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Demon's Childe

by
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Part One

Spike moved silently through the night, not even his boots creating a footfall. He didn't like skulking around like some fledgling, preferring instead for everyone to know he was coming and fear him. Since the Initiative had made him all but fangless, there was something to be said for caution. Besides, he hadn't missed the harshly sneered words the senior Harris had directed at the whelp. The last thing he wanted was to make Xander's life any harder than it was. At least demon-girl was finally out of the picture. He didn't like competition, Angel could vouch for that. Now all he had to do was get the whelp to notice that Anya wasn't the only demon interested in him.

He knew it wasn't much of a plan to get himself re-invited into Xander's basement apartment on the basis that he'd forgotten his second favourite pair of boots in the back of the closet, but it was lame enough not to sound like an excuse. He just had to get Xander alone and in his presence, then he could start working on the boy's resistance. Of course, it helped that Xander always softened up towards him when there was no one else around.

Spike was musing about what it might taste like if Xander ever let him have a sip when his boot hit something and he stumbled forward. His vampire reflexes kept him from going ass over tea kettle onto the ground and he snarled as the scent of fresh blood wafted up to him. He looked down, wondering what the poor unfortunate at his feet had had the displeasure of running into and his heart nearly leapt from his chest.

"Xander!" Spike growled, his game face flashing forward as he looked for any danger around them.

The young man was alone but there were fresh tracks leading away from the scene. It looked like several sets, but it was hard to tell in the chaos. Knowing Xander's

attackers were long gone, Spike knelt down beside the boy. He was already on his back, his chest rising and falling shallowly. The boy hadn't even cried out when Spike had stumbled over him and from the heavy scent of blood in the air, Spike knew things were bad.

Bad enough, in fact, that if he left to get help, the boy wouldn't make it. He would draw his last breath in a matter of moments. Even if they made it to a hospital, his wounds were fatal. Spike ran his fingers over Xander's face and drew them back covered in blood. "What am I gonna do with you, pet? You can't die on me now," he whispered the words and then unconsciously sucked on his blood covered fingers.

"Sp-sp-spike.." Xander managed to whisper, startling the vampire. He couldn't open his eyes to make out the other man but he knew it was Spike. He cringed at the thought of Spike finding him. For whatever reason, he didn't want the vampire's last memories of him to be like this.

Spike was startled by the harsh whisper. He needed to know one thing and he knew that Xander wouldn't be able to speak more than a few words. Some people would demand to know who had done this... some would

even demand to know in these last moments what Xander's true feelings were... but not Spike.

No.

Instead, Spike asked, "Xander, tell me if you'll let me fix this... if you'll let me take the pain away..."

"G-g-go ah-ahead.." Xander forced out. He was ready for the pain to end. He had no idea how long he'd lain bleeding and in pain but it felt like forever. It was nice to know that he wasn't going to die alone. Spike was with him and Spike would make sure it was as quick and painless as possible, of that he was sure.

Spike shifted back into game face in an instant. What surprised him was that Xander didn't flinch away, but instead lolled on his back, revealing his neck. Spike knew there would be pain... the pain of the chip screaming at him, but he didn't care. His pain would stop eventually, but Xander's heart would never beat again.

Xander shuddered slightly when he felt Spike's lips on his neck. He was fading fast but the soft kiss the vampire placed there surprised him. He opened his mouth to say

something but no words would come out, then everything went grey as long incisors sank into his neck.

Part Two

Xander slowly became aware that, first of all he was alive, and secondly someone was softly stroking his hair. He knew he was warm and that his body wasn't in pain like it should be, like he remembered it being. His eyes fluttered open and locked with a pair of deep golden ones.

"Welcome back," Spike said, shifting back into his human visage. "How do you feel?"

"Hungry!" Xander growled.

"I know," Spike said softly. He lifted his wrist to Xander's mouth and waited.

Xander seized Spike's wrist with his hands as if to stop the vampire from taking it away, even though Spike was smiling fondly. Xander's eyes shifted from brown to gold

as he morphed into game face for the first time. Driven by an instinctual hunger, he slipped his new fangs into Spike's flesh and drank deeply.

Spike shuddered and moaned as his Childe drank from him. He felt himself harden immediately, but pushed his arousal down hard. He didn't want that from Xander. Well, actually he did, but not the way Sires normally did with their Childer. He wanted Xander willingly. And for that, he knew he had to wait.

Spike was indulgent as he felt Xander drinking his fill, letting his new Childe drink much more than he'd let anyone else drink other than his own Sire. Gently, he pushed Xander's head away and was forced to chuckle with delight when Xander obeyed, but continued to lap at the closing wound. "Liked that, didn't you, luv?"

"Yeah," Xander replied. "And strangely enough I don't have the urge to yack. I don't hurt anymore either. Why is that?"

Spike chuckled affectionately again and traced his thumb over Xander's blood stained lips. Childer were usually confused and their memories fuzzy after being turned. So were most fledglings, but that was the

difference between a regular fledgling and a cherished Childe. Spike gave enough of a damn to be there to guide Xander through this period, making his Childe even more dependent on him. "You're different now, Xander."

"You turned me," Xander said flatly. He wasn't sure if he was upset by the fact or somehow pleased. He knew he wasn't angry, though. One thing struck him almost immediately. "Am I a demon now? I don't feel like a demon."

"I'm not sure what you are," Spike admitted, his fingers still ghosting over Xander's face. The boy hadn't realized he was still in game face yet. With time, he'd be able to control the change at will. "Your blood... wasn't completely human."

"That should probably surprise me.. shock me even, but it doesn't. Just one more exciting facet to living on the Hellmouth." Xander turned his face away, a maelstrom of feelings swirling inside him. He was glad he wasn't dead but it was short-lived. He was a vampire. One of his best friends was the Slayer. He wasn't going to make her have to stake him. He'd catch the sunrise first.

Spike watched as the emotions washed over Xander's face. Xander had never been good at hiding what he felt, but as a vampire he shouldn't be feeling what he was feeling now... guilt. "Bloody hell! I think you somehow managed to hang onto your freakin' soul!"

"I wouldn't know about that," Xander said. "But I don't feel the things I thought a vampire was supposed to feel. Or I guess I do feel the things that I didn't think a vampire felt after being turned. Spike.. I appreciate what you did, but you shouldn't have. I won't make Buffy stake me."

"Xander, you were more than a nummy treat for me," Spike explained. "You're my Childe. That makes me your Sire and I wouldn't let Goldilocks stake you even if you wanted that."

"You couldn't stop her," Xander said. "The chip wouldn't let you. I don't want her to have to do that, Spike. It's cruel."

Spike decided to chalk Xander's dramatics up to the fog of the change. He also decided it was time to fill his new Childe in on the way things would be operating now. "You're not under her spell anymore. I might not be able to fight her, but you can. So if she tries to stake

either of us, you can and will fight back.”

"I won't hurt her. I won't let her stake you, but I won't hurt her no matter what you say," Xander said defiantly. He fell silent, then gingerly asked the one thing on his mind. "Spike... why?"

“Because I couldn't lose you,” Spike answered simply.

"You did this because you didn't want to lose me?" Xander asked, surprised by Spike's response.

“Yeah,” Spike said. “Don’t suppose you got a problem with that, do ya?”

"Not really. Just didn't think you liked me all that much," Xander shrugged. "You do realize Buffy is going to try to stake you when she finds out you turned me?"

“We'll just have to make ourselves scarce then,” Spike decided. He always wanted to keep his Childe close by and isolated for those first few precious days. It was important to their bond that they be alone. Of course when he said this, he saw Xander’s brow crease with worry and he quickly amended. “Of course, you can give the witches a call and give them some sorta excuse for

now.”

"I want to tell Willow the truth," Xander said. "She won't tell Buffy. Not if I ask her not to. I don't want to lie to her, Spike. She's been my best friend since forever. Would it be alright if I called her and asked her to come here so I could explain it to her?"

Not the eyes! The whelp was staring at him with those eyes. He tried to remember that he was the Big Bad... master vampire... he really did try... "Later," he grumbled. "But only her and make her take an oath that no matter what she hears, no witchy stuff."

"When she hears what happened... all of it... she won't hurt you," Xander promised. He didn't promise not to make Willow forgo the "witchy stuff". He had no plans to. He knew she would want revenge and he didn't mind a bit.

"And what about the other part, whelp?" Spike asked with a bit of an edge to his voice. Lesson one, Xander had to understand he wouldn't be lied to or betrayed. Xander had to understand the loyalty of the bloodline.

"I won't make her promise not to use her witchcraft but it won't be against you," Xander said stubbornly. "If I know Willow, she'll want revenge and I'm willing to let her exact it any way she wants to."

"Revenge against me or whoever put you here in the first place?"

"Not against you. Never against you. You saved me... the only way you could. I was dying, Spike. We both know it. You did the only thing you could. She won't hurt you for that, but don't be surprised if she hugs you really hard."

"The Big Bad doesn't do... hugs," Spike cringed. "And the little witch will have to understand that it isn't her right to take revenge."

"You guys can share it," Xander said. "She was in my life long before you were so she's got rights, too. But I bet you guys could work together. That way I wouldn't have to worry about Willow getting hurt."

Spike lowered his face until it was only a few inches away from Xander's, whose head was still resting in his lap. "Tell me who did it," he purred.

"My dad... a few of his friends helped... but it was mostly my dad," Xander said. "He said he wasn't going to have a faggot for a son. He said he could smell you all over me and... I tried to tell him it wasn't like that but he wouldn't listen."

Spike leaned over and started to kiss Xander gently, his tongue slipping out to play lightly with Xander's fangs. He didn't want to scare Xander away yet, but he couldn't control the affection he felt. "Thank you, pet."

Xander stared up at Spike. He could still feel his lips tingling where Spike had kissed him. Other parts of him were sitting up and taking notice as well, adding to Xander's confusion. "I... what... why did you do that?"

"Because I wanted to," Spike whispered. His fingers traced lightly over Xander's eyebrow ridges.

"You want me? Like that? But I've never... not with another guy..." Xander groaned, his eyes fluttering closed as he leaned into his Sire's touch. His body was on fire and he didn't understand what was going on. All he knew was that he wanted Spike to keep touching him like that.

Spike growled low with pleasure. He'd gotten himself a

virgin. Not the fluffy nun kind some of the older vamps were prone to chase. No, Xander hadn't ever let another man touch him, but most likely had enough experience with women to know what he liked. "Just perfect then," Spike whispered.

"Spike, what are you doing to me?" Xander moaned. He tipped his head back and sucked his Sire's fingers into his mouth. At the same time, he brought his hand down to squeeze his aching erection. He'd never been this hot for it. Not with Anya, not with anyone.

"I've remade you into my own image," Spike whispered harshly. "Can't you feel me coursing through your veins?"

"Yesss..." Xander hissed around Spike's fingers, revelling in the sensation. "Please, Spike... please..." He wasn't sure what he was begging for, only knowing that he needed more. He prayed Spike would understand.

"Call me Sire," Spike demanded, pulling his fingers out of Xander's mouth. He noted that even though Xander was an anomaly, he had the oral fixation that most fledglings had around their Sires.

"I'll call you the fucking Pope if you just keep touching me," Xander gasped. "Please, Sire... please..."

Spike actually shivered when he heard the word slip from Xander's mouth. Someday maybe he would dare to ask the young man to call him Master, but not now. "You need me," Spike purred. He continued to touch Xander's face, neck and then chest, happy now that he'd removed the bloody shirt when cleaning him up.

"I... yeah, I guess I do," Xander admitted. "You... you're my friend. And now you're my... my Master. God, Spike, please do something before I explode!"

Spike's growls of pleasure grew when Xander called him Master. His hand moved swiftly and tore at the buttons of Xander's jeans, soon to reveal his aching cock. He'd have to buy the boy a whole new wardrobe now, something with easy access, sensual but durable... leather! But first, he had to show the younger man what sex between vampires meant.

Xander arched up into Spike's cool grip. His body was on fire, making Spike's touch seem even colder. Xander wished he could touch his Sire in return but his body was too far gone for that. He'd simply have to trust his

Master to take care of him and return the favour when he could.

Spike switched into game face as he sensed how close Xander was. "Poor Xan... neglected for too long..." Spike teased as his stroke increased. "I won't neglect you... you'll always have my touch to come home to."

"Please, Master," Xander whispered again. He arched up once more and came hard in Spike's hand. It felt like his whole body was convulsing as his Sire slowly milked him. Finally, he lay panting on the bed, his eyes shut tight.

"If you keep those pretty gold eyes shut, you can't see me do this," Spike said as he lifted his hand to his mouth and started to lick it clean.

With a growl worthy of Spike himself, Xander surged up and flipped his Sire over onto his back. He slid down a bit and began attacking Spike's clothes, desperate to give back the pleasure he'd just been given. Before Spike could even think to stop him, Xander had his pants pushed aside and the Master vampire's erection firmly clasped in his hand.

By whatever miracle, he'd managed to keep his soul and

he assumed he kept his soul because he didn't feel evil. He did, however, feel other new instincts. He suddenly had an overwhelming need to please Spike.

"Oh yeah," Spike said, grinning widely as his Childe stroked him. "Do it, pet. Show your Sire how good you can make him feel."

"I can better than all the others," Xander growled. "I can be everything to you." He didn't know what was driving him to say this, but he just had to.

"I know," Spike said softly. He brought his hand to Xander's head, stroking the soft, dark hair. He'd always had a thing for dark-haired beauties and Xander was no exception.

Xander started to nuzzle at Spike crotch. "You want me right?" He was all but begging now. "You wanted me..." No one had ever wanted him before.

"Yeah, pet, I wanted you," Spike replied. "I've wanted you for a while now. Figured you'd stake me if I let on just how I wanted you. I could have let you die, by all accounts I should have let you die. But I didn't. I chose to turn you because I wanted you by my side. Never forget

that."

Xander let out a wounded sound and swallowed down Spike's cock. In that moment he didn't even realize he'd morphed back into his human face. He sucked desperately, hoping that Spike's ever increasing moans meant he was doing something right.

"Oh bloody hell," Spike moaned. He brought both hands to Xander's head, fisting them in the boy's dark hair. He was careful not to pull too hard. He didn't want Xander to ever associate this with pain. Angelus had given him enough of a taste of that during their years together. He had no desire to do the same thing to Xander.

Xander continued to make desperate, needy noises as he sucked harder. He was almost shocked when he felt a salty gush tinged with blood wash into his mouth.

Spike tried not to thrust too deeply as he came. He didn't want to choke the boy, especially when he was doing such wonderful things to his cock. It was obvious Xander had never done this sort of thing before and that made it all the more special for Spike.

Xander swallowed deeply, licking his lips. The taste

reminded him a little of his Sire's blood and he had a feeling that he'd be tasting this a lot from now on. He wasn't stupid. He knew what went on between Sires and their Childer. The fact that this had happened so soon, within minutes of him realizing he'd been turned, told him the truth.

"You alright, pet?" Spike asked when he could find his voice again. He felt like every drop of blood in his body had been sucked out through his cock. He couldn't remember ever feeling more sated or content. The only thing wrong with his current blissful condition was the fact that his new Childe was strangely silent. A silent Xander Harris was never a good thing.

Xander didn't answer, just hid his face against Spike's thigh. Everything was different now. Xander Harris was dead. He was replaced by this... thing he was now. And everything he was now belonged to Spike.

"Xander? Answer me. What's wrong?"

"Nothin'," Xander murmured.

"It's not nothing," Spike said. He pushed Xander back a bit and sat up, then pulled his new Childe into his lap

once more. "Talk to me. I can't fix it if I don't know what's broken."

"I... I just need time to adjust to what I am now."

"And what's that?" Spike asked. Ah, his Xander was having a bit of an identity crisis. He could understand that well enough. He'd had his own when Dru and Angel had first turned him.

"I don't know!" Xander wailed. "I can't even do this right! I've seen people turned and they don't feel like this... they're ecstatic!"

"No, you haven't. You've seen the demon be ecstatic. The people they were, they're dead and gone. You're still here. And I'll tell you a little secret. If you hadn't kept your soul, I'd've had Red conjure it back for you. I want you. Xander Harris. Not a demon wearing your skin. And if it's the whole sex with a man bit then you can quit worrying. Vampires hit from both sides of the plate, pet. All of 'em."

"Even Angel?" Xander asked with a sharp snort.

"Pet, you don't want to know the number of times

Angelus fucked me," Spike laughed. "Don't know about His Broodiness, but Angelus would fuck anything that walked."

That got Xander's attention and his game face flickered on and off. "He touched you that way?!"

"He was my Sire. It was his right. He could do whatever he wanted with me and he damn well did. I won't ever hurt you like that, though. I swear it," Spike said. He didn't want to go into detail. Some things were best left buried as far in the past as inhumanly possible but he wasn't going to lie to his Childe.

"I would do anything you asked," Xander said quietly. What he didn't know was that most Childer were equally sweet and eager to please. It was only after their Masters had broken them, like Angelus had done to Spike, that they turned their affections away from their Sire. If given the chance, they would forever remain devoted to the one who made them.

"I know. I was the same way with Angelus. But unlike the great pouf, I won't abuse it. I do something you don't like, you bloody well speak up. I may do it anyway if I think it's for your own good, but you still tell me. You

understand?"

"I'll be good," Xander promised, cuddling a bit closer. "Are you sure I'm not evil?"

"I'm sure, but if it makes you feel any better you can ask Red tomorrow," Spike said. "She should be able to do a spell to tell one way or the other."

"Okay," Xander said with a large yawn. "Oh, Spike?"

"Yeah?"

"Can vampires still eat Twinkies?"

Part Three

Spike awoke as he usually did, just as the hated sun was dipping below the horizon. In another hour the sun would be fully set and he'd be free to move about as he wished. Not that he was going anywhere any time soon.

He had a new Childe to care for and he wasn't taking any chances. He smiled as he watched the young one sleeping peacefully beside him. He'd be waking soon and he'd be hungry. Spike was glad he had a decent supply of blood on hand, and not that pig shit the Watcher so generously graced him with either.

Spike continued to watch as Xander slept and smiled affectionately when, while still half asleep, Xander moved closer to Spike. Somehow he managed to move around until he had Spike's wrist near his mouth and started to nuzzle and lick it, whining softly as he began to wake.

"Go ahead, Childe," Spike said softly, stroking Xander's hair as he did so. "Feed from me."

Keeping his eyes closed, Xander sank into the cool flesh with a deep moan of satisfaction. He wasn't sure how much he was supposed to take but he stopped when the edge was taken off his hunger. Some part of his mind told him that Spike most likely hadn't fed since yesterday.

"You can take a bit more if you like," Spike encouraged. He wanted his Childe to feed from him exclusively. He

needed the bond between them to be as strong as possible. Besides, the more Xander fed from him the stronger he became and strong vampires lived longer.

"When was the last time you fed?" Xander asked, licking his lips clean.

"'Bout this time yesterday," Spike replied. "Don't worry, I've got some reserves put back and I don't mean that crap the Watcher slips me every now and again. Got some of the good stuff. You ain't gonna drain me, pet."

"I was thinking more that maybe you'd... want to... take a sip of the ol' Xander juice?" Xander said quickly. He turned his head to the side revealing his neck.

"Oh Childe," Spike whispered as he stared at the side of the boy's throat. He leaned down and licked the cool skin, savouring the taste. Then his fangs extended and he slid them deep inside his Childe's throat, tasting him and marking him all in one.

Xander let out a startled "oh" when he felt Spike's fangs slip into his flesh. He couldn't remember when he was turned, but this... this was like nothing else he'd ever felt. There was pain, but there was also more. Somehow

his entire being seemed more aware of Spike.

Spike drank deeply, knowing he'd feed his Childe again soon to replace what he'd taken. He wanted Xander to feel the drain this first time and he wanted to indulge himself a bit. This was his Childe. Even the blood of a slayer paled in comparison to this.

What signalled Spike to pull away was the way Xander shuddered against him and the wet spot that was growing on the front of his jeans. Apparently he had himself one very responsive Childe.

"Thank you, pet," Spike said as he licked the rapidly closing wound. He brought his head up to stare down into Xander's slightly glazed eyes. Ever so slowly, he leaned down, bringing his blood-tinged lips to Xander's.

Xander whimpered into the kiss and when Spike pulled away, Xander hid his eyes in shame against his Sire's shoulder. "Sorry, I..."

"You what?" Spike prodded, frowning.

"I couldn't control myself," Xander mumbled.

"Most new Childer can't, though you are especially responsive," Spike explained. "There's nothing to be sorry for. I want you to feel pleasure at my touch. I want you to crave my bite, my blood."

"Blood..." Xander repeated. "Guess I'd better get used to it. Does it all taste as good as yours does?"

"To you, no. Your Sire's blood will always taste like the finest ambrosia to you. Angelus' blood does to me, even now. If I had the choice between draining a slayer or sipping from my Sire, I'd choose my Sire every time. That tell you anything?"

"That I'll have to keep you away from Angel," Xander deadpanned.

"Don't worry. Your blood is the sweetest of all to me. I've never made a Childe before. Made minions by the dozens but never a Childe. You're my first and I savour every drop of your blood."

"But I have to get used to... drinking other blood," Xander made a face. "Not from people, I won't do that. I won't hurt anyone, but you won't feed me forever."

"Says you," Spike replied. "I can sustain you permanently. Most don't, but that's just because their Childer want to hunt and feed. You don't, so I'll take care of you. No drinking out of a bloody bag for my Childe."

Even the mention of drinking from Spike made Xander shiver. "But you won't... can't hurt humans... right? So I wouldn't be hurting anyone by drinking from you?"

"No, I can't hurt humans. I get my human blood in a bag from Willy's. Lots of people don't mind getting paid to donate blood. And I can drink from all the demons and vamps I want. Nobody's getting hurt when you feed, I promise."

"I'll just have to make sure you drink enough for two then," Xander said.

"Don't worry about me. I'll feed enough for the both of us. Just means I eat a few more times a day than I do now." Spike hesitated then frowned again. He didn't want to do this but he wanted to get it over with so he could concentrate on his Childe without it hanging over his head. "Xander... you still set on talking to Red?"

"Ahhh... yeah," Xander said. "They'll be wondering what

happened to me and I owe it to her. She's family."

"Alright then. Let's get this over with. But you tell her, she doesn't go after your father without me. I'll let her help, but I'm the one that gets to show that fucker what a mistake he made."

"Do you even have a phone in this place?" Xander asked. They hadn't moved from the bed since he'd woken up and the rest of the room was in shadows. He didn't even know where he was.

"Yeah, I got a phone. Doesn't pay to be too cut off, what with having this bleeding chip in my head and no minions around to scuttle about for me. Anything else you want here, we can get it for you. You just let me know. But for now, let me show you where the phone is." Spike got out of bed reluctantly and held his hand out to Xander. He led his Childe over to the phone then moved away to give him some privacy.

Xander noticed one thing. While Spike had led him over to the phone, the lights still hadn't been turned on and now that he really tried, he could see into the shadows. "Guess night vision is one of those cool vampire super powers," he called out to Spike.

"Oh yeah, makes it easier to hunt and such," Spike replied. "You'll get used to it. All your senses'll be sharper now. Especially smell. Go on, call the Witch. Don't want her to worry too much."

"Yeah... yeah... yeah," Xander grumbled. The truth was, he was stalling. He was afraid to call and even more afraid of what Willow would think of him now. Taking a deep breath he quickly dialed the memorized number.

"*Hello?*" Willow had snatched the phone up on the first ring. No one had heard from Xander all day and she was starting to get worried. She'd even called his folks but his dad had said they hadn't seen him since last night.

"Hey, Will," Xander tried to make his voice sound as normal as possible.

"Xander! Thank the Goddess," Willow said, relief flooding her system. "I was starting to really, you know, worry. Nobody'd heard from you since yesterday and it's not like you to just disappear and well... I was worried."

"Nope, nothing to worry about here. No ma'am," Xander started to babble. "I'm fit as a fiddle and still ali..."

alright.”

"Xander? What's wrong?" Willow asked, easily picking up the unease in her best friend's voice. "Are you in trouble or something?"

“Not exactly.”

"What is it then? I called your folks and they said they hadn't seen you since last night. Xander, where are you?"

“You talked to m-my... d-dad?” Xander choked out.

"Yeah. I was worried. Nobody could find you," Willow explained, perplexed by the tremulous way Xander had asked about his father.

“I think you should come over here... this isn't something I want to explain over the phone.”

"Come over where?" Willow asked, starting to worry. Xander sounded strange and that was never good on the Hellmouth.

“Just a second...” Xander covered the mouth piece with his hand and hissed, “Spike, where exactly are we?”

"Angel's old place," Spike said with a snort. "I would'a taken you to the factory but it's kinda fucked up and I wanted you to wake up someplace nice."

"Oh, okay," Xander nodded stupidly and then spoke into the phone. "Spike says we're at Angel's old place." Then he'd realized he'd just said he was with Spike and slapped his forehead.

"Spike? You're with Spike? Xander, just answer yes or no, are you okay?" Willow asked. She was gripping the phone so tightly her knuckles were white.

"What? Oh no, it's not like that. Yes... yes, I'm fine..."

"Okay," Willow said, breathing an audible sigh of relief. "Look, I'll get Buffy and the others and be there in like ten minutes."

"Willow, NO!" Xander caught the panic in his tone and tried to lower it. "Just you."

"Alexander Lavelle Harris, you tell me what's wrong right now," Willow demanded. She knew without a doubt that something had happened. Xander's reactions had proven

that much.

"Not over the phone, Will... please?" Xander begged in a tone of voice Willow usually called his virtual puppy dog eyes.

"Alright. I'll be there in ten minutes," she relented. "Um, do I need to bring any, uh, stuff?" She hoped Xander understood that she was referring to stuff of the vampire repelling nature.

"Definitely no stuff of any kind," Xander said.

"Right. I'm on my way then." She hung up the phone and grabbed her purse. She scrawled a quick note for Tara, telling her that she had to run out and she'd call if she was going to be late. From the way Xander had reacted she was pretty sure he didn't want her even mentioning the phone call to Buffy and the others yet.

Xander stood there with the phone in his hand until Spike came up behind him and put it back in its cradle. "This could be the end of everything..." Xander whispered.

"Not a chance," Spike assured his Childe. "Red loves you. She always has and she always will. 'Specially when she

sees you still got your soul. Now me, they'll want to do all sorts of nasty things to but won't none of 'em be mad at you."

"I'm not mad at you, so I don't see why they would be," Xander said. "I would've been dead with a capital D. Well, more dead than I am now at least. It's kind of a Sunnydale freakish happy ever after ending that I end up undead, ya know?"

"No," Spike said, shaking his head. "What it is, is a fucking travesty. A sacrilege. But it's the best I could manage."

"Is there anything else I should know?" Xander asked. "I got the spooky face down and the seeing in the dark, not to mention being a walking hard on for your blood. Anything else?"

"You can smell really good, especially blood. You can smell it moving around inside people when they pass you. You can hear it gliding through their veins. All of your senses'll be better now. Better hearing... everything. And you'll be faster. At first it'll be a bit of a hindrance until you get used to it, but after that you'll be fast as the slayer, maybe even faster."

“So I’m like Super Xander “Deadboy” Harris now?”
Xander snorted with laughter. Maybe he could get used to it after all and then he remembered the big part of Vampire and the smile slipped from his face. “And no more sun...”

"No more sun, pet. Not ever. I'm sorry about that. But the moon's real pretty. You'll start to like it." Spike wrapped his arms around Xander and held him. He knew he only had a few more minutes before Red arrived. It wouldn't do for her to walk in on them being too cozy before Xander'd had a chance to explain things a bit.

Spike kept holding Xander in silence until they heard pounding on the door. “Xander! Let me in! It’s creepy out here.”

"I'll get it," Spike said. "Just take a deep breath and remember that no matter what, Red loves you." Spike left him then and hurried to the door. He let Willow inside, careful to make sure no one else was with her.

“Alright, I’m here. Now spill,” Willow commanded.

"Will... come and sit down with me," Xander said, careful not to touch her. He knew she'd pick up on the coldness

of his touch if he did. "There's a lot I have to tell you. I'm gonna just start at the beginning and go with it. If you can, let me tell you everything before you interrupt."

Willow cocked her head slightly to the side and nodded. But first her eyes slipped over to where Spike was hovering a few feet away. If she hadn't known any better she would have thought he was trying to guard Xander from her.

"It's okay, Wills. Spike knows everything and he's not going to hurt either of us. He's just a bit... worried at the moment. To tell you the truth, so am I."

"You didn't bring any of that hocus pocus stuff with ya, didja now, lil' Witch?" Spike asked. He was trying to control his possessive streak. He didn't like anyone, even her, near his new Childe. And secondly, he was hovering for her protection. Any normal fledging would have drained her the minute she walked in that door, but obviously Xander was no ordinary fledgling.

"Nothing out of the ordinary," Willow said. "I've got some stuff in my purse but it's like the stuff I always carry. Is there a problem?"

Spike moved forward and stretched out his hand. "I'll take your purse for now."

"Give it to him, Wills," Xander said when Willow looked to him. He waited until she had handed it over before taking a deep breath and beginning his tale. "You know my home life's never been real great. Well, dad's been kinda pissed since I broke up with Anya. Last night when I came home, he... he flipped out. He said a lot of really nasty things about me. Insinuated some stuff about me and Spike, too. Then he and a few of his friends decided to teach me a lesson."

Spike listened intensely and didn't even bother to stop his game face from coming out. There was only a certain amount he could control his rage. He wondered how Xander's old man had even known about him when he was usually too drunk to even walk down the stairs. He would get his revenge on Harris Senior and his cronies. With this damned chip, now wasn't the time for pride. He'd ask for Red's help and maybe even some of his more nasty demon friends.

"When they finished with me they dumped me in the alley behind the house," Xander continued, his voice flat and emotionless. He didn't dare look at Willow as he

spoke, knowing if he did he'd never get the words out. "They left me there to die. That's where Spike found me. By the time he stumbled over me, it was too late. I was more dead than alive. I remember... I remember being grateful that I wasn't going to die all alone, that at least I had Spike with me. He asked me if he could ease my pain. I told him he could. At the time, I thought he meant to finish me off. As you can see now, that wasn't what he intended at all. Please believe me, Willow, when I tell you there was no other choice. If Spike hadn't turned me you'd be picking out flowers for my funeral right now."

"He turned you?!" Willow whispered in shock even as she skittered away from Xander.

Xander hung his head. Willow hated him now. Worse than that, she was afraid of him. He wondered if there was still enough sunlight left to go for a walk in. Of all of them, Willow was the most likely to understand. Without her, there was no chance of the others seeing him as anything more than a thing that had to be put down. He wasn't going to put them through that. "Spike, get her out of here," he said hollowly.

"Yes, yes! I need to get out of here," Willow agreed

quickly, stumbling as she quickly got off of the couch. "I need to get to the Magic Box... get the stuff for the binding spell. Spike... I'll need you to make sure he stays s-safe."

"There won't be a spell, Willow," Xander said. "You're scared of me now. I don't think I can take that. But I won't make you guys stake me. I love you too much for that." This was the thing Xander feared most, losing the small cadre of friends he'd managed to acquire. They were the only decent family he'd ever really had. He wasn't prepared for a life without them.

"We're not going to stake you," Willow said quickly as she was trying to process everything. "Maybe tie you up so we can bind that nifty soul of yours to that body."

"Hold up a second there, Red," Spike said to her before turning his attention to his miserable Childe. "She's not scared of you, pet. She's scared of the demon she thinks is inside you now. You knew it was gonna be a bit of a shock for her. Give her a second or two to get her wits about her."

"What do you mean thinks is inside him?" Willow hesitated. "Tasty human plus vampire equals

demon. What am I missing here?"

"Yeah well according to Spike I wasn't exactly human to begin with," Xander said bitterly. "I guess that made a difference or something. I don't know."

Now the part of Willow that loved Xander was coming to the forefront, pushing the fear aside. "So what, you're like all souled up now?"

"Don't know," Xander shrugged, refusing to look anywhere near her. "Spike seems to think so. I know I don't want to hurt anybody. Doesn't really matter, though. If you freaked, I know Buffy will, not to mention Giles."

"Look at me," Willow suddenly commanded, coming closer. There was one way she'd know for sure and that was to look in Xander's eyes.

It took a moment but Xander did as she asked. Everything he felt was right there for her to see. All the fear and pain and confusion. He didn't know what to do and whenever he didn't know what to do he turned to Willow. Only, he couldn't turn to Willow any more and that hurt more than anything his father and his drunken

buddies had done to him.

Willow looked deep into Xander's eyes and then a smile washed across her face. "Okay then. Congratulations, you have a soul. Now we have to deal with making your father visit planet Regret."

"I do?" Xander asked, still reeling. He reached out to hug Willow but pulled back at the last instant. He shouldn't touch her. She wouldn't want his touch now.

"Get back here," Willow admonished. She reached out and drew Xander into her arms. "We're gonna have to buy you some sweaters now."

"Aren't you scared?" Xander asked, letting his arms slide around his childhood friend. "I mean, I'm a vampire now. You should be afraid of me. I..."

"I've seen you in your old tightie whities, Xander Harris," Willow teased gently. "You aren't scary to me. You're Xander, you're my best friend. Even if you are a little cold."

"I love you, Wills," Xander said softly, holding her more tightly now. They stayed like that for a few minutes then

Xander reluctantly pulled back. "A couple of things. First, no one knows but you. We will tell them, just... not right yet. Second, you don't go after my dad without Spike. He agreed to let me tell you and let you help him but he wants in on it. Okay?"

"Okay," Willow agreed. She noticed that Spike was pacing and watching them. He obviously didn't like Willow touching him. "Is he always gonna be like that now?"

"I don't know," Xander said. "Maybe. I don't think so, though. He's real protective of me right now. I mean, he only Sired me last night."

"HE is standing right over here," Spike grumbled. "HE is like the Big Bad."

"Sorry," Willow said, grinning sheepishly. "I won't hurt him, you know. Anybody tries to stake Xander they're gonna have to go through me to do it and that includes the Slayer." Willow backed away from Xander and moved over to where Spike was angrily pacing. She reached out and hugged the vampire hard. No matter what else he might have done, he had saved Xander's life. She wouldn't ever forget that.

"Xander..." Spike choked. "Didn't I tell you I don't do hugs?"

"Sorry," Willow said again, this time smiling widely as she let go. "I won't forget what you did. Not ever. Anybody tries to mess with either one of you, you've got at least one witch you can turn to... two when you tell Tara."

"You really should be more scared of me," Spike complained.

"I would have been before this," Willow said honestly. "But I can see how much Xander means to you. And hurting me would hurt him."

"And this makes you like Willow's... well, I'm sure what it exactly makes you," Xander said. "But it makes you family."

"Family. Been a long time since I had one of those," Spike mused. "Slayer's gonna be plenty pissed when she finds out I turned you. It won't matter what you say to her, she'll still think I could have done something else. You two need to be on your toes when she finally finds out."

"Xander, that's not true," Willow said, though she cringed inside. Buffy did take Xander for granted, even more so than she did the rest of them. Willow didn't mind so much but she could be downright cruel sometimes and not even realize it.

"We both know it's true, Wills," Xander argued. "I wouldn't be surprised if she didn't want to stake me before just because she didn't want to get Mr. Pointy all bloody."

"Hey now, pet," Spike said, coming over to stand beside Xander. "It's not like that. Slayer's got a lot on her mind what with living on the Hellmouth and all. She don't mean to slight you. I think she just sees the Xander she met when she first came here. She still sees the boy and looks right over the man."

"I'm not much of a man," Xander mumbled again. No one really thought of him as a man and the hateful words of his father came to mind. His father and friends had called him a 'dirty little faggot boy' on a regular basis or some variation of it to the point he answered to it.

"That's your bloody father talking," Spike said. "You're a good man, or at least you were before those fools tried

to take you away from us. You listen to your Sire now. I know what I'm talking about."

"It isn't just my dad," Xander said. "My mom... kids at school... other people..." He couldn't believe that he was actually sniffing to keep from crying. Vampires didn't cry. Vampires weren't supposed to feel like a victim.

"None of them saw you, not really," Willow said. "They all saw the mask you wore, they never saw the real Xander. Only a few of us are lucky enough to get to see him."

"I like the Xander I see," Spike added. "And if anyone gives you trouble now, you can just snap their necks."

"Spike," Willow said, casting a worried glance at the blond vampire. "You shouldn't encourage him to do things like that. I mean, I know he's a vampire now, but he's still Xander and Xander wouldn't want to hurt anyone."

"What?" Spike said innocently and then shrugged his shoulders. "It's just talk. He's gonna hafta learn to talk the talk if he can't walk the walk. He's William the Bloody's Childe from the line of Angelus, Scourge of

Europe and he's gotta learn to play that up. You'd be surprised how far a big mouth will get ya."

"Really," Willow said sarcastically, earning a smile from the two vampires. "Alright then, but don't talk like that in front of Buffy. Not at first anyway. Look, I know you're worried about telling her but you can't keep this from her for long. You know that, don't you?"

Before Xander could answer, Spike spoke, "Hey now, he's lucky I let you near him so soon after I turned the whelp. We need some quality alone time. Screw the Slayer."

"I know you do," Willow replied. "You need time to bond and all that stuff, but Buffy will know if Xander's gone missing and she'll look for him. If she finds him here she'll stake first and ask questions later. Spike, it might be best if you got him out of Sunnydale until you're ready to come out."

"Come out?" Xander squeaked.

"Sorry, poor choice of words, but you know what I mean. I can tell Buffy that you went out of town suddenly... a sick aunt or something. She won't really miss Spike and

even if she does, she won't know where to look. Is there someplace you can go? Just for a little while?"

"I have a few hidey holes where no one can find us unless we want to be found," Spike said. "And speaking of coming out, you weren't far off the mark..."

"Spike!" Xander gasped, going even paler at his Sire's words.

"What?" Spike shot back with a raised eyebrow. "We are talkin' to a chick chaser here."

"Spike, please," Xander pleaded. "I already died because... because of what I am. I can't lose Willow, too."

"You're the same thing as her," Spike reminded him. "So am I. I won't let you hide that from your friend."

"Xander..." Willow began carefully. "Is that true? Are you really... bi?"

"Humans labels like that don't apply to us," Spike put in, hoping to help Xander's inner struggle.

"I... I guess I am," Xander said. "Spike said vampires will

fuck just about anything but I was like this before. I mean, I never did anything with another guy but I... I thought about it some."

"It's okay, pet," Spike cut Xander off before he could get anymore distressed. "I knew it. I could smell it... sense it."

"Xander, look at me," Willow commanded. She waited until he was looking straight at her before continuing. "You're my best friend. Who you love doesn't matter to me. I don't care if you want to have sex with a hamster. Well, okay, I do care about that because, you know, innocent hamster and all that. But, I don't care if you're gay or bi or tri or whatever. Okay?"

"Yeah... okay," Xander agreed. He believed Willow would try to forgive him anything, but what if the center of his obsession was solely Spike?

"Xander, would it help if I told you I've done some research on vampires and stuff and that I have a pretty good idea of what goes on between a Sire and their Childer?" Willow asked. She wanted Xander to believe her. She could tell there was something going on between the two men and, even if there wasn't, there

soon would be. It was the way things worked with vampires. She just had to trust that Spike wouldn't abuse Xander like Angelus had probably abused him.

"I really don't want to talk about this," Xander begged. Talking about sex to Willow was like... well, it was just icky. "He's been good to me."

"I can see that," Willow said, letting Xander off the hook. "I just want you to know that I'm still your best friend and I still love you and nothing you do with Spike is going to change that. Got it?"

"I got it," Xander said. He felt like he was blushing. He didn't know if vampires could blush, but it felt like he was blushing.

"Good. Now, is there anything you two need? Do you have enough blood on hand? I can get you some if you need it, but we need to do this fast. And I need to call Buffy and the others and let them know that Xander's going to be out of town for a while." Willow stopped then and frowned. She took a deep breath and faced Spike. "I won't lie to Tara. She won't say anything to anyone but I won't lie to her."

“We could use some more human blood,” Spike said. He reached over and ruffled Xander’s hair. “Only the best for my Childe.” He hoped that playing on Willow’s soft side would buy them human blood and none of that pig blood that made him consider starving to death.

"Uh, human?" Willow gulped. "I don't know where to get that, do you?"

“You can get it from Willy’s,” Spike said with a smirk. “And don’t worry, it comes from free range humans.”

"Oh, uh, okay," Willow said. She held out her hand for her purse, understanding now why Spike had taken it. It made her feel good that he was taking such good care of Xander. She would make sure to keep her promise and not go after Xander's father without him.

Spike handed Willow her purse. “Can you pick up a few other things for us? I slipped some dosh in there to cover it.”

"Whatever you need, just as long as it's not illegal," Willow said quickly.

“Nothing illegal... just some Twinkies... chocolate ice cream, hot chocolate, chips, that yellow spray cheese... Wheatabix...” Spike rattled off a mixture of his and Xander’s favourite foods by heart. “Anythin’ else you’d think he’d like.”

"Got it," Willow said, a bit choked up at Spike wanting to stock up on all the things Xander liked.

Part Four

“I thought you said we were going to a cabin in the woods?” Xander asked as they walked into a building that was bigger than the house he’d grown up in. “I don’t know many cabins with hot tubs.”

"You been in the wrong cabins then," Spike laughed as he set their things inside the door. "I like my creature comforts. Learned that from the great pouf himself."

Xander’s expression darkened a bit and his eyes tinged gold. “I don’t like it when you mention him.”

"Makes you jealous, does it?" Spike said, amusement tingeing his voice. "No worries there, luv. He may be my Sire but he'll never be my Childe. Vampires have been known to stake each other over their Childer but not

normally over their Sires. If I had to choose between you two right now, I'd choose you."

"Good," Xander grumbled. "You need someone to take care of you and I can't see Mr. Buffy doing that."

"Oh that was a good one, pet," Spike laughed. "And it's me that's taking care of you, at least for now. But it would be nice to have someone to look after me for a change. Dru always had to be looked after, and, like you said, Angelus was never one for coddling his Childer."

"You don't coddle me," Xander said, not realizing he was pouting. He did think Spike needed taking care of.

"No, I don't, but I won't treat you the way Angelus treated us. Me and Dru, we were amusements to him. Something to pass the time with when he was bored. You won't ever have to fear me, Xander. I swear it."

"You can spoil me a little," Xander said after a brief consideration. "And I'll just try to keep up with you."

"No problems there, mate. Now come on, let's unpack this lot. I'm hungry and I've got a Childe to feed." They quickly unpacked the things they'd brought, a

combination of clothes and food and a few books Spike had wanted on hand. He knew there was still a chess set at the cabin so he wasn't worried about getting bored. Besides, he had a new Childe to raise. He doubted if they would have time to get bored.

Xander trailed after Spike carrying a cooler full of blood. "Spike, do I want to know what the spray cheese is for?"

"Not really," Spike laughed. "Actually I like it on my Wheatabix. Of course, it might taste pretty good on certain parts of you, too."

"That's both interesting and disgusting at the same time," Xander laughed. "Do you still dip the Wheatabix in a mug full of blood?" Xander remembered that from when they lived together.

"Sometimes. Prefer those little marshmallows really." He grabbed a packet of cold blood and led Xander into the bedroom. He hated the stuff cold but at least it was human. Sinking his fangs in deeply, he drank straight from the bag. He could feel the hunger his Childe was giving off and he meant to do something about it.

Xander licked his lips as he watched Spike gulp down the blood. "I'll have a sip next time you have some." When he was human, the sight of marshmallows floating in blood made him want to puke, now it just appealed to his sweet tooth.

"No," Spike said, dropping the empty bag onto the floor. He knew he should get Xander used to the taste in case the time came the boy ever had to feed for himself but he didn't want to. He wanted his Childe dependent on him. He needed Xander to need him.

"Sire, I'm hungry," Xander said in a low sultry voice. He knew calling Spike by his title would set him off.

Spike growled and grabbed Xander pulling him close. He kissed the younger man hard and fast then pushed Xander down to his knees. He held out his wrist, offering it to his Childe.

Xander didn't grab Spike's wrist, instead pulling it to his mouth reverently. He kissed what would have been his Sire's pulse point during life. "Your blood... it tastes better than anything I've ever had..." He shifted into game face and looked up at Spike. "Do you still love me when I look like this? Like a demon?"

"I don't see the demon no matter what your face looks like," Spike said. "I only see Xander."

Keeping his eyes glued with Spike's, Xander bit into Spike's wrist. He kept the wounds small so that he was more nursing than gulping.

"Oh that's it, luv. Nice and slow so we can both enjoy it. Such a good Childe, you are," Spike cooed, his legs wavering slightly as Xander slowly nursed on his wrist.

Xander made a whimpering sound at the praise. He was unused to praise and it fed the needy part of his soul. What Xander didn't know was that being a fledgling was very much like being a real child. The most powerful vampires had only been fed on the blood of their Sires. The longer they fed exclusively from their Master and the more blood they ingested over time, the more powerful they became. That's why it was done so rarely. Even the most beloved Childer were weaned rather quickly, only to taste their Master's blood on rare occasions. All of this was simply because Sires feared their Childer would become too powerful.

Spike, however, had no such fear. He wanted Xander to

be strong, even stronger than him, in fact. And he wanted his Childe to associate food with his Sire alone. Xander had already expressed a reluctance to feed from humans. He would not stand by and watch his Childe become like Angelus, feeding from the blood of animals. If the choice were his, his Childe would never know the taste of anything other than his blood.

Xander was not sure how long he knelt there, slowly nursing at Spike's wrist. What he did notice was that the longer he took, the more erotic it became for both of them. Even though he didn't need to, Spike's breath still became heavier, tying him to his one time mortality. Xander felt his cock harden in his pants and groaned around his Sire's wrist. He wanted Spike in a way he'd never wanted anyone before. He literally ached for his Sire's touch.

"I know you could make us cum from using that wicked, sweet mouth of yours," Spike groaned. "But do you want that, pet?"

"No," Xander admitted, pulling his mouth away from the proffered wrist reluctantly. He didn't want to use his mouth, at least not this time. He wanted more than that from his Sire. He wanted to be claimed.

“Tell me what you want,” Spike encouraged. He knew what they both wanted, but he needed to hear Xander say it.

"Fuck me," Xander whispered, his breath ghosting across Spike's skin. "Make me yours forever."

“Would you like to be more than my favoured Childe... my only Childe?” Spike whispered back. These words were brought forth by Xander asking for forever.

"I want to be everything to you," Xander said. He felt like things were spinning wildly out of control - moving entirely too fast - but he was powerless to stop any of it. Truth be told, he wasn't sure he wanted to.

Spike crouched down in front of the still kneeling Xander and grasped the younger man's face in his hands. “Forever...” Spike breathed. “Forever means I want to make you my Consort. I want to make you my everything. You'll never taste the blood of another, never let anyone else touch you the way I do now.”

"Don't want anyone else to touch me," Xander confirmed. "Never want to feel anyone's hands on me

but yours for the rest of my life. Whatever you want to do, do it."

"I don't care what the flicks or books say..." Spike said, caressing Xander's face. "Nothin' hocus pocus about it. Just keep up what we're doin'... what we are."

"What we are." Xander paused. "Sire and Childe. Master Vampire and Consort. Lover and Beloved. That about cover it?"

"Cheech and Chong... the original odd couple," Spike teased. "Soul mates. Yeah, that about covers it."

Xander nodded then smiled up at his Sire. His eyes twinkled as he said the one thing he knew would push all of Spike's buttons. "Please, Master..."

"C'mon, luv," Spike growled lightly. "There's a nice big four poster bed with our names on it."

"Will you fuck me there, Master?" Xander kept on. "Please?"

Spike squeezed his eyes shut. "If you keep beggin' like that, we won't make it to the bed."

"Don't care," Xander chuckled. "I want to know you want me. You do want me, don't you, Master?"

"What I feel for you is beyond mere want. I will not fuck you on the ground... this time," Spike growled. "Get your ass stripped and on that bed, before I have to punish you."

Xander hesitated at the word punish. He'd seen Angelus' version of the word. He shuddered at the thought of Spike doing anything like that to him and scurried quickly to the bed.

Spike followed at leisurely pace, smirking the entire time. He was tempted to light a cigarette, but Xander had been giving him the eyes and asking him to quit. That didn't mean the Big Bad was going to give up his habit... or give into his Childe, no he was just... temporarily adjusting his behaviour. "Buck naked!" Spike called out. "It's easier to punish you that way."

"Sp-spike?" Xander queried, his hands stilling. He knew Spike was just joking with him, just playing around, but he couldn't help the nagging fear in the back of his mind. He didn't want his Master to feel the need to punish him.

He never wanted Spike to have to hurt him. He just wished he knew how to put that into words without sounding like a complete dork.

“Oh yeah, you’d be surprised at all the kinds of nasty things I can do with my tongue to make you scream,” Spike chuckled evilly again.

"I won't make you punish me," Xander said suddenly, feeling an overwhelming need to say the words out loud. "Not ever. I can be good. Really, I can."

Spike wanted to smack himself when he saw the uncertainty tinged with apprehension on Xander’s face. He’d forgotten what Xander’s background was for a moment with the new seemingly confident Childe around him. But, Xander wasn't a normal fledging. He still had a soul and all the insecurities to go with it. “I wouldn't hurt you, baby,” Spike pledged.

Xander let out a relieved breath and began undressing once more. His erection had abated some but he knew it would come back. All Spike had to do was look at him and he'd be hard and wanting again.

“I’m gonna spoil and pamper you,” Spike promised as he

peeled off his leather jacket. "Only time I'll make you scream is when you cum."

Xander blushed slightly under the praise and began removing his clothes faster. He would be good for his Sire. He'd make him proud and he'd be the best damn Consort there ever was.

Spike leaned up against the wall with his arms crossed and watched Xander undress. He was wearing a new pair of jeans and a new t-shirt that they'd picked up on the way. All of Xander's old clothes were still back at his parent's house and it wasn't a loss in Spike's opinion. "When we get back to Sunnyhell, we're going shopping. One word. Leather."

"I thought you already had leather pants," Xander said. He'd dropped the shirt and sat down on the bed to remove his shoes.

Spike actually snorted. Xander was a pure joy. Spike always loved someone who could keep him off balance, but Xander had that and the wits that Dru never did. "No, picture you, Xan, in tight leather pants."

"Why would I want to do that? I mean, you I could

understand. All sexy and dangerous. But I'd just look... stupid."

"Xan, do you think I was always like this?"

"Um, no, I'm pretty sure you were a live guy once and I don't think they did the whole bleach thing back in 18-whatever-it-was," Xander replied.

"I was a nancy boy with curly hair who liked to write poetry," Spike admitted. He stripped his own black t-shirt off quickly.

"I bet you were beautiful back then," Xander mused. "I bet that's why they picked you. I mean, look at them, they were all so beautiful. You fit right in with them."

Spike was standing in front of Xander in seconds, grasping his face again so hard if he'd been mortal, it would have bruised. "You're fuckin' beautiful! You need to understand you can be anyone... anything... you want to be, as long as you're mine!"

"No one's ever called me beautiful before," Xander replied. "I don't care what I am, as long as it's something you like."

Spike started to kiss Xander's face, his thumbs rubbing over his lover's cheekbones. "You're perfect just the way you are."

Xander surged upward and kissed his Sire brazenly. He felt the desire return to him in a flash, his penis filling and lengthening so fast it was almost painful. He wanted Spike to claim him, needed it like he needed blood to drink. This, as much as his Sire's blood, defined who he was now.

Spike backed Xander up until his knees hit the back of the bed and then pushed, following Xander down. He settled on top of Xander, glad that the bed equalled out their heights. He'd never admit it, but the height difference threw him a little.

"Take me, Master," Xander pleaded softly, no longer trying to tease his Sire but trying to convey all that he felt instead.

Spike roared, changed into game face. Every instinct was telling him to claim his Child, his mate, now! He fought the demon. It might be rough, but he would never hurt Xander. He wouldn't let his Child's first time be rape

like his own had been.

Digging into the bedside table, Spike pulled out a mostly empty tube of lubricant. He didn't use it often but he was damn glad he had it now. "Pull your legs back, pet. Show me that sweet little hole of yours," he said as he squeezed some of the cold gel onto his fingers.

Xander did as he was instructed, but he had enough sense left to notice the half empty tube. That meant Spike had been with someone else. Part of him was jealous, while the other half was embarrassed by Spike's crude words. "You've fucked others here," Xander accused in a whisper.

"Both fucked and been fucked," Spike said truthfully. "I'm a hundred years your senior, boy. I've been around a bit. But no more, Xander. You're it for me. You're my Consort and as long as you live there will never be anyone else. Not even my Sire."

"I'd rip their throats out," Xander growled. He may still have had his soul, but becoming a vampire lent itself to increased emotions, passions and violence. He pulled his legs back farther and arched his back in an attempt to seduce Spike.

"Don't hurt yourself, pet," Spike cautioned. He slid his slicked fingers down to Xander's hole and pushed one inside. The boy was tight, virgin tight, and Spike groaned at the feel of him.

"I haven't let a guy touch me like this," Xander announced with a note of pride.

"Good," Spike said. "I'm glad I get to be the first. I'm sorry I can't give you the same thing but it's about a hundred years too late for that."

Xander thought he should have been more scared, but he wasn't. Spike's finger was in his ass and all he wanted was more. Sure there was pain, but the promise of vampiric healing made it trivial. "Less talk, more fucking."

"Patience, pet," Spike grinned. "I want you to scream but from pleasure, not pain." He pulled his finger free and slid two inside in its place. Xander was still tight and Spike did the best he could to stretch his impatient Childe.

"Now," Xander whined, unaware he added a little pout.

"Soon," Spike countered. "Put your legs down for a bit. I think I need to take the edge off first."

"You said you would fuck me," Xander shot back. "I need you to fuck me!"

"I will," Spike said patiently, "but when I say so. I won't have you torn and bloody. Not this first time. So be a good Childe and let your Sire love you right."

Xander set his legs back down on the bed. "You're not supposed to be this... controlled," Xander said petulantly. He forgot how old Spike was most of the time because he usually acted just as juvenile as Xander and he didn't look much older.

"Don't doubt how much you turn me on," Spike reassured him. "I'm just better at hiding it than you are." He slid down, grabbing Xander's erection as he did so. Without further words, he brought the boy's cock to his mouth and began to suck, intent on bringing his Childe off in the hopes of relaxing him.

"Spike!" Xander howled. "No fair!"

Spike ignored his Childe's protest and continued sucking. He wasn't interested in drawing things out. He wanted to bring Xander off as quickly as possible, leaving him spent and lax for Spike's taking.

“Spike... Spike... I’m gonna c-cum...” Xander continued to moan as he was pulled closer to the edge. He was even more responsive now that he’d been turned than before.

A few more swift strokes of his tongue and Xander was indeed cumming in his Sire's mouth. Spike drank him down, wishing he'd had the foresight to pull his mouth away so he could have used the boy's own seed to slick him. He decided to save that particular fantasy for another time and greedily drank his Childe down.

Xander continued to make some very unflattering noises, the most understandable of them being, “Gah!” Spike had succeeded in sucking his brains out through his cock and apparently his bones too, he thought as he lay there boneless.

Spike sat back up, grinning widely. He could still taste his Childe in his mouth and it made his cock throb in anticipation of what was to come. He pushed Xander's legs up himself now, knowing the boy was in no fit state

to hold himself ready. He slicked his cock with the last of the lube and then gently began to push.

Again Xander groaned something that could have been, "Gah," or "God." Whatever it was, he was rather loud, but incoherent during sex. All he knew was that he wanted to encourage Spike at what he was doing.

Ever so slowly, Spike slid inside. He could feel Xander's body gripping him tightly and it took all his control to hold back and not simply slam forward into that tight, cool body. Instead, he kept on slow and steady, knowing both of them would enjoy it more in the long run if he did.

What nearly broke what heart Spike had left was the way Xander looked up at him as he started to slowly pump into his lover's body. He was looking into eyes that were filled with adoration, trust and intelligence. Xander's hand had reached up and was grasping at the nape of his neck, rubbing the short hairs there rhythmically.

Spike leaned down and kissed his Consort, careful to keep his fangs in check. There would be plenty of time later for blood and pain, this time was meant for something more. As slowly as he moved within Xander's

body, he explored his mouth. He could taste the want in his lover's kiss and it made him ache inside. Xander wanted so desperately to please him, to be good enough. Spike wished he had the words to make him understand that he already was.

"P-Please?" Xander managed to beg in the cracked voice of the mortal boy he had been.

Pulling back, Spike stared down into his mate's face. "This seals it," he said as he thrust into Xander a bit harder. "Together forever. No one will ever separate us. And if they try, they'll die."

"Master..." Xander breathed reverently, as he arched his back. He didn't have to say any more. That single word said it all.

Spike growled and surged forward hard and fast wrenching a gasp from his Childe. He would have to talk to Xander about calling him that at a time like this. Rising back up, Spike lifted Xander's legs again and began to thrust in earnest. Xander's body had loosened up some and he no longer feared injuring his mate.

Xander groaned as Spike took him harder. He wasn't

sure what prompted him to do it, maybe instinct or latent knowledge, but at just the right moment, he exposed his neck to Spike in the ultimate form of submission in the vampire world.

Spike didn't hesitate. He swooped down and sank his fangs in deep. He faintly heard Xander scream as he did so but the blood rushing through his veins drowned out the sound. Nothing mattered at that moment except the body he was pounding into as Xander's sweet blood filled his mouth.

Xander woke up to the feeling of someone licking his neck. The last thing he remembered was cumming at the same time Spike bit into his neck. He remembered sharing the cycle of blood between them vaguely, but that was more a memory of overpowering emotions.

"Welcome back, luv," Spike whispered, staring down into dazed brown eyes.

"Gah," Xander croaked.

"I take it you liked it," Spike laughed. "Wasn't too rough on you, was I?"

"Na huh," Xander shook his head with a goofy smile.

"Good. Plenty of time later to explore the rough and tumble stuff," Spike said glibly. "Bet you're hungry now, though. You want another taste, pet?"

"Can I?" Xander asked, licking his lip. "You remembered to eat more, right? Cause you're eating for two now."

"I've brought along a good supply," Spike replied. He leaned down and turned his head, baring his neck to Xander the same way the boy had done to him just minutes before.

Xander had only ever fed from Spike's wrist before. "I might take too much..."

"I won't let you," Spike assured him. "Drink, Childe. I want to feel your mouth on my throat."

Xander shifted until he laid his mouth on Spike's neck, directed by his Sire's guiding hand in his hair. He was still in game face and bit tentatively into the cool flesh. He made the wounds just big enough so he was nursing on the blood, rather than gulping at it like Spike usually did.

"Yesssss..." Spike hissed. He was still buried inside his Childe and he felt his cock filling again as Xander nursed from his neck. This time he moved slow and steady, rocking back and forth, careful not to dislodge the vampire gently suckling at his neck.

Xander whimpered as he continued to nurse on Spike's blood, but he was also drawn into the constant slide of flesh against flesh. He wasn't sure how long they laid there like that. It could have been minutes, but it felt like an eternity of long drawn out hours. He took only a trickle so he could continue to feed as long as possible as their orgasms came as a calm wave.

"Better stop now, pet," Spike said at last. He didn't want Xander to stop but he was starting to feel a bit peckish. If the lad kept it up he'd seriously weaken him and Spike didn't want that. They might be out in the middle of nowhere but trouble always had a way of finding them. Especially Xander.

Xander whimpered reluctantly and pulled away, but continued to nip and lick Spike's neck. "Tastes different," he mumbled happily.

"Hm? What tastes different?" Spike asked as he slid

reluctantly from his Childe's body.

"Your blood," Xander explained. "It tastes different after you cum. Better."

"Glad you like it. Yours always tastes like ambrosia to me." He lay down beside Xander and pulled the boy against him. "Every vampire tastes different, you know. Angelus, he tastes like some weird mix of spices."

Xander made an upset huffing noise at the mention of Angelus. "I don't owe anything to Peaches, do I?" Xander grumbled, unconsciously adopting Spike's nickname for Angel.

"Nothing he'll ever call you on," Spike hedged. "He's my Sire, luv. I owe him allegiance and so do you. Even when we're enemies I'd never stake him. He knows that. Besides, if the Slayer gives us too much trouble, we'll need someplace to run to. He won't like it, but he won't turn us away either."

"Still don't like it," Xander grumbled again. "I don't like the way he looks at you. And explain to me again how he can be your Sire when Drusilla turned you."

"Don't have to like it, pet. Just have to put up with it. As for Dru, she might have bitten me but it was Angelus' blood that brought me back. He whelped me, much like I'm doing for you. 'Cept he only did it for a few days. He knew Drusilla wasn't stable enough to Sire me herself so he did it for her."

Xander settled his head on top of Spike's chest. "I don't think he'll like it that you chose me."

"Might not, but that doesn't matter. The choice was mine to make. When he hears the why of it he'll think I did the right thing. But even if he doesn't, it doesn't matter. You're mine and nothing is ever going to change that."

"Good," Xander echoed. "So that means Mr. Broody is like my Grand Sire now?"

"Oh Peaches is just going to love that," Spike laughed. "Can't wait until we go visit him for a spell. He'll go stark raving mad trying to put up with the both of us."

"Are you saying I'm difficult?" Xander teased, reaching out and pinching Spike's nipple.

"I'm saying you're a right handful with a wicked sense of

humour. And if there's one thing Angel's definitely a bit short of, it's a sense of humour."

"In that case, maybe a little vacation to LA is in order then," Xander said hesitantly. Whether they got along or not, Angel was Spike's only family that was semi-sane and alive. "It'd be the first time anyone would actually want me to meet the in-laws."

"Tell you what, once we get everything settled we'll go for a visit. You can see L.A. and I can catch up with me Sire. Sound good?"

"I'd think I'd like that," Xander replied. "I just wish... that my family..." Xander took a deep unneeded breath. "Never mind."

"Your family, your true family, will always love you. You've still got Red and that means Tara, too. Dawnie will always love you. The Watcher will come round. The only real worry is the Slayer. She can be a right bitch about some things. 'S why I want to call Angel first. Be best if he knows what's going on ahead of time. That way he can be ready to come down if we need him."

"Are you sure I'm not evil?" Xander mumbled the

question half jokingly against Spike chest. The things he wanted to do to Angel if he so much as touched Spike weren't nice at all.

"No more so than you were before, pet," Spike said cheekily. "Don't let my past with Angel get you riled up. It's over and done with."

"I can do evil," Xander said, lifting his face up and exposing his fangs. The effect was ruined by the smile threatening to take over his face. The entire thing reminded Spike of a kitten hissing and spitting.

"Oh I don't doubt it," Spike humoured him. "But there's no need to where the broody one's concerned. Trust me, pet, he beats himself up over everything he did to me and Dru both. Besides, much as I hate to admit it, we might need the great pouf."

"Yeah, yeah," Xander said, dismissing the topic. In typical Xander fashion he was onto another subject. "My spooky evil vampire face didn't seem to do what I wanted. You said I had to walk the walk and talk the talk. I'm scary, right Spike?"

"Not yet, I'm afraid. Sorry, pet, but it's the truth. You will

be in time, though. A little practice and you'll have 'em all quaking at the sight of you."

Xander moved quickly and was soon straddling Spike's waist, pinning Spike to the bed. "I have a secret... wanna know my secret?"

"Is it a dirty secret?" Spike leered, enjoying the feel of his Childe atop him.

"Maybe... depends on how you look at it," Xander said. He leaned over and pinned Spike's hands over his head. Their faces were so very close when he whispered, "I know how to be bad, Spike. I remember what it's like to hunt. I've been a hyena... a soldier... and you're the one who told me I'm not... wasn't quite human."

"Oh fuck," Spike gasped as Xander's eyes suddenly flickered gold. He felt a thrill of desire run through him at the predatory vibes his Childe was giving off. He would have cum in his pants if he hadn't already done it twice inside his Childe.

"I've killed things too," Xander continued to whisper. "Demons... Monsters... Vampires... almost every time I killed one, I thought about doing the same to

my father... he killed me you know... it wasn't you. I should care that you want to kill him, but I don't. This was the first time he'd laid a hand on me in years... and the only reason he was able to do it now was because he had his friends with him. I wanted to kill him, Spike..."

"You'll have your vengeance. I swear it. If you want to kill him yourself, I can arrange it. Personally, I want him to suffer but that doesn't matter. If you simply want him dead I can have it arranged in a few days. Hell, when I tell him what happened my bloody Sire'll volunteer for the job."

"I don't want him dead just yet," Xander said. "I want to know what I am."

"Fair enough," Spike said. "But after we find out everything important, he dies. If you don't want to do it yourself, Angel will take care of it."

"I've been thinking..." Xander's voice lowered, his eyes nearly glowing. "I've been thinking we shouldn't kill him."

"Why the fuck not?" Spike demanded. The demon in him howled for the blood of the thing that had dared to put

its hands on his mate.

“Because I want him to see what I've become,” Xander purred. “I want him to see that I've become more powerful than him... that I can protect myself. That I am with you and there's nothing he can do about it. I want him to live in torment for a while.”

"Alright," Spike acquiesced unhappily. "But not for too long. I want the bastard dead for what he did to you. Him and his little helpers."

“I want to show you off,” Xander continued. “I might even let you dress me up in that leather you wanted for a trip to meet your new in-laws.”

"Wicked, pet. I like that. They'll be a few conditions. Won't take any chances on you getting hurt, but I do like your plan."

“Can we do it when we get back to Sunnydale?” Xander asked.

"Think we might ought to tell the Slayer and company first," Spike said. "Need to know one way or the other if she's friend or foe."

“Okay, after that. Game plan... hang out here... fuck like bunnies for a few days... tell Buffy the good news and watch her head explode, then fuck with my parents heads.”

"Sounds like a plan to me. I'll break the news to me Sire from here. Think I'll have him meet us in Sunnyhell. I want him there when you see your folks... just in case."

“Maybe I should tell them I've become the new puppet whore to a legion full of vampires,” Xander mused with a snort. “My mother would be jealous.”

"Don't you dare," Spike growled. "You're mine, pet. Mine and mine alone."

For all his noise, Spike was still pinned under Xander. “Of course I am, but I think it’s time I show you you're mine, too. Time to show you I’m worthy to be the consort of the Big Bad.”

Part Five

Xander paced. He couldn't help it. Spike had assured him that Angel wasn't going to try to stake anyone but Xander wasn't so sure. He knew there was a lot of hostility between the two vampires and he was scared for his Sire. He knew he couldn't take Angel in a fight, but he'd make the fucker stake him before he laid a hand on his Sire.

"Stop pacing, you'll wear a hole in your new boots," Spike sighed. "Peaches should be here soon and I want you to stay out of sight for a bit."

"Why?" Xander challenged. "If he's not going to stake anyone then I shouldn't have to hide."

"I didn't exactly tell 'im why he was comin'," Spike admitted. "I just need a little time to smooth it over."

"I don't like this," Xander said. "What if he doesn't believe you and decides to stake you? What then?"

“Two against one, mate,” Spike grinned evilly. “I said you’d be in the shadows, not in Timbuktu.”

"I still don't like it," Xander said as the sound of a car approaching told them Angel had arrived. "But I trust you."

“That’s a good boy,” Spike said intentionally, to annoy Xander a bit. He liked that they could still verbally spar.

"Gonna pat me on the head next?" Xander shot back. He was already moving into the shadows, far enough away that a distracted Angel wouldn't sense him.

“Nah, much rather pat you on the bum,” Spike chuckled darkly.

Xander bit off his reply as the door swung open and Angel strode in. He silently reached down and lifted the crossbow he'd hidden into his hands. He would be ready if the fucker tried anything.

“What am I doing here, William?” Angel demanded, his leather coat swirling behind him. “This had better be important.”

"Nice to see you, too," Spike drawled. "Come in and close the door. We've got some things to discuss, you and I."

"Make it quick. The sooner you spill whatever mess you've gotten us into, the sooner I can get out of here."

"Not a mess, really. Well, could be, but... Okay, just listen to what I've got to say before you get all bent out of shape." Spike paused, trying to decide the best way to proceed. He'd run various scenarios through his head but hadn't settled on one. Finally he decided to just start at the beginning and be done with it. Taking a deep breath, he began again. "Four nights ago Xander's father and a few of his cronies beat him to death."

"Is Buffy okay?" Angel demanded.

"The Slayer's fine," Spike snorted. "In fact, she don't even know yet. Only one that knows is Red and her witch. You see, they beat him and left him for dead. I found him and..."

"And what? You need help getting rid of whatever killed the boy?"

"No, I need help breaking it to the slayer that one of her best chums is now my Childe." There, it was said. Now all he had to do was keep his Sire from freaking over it. "And before you start, he's still got his soul. Apparently that waste of space called his father is a demon of some sort."

"You made a Childe?" Angel roared, changing into game face. "How stupid are you?"

"I didn't have a choice!" Spike shouted back. "He was dying. He was bleeding to death in my arms. What else was I supposed to do? If it had been Buffy would you have let her die? Would you?"

"Don't you dare connect what I had with Buffy with you," Angel snarled. "So you just turned the boy and turned him out on the world?"

"Hardly," Spike snorted, relieved that Angel was only snarling at him. That meant his Sire was willing to listen to him rather than jump to his own conclusions. "Told you he kept his soul, didn't I? He doesn't want to drink from humans. Doesn't want to hurt anybody. That's why he only drinks from me."

"Xander, get out here now," Angel called out. "I can

smell you. Let me take a look at you.”

Xander emerged from the shadows, crossbow still in hand. He kept it at his side, ready to defend his Sire if need be. Spike seemed relaxed though so Xander simply went along with it.

“So this is why you called me here?” Angel snapped, waving his hand at Xander. “You got yourself a new toy and expect me to protect you from the wrath of the Slayer.”

"I'm not his toy, Deadboy," Xander said, unconsciously raising the weapon slightly. "Spike saved my life. He seemed to think you'd be able to help us explain it to our friends so that nobody gets hurt. Guess he was wrong."

“Put your weapon down and stay still,” Angel said as he walked over to Xander and stared at him, sniffing him openly.

At a nod from Spike Xander did as Angel told him. He lowered the weapon and stood rock still as the older vampire moved around him. He itched to move away, to defend himself from someone he'd always considered a threat but he knew better than that. Spike would not be

pleased if his Childe behaved like a coward.

Angel scented Xander deeply and then sighed, "You made him your consort, too."

"Damn right I did," Spike said proudly. "He's mine. All of him. And I didn't force it on him and it's not because I'm his bloody Sire. He wanted it, mate."

"All a pretty grand gesture so you wouldn't be alone," Angel said. "You always were my most needy Childe."

"He did it for me," Xander said. "Because I asked him to. And you should talk. Like you wouldn't jump at the chance to be able to share your life with someone."

"If I share myself with someone, I lose my soul," Angel said, turning away from Xander. "Do you know what conditions are attached to yours?"

"No idea," Xander admitted. "I never lost it. Master says he thinks it's because I'm some sort of demon. All I know is the only person I still want to kill, other than my father, is you. Guess that means I kept my soul, huh?"

"You have your soul, I can tell," Angel dismissed. "And

don't call him Master. Don't you know anything, boy?"

"Why the fuck not?" Xander challenged.

"Do you want him to fuck you right here? Or in front of your friends?" Angel snapped.

"He's got more self control than that," Xander shot back.
"He's not you. He won't fuck me without my consent."

"You're radiating fuck me vibes, fledging," Angel laughed. "There is no consent between Sire and Childe. You'll always give in."

"Look, are you going to help us or not?" Xander asked, growing impatient. "I don't want to fight Buffy, but I won't let her stake Spike."

Angel turned back to Spike, squeezing the bridge of his nose. "You had to pick a difficult Childe, didn't you?"

"Told you, I didn't pick him, mate. If it was up to me I'd have made sure he lived a nice long normal life. But that didn't happen. Look, Angel, I know we've got some bad blood between us, but I need your help." Spike came over to stand in front of his Sire. Very slowly, he leaned

his head to the side, exposing his neck.

Angel reached out and caressed the side of Spike's neck with his fingers and licked his right fang. "You were always my favourite Childe," he whispered.

Xander went completely still as he watched his Sire bare his throat to Angel. He wanted to shout, wanted to grab Spike and shove him away but he was frozen in place. He wasn't sure if he could stand to watch his own Master being fed from but he understood instinctively that there was little he could do about it.

It had been forever since Angel had tasted blood other than animal. And Spike was being so submissive... asking for help and bearing his neck. He could have let Spike die over a century ago when Dru had nearly bled him to the point of no return, but he hadn't. He'd fed the fledgling on his own blood, by default becoming his Sire. Now it was nothing to move closer and slip his fangs oh so easily into the cool flesh for just a taste.

Spike sighed as he felt his Sire's fangs slipping almost gently into his neck. He was surprised when Angel only took a single mouthful of his blood before pulling back. He looked up, concerned that something was wrong, but

saw only acceptance in the other man's eyes. Then the bigger man was tilting his own head to the side, baring his neck to his Childe in a way he hadn't done in a very, very long time.

Spike shivered with anticipation as he moved his head to Angel's neck. He licked at the vein, excited to taste the blood. He punctured the skin, taking several big gulps. He knew he shouldn't take too much as Angel wasn't into taking care of himself properly anymore. The blood was more watered down than he remembered, but still rich and powerful, tinged with age in a way Xander's wasn't.

Xander's eyes flashed gold at the sight of his Sire feeding from another. Still, he didn't move. If this was how it had to be for Angel to help them then he'd endure it. Bitter insecurity washed over him as he wondered if Spike might not want him now that Angel was there. He tried to push it away but years of being the most useless Scooby made that next to impossible.

Finally Spike pulled away, his eyes hooded slightly. "Angelus..." he whispered.

"William..." Angel whispered back. He had missed having

this connection with his most special of Childer. A long, low moan caught his attention and his eyes flashed to his Childe's Childe. Xander still stood where he had been, not moving an inch as the two vampires had drank from each other. He could smell the fear rolling off the boy in waves and his eyes turned amber.

"Go comfort your Childe," Angel said, giving Spike a small push towards Xander.

Spike nodded, still a bit dazed by what had just happened. He'd been pretty sure Angel would help them, for the Slayer's sake if nothing else, but he'd never expected that. That, however, would have to wait for later. His Childe was in pain. He could feel it as he approached the boy. "Xander... pet... what is it?" he asked softly.

Xander shrank away from him. He didn't speak, instead shaking his head in denial. Spike had told him he was his world now. His Sire had whispered of forever and love, now it was all in doubt. His mind screamed that he hadn't been good enough.

"I know you're confused but what happened doesn't change anything," Spike told him as he moved in closer.

"You are still my Childe, still my Consort. Angel will always be my Sire but that doesn't change anything between us."

"I can be better..." Xander whispered. "Please, keep me..." He did the only thing that came to mind. He dropped to his knees and bared his neck to Spike.

"You couldn't possibly be better, pet. You're bloody perfect just the way you are. Oh, I'm keeping you, alright. You're mine now, Xander. That means forever. If you run, I'll follow you and drag you back. You're mine, pet. All mine."

"Why would you want me when your Sire wants you back?"

"He doesn't want me back that way," Spike said as he knelt down beside his Childe. "And even if he did, I'd still choose you. Angel's always going to be my Sire, I told you that. We might drink from one another now and again but he won't touch me any other way. I've taken a Consort now. He knows what that means. You're everything to me, Xander. Everything."

Xander lifted wounded eyes to look at Spike. "Will he

still let me feed from you?"

"He doesn't get a say in that," Spike said. "I'm his Childe, yes, but I'm a Master, too. The rules are a bit different. I obey him out of respect and loyalty. He would never tell me I couldn't feed my Childe. He might make a few suggestions, but that's all they'd be. Please, luv, nothing has changed, I swear it."

"Can I have some now? Please... just a little bit?" Xander begged. He'd come to associate Spike's blood with comfort and security since he'd been turned.

Spike didn't reply. He knew actions would calm his Childe more than words ever could. Grabbing Xander by the arms, he pulled him forward and sank his fangs into the boy's neck. He didn't drink much, just as he hadn't with Angel. Instead, he pulled back then bared his own throat to his Childe.

Xander whimpered, nuzzling his face against Spike's neck. His fang's barely slipped into the vein, letting just a trickle into his mouth. When he wanted to be comforted, Spike would let him nurse slowly on his blood.

"That's it, pet," Spike crooned. "Take all you want."

Xander whimpered again. It was more like necking with blood involved as the wound closed. He wrapped his arms around Spike's waist and clung to him.

"It's okay, I've got you," Spike continued trying to comfort his Childe. He was aware of Angel coming over to them and leaning close to Xander. He wanted to tell him to get away but held his tongue. When it came to handling Childe, Angel was one of the best. After all, he'd managed both Drusilla and himself.

Xander sensed Angel coming closer and clutched at Spike harder, his hands fisting into his leather jacket. Xander's head snapped up, literally baring his teeth and hissed, "Mine!"

"Easy," Angel said, holding up his hands placating. "No one's going to take him from you, especially me. You make my Childe happy. Anything that makes my Childe happy makes me happy as well."

"Mine..." Xander repeated, this time a little less vehemently.

"Yours, Childe," Angel said fondly. "Yours to defend. Yours to obey."

Xander kept licking and nuzzling Spike's neck, watching Angel carefully. "Grand-Sire?"

"Yes?" Angel smiled, his pride in Spike growing even more. His Childe had done well. It would have been a shame to lose this one. He had so much to offer.

"I could taste you..."

"In his blood?" Angel asked, a bit surprised. Normally new Childer weren't able to distinguish such things.

"Yes," Xander nodded. "Now I know you were always part of him. Your taste... it's layered under Spike's taste."

"Just like mine's layered under yours," Spike said. "We're part of each other. No matter how much we might hate each other for a bit, we're still connected."

"I don't want to let you go," Xander said moodily. He'd been fairly stable for a fledgling, only having a fraction of the normal mood swings or even violent outbursts. "I don't want to tell Buffy. I don't want to be handled by

Angel. I just want to run away.”

"If that's really what you want, we'll do it," Spike said. He didn't want to leave Sunnydale, but more importantly, he knew that Xander didn't really want to either. These people were his friends, his family. He didn't want to leave them no matter what he said right now. Still, Spike didn't think he could bring himself to make his Child stay if he said he didn't want to.

“No, it’s not what I really want,” Xander said sullenly. “I think I want you both to stop treating me like a baby.”

"Then stop acting like I'm trying to take away your favourite toy," Angel said, stepping back abruptly. It was time to break Xander out of this mood of his. They had work to do if they were going to keep the Slayer from staking anyone. "Your Sire has pledged himself to you. That should be more than enough."

“He’s my life,” Xander spat back. “And sorry if it’s hard to believe that a man like him would pick me, but it is. Okay, Grandpa?”

"What?" Spike frowned. "You think it's hard to believe I picked you? Xander... mate... in case you hadn't noticed

I've been giving you the eye for a while now. I wouldn't have turned you, but that's just because I wanted you, not some demon wearing your skin. You get what I'm saying, luv?"

"We don't know what's wearing my skin," Xander said, pushing away from Spike and hugging his own body. "Maybe Angel knows, but I don't."

"Then we'll find out," Spike told him. "And just like Angel reclaiming me as his Childe, it won't make a bit of difference. So try to play nice with your Grandpa, okay?"

"Is he gonna bounce me on his knee and give me some candy?" Xander snorted, his eyes sparkling a little.

"How about if I put you over my knee and give you a paddling?" Angel shot back, trying hard not to grin. The image of Xander stretched over his lap as his "Grandpa" gave him a spanking was almost too much.

"Kinky, but I'll save that one for Spike."

"That isn't what I meant," Angel said, blushing at the sudden mental image of a naked Xander spread across his lap for a spanking. Faster than the eye could see, he

slid up next to his Grand-Childe and whispered hotly into his ear. "But it can be arranged."

Xander hissed again. "I belong to my Master!"

"Sire... please..." Spike began but Angel cut him off.

"He's yours, William. I forfeit any Sire's rights, though he will still be under my protection," Angel assured him. He would never lay claim to Xander. It would do too much damage to both Sire and Childe if he dared try it. No, he would content himself with the fact that he had his own Childe back.

Part Six

Angel ended up spending the day in the warehouse with Spike and Xander. He found out that Xander was a good match for his Childe after all. He watched as Xander tempered Spike's wild streak, but was still juvenile enough to sink down to Spike's level. All in all he was

relieved when Willow and Tara arrived. He'd had about all of the Grandpa cracks he could stand. He was seriously reconsidering putting Xander over his knee and there was nothing sexual about it. While it was nice to see the boy had kept the majority of his more human traits, it was also incredibly aggravating.

"Hey Grandpa," Xander called out. "You need to stop hiding in the corner."

"Spike, maybe you should explain to your Childe that just because I gave up Sire's rights does not mean I can't still turn him over my knee," Angel shot back. Enough was enough. If the boy wasn't smart enough to quit when he was ahead then he'd get a well deserved lesson or two in not irritating vampires two hundred years older than him.

"He's toned it down for you, Peaches," Spike laughed. "This is how he acts when he kinda respects you."

"He might want to work on that," Angel grumbled. A knock at the door kept him from saying anything else. All three vampires tensed then sensed that it was only Willow and her mate. Xander had called them first,

wanting their support before Buffy and Giles arrived.

"I like 'em cheeky," Spike shrugged and walked over to the door to let their first "guests" in.

"Um, hey, Spike," Willow said nervously as she pulled Tara inside. She started when she saw Angel but recovered quickly. "Oh, Angel. I didn't know you were gonna be here. Does, um, does Buffy know?"

"No, she doesn't know yet," Angel shook his head.

"Oh, okay," Willow said. "Xander... how're you doing?" She saw her best friend standing over near the far wall. He was fidgeting nervously from foot to foot and Willow longed to simply pull him into a hug. Coming to a decision, she squeezed Tara's hand then dropped it and crossed the room to her friend.

Xander stood there stiffly until Willow pulled him into a bear hug and he loosened up. "I missed you, Wills."

"I missed you, too. I've been so worried. Are things going okay?" She held him as she spoke, trying to get used to this new version of him. He was colder and she couldn't feel his heart beating like she would have been able to

when he was alive.

“Other than having Spike and Gramps each fussing over me? Nah. We’re just one big Vampiric Brady Bunch.”

"Gramps?" Willow giggled, shooting a sideways glance at Angel. "Well, I'm glad you're okay. I take it you're ready to let Buffy and Giles in on what's happened?"

“Ready? Hell no, but there’s no turning back.”

Angel barked a laugh at the boy's choice of words. Shaking his head he led Tara into the living room and went to get something for everyone to drink. This would be easier if it appeared to merely be a social gathering. The last thing they needed was to get Buffy's Slayer instincts kicking in before the meeting even began.

“We can get you some more...” Willow lowered her voice. “...human blood. Especially, with three of you to feed now.”

"It's okay, Willow. You can say it out loud," Angel said. "I don't really plan on staying long, though. I just want to make sure things don't get out of hand. Buffy has a tendency to stake first and listen to reason later. I don't

want to see my Childe dusted for trying to save her friend's life."

"They were only a few minutes behind us when we called," Willow warned. "We brought a hex that will incapacitate her for a bit if she gets too out of hand."

"You'd do that?" Xander asked, stunned. He knew Willow and Tara were on his side but he didn't think they'd go so far as to try to hex the Slayer.

"I won't let her hurt you," Willow said seriously.

"Me either," Tara echoed quietly.

"Thank you," Xander replied, then looked over at Tara. "Both of you. I don't think I could do this without you. Angel, look, I know I've been a bit of a prick but... thanks. You didn't have to stay and help us with this. I know how hard it is for you to be around Buffy. I just... thanks, Grandpa."

"Are you going to keep calling me that?" Angel sighed.

"Thought you'd prefer it to the Great Pouf," Xander grinned, the comment making Willow and Tara both

giggle. That seemed to relax them all a bit and they had just managed to get settled on the various furniture when the knock came.

“You’re just as much of a handful as William,” Angel grumbled affectionately. “And I wouldn't have it any other way.”

Xander took a deep breath, trying to calm himself as Angel went to answer the door this time. They had decided it would be best for Buffy to see him and get it over with before they told her. It would also serve to throw her slightly off balance, something that could be used in their favour if things went wonky.

“Angel?” Buffy was shocked to see her ex-lover here in Sunnydale and even more surprised to see him in Spike’s warehouse.

"Buffy. It's good to see you. Please, come in," Angel said cordially, holding the door open for the Slayer and her Watcher. "Giles, it was good of you to come. Thank you."

“You’re being polite,” Buffy said warningly. “It can’t be good if you’re being polite.”

"Actually, what we have to tell you is both good and bad," Angel admitted. "Please, let's all sit down and then we can start at the beginning."

"What did Spike do now?" Buffy demanded. She refused to sit down, instead planting her feet in a defensive stance.

"Spike didn't do anything wrong," Angel said in his Childe's defence. He bristled at the way the Slayer hurried to blame him. Just because his Childe was a demon didn't mean everything that went wrong in Sunnydale was his fault.

"We're in Spike's place, you're here, and my Slayer senses are pinging," Buffy shot back.

"That doesn't mean that whatever happened is Spike's doing," Angel argued. "Look, let's sit down and I'll start at the beginning. When I'm done you can ask all the questions you want, okay?"

Xander made the mistake of shifting uncomfortably in Buffy's peripheral vision. She didn't see her friend Xander, only sensed an unfamiliar vampire. She pulled out a stake and backed away from Angel, heading

towards Xander.

"Buffy, don't," Angel said, grabbing her arm. "Let me explain. It's not what you think."

"What's hiding over there?" Buffy shouted. "Something's hinkey here."

"Xander, I think you better come out where she can see you," Angel said, still holding her arm. If she tried to move on either his Childe or his Grand-Childe, he'd be ready.

Xander moved out of the shadows, but Spike was standing in front of him. "That is not Xander!" Buffy hissed.

"Yes, it is," Spike said softly but firmly. "And the sooner you get over it the less traumatized you'll leave him. This isn't easy for him, you know. He's been scared to death to tell you. Now be a good bint and listen to the pouf while he explains what's happened."

"I'm going to give you five seconds to give me a reason not to stake that thing right now!" Buffy's hand was flexing on the stake.

"Try to touch my Childe, Slayer, and I'll rip your heart out, chip be damned," Spike growled, his face morphing into its demon visage. He'd known this was a bad idea. He should have simply taken his Childe and gotten the hell away from the bloody Slayer. Angel would have taken them in and he would have kept his yap shut to boot.

"Five... four... three..." Buffy started to count down.

"He still has his soul," Willow said quickly as she and Tara readied their spell. She didn't want to use it against her friend but she wasn't going to sit there and watch Xander, or Spike for that matter, get hurt.

Buffy lowered her stake a little. "Explain, like now!"

"I don't really have an explanation," Willow admitted. "But Xander didn't lose his soul when Spike turned him. He's still our Xander, Buffy. You have to believe me."

"Buffy, we need to hear them out," Giles pleaded with his Slayer.

"Giles is right," Angel said, tightening his grip on her arm just enough to refocus her attention on him. "Now unless

you plan on staking all three of us, I suggest you put the stake down and listen to what I have to say."

Buffy decided it was time to turn her rage on Angel. "Since when do you take his side over mine?"

"How about since he saved your friend's life?" Angel shot back, his anger getting the better of him. "If Spike hadn't turned him, you'd be putting flowers on his grave right now. You should be thanking him for what he did, not threatening him. Especially when you know he can't do anything to defend himself against you."

"Whoa, back the truck up. If Spike didn't kill Xander, then who did?" Buffy demanded.

"My father," Xander said softly. The memories were still painfully fresh. He could remember every blow, every kick, every hateful taunt they had hurled at him. "Him and a couple of his friends. They thought I was gay so they beat the crap out of me and dumped me in the alley behind my house. That's where Spike found me."

"Okay, that's settled then," Buffy switched her rage in an instant to the new target. "When are we going to kill him?"

"You're not," Spike said. "Oh don't worry, Slayer. He will die. But it'll be when Xander's ready for him to and it'll be my way."

"So, let me get this straight," Buffy said. She flipped the stake in her hand and put it back into her pants. "Xander's dad tried to kill him, but Spike found him first and now his soul is somehow superglued to his body."

"Apparently he never lost it," Angel explained, relaxing a bit now that there was no immediate danger of staking taking place. "Spike said his blood didn't taste entirely human. I'm thinking his father at least might be some sort of demon. Maybe his mother, too. We don't know yet."

"A demon?" Giles gasped. He took his glasses off and ran his hands off through his hair. "It would have to be a demon that could easily pass for human."

"Like there aren't a lot of those," Willow said. "But now that we all know we can try to figure this out. I mean, it can't be that hard, right? And, the best thing is, Xander isn't dead."

"Undead," Xander corrected. "And don't you think my parents would have told me if our family was demons? Maybe I'm adopted?"

"Maybe your mother doesn't know," Angel offered. "In any event, we'll figure it out. I'll get my people in LA working on it, too. Don't worry, Childe, we'll get to the bottom of it then that waste of space you call a father will pay."

"I want to know that there's no way I can lose my soul," Xander said. "I want everyone's promise... that if something like that happens... that you'll..."

"Spell you so fast it'd make your head spin," Willow said vehemently. "If I can stick Angel's soul back in him I can damn sure stick yours back in, too. So don't you say a word about promising to stake you. You hear me, Xander Harris?"

"Okay," Xander mumbled. "So we're okay about this then? I'm still a Scooby?"

"Xander! Of course you are," Buffy said. "I mean, it's a little weird, you being a vampire and all now, but I'll deal."

I'd rather have you a vampire than not have you at all."

"And... and you know Spike-and-I-are-together-right?" Xander added quickly.

"Together as in together?" Buffy frowned. She understood that Spike was his Sire, then realization dawned. She remembered all the vampire lore she'd read. She remembered all the things Master vampires tended to do to their Childer. She whirled on Spike, rage flashing in her eyes as her hand reached down for her stake.

"He kinda married me," Xander said with a loud nervous laugh.

Buffy turned back to Xander, more confused than ever. "Look, Xander, we'll figure this out. But in the meantime, you don't have to stay here with him. We're grateful for what he did and all but that does not give him the right to... to use you. I know what goes on between vampires and their Childer."

"I'm not just his Childe, I'm his Consort," Xander blurted out.

"Xander, get your things," Buffy commanded. "You're coming home with me. You can stay with me until we figure something out. You don't have to be Spike's Consort. He can't make you."

"He could make me," Xander said, stepping closer to Spike. He'd never been afraid of Buffy before, but now that he was a vampire, there was undeniable "sense" of her danger. "But he hasn't. I want to be his consort."

"Buffy, he's telling the truth," Angel broke in. "Spike might be able to make him do things as his Childe, but a Consort isn't something that can be forced. Xander has to want it as much as Spike does. I know this is a lot for you to take in, but Spike isn't hurting Xander."

Spike's arm had slipped around Xander's waist now, pulling him closer. "You're a right bitch for even thinking that, Slayer."

"Oh please, like you haven't ever forced one of your minions to service you," Buffy sniped.

"Xander ain't a minion!" Spike growled. He started to push Xander further away from the gathering. "That's it! I want you all out of here. Peaches, Witches, you're

welcome back, but not her.”

"Spike, calm down," Angel said, the authority in his voice clear to everyone. "Buffy's just trying to understand and she didn't say he was. She just pointed out the fact that you've never been too careful of how you handled your minions in the past. She doesn't want to see that happen to one of her best friends. I'd think you'd be happy the Slayer is so worried about him. It means she'll protect him if there ever comes a time when you can't."

“You remember what kind of insult it is to be called someone’s minion?” Spike challenged. A minion was something disposable, a piece of property. Xander was anything but that.

"I do, but she doesn't. To her, it's basically the same thing. She never meant to insult your Childe. She wouldn't do that to him."

Spike knew Angel was handling him again. His Sire had been doing that since he’d claimed him from Dru. Now he was falling into the bad... okay, maybe not so bad pattern of handling both him and Xander. In the age old struggle between any parent and child, no matter how old Spike got, Angel would always think of him as his

Childe. "I still don't want her around my Childe. She wanted to take him away from me."

"She only wanted to protect him," Angel countered. "Spike, come on, do you truly think I'd stand by and let her take your Childe from you?"

"No," Spike mumbled. The truth was he knew both he and Xander were vulnerable. He couldn't defend himself against humans and Xander wasn't at full strength yet. "What, you gonna stay and protect us?" He said it sarcastically, but really he wanted it.

"Actually, I thought you could come back to LA with me," Angel replied. "You'd have more privacy and I could help you teach him the things he needs to know." Angel hoped Spike wouldn't balk at the offer. As much as he needed to get back to LA he wasn't going to leave his Childe here alone. If the slayer took it in her head that Spike was a danger to Xander she'd stake him in a heartbeat. The very last thing he wanted was to have to kill Buffy over his Childe.

Now that idea had some merit. It was never a good idea to hang around your childhood home after you'd been turned. People you used to know noticed things and it

was just bloody depressing. "Maybe we'll come because you asked so nicely," Spike said, trying to sound casual. "But after we take care of a little business."

"Spike, you can't hurt humans," Angel reminded him, a rather Angelus-like grin spreading over his face. "So you'll have to tell me exactly what you want done to them."

"Thanks, Gramps," Xander echoed, still held behind Spike.

Part Seven

Xander waited until the white car pulled away. He knew his mother would be gone for most of the night. That gave them several hours to do what they came here for. They hadn't had any luck in finding out what type of demon Xander's father was. Spike, in his infinite patience, had gotten tired of waiting. So tonight, Xander, Spike and Angel were paying dear old dad a visit.

"Tell me again why I can go in without an invitation?" Xander asked.

"Because it's your house," Spike explained. "If you'd still been just living with your parents then you couldn't have,

but you've been paying him rent for the basement. That makes it yours, not his. Understand?"

"Okay," Xander nodded, accepting the explanation. "He should have drunken himself into a pretty good stupor by now."

"Don't let him fool you," Angel cautioned. "Some demons can handle their liquor better than you think."

"I'm used to pussy footing around him," Xander dismissed. "Been doing it for as long as I can remember."

"Alright, but watch yourself," Angel nodded. This was the tricky part. They needed to stay in the shadows until Xander had the door open for them. They couldn't risk being seen entering the house. Not with what they planned to do.

"Yes, Grandpa," Xander sighed and rolled his eyes. He placed a quick kiss on Spike's lips and took off for the door.

Spike growled as he watched his Childe move through the night. Xander was certainly a sight to behold. He was sleek and fast, darting from shadow to shadow just like

they'd taught him. Still, he didn't like his Childe being so far away from him, especially here.

Angel placed a comforting hand on Spike's shoulder. "He's beautiful."

"He is, isn't he?" Spike replied. It was true. Since his turning, Xander had blossomed. Gone was the geeky boy and in his place was a stunning man. Spike had been both surprised and pleased by the changes taking place.

"He'll be a Master some day," Angel predicted. "But it will go fine now. He's strong."

"Sire... you ever feel like this with me?" Spike asked softly. Xander was almost there. In another minute it would be time for them to move in.

"All the time, William," Angel whispered. "All the time."

"Sire..." Spike sighed, leaning into the other vampire slightly. He longed to reach out to Angel the way he used to but he didn't. Xander wouldn't understand and Spike wasn't going to hurt him. "I wish I could give you more."

"I let go of you a long time ago," Angel said. "I lost that

right. The boy's in."

Spike shifted to game face in an instant and he and his Sire streaked across the night toward the house. They would definitely continue this conversation later but there were other matters to attend to now. They stopped when they reached the barrier of the door. Both men grinned as Xander smiled and invited them inside.

"See, piece of cake," Xander whispered. "I told you I could do it."

"Never doubted you for a second, luv," Spike said. He pulled Xander close and kissed him on the mouth. He kept it brief, but he needed to taste his boy's mouth before they began. "Where do you think he is?"

"He probably made it as far as the couch," Xander predicted. "That's on a good night. It was always better when he passed out early and couldn't come looking for me or mom."

"He hurt your mum, did he?" Spike asked, his anger rising. He didn't care for blokes who beat on their women. He was going to enjoy making this one pay.

“Yeah, he did,” Xander said. “Dad always said he wished I was a girl, not that that ever stopped him from hitting me, but I think... if I’d been a girl he would've... you know... been too interested in me.”

Spike felt sick. He stared at Xander hard. "Xander, pet, I want you to tell me the truth now. Has that beast ever... touched you?"

“He never raped me,” Xander mumbled, looking away.

"You don't sound too convincing there, pet," Spike said, trying to keep his tone light. Inside he was seething. The bastard might not have raped the boy physically, but he'd done just as much damage otherwise. Oh, he was going to enjoy making this one suffer.

“I was a mistake, you know,” Xander said. “My parents never wanted kids in the first place, but they had me. My dad said I was a waste of space. Sometimes he’d touch me... tell me I was too pretty for a boy...”

A low, deep growl startled both Spike and Xander and they turned to see Angel, in full game-face, growling menacingly. "Spike, we're gonna rip his nuts off and feed 'em to him," he vowed. Child molesters made him

physically ill and to know that his own Grand-Childe had been abused was enough to make him want to rip someone apart.

“Shud-dup!” a slurred voice came in response to Angel’s outburst, followed by the sound of an empty liquor bottle crashing against the wall.

"Look, guys, you need to crank it down a notch," Xander whispered, grabbing onto both men to keep them from charging into the other room and killing his father on the spot. "We still need information from him. After we get what we came for, he's all yours. Okay?"

“He doesn't look too dangerous to me,” Spike growled. Sure Xander’s father was a big man, but he also had a big beer gut, which would make him slow. As it was, he was sprawled out on the couch, barely conscious.

"Don't let him fool you," Xander cautioned, just as Angel had done earlier. "He's fast and mean and he's got no problem beating his own son to death."

“The game plan is you two let me go in there and subdue him,” Angel said.

"Alright, but watch your back, Grampa," Xander said. He grabbed Spike's hand and squeezed it. This was the part of the plan he liked the least. They didn't want to take a chance on Spike's chip going off if Xander's dad did turn out to be human. Spike had refused to let Xander take part in subduing the man so that left Angel. Xander didn't like it but he'd been out-voted.

Angel strode silently to the couch and pulled out a sword from his leather duster. There were some things that he still preferred in his arsenal and a good sword in his hand was one of them. With deadly accuracy, he had the sword pointed at Harris's throat.

"Go away," Harris grunted.

"Not gonna happen," Angel growled. He dropped the sword and swooped in to grab Xander's father by the throat. He wanted to simply rip the fucker's head off but he held back. Xander wanted information and Angel was going to get it for him. Lifting the man off the couch, Angel threw him across the room into the far wall, smiling when the man crashed into it and slid to the floor.

What Angel didn't expect was for the big man to grunt and get up unsteadily, only to shake himself off. "What's this?" he shouted, sniffing the air. "A mother fucking vampire?"

"Actually, it's three," Xander said as he stepped out of the shadows. "You really should have killed me before dumping me in that alley. You never know what might come along in Sunnydale."

"I thought I killed you boy," Harris laughed, his belly jiggling grotesquely. "Guess your blood sucking boyfriend finally decided to turn you, huh?"

"You got that right, mate," Spike said as he stepped into the room as well. He could smell the demon-scent coming off of Xander's father now and he ached to get in on the fight. "And now it's payback time."

"For what?" Harris snarled. "For getting rid of what's mine? I have every right to dispose of my property."

"Your son isn't your property," Angel snarled.

"Maybe not under human law, but you've probably figured out we're not quite human," Harris laughed. "His

mother belongs to me along with any children she produces. Her father gave her to me. The boy belongs to me until he turns twenty one. My brothers and I decided to dispose of him before he reached maturity. He was judged unworthy to join the brotherhood. It's the law of our kind."

"And just what kind is that?" Spike asked. He had a pretty good idea from what the bastard had said but he wanted to make sure. After that, he and Angel could cheerfully kill the fucker then go after his "brothers".

"I'm a Purson demon," Harris laughed. "Descended from the great line of Purson, Twentieth Spirit listed in the Goetia."

Angel and Spike glanced at each other. This was more serious than they'd thought. Xander's father wasn't just a run of the mill demon. A Purson wasn't something to tangle with. Still, the odds were three against one. As long as the "brothers" didn't show up.

"Do you really think you can take me on?" Harris laughed. "I might not have been gifted with the sight or ability to find treasure like my brothers, but that doesn't mean I'm powerless. I might have to live in squalor and

be married to a useless bitch who births a fag, but I always loved the aerial powers!”

Just as Harris finished speaking, he started to float off the floor. Spike had heard enough. They knew what the thing was and even more importantly, which powers Xander was likely to inherit from it. Now it was time for it to die. Launching himself at it, Spike collided with it in mid air, sending them both crashing to the ground. He wanted to rip the thing's heart out with his bare hands and feast on it.

As Spike and Harris were rolling around, Harris continued to taunt him, “You’re the reason I killed my own spawn! We could smell you on him!”

"News flash for you, Daddy-dearest, we weren't fucking then," Spike said as he slashed at Harris with his teeth.

“You made my spawn unclean... tainted!” Harris shouted, backhanding Spike.

Angel watched his Childe reel from the blow and dove into the fray. He slammed into Harris, knocking him into the wall once more. While staying with Spike and Xander he'd gone back to drinking human blood, albeit from a

bag. In any case, he was stronger and faster than he'd been in a long time.

Together, Spike and Angel were able to wrestle Harris into submission after a drawn out battle where most of the first floor of the house was destroyed. Angel was about to skewer him on the sword when Xander called out, "Stop! Don't kill him now!"

"Why the bloody hell not?" Spike asked angrily. He wanted this fucker to die. He wanted to bathe in his fucking blood. He wanted to stand there and watch as the light went out of his eyes for good.

"I need to know I can't lose my soul" Xander cried out. "He has to know!"

"What? Xander, no," Angel said. "You can't, trust me. I know a thing or two about Purson demons. You can't lose your soul, I promise."

"Then just one question..." Xander nodded, shaking. "Why... why wasn't I good enough? Why didn't you love me?"

"Listen to yourself," the demon roared. "You're fucking

pathetic. Chasing after the fucking Slayer. Running around killing demons. The brothers wanted to eat your heart but I told them not to taint themselves."

Xander winced openly. "What would it have taken for you to love me?"

"I'm a demon, you stupid piece of shit. I don't love anything. By the Gods, I should have drowned you when you were born."

"But... but, I'm a demon," Xander said the words for the first time. "And I loved you. So I know you're lying."

Xander turned to Angel who seemed to know the most about demons. "Some demons live just like humans... among humans, with families and such... and they can love, but not Purson demons. You must have a little human heritage somewhere."

"Hey, I'd have known if he was pure demon," Spike said, the taste of his Childe's blood easy to recall. "He wasn't. So either this git's lying or his mom ain't a hundred percent demon. Either way, he's full of shit."

"His mother was a half-breed," Harris spat. "That's why I

bought her for so cheap. A cheap fuck. Didn't think I'd waste my one chance to spawn on him, though."

"You bought her?" Xander repeated, incredulity warring with anger in his voice. How dare this bastard talk about his mother like this? He was really going to enjoy watching Spike and Angel kill him.

"It's how it works with our kind," Harris laughed. "We can only have one spawn. I thought you'd had half a chance when you hooked up with that hot piece of ass, the Vengeance demoness. But instead you like being the piece of ass. If you're gonna kill me, get it over with so I don't have spend another second looking at this waste of space!"

"Not a problem, mate," Spike hissed. He turned to Xander, smiling evilly. "You want to do the honours, pet? Or would you rather let Grandpa do it?"

"I... I don't think I can," Xander faltered, backing up a bit. "I always wanted to... every time he hit me or mom... or yelled at me, but I can't... I'm sorry, Sire... I just don't want to become like him."

"You could never become like him," Spike assured him.

"But how about if we let Peaches here have him. He's chomping at the bit to rip his guts out. You can watch what happens when somebody threatens one of your Grand-Sire's Childer."

"Do I have to watch?" Xander begged. Part of him wanted to... part of him wanted to kill his father, but that was the part he was afraid of. He was afraid of the demon he knew he was and apparently always had been. The other part of him just wanted Spike to take him away.

"Yes, you do," Angel said. "You're not like him. Just the fact that you don't want to dance in his blood is enough to prove that. But you need to see this. You need to know that when something is done to you it will be avenged."

Xander knew this was part of the obey element of being a Childe that Angel had been trying to teach him about. He didn't want to watch, but he would because he'd been told to.

Angel was pleased that the boy had obeyed him. He could see the slight tremor running through him and decided to make this fast. He didn't want to. He wanted

to make the fucker sorry he'd ever been born. He contented himself with the knowledge that he could take his time on the "brothers". He'd just make sure Xander wasn't there for those. With one swift move, he grabbed the thing's head and broke its neck. He didn't even bother to feed, not wanting even a taste of the repugnant thing's blood.

When Spike and Angel turned, they were both wearing self-satisfied grin on their faces. Angel might have been good at handling Childer, but he had never raised a Childe with a soul before and one still not quite a man yet. Xander was frozen to a spot, eyes distant as he looked at his dead father.

"Xander... pet... you okay?" Spike asked, alarmed by the stillness of his Childe. He hadn't expected Xander to react like this. Sure, he hadn't expected him to jump up and down over the bastard's death but he hadn't expected this either.

It took a second for Xander to respond, twitching a little. "M'fine," he mumbled.

"Come on, luv. Let's get out of here. Nothing more for you here anyway," Spike said as he grabbed the boy and

pulled him toward the back door.

“W-We can’t leave him like that,” Xander said, shaking his head. “My mom...”

"I'll take care of it," Angel said. He wasn't looking forward to disposing of the body alone but Spike needed to get his Childe out of there before he fell apart completely. He hadn't expected his father's death to bother Xander so much. If he had, he would never have made him stay to watch it.

“What about my mom?” Xander insisted. “She doesn't have a job. She even has to wait for permission to eat... almost to breath...”

"I'll take care of it," Angel said again. "There are places she can go, people who will help her. She might even be able to return to her family now that your father is out of the picture. And if she can't, I'll see to it that she's taken care of."

“He’s really dead,” Xander said. His hand tightened on Spike’s grasp. “I killed him.”

"You didn't kill him, pet," Spike tried to assure him. "Your

Grand-Sire took care of that."

"Spike, can you take me away now?" Xander asked in a broken voice.

"Of course, luv," Spike said at once. "Angel can find his own way home when he's done here." He led Xander outside, making sure no one was around to see them exit the house. They kept to the shadows again, Spike not wanting to risk running into anyone with Xander acting so out of it. He breathed a sigh of relief when they made it back home without incident.

"I suppose it's pretty much a right of passage to off your parents when you're turned," Xander laughed in a rather scary tone. "Guess I'm there already."

"Not always," Spike said. He sat Xander down in the kitchen and went about making some hot chocolate. It was his favourite comfort food, even better than blood sometimes. "I mean, I turned my mum but not because I wanted to hurt her. I was just trying to make her better... give her eternity."

"Spike... Sire?" Xander asked in a very serious tone.

"What is it?" Spike asked, steeling himself for whatever Xander was about to ask.

"Can I have a sip of hot chocolate?"

Spike frowned at Xander slightly but set the steaming [mug](#) of chocolate in front of him all the same. "I was making two," he said, letting Xander know that this had been meant for him as well.

"You're going to let me have some?" Xander asked hesitantly. "It's not your blood."

Spike understood then and smiled at his Childe. "Yeah, you can have some. Have as much as you want. It tastes good and you always did love your chocolate. I don't mind if you have this. It can't sustain you. The only thing that can do that is blood."

Xander's eyes lit up and he dipped his finger into the foam, licking it off slowly. "Man, I have missed sugar. I mean, your blood... well, there's nothing that can compare to your blood. But I just want to try fanging out on a Twinkie to see if I can drain it."

"That, pet, is disgusting," Spike laughed. "But you can

have all the Twinkies you want if it'll make you happy."

"What?" Xander said between a noisy slurp. He was trying everything to forget the image of his father's dead body. Nagging Spike always helped. "This coming from the walking ashtray."

"Ha ha," Spike said. He made a mental note to cut down on the smokes. He knew the boy didn't care for them much. He made another mental note to pick up some junk food the next time they were out. A sugar-laden Xander was a happy Xander, after all.

"Do you ever feel guilt?" Xander suddenly asked out of the blue.

"Yeah, sometimes," Spike shrugged. "Don't tell the pouf I said that, though. But yeah, I do. Felt right bad about what I did to my mum. Still do sometimes. Why?"

"No reason," Xander said quickly. "And this Sire's right thing... would it apply to Dru, too?"

"How do you mean?" Spike asked.

"I don't know what it is exactly," Xander admitted. "But I

heard you and Angel talk about it. I know it means Sires have some sorta claim over their Childer."

"Yeah, they do. A Sire owns his Childer body and soul. And his Childer's Childer, too. Means they can bloody well do what they want with you when they want it. Angel said he'd forfeit his rights with you. I'm not explainin' this very well, pet."

"I know... they'd get a taste of the merchandise," Xander murmured. "But, could Dru... would she..."

"Dru ain't my Sire," Spike said. "She drained me, but Angelus is the one that Sired me. She's got no claim on you. Tell me the truth now, pet. You just worried about Dru or about what Angel might try to claim?"

"He killed for you," Xander admitted miserably. "He killed for us. I don't know what to think of him. He looks at me."

"The poof's always had good taste in men," Spike said. "He may be a bit of a pillock but he's loyal. He'll protect his family to the death. That's why he never staked Dru. Couldn't bring himself to do it no matter how evil she was. Same with me. Anyway, you don't have to worry

about him. He might look but that's all he'll do unless you tell him otherwise."

"And I won't tell him," Xander said. "I just want to know how to handle it if we're going to LA... which is sounding better and better."

"He's your Grand-Sire. Normally, you'd show him respect and defer to him as you would me. We'd both probably end up warming his bed if he hadn't relinquished his rights. He'll fight to the death for you and you'd be expected to do the same for him. You're family now."

"So I'm your bed warmer, huh?" Xander tried to make it sound seductive. The truth was he didn't feel all that much like sex. He just wanted to be held, but Spike always held him after sex.

"Well, you would be if you were actually warm," Spike joked. "Look, pet, don't know about you but I'm knackered. What say we catch a bit of kip before His Broodiness returns?"

"Do you think he'll be back soon?" Xander asked. He wanted Angel there for extra protection. If Spike was tired, he'd let his Sire sleep and stay up to keep watch.

"He won't be long. Don't worry, though, the door's bolted good and tight. Nothing can get in here unless we let it," Spike told him. "Come on, let's lay down for a bit. Wanna hold you for awhile."

"You can sleep," Xander said, letting Spike pull him off the chair, even as he yawned. He didn't think that vampires yawned, but he didn't care. "I'll keep watch."

"Not gonna happen, pet," Spike said. "I wanna lay in our bed and hold you and watch you sleep for a little while. You're not gonna deny your Sire what he wants now are you?"

"No," Xander admitted. Spike pulled him over to the big bed and began to undress him. "But I could stay awake if I wanted."

"I know you could, but I don't want you to. Now be a good Childe and do what your Sire says." He finished undressing Xander down to his boxers and put him in bed. Spike slid in beside him and arranged the younger man next to him with Xander's head on his shoulder.

"I'm a demon," Xander mumbled, already half

asleep. "That means I'm all kinds of bad."

"You always were, luv. Just didn't know it," Spike said.
"Now close your eyes and rest."

"Grrr..." Xander mock growled before slipping off into a deep sleep.

Angel slipped into the warehouse and crept toward the bedroom. He could tell Spike and Xander were in there. He could also tell that while Spike was awake, Xander was sound asleep. That was probably for the best. The boy had had a hard day.

"So it's done?" Spike asked.

"Yeah," Angel said as he quietly pulled a chair up to Spike's side of the bed. "I did what I could for the living room but it was still pretty trashed. The body's taken care of, though. How's he holding up?"

Spike smoothed over Xander's hair and checked to make sure he was asleep before he spoke. "He's steadier than most fledglings and considering we just killed his father in front of him... I think that was mistake."

"I know. I'm sorry. I thought it might help for him to see his tormenter being paid back. I should have known it would be too much. He's a sensitive soul. He takes everything to heart." As Angel spoke he carefully reached out and ran a gentle hand over Xander's shoulder. He'd been on edge since Spike and Xander had left the Harris house. Now that he knew his Childer were safe, he could finally relax.

"Sometimes I forget he has a soul," Spike admitted. "We can't be too careful with him. He's more human than he is vampire."

"We'll be careful," Angel whispered. He would make sure of that. Xander deserved that care after everything he'd lived through. How many times had this man-boy saved Buffy? How many times had he helped save the world? And in all that time Angel seriously doubted if anyone had ever shown him the care Spike was now.

"Sire?" Spike's tone was serious, if not a little uncertain. "The boy scares me."

"How so?" Angel asked. He could hear the worry in Spike's voice and it pulled at him. In the short time they'd been reunited their bond had grown immeasurably.

While it felt good to be so connected to his Childe, it was also a bit disconcerting. When his Childe was troubled, so was he.

"I've made minions," Spike dismissed them with a wave of his hand. "They were nothing. Never had a Childe before. He relies on me for everything and that scares the shit out of me. All that responsibility..."

"You'll be fine," Angel smiled. "Just the fact that you're worried about what kind of Sire you'll make tells me that. It won't all be moonlight and roses, but you'll get by. And I'll help you both any way I can."

"I can't protect him properly, you know," Spike admitted his worst fear.

"Then we'll teach him to protect himself and if the time ever comes, I'll protect him for you. Spike... you won't always have that chip in your head. We'll get it out, Childe. I promise."

"Don't lie to me, Angel," Spike hissed softly. "I know that if I got it out you'd stake me. I'm evil."

"I would never stake you," Angel vowed. "Never. You're

not as evil as you think, Spike. If you were, you'd be using Xander to get back at Buffy and her friends for every rotten thing they've ever done to you."

"You used to hate that," Spike whispered. He turned his own head away, kissing the top of Xander's head softly. In a way, Xander reminded him of the way he used to be, only his Childe was much, much stronger than he'd ever been at the same age. "That's why I became Spike. Angelus hated William's weakness."

"I'm sorry," Angel said, looking away. "I know nothing can ever make up for the things I did to you."

"It made me the bloke I am today," Spike tried to shrug it off. "William wouldn't have lasted very long."

"No, I suppose he wouldn't have," Angel agreed. Soft, gentle William would never have lasted in their world. Spike, however, was made for it and Xander would learn from him.

"I don't want him to change... to have to grow up anymore than he has," Spike almost sulked.

"There's no way to stop that, Spike. But we can try to

make sure he doesn't grow up too fast. Besides, I think Xander will always be a kid at heart."

"I don't like the way you look at me when you say that," Spike huffed a little.

"You're my Childe," was all the explanation Angel gave. Inside he was nearly laughing. Spike couldn't have chosen a better Childe if he'd tried. They both acted so immature they'd keep each other amused for decades.

"Just for that I think you should have to tuck us in," Spike grinned. Behind the cheeky bravado was the truth that he wanted Angel close.

Angel looked at his Childe, surprised by the suggestion. He saw something in Spike's eyes and felt the bond between them pull a little tighter. "Slide over, boy," he said as he got up and slipped off his coat and shoes.

"Oy, you don't still snore do you?" Spike put up a token protest, but still was moving Xander over inch by inch.

"I never snored," Angel groused as he slid in beside Spike and Xander. He grabbed the blanket at the foot of the bed and covered them up then rolled over until he was

pressed up against his Childe. "Go to sleep, Spike. We'll deal with everything else when we get up."

"Should start calling you Snugglebunny now," Spike quipped, but it had no edge. He felt safe now pressed between Xander and Angel. It wasn't sexual, well no more than the ever present sexual tension between Sire and Childe.

"Sleep," Angel said again. "That is an improvement over a few of the things you call me, though."

"Night, Peaches."

Angel bit back an angry retort and merely pulled his Childe a bit closer. "Goodnight, Will," he whispered, closing his eyes.

Part Eight

Xander was pulled into consciousness slowly. He could feel a hand cupping his ass. That was normal, but something just wasn't right. The hand was a little bigger than he remembered. Slowly, he opened his eyes and stared at the sight before him. His Sire was in bed with him but they weren't alone. Angel was currently snuggled up next to Spike with an arm draped over the both of them. An arm that ended in a rather large hand that was currently cupping his ass. Xander didn't know whether to be wiggled out or pissed off, but one look at the peaceful features of his Sire quieted his reaction.

The question was, how did one extract himself from a pile of vampires that more currently resembled a pack of intertwined octopuses? He wondered how Angel had ended up in bed with them, but he had to remember as much as he wanted his Sire near, Spike maybe wanted the same thing on some level.

Xander tried to inch away from the pair but as soon as he moved two sets of eyes snapped open and gazed at him worriedly. "You okay?" Angel asked, breaking the silence first. He hadn't meant for Xander to wake up with him still in bed with them.

"I'm hungry," Xander blurted out. Okay, he hadn't meant

to say that, but he was. Very, very hungry. "And your hand's on my ass."

Angel jerked his hand back as if he'd been splashed with Holy Water. "Um, sorry," he said sheepishly, glaring at Spike when he had the audacity to snicker.

"Peaches always was grabby," Spike snorted. "Likes a good bum, too."

"Um, Spike, way too much information," Xander said. He slid out of bed then, intent on raiding the kitchen. What he wanted was blood but he knew Spike hadn't eaten yet and he didn't want to weaken him. Besides, he thought maybe the two vampires would like a few minutes alone.

"Don't fill up on sugar, luv," Spike called out. "I plan to let you nurse on my wrist as long as you want soon."

"You need to eat first," Xander called back. "You both do. I'll start some blood heating up."

"I don't think so," Spike insisted. He didn't want Xander tempted by the blood. "Wait for me, pet. Have a Twinkie."

"I won't drink any, Sire," Xander said softly, knowing they could hear him. "I only feed from you."

Angel reached out and squeezed Spike's shoulder. "Trust him," Angel whispered. "Baby steps, Will. Baby steps."

Spike frowned but stayed where he was. He didn't want to. He wanted to go to his Childe and make sure he drank nothing but the blood of his own veins. Instead, he lay hard and unmoving next to his Sire as he listened to his Childe prepare their food.

Angel's hand started to massage Spike's stiff shoulder. "Do you really think he'd choose some cold human blood over his Sire's fresh blood? Do you remember what it was like when you were that young? The craving..."

"Still have that," Spike admitted. He'd never told his Sire before, but he'd never lost the craving for his blood. Even after becoming a Master in his own right, Spike still craved what only Angelus could give him.

"Ah, Will," Angel sighed, he reached out and cupped the back of Spike's head. "I think... as long as you're under my protection..."

"Sire?" Spike queried softly.

"As long as you're under my protection, I'll give you this," Angel whispered, continuing to hold Spike's head and now holding up his wrist.

Spike stared at his Sire, his eyes going wide at the implication. Angel had fed him only rarely and that was when he still tolerated him. For Angel to offer now... Spike wanted so badly to reach out and take the proffered wrist but he held back. He knew all too well how Xander felt about Angel. He also knew that his boy didn't like to share.

"Go ahead," Xander said from the doorway, startling both vampires. "You want it. He wants you to. Go ahead."

"It will make your Childe stronger when he feeds from you with my blood in your veins," Angel said. He wasn't sure if he was trying to give himself or Spike an excuse.

Xander walked forward and knelt down beside the bed. He reached out and took Angel's hand and lifted it toward his Sire's face. "Drink, Sire," he said again,

understanding shining in his eyes.

“Just a little bit,” Spike whispered, licking his lips. He leaned forward, slipping into game face and bit Angel’s wrist. At the same time, he bore his own wrist to Angel.

Angel looked to Xander, asking silent permission to feed from his Childe. He felt the pull within, but he had to know Xander was all right with it. The boy had allowed so much already, he didn't want to overstep himself now.

Xander nodded his permission silently. Sure a part of him was jealous, another part understanding the craving, but another part of Xander knew what a turn on the two vampires were together. His cock was already hard from watching Spike feed.

Angel took the hand and slid his fangs into Spike's wrist almost tenderly. He kept his eyes on Xander as he fed, amazed at the emotions flitting across the boy's face. He wasn't surprised by the arousal. Feeding always aroused vampires, regardless of who was doing the feeding. What did surprise him was the fact that Xander was letting him do something so blatantly intimate with his Sire.

Again the exchange between the two Masters was little

more than a token exchange, each taking just enough to replace what the other was taking. They pulled away only after each licked the wounds carefully.

Xander stood then and walked soundlessly from the room. He gathered the two mugs of blood he'd been heating and took a deep breath. He was still incredibly aroused and wanted to calm down before he went back into the bedroom. A few seconds later and he was calm enough to pick up the blood and carry it to the two men.

Angel took the first mug that Xander held out, but then made a face, handing it over to Spike. "Marshmallows?"

Xander only smiled and handed Angel the other mug. He knelt back down beside the bed and waited, his eyes darting between the other two men. This was his family now. Sure, he still had the others, but none of them would understand him the way these two would. It was time to show them both that he could handle all this.

"Still hungry, pet?" Spike purred as he sipped on the mug casually.

Xander nodded his head mutely, unwilling to break his silence.

“You want to please me, don’t you pet?”

Again Xander silently nodded. He wanted to please Spike more than anything.

Spike held out the same wrist Angel had fed from and instructed his Childe with a seductive smile. “Then come feed, baby. But when you do, I want you to pleasure yourself for me.”

Xander's eyes flashed to Angel for a split second, but he did as his Sire instructed. He took Spike's hand in his and sank his teeth in. As he began to suckle, he snaked his free hand down to his pants and pulled out his erection.

“That’s it,” Spike cooed, petting Xander’s head. “I knew how hard watching us made you.”

Xander stroked himself as he continued to feed. He could smell his own musk and knew the other two vampires could as well. His eyes darted to Angel again and this time he saw lust burning in the man's dark eyes. Still, Angel made no move toward either of them, apparently content to simply watch the show.

With his free hand, Spike moved to echo Xander's action. He quickly unbuttoned his jeans and released his cock. Between watching Xander and the feel of his Childe on him, it didn't take long before he was as close to cumming as Xander was.

"Oh God..." Angel moaned, unable to help himself. He'd refrained from joining in but just barely. He was aching hard in his pants and he wanted nothing more than to find release.

"Bite harder," Spike moaned. Xander was always so gentle, but right now he needed a little something to push him over the edge.

Xander knew what his Sire wanted and bit down hard. He felt a fresh gush of blood in his mouth and gulped it down a second before his entire body tightened and he came.

"Xander!" Spike threw back his head and howled, cumming in his hand.

Finally, it was over and Xander drew back his fangs from his Master's wrist. He licked it clean, just as Angel had done earlier then tucked his own spent cock back into his

pants. He smiled as his Master gasped for breath and when Spike went to wipe his now cum-covered hand on the blanket, Xander quickly stopped him. His eyes locked on Spike's, he brought the hand to his mouth and very carefully began to lick it clean.

Spike's head lolled to the side, taking in Angel's stunned appearance and tented trousers. "Isn't my consort a wet dream, Peaches?" Spike purred, the nickname bearing no menace this time, only teasing. He might be reformed a little, but he was still a bad boy at heart.

"He always was," Angel said, realizing a moment too late that he probably should have kept that particular opinion to himself.

"So you aren't blind after all," Spike snorted. "Thought you might have been blinded by that blonde pussy..."

"Leave Buffy out of this," Angel said, the words lacking any real heat. He'd already chosen his Childe over the Slayer and Spike damn well knew it. "And no, I'm not blind. He was a beautiful boy and he's grown into a beautiful man."

Xander had buried his head in Spike's lap. "Hello, boy

still here," Xander mumbled. He'd never been able to take compliments well. The truth was, he'd never gotten that many compliments.

"We kind of noticed that," Angel laughed. "You were magnificent, you know. I could see everything you felt for him as you fed. It was amazing."

"Awww, c'mon guys," Xander mumbled again, still hiding. "I'm still new to this whole gay thing."

"Alright," Angel relented. He didn't want to make the boy uncomfortable. And speaking of uncomfortable, he had a little problem of his own that he needed to take care of.

Under other circumstances, Spike would have asked his Sire to pleasure himself in front of Xander. But the boy-man wasn't ready for that just yet, still having amazingly maintained a certain naiveté.

Angel caught the glint in Spike's eyes and knew he'd better get out of there while he still could. "I'll just leave you two to clean up your mess," he smirked as he slid out of bed and headed for the bathroom.

"Lube's in the cupboard, mate," Spike called out with a

hoarse chuckle.

Angel faltered in mid-stride, his face going red as Xander chuckled behind him. He clenched his fists as he stormed to the bathroom and slammed the door behind him. Even getting angry hadn't cooled his desire and he wasted no time in stroking himself to completion.

Part Nine

Xander had to wait until sunset before he could go check on his mother. Angel had assured him the body of his father was taken care of, but that the house was still a wreck. There had been no blood. He knew his mother would have silently cleaned up the mess and waited for her missing husband. It wouldn't be the first time that Xander's father had trashed the house and taken off for days at a time. That's probably what his mother thought. She had no idea her husband and tormenter was dead.

As he approached the house, Xander wished he'd taken Spike up on his offer to come with. He had refused, though, thinking his mother would feel more at ease without Spike's rather overbearing presence. He knocked on the door, amazed that his hand wasn't shaking at all.

The door didn't open, but instead he heard a muffled, "Who is it?" He'd learned at an early age never to let people into the house. It was usually the cops or some brute to see his father. Either that, or his mother and him were sporting bruises that one didn't want the general public to see. Now that he knew the dark family secret, the secretiveness made sense. They were demons and that wasn't something you advertised to the outside world. All those men visiting his father had been members of the Brotherhood.

"It's me, mom. Xander," he said. Slowly, the door creaked open and his mother stood there regarding him warily.

"So, um, can I come in?"

"Xander?" Mrs. Harris squawked in surprise. "How did you... You're alright."

"Yeah, mom, I'm fine," Xander said. Her words surprised him but he pushed that away for now. He had to get this

over with before he lost his nerve entirely. He walked inside the house and closed the door behind him. "Mom, listen, there's something I have to tell you."

"You haven't seen your father and his friends in the past couple of days, have you?" Mrs. Harris said. "That would explain... that would explain this mess maybe. Your father was looking for you, Xander. Family business. You shouldn't have hidden from him, you know that only makes it worse. He must have been so pissed when he couldn't find you and trashed the house. Now he'll take it out on me whenever he crawls out of the hole he's drunken himself into."

"Oh, he found me alright," Xander said. "But you don't have to worry about him hurting you ever again. He won't be back, mom. Some friends of mine, they made sure of that."

"Didn't you ever learn not to get the law involved in family business!" Mrs. Harris hissed. "Now tell me which jail he's in so I can go bail him out."

"He's not in jail. The fucker's dead. Now he can't hurt either one of us ever again," Xander spat. It was then that his mother's earlier words began to register. She

knew his father and his friends were looking for him. She knew they were coming for him and she hadn't done a single thing about it.

"You killed him!" she yelled at the top of her lungs and shoved Xander away from her. "You killed my husband!"

"He killed me first!" Xander shouted back then clamped his mouth shut. He hadn't meant to say that but he couldn't believe his mother's reaction. "You're free now, don't you get it? He's gone and you're free."

"Free? There's no such word for a Purson demoness. I belonged to your father and now that he's dead I have to go back to my father! Your father was my freedom! Because he was willing to buy a defective half-breed, my father let me out of that fucking basement," Mrs. Harris screamed. "I don't want to go back to that basement. It's so dark and with your father I at least saw sunlight! He let me have so much freedom. He treated me better than I deserved."

"How can you stand there and defend him?" Xander shouted angrily. "He killed me. They beat me to death and left me in an alley to die. If Spike hadn't come along..."

"Spike?" She cut him off. "You mean that blood drinker... he... he turned you?"

"Yes, he did," Xander said, shifting into game face. He wanted to shock her now, wanted to scare her. She'd known all along and she hadn't tried to protect him. She'd known that bastard was going to try to kill her own son and she hadn't done anything.

"Your father was right about you," his mother hissed, backing away from him even as she started to babble. "He said you weren't worthy of joining the Brotherhood. No matter how much I cried and begged him, he said he knew best. He always wanted a little girl... I wish I'd have had a little girl. She would have had to stay with me... I wouldn't have kept her in a basement, just kept her inside until your father sold her. You know I even had a bride picked out for you? She was a pretty thing I saw when I visited one of the brother's wives... she was fifteen and hadn't even seen the light of day... she was so docile, she would have been a proper wife. I would've been a grandmother after you turned twenty-one and joined the Brotherhood."

"I can't believe you," Xander shook his head backing

toward the door. "You're just as much a monster as he was."

"A monster?" This actually made Mrs. Harris laugh as she took in Xander's game face. "If that's what you want to call me, why not? I was never normal. I was cursed with a human mother. I was born a monster to both demons and humans. But your father took care of me. And you killed him! You're the monster now! You're not my son!"

"I was never your son," Xander said softly, his features slipping back into their human guise. "From now on you can consider me just as dead to you as he is."

~*~*~*~*~

The goodbyes with the Scooby Gang had been eerily tense. Both Willow and Dawn had cried liked they'd never see him again. Buffy had glowered the entire time, still trying to convince Xander he could leave Spike and stay with her. But to top it off, Giles had taken him aside for a "talk".

It was then that Buffy's attitude had changed

dramatically. Angel was still seething from the things the Slayer had said to Spike as soon as Xander was out of earshot. He'd even opened his mouth to tell her just what she could do with her threats but Spike had touched his arm and shook his head. The last thing Xander needed was this to turn into any more of a circus than it already was. So Angel had bitten his tongue and wondered, not for the first time, what he'd ever seen in Buffy.

Xander looked over nervously at the two brooding vampires, standing away from the group. Giles was doing that nervous thing with his glasses and wiping beads of sweat from his forehead. "Xander... I feel... I mean to say, I think it's time you and I had a serious talk."

"About what, G-man?" Xander asked, causing Giles to frown. "Oops, sorry about that. Guess you'll be glad not to have me around calling you that anymore, huh?"

"I never liked that name," Giles made a slightly confused sound and then shook his head. "But I've been called worse. Listen, son... I was never good at this kind of thing... Buffy rather figured it out for herself."

"Giles, listen, whatever it is you feel you've got to say, just say it. We've known each other a long time. I'd like to think we're friends. So spit it out already."

"Alright, I didn't think you'd be the first of my kids to get married... or close enough to it," Giles coughed uncomfortably. "If Spike does anything he shouldn't, I want you to call me. I want you to know that you can come to me for anything."

"You... you really mean that, don't you?" Xander asked in awe. He always thought Giles merely tolerated him, but this sounded like Giles actually gave a damn. It was... nice.

"Of course I do," Giles said, putting his glasses back on. "You're one of my family. And I need to talk to you about something else. Like I was saying... you're as good as married now, so..."

"What?" Xander asked when Giles fell silent. He could tell the older man was having difficulty saying whatever was on his mind but he didn't know what to do about it.

"I had a relationship like you had once," Giles said rather bluntly and quickly.

"You've had a relationship with a vampire?" Xander blurted out, shocked. A moment later he realized what Giles had really meant. "Oh! You're talking about with another guy. I get it. And can I just say, way to go G-man."

Giles groaned and pinched the bridge of his nose. "That's not exactly what I meant, well... yes, I did have a... conjugal relationship with another man. Do you remember Ethan?"

"Now who could forget that wacky Chaos guy?" Xander joked, earning a somewhat wan smile from the Watcher. "So what? You guys used to do the deed?"

"I was in love," Giles said softly. "But I want you to understand that I know what it's like to love someone who's not perfect. Whom other people would think of as evil."

"You still love him, don't you?" Xander asked, suddenly reading much more in the man's eyes.

"Y-Yes," Giles whispered. "And that's what I want you to understand. Spike loves you, I see that. But if he ever

crosses a line and you can't live with what he did... if you have to leave him... you can come to me. I won't judge you."

Xander didn't know what to say. No one had ever done anything like this for him before and he didn't know how to react. He ended up pulling Giles into an awkward embrace and whispering, "Thanks."

"Just don't lose yourself completely in your love," Giles whispered another deeply personal warning. His love for Ethan had changed him into Ripper for a part of his life he didn't want to remember. "Because it might change you into someone you may not like. Stay true to yourself, son."

"I will," Xander said, pulling back. "And I'll keep in touch, too. That way you can remind me if I start to change too much."

Giles reached out and once more patted Xander's cheek. "You were always a good boy and now you've grown into a fine man." A part of him mourned that the boy would forever be locked in this form, never growing a day older outwardly.

"I had a good role model," Xander said. He glanced over at Spike and Angel and noticed the tense posture of the two men. "I think I better get going, Giles. Look after the girls and if you need me, I'm a phone call away."

"Of course," Giles said, his mask of propriety slipping back into place. "Oh, and Xander?"

"Yeah?"

"Don't make it too easy on them," Giles said with a slight smile.

"You got it, G-man."

Part Ten

"You live in a moth balled hotel? Figures," Spike scoffed, as they walked into the lobby. "You always had a flare for the dramatic, Peaches."

"It's roomy and I like it," Angel replied, refusing to rise to the bait. It had taken most of the drive for him to put Buffy out of his mind. He wasn't about to let Spike start pissing him off now.

"Touché," Spike said, raising his hands. "Didn't say it

wasn't nice. Just wondering about the thickness of the walls, is all."

"Don't worry, they're thick enough," Cordelia said as she came out from behind the front desk. She walked straight to Xander and threw her arms around him. "How are you holding up?"

"They told you?" Xander squeaked.

"Giles called. He thought it might be easier if you didn't have to go through the whole thing all over again. That and he didn't want to take a chance on me or Wes staking Spike."

So Xander owed Giles another thank you. It really was easier this way. He didn't like the idea of having to live through another tense explanation. "Yep, so now you have two souled up vamps on your hands, not to mention another cranky one."

"Yeah, well, considering what Spike's done, he can be as cranky as he wants and I won't say a word," Cordelia replied. "I know things didn't work out so great between us but that doesn't mean I don't care about you."

Spike made a light growl at the mention of their past relationship and Xander stepped away. "He's just cranky because Angel wouldn't let him drive and Gramps is even worse because he had to put up with us. He kept threatening to pull over and make us ride the rest of the way in the trunk."

Cordelia laughed at the image of Angel trying to drive with these two in the car with him. She almost wished she could have been there. Almost. Right now, though, she had something she wanted to do before she lost her nerve. Smiling once more at Xander, she quickly walked over to Spike and pulled him into a fierce hug. "Thank you," she whispered into his ear.

"Ack! What's with birds hugging me," Spike grumbled. "First Red, now you!"

"Consider it pay back for trying to kill us so many times," Cordelia laughed. "I won't forget what you did for him. Not ever, Spike. I just want you to know that."

"Okay... okay," Spike said quickly, still stiff in the hug. "Xander, a little help?"

"Cut him a break, Cordy," Xander laughed. "He's not used

to affectionate humans yet."

"He's got you, doesn't he?" Cordelia shot back, making sure to give Spike one last squeeze before letting him go.

"Yes, but number one, I'm not a girl and number two, I'm not exactly human anymore," Xander replied.

"Either way, it'll be nice to have you around here," Cordelia shrugged it off. "We can go shopping together now that you're gay."

"Cordy!" Xander gasped, choking a bit. "Don't say things like that out loud! I'm still adjusting to the whole in love with a guy thing."

"Uh huh, sure you are, Xander," Cordelia dismissed it in the distracted way she was prone to dismiss serious issues. "I should have known you were gay when you gave up a catch like me. It makes perfect sense now."

"Cord, honey, I would have sold my soul to get you to forgive me back then," Xander said. "I never, never, meant to hurt you."

"You just called me honey," Cordelia giggled. "You are so

gay it hurts. Almost as gay as the two leather boys over there.”

"Hey!" Spike and Angel said in unison, making the others laugh.

"Leather boys?" Xander giggled. "Now that's something I would pay to see."

"Well, Xander, there are quite a few stores in town that cater to that sort of thing. I'm sure when you and Cordelia go shopping you could stop in and pick up a few things for Angel and Spike," Wesley put in helpfully. He was enjoying seeing his boss squirm a bit.

"I wouldn't laugh too hard, Wes," Cordelia gave him a pointed look. "Do I have to remind you of your leather butch-wanna-be outfit?"

"Here now, I looked rather fetching in that outfit," Wesley defended.

"You looked gay," Cordelia laughed. "But that's okay, so do Angel and Spike."

"You know, Xander, I'm liking your cheerleader less and

less," Spike pouted. "The Big Bad does not look gay."

"I don't know," Cordelia said, walking over and looking carefully over Spike and then Angel. "I would say it's a tie. Spike has the whole dyed hair bad boy Brit thing with an oral fixation on cigarettes, but then Angel... well, his name is Angel. Some of the demons think it's a little fruity."

"Hah! Always been that way. You should hear some of 'em," Spike laughed. Maybe this Cordelia bint wasn't so bad after all.

"What? I'm an avenging angel," Angel protested. "You know, like hell's angels."

"Good Lord save us all," Wesley muttered, disappearing back behind the front desk.

Cordelia sighed heavily. "Like I said, not a straight man in the bunch."

"I heard that, Cordelia," Wesley called out. "And just for the record, vampires are neither straight nor bent. To put it bluntly, if it's shagable, they'll shag it."

“Oh Wesley, while you're behind the desk, could you be a dear and look for my nail file?” she asked, having absolutely no fear and not even a clue that there was anything wrong with teasing these particular vampires.

"Okay, I don't know about you two, but I'm beat. How about we heat up some dinner then hit the sack?" Xander said before either vampire could respond. The last thing he wanted was for a real fight to break out. Not when he was finally starting to feel good about coming here.

“We knew you were coming so we have nice fresh pig’s blood in the fridge for you,” Cordelia supplied helpfully. She was already distracted by filing her nails with the nail file that Wesley’s hand had placed on the desk, only to disappear back into hiding.

"Pig's blood?" Spike repeated. "You've got to be kidding."

“Cordy, we need a supply of human blood,” Xander said. He could tell by Angel’s broody look that he was already ashamed and guilty for having indulged in human blood while he’d been in Sunnydale.

"But Angel only drinks this stuff," Cordelia said. She

looked over at her boss then back at Xander. "I see. You know, Angel, if you needed human blood you should have said something. I'm afraid the pig will have to do for tonight but Wes and I'll get some human blood in first thing in the morning."

"I can go back on pig easily enough," Angel mumbled. "Just get enough to feed Spike and Xander."

"I don't think so, mister," Cordelia replied. "Like I said, we'll get some here first thing in the morning. We can keep the extra pig on ice in case of emergency."

"It's better for him this way," Xander tried to rationalize it. "He's stronger."

Cordelia turned to glare at Angel again. "Stronger? Human blood makes you stronger? And why has this never been mentioned? We fight the forces of evil, Angel. We need you as strong as you can get."

"It's also a temptation," Angel mumbled. It was also a reminder of the monster he'd been, no matter how good it tasted.

"A temptation to what? Raid the local blood bank? See if

anyone wants to make an extra Red Cross donation? Get real. Drinking a little human blood isn't going to make Angelus come popping out and it's not going to make you suddenly realize what tasty snacks Wesley and I would make."

"Don't worry, princess," Spike smiled evilly. "We'll make sure Peaches here takes his medicine like a good little boy." He leaned over and whispered in Angel's ear, "Even if you have to nurse from my wrist with Xander."

Angel went completely still at Spike's words. The erotic image they painted sent a wave of arousal through him. He glanced at Xander, but the boy appeared as relaxed as ever. He wasn't quite sure what game his Childe was playing but he was going to find out. "Um, Cordelia, why don't you and Wesley head out? You can pick up the blood in the morning on your way in, okay?"

"Yeah, sure thing boss," Cordelia agreed happily. She kicked Wesley under the desk as she gathered up her purse and jacket. "It'll be nice having someone my own age around. Not that vampires over a century old and English bookworms aren't a blast. C'mon, Wesley, you can give me a ride home."

They watched as the two humans left, Cordelia making sure to lock the doors on their way out. Once they were gone, Xander looked to Spike and Angel. He'd heard his Sire's whispered words but had chosen not to react in front of Cordelia. Now, however, he was free to do what he wanted. "So, Master, can I watch while you feed him?"

"You heard that?" Angel groaned. He didn't like the look on the boy's face. It reminded him far too much of Spike.

"Yeah," Xander grinned. "Gave me all sorts of naughty ideas. Please, Master, let me watch. I promise that's all I'll do... this time."

Spike shivered when he heard Xander call him Master. He was powerless when his Childe and Consort used that name, but he didn't want Xander to know that. He was the Sire, he was supposed to be in control. "I was just saying that to rile up Angel. I didn't get a chance to say if he has problems with feeding, then he could feed from me cause then he wouldn't really be drinking human blood... cause it'd be a technicality..." Spike stopped when he realized he was sounding flustered. A fledgling shouldn't make him flustered.

"I want to watch," Xander said purposefully. "I want to watch him on his knees drinking from your wrist. I want to watch you filling him up with your blood the way you do me."

Both of the elder vampires groaned in tandem. They'd forgotten that one of the more pleasant side effects for a new fledgling was the tendency to be over sexed. This one just happened to be armed with a soulful set of big, brown eyes that neither one could really resist. "I don't think that's a good idea," Angel said, breathing heavily.

"Why not?" Xander asked. "Give me one good reason why you shouldn't do this."

"Because I'm his Sire," Angel supplied.

"Not good enough," Xander replied. "You've fed from him before. I know, I watched. So try again."

"Because it's not good for you," Angel tried again.

"How is it not good for me?" Xander said, smiling widely. Angel thought he was going to feel threatened or jealous. Well, he probably would feel a little jealous but only in a good way. He'd gotten over feeling threatened by it the

first time it had happened. They were Sire and Childe. They were supposed to take comfort in each other.

Angel backed up as Xander moved a little closer. "Because you're so young. I don't want you to think I'm taking your Sire away."

Xander threw back his head and laughed. "I forget sometimes how much like Buffy you can be. The world really doesn't revolve around you. You couldn't take him away if you tried. I know that and I think you do, too. So try again."

"Ummm, the look on your face for one," Angel muttered, finding that he was back against the wall.

"Oh? What look would that be?" Xander asked. He stopped right in front of Angel, their bodies barely in inch apart. His own desire was in high gear. Personally, he wanted Angel naked and on his knees feeding from his Sire, but he really didn't think they'd go for that.

"You looked like Spike," Angel groaned.

"And how is that of the bad?" Xander asked.

“You’re both brats...”

"Like Sire, like Childe," Xander said. "But you still haven't given me a good reason. Don't you want to feed from him? Don't you want to take his wrist to your mouth and feel his blood flow down your throat?"

Angel banged his head against the wall in frustration. The imagery Xander’s erotic words created in his mind was making him hard. “Spike, control your Childe,” he pleaded, his voice tinged with desperation.

"Maybe later," Spike snorted. "I quite like the way he's handling you right now. He's got you so hot you can barely stand it. I'm surprised you've held out this long."

“You’re both torturing me,” Angel complained.

"Nah," Xander said, motioning for Spike to come closer. "That comes later. But only if you ask real nice." He leaned up against Angel then, using his body weight to pin the older vampire to the wall. He knew Angel could get away if he wanted to but Xander didn't think he would. He was enjoying this as much as they were, he just didn't want to admit it.

"Two against one isn't fair," Angel huffed, even as he watched Spike moving closer. His Childe was pulling off his jacket, letting it drop to the floor. Spike nipped at his wrist lightly and offered the blood droplet to Xander, who carefully licked the wound clean.

"Mmmmm... tastes good. You sure you don't want some?" Xander taunted Angel, pushing against him so that Angel could feel his erection.

Angel flashed into game face, his eyes sparkling gold. "I could take what I wanted," he threatened with a growl.

"But you won't," Xander said softly. "I know you. You'd never take what wasn't freely offered so stop putting up a fight already."

"Tell me what you want," Angel whispered, his resistance melting.

Xander stepped back, putting some space between himself and Angel. "Get on your knees," he said. This was what he wanted to see. He wanted Angel on his knees feeding from Spike as if their places had been reversed.

Angel's lips twitched over his fangs in a scowl. His

demon half roared that a Master would never humiliate himself like this, but the other half told him he wanted this. He wanted to show Spike he was sorry for all the times he'd humiliated him. He wanted to show Spike that he trusted his Childe now.

Spike waited, a bit worried about what Xander was trying to do. It was never good for a Childe to try to dominate his Sire, and even worse to try it with his Grand-Sire. Angelus would have ripped the boy's heart out for it, but Angel... there was no way to tell how Angel would react.

Angel reached out and cupped Xander's face, tracing along his cheekbone with his thumb. "So much more like William than you'll ever know. Such a pretty, wilful Childe," he whispered, with more of a trace of Angelus than ever before.

Spike froze at Angel's words. He could clearly hear Angelus in the tone and it chilled him to think of that one touching his Childe. "Sire?" Spike said, trying to draw attention away from the boy.

But the eyes that looked back at Spike were the eyes of Angel. Spike was one of the few that understood that the line between Angel and Angelus was only the matter

of a conscience. It wasn't like he'd suddenly become another person the day he'd gotten his soul back, it only meant he could feel again. It was his Sire who pushed away from Xander and gracefully fell to his knees.

Spike held out his wrist wordlessly. He felt Angel take it in his hands then bring it to his mouth. A single kiss was placed there, then fangs sank into the tender flesh, sending an exquisite jolt of pleasure/pain through him as his Sire began to feed.

Neither Angelus nor Angel had ever fed from him like this. Xander was watching carefully, his eyes drifting from Angel feeding to Spike's other wrist. It was obvious what he wanted, but he was too afraid to ask for it.

Angel reached up and grabbed Xander by the arm. Without looking up from Spike's wrist he jerked the boy to his knees beside him. Finally he pulled away and licked the blood from his lips. "Feed," he ordered, thrusting Spike's wrist at the boy.

Xander groaned and happily sunk his teeth into Spike's flesh. He watched as next to him Angel moved up Spike's arm and bit into a new area.

"Oh yeah," Spike groaned. He used his free hand to touch first his Childe's head then his Sire's. He could feel both of them feeding from him, pulling the very blood from his veins. What little he had left was heading straight for his cock, making him start to sway on his feet as the light-headedness hit him.

As he swayed, it was Angel who caught him before he could hit the floor. It was also Angel who whispered something into his ear that made him groan. "We're going to have so much fun filling you up again..."

Part Eleven

Spike groaned as consciousness returned. He could feel the soft bed beneath him and knew that Angel and Xander must have placed him there after he collapsed. He should have known better than to try and feed both of them on less than a full stomach. He was lucky they hadn't accidentally drained him for good. Cracking an eye open, he was surprised to find his Sire sitting patiently by

his bed.

"I know you're awake," Angel said without moving.

"Where's my boy?" Spike asked, not seeing Xander. He was surprised. He'd thought for sure the boy would have been here waiting on pins and needles to make sure he was okay. He knew he would have been if he'd been in his place.

"Getting some blood for you," Angel said matter-of-factly. "You're lucky you didn't wake up to find him between my legs with that cat-in-heat act he was pulling."

"Excuse me?" Spike said. He tried to sit up a bit but the room shifted alarmingly so he laid back down and settled for glaring at his Sire.

"He was acting like a slut. You should have seen him after you passed out... so hard and needy..."

"You didn't," Spike gasped. He tried to tell himself Angel wouldn't have but after all the pushing Xander had done it would have been well within his rights to simply take the boy then and there. And Xander would have been so

high from his blood that he would have gone along with it, too.

“What, you can’t tell me the image of him sucking me off doesn't turn you on?” Angel purred, shifting closer to Spike.

"He's mine," Spike told him.

Angel reached out and grabbed Spike by his dyed blonde hair, demanding to know, “Are you jealous?”

"You bloody well know I am," Spike said. "You told me you gave up your claim to Sire's rights. You taking 'em back now?"

“Do you feel longing and hurt?” Angel continued his questioning. “Does your heart feel empty?”

"Yes," Spike said softly. "He's all I have. He's been all I've had for a while now. Please, Sire, don't take him away."

Angel sighed in defeat now that his point had been made and let Spike go. “Now you know how I feel. I won’t touch him.”

"Sire?" Spike said, seeing the pain in Angel's eyes. "I... I didn't mean I never wanted you to touch him."

"Do you know why I keep saying he reminds me of you?" Angel asked, but didn't wait for an answer. "Because he does. That uncertainty and vulnerability mixed with playfulness. The way he looks at you... you used to look at me like that... with complete adoration and trust."

"He could again if you give him time," Xander said from the doorway. He'd been listening to their conversation from the kitchen. He was fast finding out how useful vampire hearing could be. "We've all got some trust issues to work through but I think we can if we're willing to try."

"You're too young and innocent to understand the things I did to him," Angel said in a soft tone. "And he didn't leave me, I left him. I abandoned my own Childe before he was ready to face the world. Spike was the kind of Childe who needed to be close to his Sire. He was so dependent..."

"You can't undo what you've done, Angel. Believe me, I know that. But you can make up for it. Isn't that why you're back? To atone for what you did? So atone. You'll

find that Spike can be surprisingly forgiving once he realizes he can trust you."

"I can't risk getting too close to anyone."

"Oh please, like you're gonna find perfect happiness with me around," Xander scoffed. "Or Cordelia. Trust me, Angel, we were there when it happened before. We're not about to let it happen again. 'Cause, you see, I know what you'd do to him and I'll die before I let that happen."

"And what do you think I'd do to him?" Angel challenged.

"You'd destroy him," Xander said simply. "You'd probably start by killing me. Or maybe just torturing me. Then you'd start on him. He hasn't told me much but from what he's said I gather Angelus wasn't exactly a tender Master."

"I am Angelus."

"Yeah," Xander smiled sadly. "I get that, too. Buffy might not, but I do."

"It took me decades to fight what I am... to face what I'm

capable of," Angel continued, looking down at his hands.

"But you have fought it. You fight it every day and every person you save inches you closer to redemption. Personally, considering everything you've done, I don't know if you'll ever make it but I know you have to try. Just give Spike a little time and you'll see. He wants to trust you again. I think he needs to. I couldn't imagine being in his position... having my Sire and not having him all at the same time."

"You were the only one I could really turn to with the protection of my Xander," Spike added. "I knew that even after all that shit we've been through, you'd protect me when I really needed you."

"Always," Angel vowed without hesitation. "I protect my Childer. And my Childer's Childer, as well."

"I think that's a start... Master," Spike barely whispered the last word. It was something he hadn't called Angel since the day he'd left them.

"Spike..." Angel gasped in warning. He was still partially aroused from feeding earlier and it didn't take much to set it off again.

"I think it's time for some food," Xander put in, hoping to slow things down a bit. Angel looked ready to pounce on Spike and fuck him through the mattress.

Spike was licking his own lips nervously and took the hot mug of blood from Xander. He sipped it carefully, watching Angel do the same over the rim. He knew he shouldn't have called Angel Master, but there was no other word that expressed how he felt quite like that one.

"It'll be okay," Xander whispered as he sat down beside Spike and stroked his face. "You'll see. It'll be good here. You can be with your Sire and we can be together without any pesky Slayers getting into our business."

"Just have to point us in the direction of our own flat," Spike said uncertainly. Angel had been so very close since he came to Sunnydale, even sleeping in the same bed. But now they were on Angel's turf and he didn't want to push his Sire.

"I don't think so," Angel said. "We're family. Family sticks together. It's safest that way for all of us. You can have a separate room for the two of you, if you prefer, but I'd

like you to stay here."

"You might not appreciate us doing the horizontal mambo on your mattress," Spike pointed out.

"Do I get to watch?" Angel quipped, trying to lighten the mood. The truth was, he wanted them to stay. In the hotel and in his rooms as well. That, however, might not be what Spike wanted.

"What, again?" Spike snorted. "Didn't know you were such a voyeur, Peaches."

"I'll take what I can get," Angel said. "I want you to stay, if you want. In my room or a room of your own, whatever you're more comfortable with."

"How about we take it day by day," Spike offered. He knew how much they could get on each others nerves and it was only a matter of time before Angel would want his space. "Today, we'll stay with you."

"Alright," Angel said. He looked to Xander then, watching as the young man continued to stroke and pet Spike's face. "Xander, are you okay with this?"

“That depends on who gets to be in the middle?” Xander actually flashed both Master vampires a huge leer. “And whether or not your hands wander again.”

"From the way you were acting downstairs, I'd think you wanted them to wander," Angel shot back. "You don't know how close I came to fucking you in the lobby, boy."

Xander's smile faltered, cringing back a little. "I was going to say I didn't mind. I'm sorry..."

"Don't, Xander," Angel said softly, reaching out and touching the boy's arm. "I didn't mean to scare you. I wouldn't have, you know. I gave up the right. Ask Spike if you don't believe me."

"I don't mean to piss you off," Xander continued to apologize, flinching almost as if he expected Angel to hit him with the sudden movement of his hand. Angel was big and intimidating enough to remind him of his father.

"You didn't," Angel said. "And even if you did, I would never hurt you. You spoke of trust earlier, Xander. Trust me. I won't hurt you."

"I know that," Xander said quickly. "Old habits die hard

when you're a cowering wuss."

"Hah, talk about cowering wuss," Spike said, trying to make his Childe feel better. "I couldn't even defend myself from the bleeding cheerleader if I needed to."

"That isn't your fault," Xander said, moving closer to Spike so that he was almost sitting in the other man's lap.

"Maybe not, ducks, but that doesn't change anything," Spike said. "I still can't defend myself or my Childe. Not from humans, anyway."

Xander buried his head against Spike's neck and mumbled, "I don't care."

"We'll find a way to get that chip out, Spike," Angel promised. "I don't know how, but we'll find a way. I won't let them leave you defenceless like this."

Xander still clutched at Spike, but turned a stubborn look on Angel. "You're going to teach me how to protect him, right?"

"We both will," Angel said. "Spike knows more about

fighting dirty than anyone I've ever known. What I can't teach you, he can."

"We'll start when we wake up then," Xander decided. He was already pushing Spike back onto the bed and cuddling with him. Then he remembered how drained Spike really was, but he was already so comfortable. He turned big puppy dog eyes on Angel and asked, "You'll get your poor starving Childe some more blood, right, Gramps?"

Angel let out a long suffering sigh but got up and headed to the kitchen. He quickly heated another package of blood for Spike. He'd be glad when they didn't have to drink this pig shit anymore. He hated it and knew his Childe did, too. He walked back into the bedroom and found Xander already had Spike propped up waiting for his meal. The sight made him both happy and sad at the same time. At least his Childe had managed to find someone to spend his eternity with.

Angel ended up feeding Spike two full bags of blood that night until Spike actually fended him off complaining that if he drank another ounce he'd explode. Angel even went so far as to call Xander and Spike cute when they were curled up together. He'd been a bit self-conscious

about joining them in the bed after his earlier goof with Xander but the young man had simply pulled back the blankets and scooted his Sire over to the center of the bed. Once he'd laid down, Spike and Xander had both pulled him close until he was pressing up against his Childe's side with his arms holding both of them.

All three of them slept more soundly that day than they had in a long time. It felt so much safer now that they were away from Sunnydale. They barely moved at all during the day and as the sun set, making way for the night sky, someone came looking for them.

Cordelia pushed open the door and carefully entered the room. She knew better than to go sneaking up on sleeping vamps, no matter how tame they might seem. "Angel?" she called out softly as she stepped into the bedroom. The sight that greeted her made her stop in her tracks. All three of them were curled up in the bed like some great tangle of vampiric puppies. She giggled when she caught sight of where Angel's hand currently was. It was resting on Xander's ass, gripping it tightly.

"Angel," Cordelia called out again. Most people would have fled or left the vamps to their own devices, but she couldn't pass up this opportunity.

Angel cracked an eye open and saw the smiling face of Cordelia. He groaned and buried his head against Spike's hair. "Not now, Cordelia."

"You do realize that I am never going to let you live this down, right?" Cordelia asked, smiling broadly. She could picture years of teasing ahead and that made her grin even more.

Angel tightened his grip on Xander's ass. It was time to teach this girl a lesson. "You think I have something to be embarrassed about?"

"Like I care who you're getting groiny with," Cordelia continued to grin. "I think it's kinda nice actually. But I know you, soul-boy. I'll be able to tease you about this for months."

"Tease me all you like, but leave the boys alone," Angel warned. He didn't really catch that he'd called Spike a boy, but he would always be one to Angel.

"Oh please. Xander's not gonna freak if I tease him a little. He's stronger than you think, Angel. Now, are you boys going to get up and try out the nice fresh blood

Wesley and I got you or not?"

"I'll say yes to the blood," Angel said. "But I've already warned you once. Don't tease my boys about this." He was glad they were both still asleep. Spike had told him Xander wasn't a "morning" person and Spike was still wiped from their blood games. He didn't want anything, even Cordelia's teasing, to jeopardize the bonds he'd begun to build.

"Hey, you need to get something straight right now, mister," Cordelia said, her eyes flashing and her hands on her hips. "I would never do anything to hurt him. I would die for him. So don't you lay there and threaten me. Not where Xander's concerned." With that she turned on her heel and stalked from the room. She refrained from slamming the door, not wanting to wake Xander and Spike. It was definitely time for a shopping trip. Anything to put a little distance between herself and a certain souled vamp.

She might not have slammed the door, but it was enough to wake Spike. He was still groggy from too much blood and the emotions from last night's discussion were still dancing in his subconscious. The smell of his Sire so close brought up memories of his past. He snuffled lightly,

nuzzling against Angel's neck and whispered, "Master?"

"Shhh... it's alright, Childe," Angel said, pulling Spike in tight. "Go back to sleep. It's still early."

Spike whimpered, suckling briefly on Angel's neck before drifting back to sleep. He reminded Angel so much of the boy he had been when he had been turned. Angel ran his hand through Spike's hair and smiled when the curls began to reappear. Maybe it was time to try and convince Spike to change his looks. With a little gentle persuasion, maybe he could convince his Childe to let his natural curls return and maybe, just maybe Spike would grow his hair out.

"You really shouldn't piss Cordy off like that," Xander whispered, his eyes still closed. "She does know where you sleep, after all."

"I didn't know you were awake," Angel said softly, still playing with Spike's hair.

"Yeah, I figured that," Xander replied, still speaking softly to keep from waking Spike. "Me and Cordy, we've had our ups and downs but by the end we were friends again. She might not have much tact but she doesn't mean any

harm. Most of the time."

"I'm not willing to risk upsetting either of you," Angel returned and then sighed, happy that Spike was still asleep. "I've been accused of being over possessive before and having William like this... so sweet and close... his hair curling... it brings up old needs."

"Old needs," Xander repeated. "You still love him. I know he still has feelings for you. You, uh, you want me to leave so you guys can be alone for a bit? I can go downstairs, see if I can placate Cordy so she doesn't lace your blood with arsenic or anything."

"Don't," Angel commanded. "Yes, I do love him, more now actually because it's not tainted with the madness of the demon, but the old needs I was talking about, it's more like my need to protect him."

"Don't lie to me, Angel. Not ever. Not if you want me to trust you," Xander said seriously. "The need to protect may be there, but that's not the only need you've got where my Sire's concerned. You want him. I can smell it on you."

Instead of pushing Spike away, Angel held his Childe

closer. "I want to protect him from me. So I will ignore my baser needs."

"Considering how much my Sire wants you, that'd be pretty cruel, don't you think?" Xander said. He was trying to reason with Angel but it was hard. This was Spike they were discussing. His Sire. In truth, he didn't want his Sire touching anyone but him. In reality, he knew that wasn't likely to happen. Like he'd just told Angel, that would be cruel.

"I'm content with what we have," Angel said stiffly. "Watching and blood is enough."

"Bullshit. I told you not to lie to me." With that Xander rose from the bed, ignoring Angel's attempt to stop him. He grabbed his pants and slipped them on then went in search of Cordelia. Maybe she'd have some insight into how to get Angel to quit playing the fucking martyr.

Xander's hasty escape was enough to pull Spike out of his deep sleep, but he came around slowly. Again he whispered silkily, "Master?"

"Here, Childe," Angel replied, turning his attention from the empty doorway to the man lying in his arms. "Did

you rest well?"

Spike continued to nuzzle against Angel's neck. "Like the dead."

Angel chuckled at the lame joke and turned his head to expose his neck. "Feed, if you like. There's fresh blood downstairs when we're ready."

"Just a bit," Spike mumbled and drank slowly, licking the wound when he was done.

"Mmmmm... I'd almost forgotten how good that felt," Angel said. "I'm so glad you're back, Will. I've missed you."

"I missed you, too," Spike returned the affection with a quick kiss. "Now where's my pet?"

"He, uh, he went after Cordelia," Angel said worriedly. "I managed to piss them both off enough to go storming out of the room."

Spike shook off his grogginess, moving swiftly until he had Angel pinned under him. "What did you do?"

"I told Cordy she could tease me all she wanted but to leave you two alone. She seemed to take offence at the implication that she'd do anything to hurt Xander," Angel hedged.

"And what else? I know you, Angel. That's not it."

"I might have implied a threat or two," Angel admitted, now thoroughly embarrassed by how he'd acted.

"Xander was awake the whole time. We talked. He told me not to lie to him."

"Spill it all," Spike demanded, poking Angel in the chest with his finger.

"I said I felt the old needs coming back," Angel explained.

"Xander took that to mean sex. I told him it was just my protective urges but he didn't believe me. He stormed off after Cordelia when I told him I was content with what I have now."

"No wonder he thought you were a liar," Spike snorted. "You are, you big ponce."

"I just didn't want him to feel threatened," Angel said in his defence. "He's your Childe. He wants you all to

himself. Can't say that I blame him there really."

Spike ground his groin against Angel. "He's a fledgling. Volatile, confused and vulnerable... that doesn't mean he's stupid."

"No, I guess not. Spike, this really is enough for me. It's more than I ever thought I'd have and I can live with just this. I don't want to make things any harder on Xander than they already are."

"It's enough... for now," Spike agreed. "My Childe is too new to understand yet, no matter what he says. But that won't always be the way it is, Peaches."

"I don't want to come between you. It was bad enough the way I toyed with the bond between you and Drusilla. I won't do that again," Angel vowed.

Spike shift closer until his mouth was even with Angel's ear. "He's my equal. My Dark Prince."

"I always thought you were my light. All pale, like the moonlight. Oh, Childe." Angel pulled Spike to him tightly and nuzzled his neck. A variety of feelings were coursing through him and he was having a difficult time sorting

them all out. At the moment, he wanted nothing more than to hear his Childe call him Master again as he buried himself inside him. That, he knew, could not be allowed to happen.

"I love him," Spike whispered. "He's my only Consort and Childe. Do you understand what that means for us, Master?"

"Yes," Angel said, shivering at the sound of that title falling from Spike's lips. "I wish... never mind."

"I want you to tell me what you wish for, but first I want to tell you what it means to me," Spike said. "It means I can never be completely yours. I know you want that. That means you couldn't be completely happy... do you see now?"

"I know. Don't take this wrong, Spike, but I could never be completely happy with you. There's too much darkness between us. I've done too many despicable things to you to ever forget. I could love you until the end of time and I'd always remember how much I've hurt you."

This caused a big smile to cross Spike's face and reached

down to plant a sloppy kiss on Angel's lips. "Bloody terrific, ain't it, mate?"

"I suppose that's one way to look at it," Angel said, unable to keep from smiling at the look on Spike's face. "No worries about Angelus' personality taking over at least."

"You can be happy with us, Angel, if you let yourself," Spike said. "You're family. It'll just take time with the boy, but it's not like we don't have plenty of that. You know he was a virgin, right?"

"I figured as much. Xander never struck me as the type to be into experimentation. I know he was with Cordy but I don't know how far things went."

Spike snorted. "Oh, he's been with birds, just never even kissed a bloke. Gotta give him time."

"Well, he seems pretty okay with it. I mean, that display he put on earlier was enough to nearly push me over the edge. You really are lucky you didn't wake up to find him on his knees between my legs."

Spike growled in warning. "Don't get any ideas. He just

doesn't have any idea how sexy he is, that's all."

Angel tensed and expertly flipped them over so Spike was now beneath him. "I won't, but you might want to tell him to tone down the teasing a bit. You know what it's like when the bloodlust is high. We could both end up hurting him and neither of us wants that."

"I won't punish him," Spike spat. "He's always been a cocktease. I don't wanna change that."

"I'm not asking you to. Just warn him a bit. He thinks just because I've got my soul that I won't touch him. I've got limits just like any man. Don't scare him, though. I don't want him afraid of me on top of being pissed off."

"He's twenty, you're over two hundred. You should have more control than him," Spike said. "He was a walking hard on before I turned him and now's he's just dead sexy piled on top of that. He's just starting to get a little confidence back, I won't take that away from him."

"Then don't get worried if I try to keep a little distance. It's been a long time since I've had anyone, Spike. My control isn't exactly up to par."

“Your control was never up to par,” Spike quipped. “And you can’t keep your distance. He'll take it the wrong way. If you haven’t noticed, the boys a little sensitive. This is the first time anyone’s ever shown him any sort of affection. Might be why he doesn't know the difference between affection and shagging yet.”

"Yeah, I kinda got that. He seems to think that if I'm nice to him it means I want to fuck him. Or that he has to let me. What the hell did those people do to him?"

“I don’t wanna know,” Spike whispered truthfully. “You see now why I need help with him?”

"Yes," Angel agreed. Spike did need help with his Child and even if he didn't want to know what those beings had done to Xander, Angel was going to find out. He had a feeling he would need to know if he was going to help the young man overcome his upbringing.

Spike wiggled under Angel’s body, testing his Sire’s strength unconsciously. “So just don’t cut the whelp off from affection, okay? If he starts something... well then, he should have the right to finish it if he wants. Sowing his wild oats and all.”

"So if he starts acting like a little slut again I should just let him?" Angel asked, testing his Childe. He ground his pelvis down against Spike as he spoke, pushing their erections together hard.

"Don't call him that!" Spike hissed, although he was pushing up against Angel. "What if he heard you?"

"I'm not going to coddle the boy, Spike," Angel said as he continued to grind against the other man. "I'll make allowances for his circumstances but if he acts like a cat in heat he'd better be ready to pay the consequences."

Xander had been coming back to tell Spike he was going out with Cordelia. He didn't want to interrupt what he sure was already a passionate union, but he didn't want to worry Spike by just taking off. Part of him said that they were probably just talking, but then he had taken in the scene of Angel humping Spike under him. A moment later he'd heard Angel call him a slut and the bag he was carrying fell to the floor. He was bringing a heated bag of blood that Cordelia said was only a matter of hours old as a peace offering. The bag burst and the blood pooled around his feet.

"What the..." Spike exclaimed as the smell of fresh, hot

blood filled the room. His head jerked to the side and he saw Xander standing in the doorway, staring at them with a look on his face that made Spike want to curl up and die. "Xander... pet... it's not what you think."

"I... I just came to tell you I'm going out with Cordy, Master," Xander said in the tone he used when he didn't want to piss his father off. He made sure to use Spike's proper title. "I'll be good. I... I have to go... I'll clean up my mess when I get back."

"Xander... wait!" Spike called out, trying to shift Angel off of him before his Childe could get out the door.

But the only thing left in Xander's wake was a few bloody footprints. Xander hadn't even changed into his shoes yet before coming down to try and appease Angel. Now he'd used his new speed to hightail it out of there.

"Damn," Spike muttered, ceasing his struggles once the outer door slammed shut. His Childe had gone. Spike wanted to run after him but he knew Angel would never allow it.

"Maybe this is a lesson he needs to learn," Angel said quietly.

"What lesson is that? That his Sire can act like a cat in heat just as much as he can?" Spike asked. There was no real heat in his words, only resignation and worry. He didn't like the thought of Xander wandering around LA with just the cheerleader as backup.

"He does need to toughen up," Angel reasoned, still pinning Spike to the bed. "You've been coddling him too much."

"Yeah, well, he deserves a little coddling," Spike argued. "His own bloody father helped beat him to death. His mum knew all about it and didn't lift so much as a finger to warn him. Everyone he's ever loved has dumped on him. I don't want to be lumped in with that lot."

"He's a vampire now," Angel continued his argument. "You have to treat him like one. Not like some teenager."

"He might be a vampire but he's still just a boy. He hasn't learned how to be a man yet. Nobody ever took the time to show him. The Watcher's the only real father figure he's ever had but he had his hands so full with the Slayer he couldn't give the boy much time. I know I'm coddling

him, alright, but I don't want him to ever worry that I'll leave him."

Finally Angel sighed and pushed himself off of Spike. "He'll get over it eventually. I doubt he heard anything, just got an eyeful and he pretty much pushed you on me. What did he expect to happen?"

"Probably expects me to have his bags all packed by the time he gets back, knowing Xander," Spike said. "And just where do you think you're going, anyway?"

"Downstairs. I have a business to run," Angel said, already looking for pants that would hide an erection. Of course he still needed to shower and eat, but there was nothing like paperwork to kill a good erection.

"I don't think so, Peaches," Spike said. "You got me all hot and bothered. Even managed to chase my boy away for probably the better part of the night. You're not gonna just leave me like this."

"What happened to waiting until the boy was ready?" Angel said, repeating Spike's earlier argument in a mocking tone. "What happened to all the time in the world to broaden his horizons? Well, we certainly

broadened his horizons. Bet he liked what he saw."

"I bet he did, too," Spike said smugly. "Or he will once he gets over the shock and quits worrying that I'm gonna dump him for you. But that's got nothing to do with this. I want my Sire back."

"You have your Sire back," Angel said. "But the answer is no, William."

"You don't want me," Spike said, his own insecurities surging forward. Angel had never refused him like this before. It was the worst insult a Master could give to their Childe, telling them they were no longer desired.

Angel groaned inwardly, calling for patience. Maybe he was going about this the wrong way. Half the time he thought of Spike as his Childe, the other half time as a Master vampire. But that was not the plea of a Master vampire. That was the wounded plea of his insecure Childe... of his William. Maybe if he'd been strong and treated both Spike and Xander like the Childer they were, they wouldn't be in this situation. Maybe, it was time he started acting like the Master vampire he was.

"I always want you, Will," Angel admitted. "But it

wouldn't do for Xander to return and catch us in the act. Or even come back and smell it in the room. He'd know and that would undermine what small amount of self-confidence the boy does possess. I'm afraid you'll just have to live with it until your Childe decides to come back."

That answer did not please Spike at all. He grabbed a pillow and hurled it at Angel. "Then get the hell outta here so I can wank off," Spike growled. "Maybe when my boy comes back, we'll just jet outta here." It really was an empty threat. He didn't have any other safe place he could take his Childe right now, but that didn't mean he wasn't pissed off royally. In truth, he was a little confused. He was a Master in his own right, but now he was trapped between that and the role of a Childe with the natural desire to become his Sire's favourite again.

"Change the sheets when you're done," Angel said calmly. He finished dressing and left the room as quickly as he could without appearing to rush. He knew by the time Xander returned that Spike would be calm again. That was good. They were going to need that calm once Xander and Cordelia got back.

Part Twelve

"So are you gonna tell me what happened now?" Cordelia pressed. Xander had come to her quiet and shaking, literally dragging her out of the building. He'd quickly covered that with the 'Geeky Xander Puppy' mask, but Cordelia could see through it. No matter how much he complained as he followed her around the stores, he was hurting badly inside. And she just knew those two vamp blockheads had something to do with it.

"Nothing really," Xander shrugged. "Nothing I shouldn't have expected, anyway. I walked in on them. No big, right? I mean, Sire and Childe... that's what they do. And they've been really good about not pushing me and stuff. Of course, Angel thinks I've been acting like a slut."

"Slut?" Cordelia squeaked, almost dropping her parcels. "He called you a slut?"

"Not to my face or anything," Xander said quickly. "He

was talking to Spike. He told Spike to tell me to quit acting like a slut or something like that. That's when I walked in and saw them together. I mean, I knew it was going to happen. Spike almost said as much. It just... hurt. Guess I know what it felt like for you now, huh?"

"You and Willow were only kissing," Cordelia dismissed it. She'd gotten over that a long time ago. "So your man was cheating on you already. Well, there's only one thing to do about that."

"Um, Cordy, I don't think it's actually considered cheating. Angel is his Sire. They have a bond. And if it makes Spike happy, and I really can't believe I'm saying this, I want them to be together." A wild mix of emotions coursed through Xander at his admission. Jealousy, love, understanding, anger... they all made a debut, swirling one into the other inside his head. The bottom line, however, was that he wanted Spike to be happy. If that meant he had to spend eternity sharing him with Angel, then he'd learn to live with it. Somehow.

"You make Spike happy," Cordelia said. "Which brings me back to my solution. Shopping. I'm taking you shopping. If they think you're a slut, then you'd better dress the part. Nothing like a little jealousy to make a

man take a second look.”

"Um, kinda like the way you dressed your first day back at school?" Xander asked, remembering vividly the red leather outfit Cordelia had sported that day. It had been enough to make certain parts of his body sit up and take notice no matter how he tried to fight it.

“Bingo!” Cordelia brightened up. “I know just the store!”

Xander tried to protest as Cordelia grabbed his hand and literally dragged him toward a store. He had a feeling Angel was getting the bill for this little shopping trip and he wasn't sure how the older vampire would take it. He was already in hot water with both his Sire and Grand-Sire over his actions. This would only make things worse.

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Xander didn't want to go back into the hotel. He felt like an idiot and he just knew he'd be blushing if he had enough blood in his system. He hadn't fed at all yet this evening and his hunger was gnawing at him. He was dressed head to toe in leather and silk. He still remembered the male shop clerk groping at him and

leering an offer, even going so far as to slip him his phone number. The only difference between this outfit and the ones he'd seen Spike and even Angel in was that Cordelia had insisted he wear butter soft chocolate brown leather. She said it matched his eyes.

"You look great," Cordelia told him for the fifth time. "So great in fact that those two idiots are probably gonna hurt themselves when they see you. Now quit stalling and get up there. And remember what I said. Play it cool, like nothing ever happened this morning. Make them come to you."

"I have to go to them eventually," Xander mumbled, running his hands nervously over the skin-tight pants. He was most unsure about the lace up fly drawing attention to this package. "I have to eat."

"So go up and start rummaging through the fridge like you're looking for something to eat," Cordelia instructed. "You said you only eat from Spike, right? That should get both of them jumping."

"You're trying to teach me how to be manipulative," Xander accused.

"As if," Cordelia grinned. "You spent how many years with Her Buffyness and you still don't know how to be manipulative? I'm just coaching you on how to make an entrance."

"Make an entrance," Xander repeated. He wanted to keep Spike at all costs. "No matter how I dress, I can't compete with Angel."

"Really? Then why was Spike in Sunnydale with you rather than here with Angel? I mean, it's obvious Angel would have taken him in. But he stayed there with you," Cordelia said. "Don't get me wrong, there're some serious feelings between those two, but they're nothing compared to what Spike feels for you."

"Thank you, Cordy," Xander said and gave her a quick hug. "I can do this. I can do this."

"I know you can. You're Xander Harris and there's never been a challenge you couldn't meet head on. Not when it comes to vampires."

Xander left Cordelia going through the bags of her own purchases. He headed to their room repeating, "I can do this," over and over to himself. He silently opened the

door, headed to the fridge and started to root around, making sure to reach in the very back to showcase certain assets.

Xander could feel two sets of eyes on him and did his best to ignore them. He rooted around for a few more seconds, even going so far as to give a little wiggle before pulling out a blood pack and raising up.

“What do you think you’re doing, pet?” he heard Spike’s distinctive growl from behind him. Much closer than before.

"Getting something to eat," Xander said as non-committally as possible. "Shopping with Cordelia can really take it out of a guy. I'm starving."

“You haven’t eaten yet,” Spike said flatly. The poor boy must be starving and that raised a whole new level of guilt in Spike. “Warming the bag up for me?”

Xander considered saying no, that he was in fact warming the bag up for him. One look at his Sire's face and he simply nodded and turned toward the microwave. He would not lie to his Sire. Not directly and not about something so obviously important to Spike.

"It's a nice new outfit," Spike said, taking in Xander head to toe. It was a little awkward between them, but the sight still brought a smile to him. So his Childe was trying to seduce him.

"Cordy picked it out. She said she always wanted to see me in leather," Xander shrugged.

"Rather tight isn't it?"

Xander shrugged again and quickly thought of how Cordelia would handle a situation like this. "Cordy seemed to like it," he said then turned around so Spike couldn't see the smile on his face.

"Does that bint still have a thing for you?" Spike demanded. He didn't like the idea of Xander's ex ogling and fondling him in that outfit.

"Nah, Cordy's way over me. Don't know how I ever thought I could be enough for a girl like her." The microwave went off before Xander could say any more and he quickly went about pouring the blood into mugs before it could cool.

Spike came up behind Xander and started to run his hands over Xander's thighs and stomach. "We need to have a little talk, pet."

"Your blood's ready, Master," Xander said, ignoring Spike as best he could. He turned and placed a mug of blood in his Sire's hand then brushed past him to carry the remaining mug to Angel.

Spike took a large swig of the blood as he watched Xander carefully. This wasn't quite the reaction he'd been expecting. He'd been expecting Xander to come back begging and broken. This was a new mask that he hadn't seen before as a coping mechanism.

Xander knelt before Angel and held out the mug. "Your blood, Grand-Sire," he said formally. Spike had told him that Childer were supposed to be respectful toward their Grand-Sires. Well, he could play the dutiful Childe and let them try to figure out what was going on in his head.

Angel took the mug and then took in Xander's outfit. "Get out of that getup, boy," he said tersely.

Xander thought about protesting but didn't. Instead, he decided to do exactly as Angel had said. Standing up, he

began to strip, his movements short and economical as if he were merely undressing for bed. There was no teasing involved, just a simple removal of the offending outfit as his Grand-Sire had requested.

“I didn't mean it like that,” Angel growled, averting his eyes. “Go change into something else.”

Xander gathered up the shirt he'd removed and carried it to the closet. He carefully hung it up before pulling out a sweater. The longer sweater covered more of the leather pants but Xander didn't mind. He knew he'd made an impact because he could feel the two men's eyes on him. If they wanted an obedient little puppy, then that's what they would get. At least this way he wouldn't get accused of being a slut again.

“Angel, lay off of him,” Spike spat. “I really liked your outfit, Xander. You can wear it anytime you like.”

"Thank you, Master," Xander replied. He wasn't sure what else to do so he sat down in the chair closest to the bed. He would have sat on the bed itself but didn't want to give anybody any ideas. It would be up to them to make the first move.

Spike was lost looking at Xander. His own eyes dropped to the floor and then he noticed a crumpled piece of paper. He bent down to pick it up and found out it was a receipt from a leather store with a hefty price tag. It made him smile until he turned it over and saw a phone number written on the back with a tag, 'Call me gorgeous and maybe I can get you out of your new pants. Kisses, Justin.' Spike held up the paper and demanded, "What's this?"

"The receipt," Xander said, knowing full well what Spike was talking about.

"Who's Justin?" Spike demanded. "Did this bloke try and pick you up?"

"Huh? Oh, he was the sales clerk at the store. I think Cordy said something about me having a boyfriend so he wrote his phone number on the back. I would have thrown it out if it hadn't been on the receipt," Xander explained.

"Take the pullover off and leave the pants on," Spike ordered suddenly. "Get your pretty ass over here."

Xander did as he was ordered, throwing the sweater

onto the floor and walking over to stand in front of his Sire. He stared down at Spike's boots. "I'm sorry I behaved like a slut, Master. It won't happen again."

Spike grabbed the back of Xander's hair, pulling his head back. He put his wrist in front of Xander's mouth and growled, "Drink and remember who you belong to."

Xander sank his teeth in and drank, but only a little. He took a few mouthfuls, feeling the hunger swell inside him then he pulled back, licking the wound to seal it. He didn't understand why he suddenly felt so uncertain, but he did. It was as if he didn't know what his place was now.

"I said drink," Spike said more powerfully. "Don't make me force feed you to re-establish my claim."

"I drank, Sire," Xander said, backing away slightly. "I'm not really hungry anymore."

"You haven't fed since yesterday," Spike said, his visage changing into game face. "Unless you drank from someone else. Did you drink from that mortal?"

"No," Xander shook his head. "I told you I won't. I'm just

not hungry anymore."

"I know you're hungry. Are you that angry with me that you're willing to starve yourself?"

"I'm not angry with you, Sire. I'm just having a few problems... adjusting... to things," Xander tried to explain. It had all seemed so much easier when he was out with Cordy. Now, all he wanted to do was fall to his knees and beg Spike not to cast him aside in favour of Angel.

"Tell me how you think things are now?" Spike pressed. He kept his grip on Xander's hair tight, making sure his Childe had to look him in the eye.

"You and Angel. I saw you," Xander said. "I know you want to be with him. I mean, he's your Sire, you're supposed to want to be close to him. I just... I want you to be happy and if that means that I have to share you with Angel then I guess that's what it means and I'll get used to it, I promise I will but it's hard, you know, because no one's ever wanted just me except for you and now you don't even want that."

Spike's response was to let go of Xander's hair and wrap

his arms around the babbling boy's waist. He drew him over to the bed and told Angel briskly, "Get out."

"No!" Xander said frantically. "He's your Sire. He belongs here. I'm sorry, Master. I don't mean to be like this. Everything's so confused in my head right now. Please don't be mad."

Spike used his strength to manoeuvre Xander easily onto the bed until he was sitting on Xander's lap and leaning over him. "Here's how it's gonna go. Angel is gonna leave us alone and we're gonna have a nice long talk after you feed. You can take as long as you want, doing all that slow, sweet suckling you do, but you will feed."

"Yes, Master," Xander replied, his eyes never leaving Spike's.

Spike reached out and pushed Xander's hair away from his forehead. Using a soft tone he said, "And I'll show you how much I love and need you."

Xander closed his eyes as he sank his fangs into Spike's wrist again. This time he drank deeply, not suckling as he normally did, but feasting on his Master's blood. His hunger flared then slowly began to abate as he filled his

belly. Finally, he could sense that Spike was weakening and he pulled his mouth away, carefully licking the wound closed as he did.

“Feel better, pet?” Spike whispered, continuously touching Xander’s face and hair. He was much more comfortable now that he had re-staked his claim.

Xander nodded, licking the last of Spike's essence from his lips. He knew Spike wanted to talk now and he wished they could just skip it. He knew the score. Spike loved him, he'd said as much, but his tie to his Sire was strong. Xander would simply have to adjust if he wanted his Sire to be happy.

“Tell me what’s going on in that pretty head of yours,” Spike whispered again as he gently grabbed Xander’s chin so their eyes were forced to meet.

"Nothing really," Xander said. "Just making a few mental adjustments."

“Wanna tell me what they are?”

"You and Angel. I know he's your Sire and I understand how strong that tie can be now. I didn't mean to act like

a whore. I just wanted him to loosen up a bit. I'm sorry if I embarrassed you."

Spike's fingers tightened on Xander's chin. "Don't you ever call yourself that. You understand me?"

"I didn't mean to act that way, Master. I swear, I didn't," Xander said softly, his voice breaking on the words. "I just wanted him to join us. Guess I got what I wanted, huh?"

Spike had to bite the inside of his mouth until it bled to keep from losing his temper. He'd always been patient with Dru, but he'd been able to take out his aggression when they got violent. He couldn't be violent with Xander. Angel was the talented one at handling unsteady fledglings. He could see the desires of a vampire were confusing the old morals that were still bonded with Xander's soul. No fledgling should have to deal with the guilt of their mortal constraints, even Angel hadn't been put through that emotional torture. By the time he'd gotten his soul back, he'd had no sexual hang-ups left.

"Do you even know exactly what you want, pet?" Spike asked gently. "Does part of you want one thing and another part think it's wrong?"

"N-no," Xander replied. "He's just so much more than me. How can I compete with him? I don't want to lose you, Sire. I don't think I could stand it. I don't mind you being with Angel as long as you still want me some, too."

"Shit," Spike hissed. So the boy thought Angel was replacing him. He had to fix this. "What you and I have, it's already stronger than anything Angelus and I ever had. The only thing I have tying me to Angel is the blood bond between Sire and Childe. I knew and feared Angelus, but I don't know Angel."

"But you want to. I know you do. I can see it in your eyes. You want your Sire back and I can't say I blame you. Especially since he wants you back just as badly. The bottom line is, I want you to be happy. If Angel makes you happy then I'll deal."

"I think it's time for a history lesson for both of you," Angel's quiet voice broke into their awareness. He'd been standing there the whole time and now he moved closer to the bed.

"Angel!" Xander gasped, shrinking back on the bed. He knew he'd made the older vampire angry with his

displays. The demon in him was howling for him to get on his knees and make this right with his Grand-Sire. It was the way things were done, and while he wasn't sure how he knew that particular fact, he still knew it to be true.

Spike grabbed Xander around the waist, hauling him against his chest as Xander cowered. "I thought I told you to get outta here!" Spike growled.

"No, Sire, don't," Xander said, his arms going around Spike and holding on tight. "Don't push him away because of me. I need to talk to him anyway."

"You both need a lesson about the meaning of family," Angel said in an eerily calm voice.

"I'm sorry, Grand-Sire," Xander said. "I never meant to act like that. I won't do it again."

Angel looked at Xander and realized the boy was absolutely terrified. "You know I'm not going to hurt you, right?"

"I kn-know," Xander said. He really did trust Angel, but part of him was wary. He knew a few things about how

Sires, Angelus in particular, disciplined their wayward Childer. The thing that worried him the most, though, was the thought of Spike trying to get between them.

Angel moved a little closer. "Your father used to hit your mother in front of you, didn't he? He used to hit you, too." He used the tone that always used to calm Childer. It pained him to think of the times he'd talked Dru or William from a dark corner with the same tone, only to betray their trust with torture once he got hold of them.

"Sometimes," Xander shrugged. There was no use denying it. They all knew the things his father had done to him.

"Did your father cheat on your mother?" Angel continued with this seemingly strange line of questioning.

"Yeah. Bastard even brought someone home once," Xander said bitterly. "Mom went out of town to visit her sister. When she came back he had a woman there. She didn't say anything, just went on like she hadn't just walked in on him getting a blowjob in her own living room."

“That’s not the way human families are meant to be and you thought you were human,” Angel said, knowing the recent revelation that he was of mixed demon heritage could be a sore point. “Spike never learned what it was like to live in a proper vampire family. With Angelus... with me, I didn't appreciate my Childer. I know he tried to build one with Dru, but the girl was never there.”

"I don't want to screw things up," Xander said softly. "I never could do anything right at home. I don't want that here. Just tell me what to do and I'll do it."

“You’re going to do just what you've been doing,” Angel said, inching closer to the pair huddled together. “You’re going to continue to care for your Sire. Every family needs one pair to hold them together, to be the center of the family. That’s why Sire’s play favourites among their Childer. There’s no equality for us. You have to learn that.”

"But what about you? I thought you and Spike... that you guys would be the center."

Angel smiled sadly. “I could never have that. I could never be as happy or love as much as you do, it’s too

dangerous. I'd be privileged just to live on the periphery."

"No," Xander said. He felt calmer now and pushed away from Spike a bit. "You shouldn't have to be on the outside looking in. I know what that feels like and trust me when I say it sucks. Royally."

Angel sighed and scratched at his temples. "It's the way things have to be, Childe. You're young, you'll understand as you grow older. Just take comfort in the fact that I'm not taking your Sire away from you. I'm just here to protect both of you and give him the support you can't."

Xander reached out a tentative hand and placed it on Angel's arm. "What about you? I know you can't ever have the perfect happiness thing but that doesn't mean you can't have some. I told Spike all I wanted was for him to be happy. I meant that."

"I don't do happy well," Angel said. He didn't move away from Xander's touch, remembering Spike's lecture on not pulling away from the boy. "Nothing happened between us before, I wouldn't let it."

"Because of me. It was stupid of me to run out like that. You just caught me by surprise," Xander said. He paused, thinking about what Angel had just told him. "You really didn't do anything?"

He didn't say that it wasn't for lack of Spike's trying, but that wasn't his Childe's fault. When around their Sires, Childer had little control over their sexual need to please their maker. "No, nothing too serious happened. Pants stayed on."

"You really did that for me?" Xander asked, bewildered that the two vampires had denied themselves what they obviously wanted just for him. It was completely opposite to how things normally happened in his life.

"If anything happens... whatever happens, you're not ready for it yet," Angel nodded. He reached his own hand over and briefly rested it on Xander's.

"Maybe not, but I know it's what you both want. Tell me something, Angel, back when you were a Childe if there was something your Sire wanted what would you have done?"

That made Angel smile. "As long as Darla is still alive, I'll

always be a Childe. When I was a fledgling, I would have done anything for her. I would have done anything for her until I got my soul. Even now, I still love her.”

"Then you understand. Spike wants you. Like I told him, I'll deal."

“What does William want though?” Angel asked. His Childe had been quiet while they talked, merely watching the interaction with intense blue eyes.

"I want you, you know I do," Spike said. "But I won't hurt him. He's been hurt too many times by the people he trusted. I won't have him look at me with betrayal burning in his eyes."

“Then why don’t we take this slowly,” Angel suggested. “It’s not like we don’t have time.”

"Will you lay down with us at least?" Xander asked shyly. He knew he wasn't playing fair but it was obvious that neither his Sire nor his Grand-Sire was going to make the first move. It would be up to him to try and get them together. He would just have to remember not to come on so strong. He didn't ever want to give Angel a reason to call him a whore again.

“Did you sleep enough during the day?” Angel asked immediately, his protective instincts of the younger vampire coming forward.

"Not really. Cordy and I talked. A lot. You might want to, ah, avoid her for a little while. She was kinda pissed," Xander said, grimacing slightly.

Angel looked nervously at the door. He moved avoiding Cordelia to the top of his priorities list. “It has been a long evening.”

"Lay with us, Sire," Spike said, sliding himself and his Childe over to make room.

“This two against one stuff isn't fair,” Angel grumbled even as he moved onto the bed.

"Funny, I used to remember you liking that sort of thing," Spike smiled, teasing his Sire.

Angel groaned again. “Be nice, Willy.” He held back the smile knowing how much Spike had always hated that nickname.

"Oi. Don't call me that. You know how much I hate it," Spike groused.

Angel settled next to Xander, his hand already itching to rest on those luscious cheeks. "That's why I do it. It's cute when you complain."

"Ha ha," Spike said. "Go to sleep. My boy needs his rest."

"I'm not a boy," Xander piped up. "I'll be twenty-one in a few weeks. Now go to sleep, old man."

Part Thirteen

Things settled down over the next few weeks. Xander seemed to calm considerably, accepting that his new family wasn't going to suddenly grow tired of him. Cordelia had given Angel hell for making Xander worry like that but an all-day trip to her favourite spa had gone a long way toward getting her to forgive and forget. For his part, Xander did his best to keep Angel close to them, never letting the older vampire become too far removed.

Spike and Angel seemed to be trying to make up for Xander's crappy past and their own mistakes. Spike openly lavished him with affection and Angel seemed intent on showing he cared by spoiling Xander. One

evening he just left a credit card on the table with Xander's name on it and no explanation. Cordelia had really enjoyed that particular present as Xander had proceeded to take her shopping on Angel's dime. The two older vampires had been stunned when he'd swooped up the credit card, grabbed Cordy and headed out into the night. They'd had a rather anxious few hours waiting for them to return.

"You're spoiling the brat, you know," Spike teased Angel as they waited.

"I know, but it's only money," Angel replied. "From the way he acts I doubt if anyone's ever spent much on him before. His parents certainly didn't. I just can't believe he took Cordelia."

"He's actually becoming friends with the bint," Spike shrugged. "I don't mind 'cause she's good for him. Says she wants to make his outside match his new status as boy toy."

"I'll talk to her about that," Angel said. He wasn't exactly comfortable with Cordelia doing a make-over on Xander. It was much easier to resist him when he still looked like a dopey schoolboy. That was the reason Angel had

ordered him out of his leathers after his first time out with Cordy. It was damn hard to look and not take.

"I don't think so, Peaches," Spike made a tscking noise. "I like the new Xander. Tight jeans. Leather jacket. Yummy."

"You don't think it's too... conspicuous?" Angel asked.

"Oh, big word," Spike laughed. "He's beginning to like the attention. But he hasn't dared put back on that outfit he bought a few weeks back and we should have a little talk about that."

"I didn't mean to make him self-conscious about it," Angel said. "I'll talk to him if you think it'll do any good."

"You haven't noticed he tends to cover up when you're around?" Spike asked. "I even caught him wearing one of your shirts the other night."

"I didn't mean for that to happen. I was only trying to keep from jumping him on the spot."

"Dead sexy, wasn't he?"

"Too much so," Angel admitted. "It was all I could do to keep from taking him then and there. He has no idea how beautiful he is."

"I didn't tell you I caught him wearing your shirt," Spike said again, deciding it was time to tuck at his Sire's heart strings. "It was while you were out with that weirdo Gunn. After you'd worked out with him. I found him curled up on the bed, fresh outta the shower and wearing just your shirt."

"He was?" Angel asked, easily picturing a freshly showered Xander curled up in one of his long shirts. It was both erotic and strangely innocent. Angel wished he could have seen it for himself.

"Yeah, he was knackered. He wears himself out in those little training sessions of yours," Spike nodded. "He wants to impress you so badly."

"He does impress me. But I don't suppose he knows that. It's been a long time since I had a new Childe. I forgot how they can be."

Spike tried to suppress a smile when he heard his Sire refer to Xander as his Childe. He wasn't jealous because

it was so very important to him that Angel bond with Xander. "He's still a handful, but he's settled into the life like an old sock."

"You like this, don't you?" Angel asked, seeing the smile his Childe was trying so hard to fight. "Us all together like this."

Spike's mirth faltered a little. "Yeah, don't you?"

"You know I do," Angel said gently. "I'm just a little surprised. I would think you'd want your Childe... your Consort... all to yourself. You've never been one to share with others, even me."

"I shared Dru with you," Spike bristled. "You just never asked what I wanted before."

"You didn't share Dru, I took her," Angel replied bluntly. "That's not going to happen here. I'm asking this time, Will. Tell me how you want this to be between us."

Spike crossed his arms over his chest and turned away. "He'll always be mine."

"Yes, he will. If I tried to take him, he wouldn't let me."

He'd fight with everything he has to stay by your side. He truly is your Consort, William."

Spike glanced at Angel sideways. "That's why I want this."

"I don't understand," Angel said. "You want to share him because you know I can't have him otherwise?"

Spike huffed and threw Angel a disgusted look. Angel should just understand. "I trust him, but I can't give him everything."

"You give him everything. What could he possibly want that you don't provide?"

"What about protection?" Spike spat.

"You can give him that, too. And one day soon, my Childe, you'll be whole again. I promise."

"Is that why you're holding back?" Spike asked suddenly. They'd been sleeping in the same bed with Angel over the past few weeks, but besides kissing, he had refused any sexual contact other than watching Spike and Xander together.

"I don't want to interfere. The boy's had enough forced on him. I don't want him to think he has to submit to me simply because of my status."

"I think you're afraid that I'll take off with him if I get that chip outta my head," Spike accused. "I think that's why you don't want to get too close."

"Is that what you want? To leave once you're whole again?" Angel asked, redirecting the question.

"No!" Spike shouted. "I'm tired of being alone. Call me selfish, but I want it all!"

"Are you sure? You could have the world at your feet once that chip's out of your head. Do you really want to stay here with me?" Angel had to know. He had to know if this was just temporary. He couldn't risk giving himself to the two of them if Spike was going to take off once he was healed.

"You're so bloody thick," Spike accused as he continued to rant, his accent getting thicker. "You and Xander are my world! I've seen what the rest of the world has to offer for over a century and don't want any part of it."

"Spike, calm down," Angel said, getting to his feet and moving quickly to his agitated Childe. "I'm sorry. I just... I had to be sure. Having you back again has been the best thing to happen to me in a very long time. I don't want to lose you."

"I don't know what this is," Spike growled. "Maybe I should just leave that mother fucking chip in my head. It'd keep me in line living with two souled up vamps."

"No," Angel said. He knelt down in front of Spike and grabbed him by the arms. "I am not leaving you defenceless. I don't care if it means you try to bite your way through the entire city. I won't have you crippled like this."

"Maybe I should... should get cursed by Xander's little witchy friend, too," Spike half laughed, half sobbed.

"No," Angel said again. "Xander loves you just the way you are. You don't have to change for him."

"But I have changed," Spike insisted. "I don't know any other Master Vampire who runs to his Sire like a

baby. Every other Master Vampire is able to control this... need. I didn't run to you like this before."

"Every vampire craves his Sire. I still miss Darla, even if I was the one who killed her. It doesn't make you weak. Your feelings, they're what make you strong. Without them, you wouldn't have made it this long."

"I shouldn't need you," Spike insisted with a half a pout. "But I do."

"I'm glad you do. I need you, too. I'm tired of doing this alone. I want my Childer back. I know I can never have Dru or... Penn... but I can have you and Xander."

"Right. It's time I stop acting like a right git," Spike said, looking up at Angel. "It's time we talk about my birthday boy."

"Oh yes," Angel grinned. "He did say he had a birthday coming up. I take it you'd like to do something extra special for him?"

"He told me what some of his crappy birthdays were like when he was a kid. He laughs about it now, but I know it still hurts him. Imagine coming home and your parents

didn't care enough to even give you a card, or Dad got drunk and ate your birthday cake."

"We really should have killed him slower," Angel seethed. "But that's not important now. I'll get Cordelia to take care of the cake. She should know what he likes best. Any ideas on what you want to get him?"

"I do, but it's too expensive," Spike admitted.

"Tell me," Angel said.

"A car."

"I think that can be arranged," Angel said. "As long as you weren't thinking of anything too outrageous."

"You know what always makes his eyes sparkle when we pass it?" Spike confessed. "A classic mustang."

"I'll see what I can do. I know a guy that moves cars on the side. He might be able to get one by the time his birthday rolls around. If not, we can save it for his Death-day present."

"Actually..." Spike looked like he had when Angel caught

him killing someone he wasn't supposed to in the old days. "Actually, I kinda found it already."

"Well that's even better then," Angel replied. "What colour is it?"

"Black exterior, red interior. Blood red."

"He'll love it," Angel grinned widely. "Is it in good shape? How soon before it'll be ready?"

"It just might be ready now," Spike confessed. "I sorta managed to run into this old demon who owed me a favour. Just so happens he owns a body shop here in LA with a 1970 Mustang Mach One ripe for the picking."

"Perfect. Tell him to keep it there until we're ready for it," Angel said. "Now that we have his present from you figured out, what about mine?"

Spike actually stared at Angel blankly for a second. "You mean you want to get him something on your own?"

"He's my Grand-Childe," Angel explained. "I want to make the day special for him, too."

“What did you have in mind?”

"I don't know. I was thinking something along the lines of the outfit Cordy picked out for him. Maybe something in soft black leather."

Spike's eyes dilated a little. "That would be... hot."

"I thought you might like that. And it might help get Xander to wear the first one again. I don't like the fact that he hasn't touched it since that night. I didn't mean for that to happen."

"Makes me feel like a cradle robber to say this, but he's still a kid. He can be hurt so easily."

"So can somebody else I know."

"Are you saying I'm difficult?" Spike huffed.

"Maybe. But you're worth it," Angel replied. Any further discussion was cut short as Xander and Cordelia burst through the doors laughing loudly.

Xander took one look at Spike sitting on the floor with Angel crouched over him and immediately dropped his

shopping bags. "What's wrong?" he demanded.

"Nothing's wrong, pet," Spike said. "Me and the pouf were just passing the time till you got back. How was your shopping trip? You manage to max out that card he gave you?"

"You're upset," Xander said, still standing there, then turning his gaze on Angel. "Why is he upset?"

"He's not upset," Angel assured the younger man. "He just asked if he was difficult and I told him yes, but he was worth the trouble. That's all, I give you my word."

"We're not difficult," Xander quipped. "You've just gotten sluggish in your old age."

"Sluggish, right," Angel replied, running a hand through his hair. He turned his attention to Cordelia warily. The last time she and Xander had gone shopping he'd ended up with one very pissed off co-worker. She'd even gone so far as to casually mention using Holy water to brew the coffee with. Luckily for him, Xander drank coffee, too, eliminating the chance of that particular threat being carried out.

“Maybe that explains why he’s so thick sometimes,” Cordelia added with a pointed look at Angel and a raised eyebrow.

"So, did you guys, um, enjoy your shopping?" Angel asked. "I mean, you got a lot of bags. What did you get?"

"I didn't want to buy it all," Xander hesitated. "But there was a sale on and Cordelia said I needed to update my wardrobe."

"It's fine. I wanted you to spend the money. Why don't you show us what you bought?"

As Xander smiled and started to root around in his bags, Cordelia piped up, "We went to Structure for this to die for sale. Xander seriously needed more new clothes and you can always go there for semi casual through formal tight slinky to shiny as needed. We got lots of darker colors. Xander almost looks like a mini Angel now."

"Oi! Tell me you got him something with a little color," Spike cried out.

“Oh don’t worry, I know how much you like him in colour,” Cordelia giggled. “I made sure he got deep reds

and blue... even made sure his new silk boxers weren't all black.”

"You got him silk, huh kitten? I'm impressed," Spike said, grinning at Cordelia. The thought of Xander in silk was enough to make his jeans tighten. He couldn't wait to get his boy into them so he could turn around and get him right back out again.

“I can’t believe you told them I bought underwear,” Xander hissed under his breath. He’d almost died when Cordy had dragged him over, insisting he just had to buy them to please his man. Of course, she’d said this loud enough for everyone in the store to hear.

"Bet you had fun helping him pick 'em out, too," Spike said. He was surprised that he wasn't jealous at all. If it had been Angel helping him pick out his unmentionables he would have been a bit ticked, but the cheerleader didn't bother him in the least.

“He blushes like a dream,” Cordelia laughed. “I knew he was thinking about you when he bought them. There wasn't anyone else he could be thinking about with that goofy look on his face.”

Spike simply grinned when Xander began to blush. He glanced over at Angel and was pleased to see a smile on his Sire's face as well. He wished those idiots back in Sunnydale could see his boy now. They wouldn't even recognize the man he was becoming.

Part Fourteen

"You know... it's my birthday today," Xander tried to mention casually as heated up blood for both Angel and Spike. He'd been dropping subtle hints for several days, but it was the morning of his birthday and they were acting like it was just another day.

"Really? That's today?" Spike asked. "Thought it was yesterday." It was all he could do to keep from laughing at the look on Xander's face. He knew they couldn't keep this up for long. It wasn't fair to the boy, but he couldn't believe that Xander thought they'd actually forgotten his birthday.

"Oh." Xander's lips tightened and then he sighed, turning back to microwave. "That's okay. No biggie."

"Pet, take the blood and go into the other room," Spike said. He waited for Xander to do as he was told then followed silently behind. He hoped Angel had everything set up. He wasn't about to let Xander go on thinking they'd forgotten about him.

Xander had his eyes downcast, focused on his shoes even as he entered the room. "I'll just give the blood to Gramps and then... find some stuff to do."

Spike waited until they were inside the other room. He grinned at Angel and Cordelia. Even the Watcher and that Gunn fellow were there. "Happy Birthday, Pet."

Xander looked up and his mouth dropped open as he took in the hand drawn banner in pink saying "Happy Birthday Xan Man." He realized that Cordelia must have done that if the pink hearts all over were any indication. Then he took in the cake with his name on it and his eyes started to well up.

"Happy Birthday, Xander," Cordelia said, stepping forward and taking the cups from him before hugging her

ex-boyfriend. She could see the emotions starting to overwhelm him and simply held him for a moment.

"I didn't think anyone..." Xander didn't finish the sentence. He didn't think anyone remembered or gave a shit. He didn't think anyone thought he was worth the trouble.

"Hey now, you didn't think we'd forget something as important as this, did you?" Spike said gently. "Only thing more important'd be your Deathday but we got a ways to go for that still."

Xander swallowed thickly. "You got me a cake," he said dumbly. It still hadn't all sunk in.

"Cordy said you liked chocolate," Gunn said, trying to draw the rather startled young man out. "Glad to see you got good taste."

"It has my name on it," Xander smiled goofily. "Never had one of those before. Usually a Twinkie with a candle if I was lucky."

"I don't think that'll ever happen again," Cordelia said. Not if the other two vampires in the room had anything

to say about it. She had a feeling Wes and Gunn would be in on it, too. From what she'd learned about them, their childhoods hadn't been a whole lot better than Xander's had. "Now come on. Time to blow out the candles so we can get to the presents."

Xander took Spike's hand and dragged him over to the cake. As his friends sang happy birthday he blew out the candles enthusiastically. Well, Angel and Wes both mumbled the words, but it was the thought that counted.

Wesley did the honours of cutting the cake, handing out huge slices of the triple chocolate monstrosity. Cordelia knew her thighs were going to kill her but she took her piece from Wesley and settled down to eat it. She was going to enjoy Xander's birthday cake even if she had to starve the rest of the week to make up for it.

Xander refused to let go of Spike's hand and ended up perched on a couch, eating his cake happily with one hand as he juggled the plate on his lap. "You said presents?"

"Finish your cake first," Cordelia instructed. "I don't want you choking when you get a look at what we got you."

It wasn't that Xander was very childish, he just liked presents. At least that's the excuse he told himself when he wolfed down the rest of his cake in one bite. With a full mouth he asked, "I can always have more later, right?"

Cordelia shook her head with a smile and set her own cake aside. Spike's present was being saved for the grand finale so they started with hers. She handed Xander her present, watching expectantly as he tore open the package.

Xander opened the lid to the box and then slammed it shut, his blush rising immediately. "Cordy!" he gasped. "I can't believe you bought me that!"

"What? I thought it might help spice things up a little bit," Cordy said wickedly.

Xander put his hands securely over the top of the box. "Ah, thank you. I think, but things are spicy enough already."

"Cheerleader got you something naughty, huh?" Spike grinned. He hoped it was something the boy wouldn't be

too shy to use.

Xander opened the box just enough to show Spike what Cordy had gotten him. "You were involved with this, weren't you?"

"Not me, Pet," Spike said, grinning even more at the sight of the box's contents. "But I like it."

"Do I want to know what that is?" Angel groaned. His entire brood here was a handful.

"We'll save it for a surprise," Spike said. "But come on, time for your next pressie. Oi, Watcher, your turn."

"What I got was rather hard to wrap," Wesley coughed uncomfortably. Wes pulled a sword from behind his back with a bright bow attached to it. "It's a kopesh blade. I wanted to get you something practical."

"Wow, Wes, thanks," Xander said, taking the sword from the slightly flustered man. He ran his hand over the curved blade, careful of the razor sharp edge. The sword looked extremely well made. He'd have to ask Angel about it later.

"Now for my turn, man," Gunn spoke up. He handed an envelope to Xander. Inside was a pair of season tickets to the Lakers that he'd managed to get from a scalper who owed him big time. It might be in the nose-bleed section, but he still thought it'd be a cool gift.

Xander opened the envelope and just stared. He looked up at Gunn, opening and closing his mouth. Finally, he managed to get words out. "Oh... oh wow! Thanks! This is so great. I can't believe you guys did all this."

"You just have to promise to take me to at least one game," Gunn said. "Wouldn't hurt to get you away from your old man for awhile. Spend some time with someone your own age."

"You got it," Xander said quickly. "And yeah, it might be nice to get away sometime. Do some normal guy stuff."

"Yeah, with someone who isn't so vampiricly gay?" Cordelia added with a pointed look at first Angel and then Spike. "Can't have you too flaming yet."

"Hey, I'm not flaming," Spike grouched. "The pouf might be, but I'm not."

“You bleach your hair, honey,” Cordy said gently. “Let’s not mention leather and the way you suck on those cigarettes you sneak in the alley when you think Xander won’t notice.”

"Lots of blokes dress this way. That don't make them nancy boys," Spike argued.

“What about the fact that you sleep with two men?”

"Well, yeah there's that," Spike admitted, not about to deny either of his lovers. He wasn't the only one that got his feelings hurt kinda easily. "But that don't mean I'm on fire."

“What ever makes you happy,” Cordy said. “But you should know there’s nothing wrong with it. Hell, the word’s already starting to get around. I bought Xander’s toy at the sex shop down the street and he gave me a discount when he found out it was for one of Angel’s boys.”

"Oh my God! Cordy, tell me you didn't," Xander pleaded, turning an alarming shade of red for a vampire.

“That I didn't what?” She was obviously confused. Of

course she'd needed to ask the clerk for help and he wanted to know who it was for. She wanted to get the best for Xander and it wasn't like she knew about gay sex toys.

"That you didn't tell the guy down the street that runs the porn shop that you were buying a... a sex toy... for me," Xander explained, speaking as slowly as he could manage. He just knew he'd never be able to walk past that shop again without all the blood rushing to his face.

"Of course I did," Cordy beamed. "He was a little confused at first, but then I explained to him that you're my ex-boyfriend and now you're sleeping with my boss. He thought you were hot."

"Man's got good taste, Pet," Spike said, trying to ease Xander past his embarrassment. He was going to have a talk with the cheerleader about discretion. It was clear that Xander wasn't happy with people knowing about the three of them just yet. Spike tried not to let that hurt, telling himself that Xander was young and not far removed from his humanity. In time, he would lose his mortal inhibitions.

"Can I have more cake now that we're done?" Xander

muttered.

"What makes you think we're done?" Angel asked, speaking up for the first time. He'd been content to let Spike enjoy the moment with Xander. Now, though, he wanted to give the boy his own gift and then watch while Spike unveiled the grand finale.

"You guys have already gotten me too much. A sword, Laker's ticker and... a... well..." Xander's hand tightened on the box. "A something. I hope you didn't get me anything too big."

"Nothing more than what you deserve," Angel said cryptically. "I'll go first." He handed Xander a large box. He had picked this outfit himself, knowing exactly what he wanted to see the boy in.

Xander opened the box, but faltered when he opened the lid and looked at the leather outfit within. He lifted wounded eyes to Angel and croaked, "This is a joke, right?"

Angel moved over to Xander and knelt down beside him. "No joke, Childe. I'm sorry for before. I wasn't thinking. It would please me very much to see you in this some

time."

"But I've been good," Xander protested. "I haven't been wearing anything too whorish, have I?"

"You've been very good. This is my treat to you. I picked this out myself. I could picture you in it when I did. Believe me, Childe, you would look magnificent." Angel gently stroked Xander's hand as he spoke, trying to calm him. He realized he should have given him the gift in private but it was too late now.

Xander did the only thing he could. He didn't pull away from Angel, but he gazed back at Spike for permission to accept the gift. "Master?"

"Take it, Pet," Spike said. "Wouldn't mind seeing you in that getup myself."

"Okay," Xander said, knowing he'd accept the gift. He was still leery he might incur Angel's wrath somehow. "But I won't wear it out in public."

"No," Angel said shaking his head. "This, you wear only for us."

“We'll have to buy you something else just as tight and leathery to wear when you use Spike's present,” Cordy chirped. She definitely didn't think it was fair that only Spike and Angel would get to see him in that type of outfit.

“Huh?” Xander said, his gaze shifting to Cordelia then over to his smirking lover. “Um, Spike, what's she talking about?”

“Well, why don't you follow me outside so I can show you your pressie, Pet?”

"Outside?" Xander queried. He took in the too smug expression on Spike's face and the gleeful smile on Cordy's and started to worry. Still, he let Spike take his hand and lead him toward the door.

Sitting right in front of the hotel, highlighted by the shadowy case of a streetlight was a classic car. It was shiny midnight black with custom red decals and red leather interior. “That's for you,” Spike said, pointing to the car.

"You... you got me a car?" Xander gasped. "Spike, I can't take this. It's too much."

"Of course you can take it," Spike said, already pushing Xander out to it. "Don't you like it?"

"Of course I like it," Xander said quickly. "But this had to cost a fortune. I don't have any money, Spike. I..."

"Repeat after me," Spike started. "I will accept this wonderful pressie from my Sire, no questions asked."

"Sire..." Xander trailed off. He'd never been given anything like this before. He didn't know what to say.

"C'mon, Pet," Spike said, pulling him towards the car. "It's a nice practical gift. You needed a car anyway."

Xander spun around quickly, startling the friends that had followed him outside. He grabbed Spike and pulled him close, squeezing him hard enough to bruise. "I love you," he whispered hoarsely as he fought for control.

Part Fifteen

Xander was unsure of how he looked. He'd locked himself up in the bathroom to try his new outfit on without prying eyes. He ran his hands over the pants and muttered, "Well, at least I know Angel likes tight, black leather." He adjusted his package again. "Really tight leather."

"You gonna come out any time soon, Pet?" Spike called from the other side of the door. He was starting to get anxious. Xander had been in there a really long time. He was beginning to doubt if they'd get to see his boy in his new leathers tonight.

"It's so tight it's obscene," Xander called back. "I know I look stupid."

"I promise you, Xander, you do not look stupid," Spike called back. "Now come out here and let us see you already. Your Grand-Sire's about to do his nut waiting for you."

The door creaked open and Xander peeked out. He saw Angel pacing in the corner. "Just promise me you won't laugh?"

"Nobody's going to laugh," Angel promised. A few seconds later the door slowly opened and Xander stepped out. He was dressed in the outfit Angel had gotten him and the sight almost set his heart beating again. The young man looked good enough to eat in the tight leather pants and silk shirt. Angel had been a bit unsure about the shirt but it hugged Xander in all the right places, showcasing the boy's beautiful body to perfection.

"No one's saying anything," Xander said quickly. He could feel his palms getting sweaty. "I told you I looked stupid."

"You look... exquisite," Spike said, moving forward to take Xander's hands and pull him more fully into the room. "If you'd dressed like this back in Sunnyhell, I'd have bitten you a long time ago, chip or no chip."

"I would have been laughed off the street if I'd dressed like this back there," Xander laughed. "You two can pull it off, I can't."

"Oh you are so wrong there, Pet," Spike continued. "You would have had to beat them off with a bloody stick. You

look like a walking ad for sex. Makes me want to throw you down on the bed and see how fast I can get you back out of those things."

Xander held out his arm in mock surrender. "Sounds like a plan to me."

"Wait," Angel called out when Spike started forward. He walked over to his Childer and slowly circled Xander. He wanted to look his fill before Spike got hold of the boy. He knew it would probably be a long time before Xander wore that outfit again and he wanted the memory of it clear in his mind.

Xander watched Angel watching him as his Grand-Sire circled them both. After several moments of silence, he cocked his head to the side and took a deep breath. "Can I have something else for my birthday?"

"Anything," Angel said without pause. "Name it and it's yours."

"You."

"What?" Angel asked, going completely still behind the boy.

"I want you," Xander said, pleased that his voice didn't waver.

Angel glanced over Xander's shoulder at Spike. At his Childe's nod, he smiled. "Then you shall have me."

"Oh." Even though he'd asked, he hadn't really expected Angel to say yes without at least some more begging. "Ummm, so... yeah..." He grinned at Angel and Spike, showing his young years. "So what now?"

"Now we love you to within an inch of your unlife," Spike said. "You've never been loved by the likes of Angel and me before. Promise you, pet, this'll be a night to remember."

Xander actually gulped. "You're both going to fuck me?"

"If that's what you want," Angel said, slipping in close and whispering in Xander's ear. "Or you could take us. Whatever you want tonight, as much as you're ready for. We're yours for the taking."

Xander gulped again and he could feel his erection already straining against the tight leather pants. In the

past few weeks, Angel had watched Spike and Xander together in pretty much every position conceivable. It was a turn on to know they were being watched, but he'd been having fantasies of Angel slipping into the bed and taking him after Spike was done.

"I've been thinking about..." Xander blurted out.

"Go on, you can tell him," Spike coached softly. "I want it, too."

"When you watch..." Xander started uncertainly. "I've been thinking about after Spike's done... about you taking me..."

"You want that, my Childe?" Angel asked, pressing his full length against Xander's back. "You want to give yourself to me like that while your Sire looks on?"

"Yeeeeesss," Xander moaned. "I want to know what he felt when you took him. I want..."

"Then you shall have." With that, Angel turned Xander around and kissed him. It wasn't a gentle teasing kiss. This kiss held all the promise of what was to come that night. It let Xander know, in no uncertain terms, just

what he was in for.

When they broke away, Xander was clutching at Angel and was able to finish his previous thought. "I want to be closer to you."

"You know you don't have to do this to be close to me. It would never be required of you," Angel said, giving Xander an out. He didn't want the boy in his bed out of some sense of obligation. He wanted Xander to want to be there or not be there at all.

"But I want to be closer to you," Xander repeated again, emphasizing his point by rubbing up against Angel in all the right places.

"Gods, Childe," Angel groaned. "You're enough to tempt a saint. Spike, let's take him to bed already. I'm dying for a taste."

At the mention of taste, Xander decided now was the time to ask for another aspect of his fantasy that he hadn't even told Spike. "When Angel takes me... can I feed from you Spike, please?"

"Course you can," Spike said, leering widely as he led

Xander to the bed. "Figured I'd hold you while he did it anyway."

"Oh, I like that idea," Xander nodded. "Now I need to get out of these pants, they're killing me."

"Very well then," was all Angel said before dropping silently to his knees in front of Xander. He reached up and undid the clasp on the pants then carefully pulled the leather down.

"Angel... you shouldn't be doing that," Xander gasped.

Angel didn't reply. Instead, he held Xander's pants as he stepped out of them, leaving the boy standing in just his silk shirt.

"You're a Master," Xander gasped. He didn't want his Grand-Sire to lower his pride for him.

"Nothing we do here will change that," Angel said, getting to his feet. "And the faster we get you naked, the better."

"Hello, no pants here," Xander sputtered. "How about we get you naked, Mr. Pants Wearing Vamp?"

Angel shook his head and stood up. He kissed Xander again then set to work on his own clothing. If the boy wanted him naked, he wasn't going to complain. He glanced at Spike and saw him disrobing as well. At least he wasn't the only one in a hurry to tumble Xander into bed.

Xander slipped his silk shirt off and stood naked, watching the elder Vampires undress. "You know you'll only be my second male lover, right? So don't expect anything too spectacular."

"You're spectacular enough just the way you are," Angel told him. "I'm glad Spike and I will be the only ones to have had you like this."

Spike decided to use this change in conversation to tease Angel even more. "You have no idea how tight he is, Sire. So sweet and tight... just like the first time I took him."

"Oh I can imagine," Angel said, a look coming over his face that Xander had only seen once before. "The boy's still fresh. And before tonight's over I'll know exactly what it feels like to have him wrapped around me."

The possessive attitude should have pissed him off, but it only made him shiver in anticipation. "Would that please you?" He wanted to be coddled and reassured now more than anything else now.

"Very much," Angel told him. "But the real question is would it please you?"

"It would mean I'm loved," Xander whispered, already moving back to the bed. The line between love and sex was still blurry for him.

"You're already loved," Spike said as he pulled Xander onto the bed with him. "By the both of us. Peaches doesn't have to fuck you to love you, Pet."

"But I want it," Xander insisted. Spike sometimes forgot what a mess the emotions of a fledgling were like. The needs Xander felt still confused him on some level.

"Then you'll have it," Spike promised. He pulled Xander in close and kissed him hard on the mouth. The time for talk was over. The boy needed reassurance and the way he needed it at the moment was through sex. Still kissing Xander, Spike manoeuvred him onto the bed so that he

rested on top of his Childe.

When Spike was nuzzling at Xander's throat, Xander whispered, "I'm ready for you..."

Spike stared down at his Childe then let his hand ghost down to Xander's buttocks. His fingers slid inward until they found his boy's slick hole. He smiled wickedly. It seemed somebody had been doing more than trying on clothes in the bathroom.

Xander licked his lips and pushed back against Spike's fingers. "On my back," he instructed quickly. "Please?"

"Yeah," Spike agreed. "Wanna look at you while I take you. Want you to see it's your Sire fucking you."

"Yes!" Xander ground out and pulled his legs back, opening himself up even more.

"Oh that's a good boy," Spike whispered. He pulled back and positioned himself at Xander's hole. He was a bit leery about not stretching him first but trusted Xander's judgment. Carefully, he began to push forward, not stopping until he was all the way in.

Xander could feel Angel watching them like he always did. There were no signs such as heavy breathing or even movement. Angel wouldn't move when he watched them, not even to touch himself. His dark serious gaze from the shadows was enough to drive both Xander and Spike crazy.

Angel watched the pair on the bed silently. He fought to keep from touching himself, the need even stronger than normal this time. He ached to be in Spike's place, to slide into that tight flesh and claim it for his own.

He watched Spike increase his speed, pounding into the boy. Spike was capable of lasting for hours, but he usually had trouble remembering patience most of the time. He was likely to let his Childe cum several times, rather than making him wait. Well, it was time Xander learned the benefit of waiting. He broke his usual silence and commanded, "Don't let him cum, William."

"Didn't plan on it, Sire," Spike said without breaking stride. He saw Xander frown and stroked his face lovingly. "Trust us, Pet, you'll love it. If there's one thing my Master knows how to do, it's shag."

"But you're so close," Xander protested. He even

squeezed his internal muscles to emphasize his point.

"Oh, I'm gonna cum, Pet," Spike said. "You're the only one that's holding back." With that, Spike slammed forward again and came. He howled as his seed flooded into his Consort, marking him.

Xander whimpered in protest, thrashing on the bed. "I want more!"

"You're gonna get plenty more," Spike said as he slowly withdrew. "In case you forgot, my Sire's just itching for his turn with you."

Spike moved behind Xander and pulled his Child against his chest. Xander spread his legs and grabbed at Spike's wrist, nuzzling at it. He wouldn't bite it without permission, but his blood lust was rising.

"Wait until he's inside you, then you can feed," Spike instructed.

They both watched as Angel slowly stood and moved over to the bed. He didn't say a word as he settled between Xander's thighs. The boy was still stretched and loose from Spike and Angel wasted no time in

positioning himself and sliding in.

“Please!” Xander wailed. He didn't know if he was asking to be fucked, to cum or to feed. But he needed all of them.

Spike quickly slipped his wrist to his Childe's mouth, hoping to soothe some of the savage need coursing through him. He knew his Sire was going to keep him on edge for a bit, wanting him to reap the benefits of being loved by two vampires. Angel, he knew, could last for damn near ever if he set his mind to it.

Xander whimpered as he bit into Spike's wrist. Angel was pushing into him steadily, but never enough to cum. “Just nurse, Childe,” Angel instructed as he fucked Xander slowly. “We're going to be here for a long time... and don't touch yourself. You cum on my cock, or don't cum at all.”

Xander whimpered a bit louder but never took his mouth away from Spike's wrist. He was careful to only sip at the punctures as Angel had instructed. He felt like he was on fire, his body burning wherever Angel touched him. Slowly, he reached up and began to pull Angel down toward him by the neck. When he was close, Xander

turned his head a bit, offering his neck.

Angel looked to Spike for permission. "As long as he never drinks from you," Spike whispered. The idea of his Sire feeding on his Childe was disturbingly erotic.

Angel nodded and lowered his head. He bit into Xander's neck hard, revelling in the first gush of blood over his fangs. He began to pound into Xander harder and faster as he gulped down the sweet elixir flowing from the boy's veins. Ironically, he realized he wasn't going to last much longer than Spike this first time and set about making sure that Xander came as well.

Xander simply felt everything on a new level. He felt the blood sliding down his throat and felt it draining at the same time into Angel's hungry mouth. He felt Angel pounding into him to the point that his cock was ready to explode. It was like every nerve in his body was screaming and over sensitized.

Spike could tell how close they both were and leaned down to whisper in Xander's ear. "Cum, Childe," he commanded softly, then leaned back to watch.

Xander arched his back and his fangs bit down hard into

Spike's wrist as he screamed against the flesh. Darkness overtook him as his Sire's blood gushed down his throat and he came harder than he'd ever done before.

Slowly Xander's eyes fluttered open and he stared up into two smirking faces. Angel and Spike were both looking down at him as they touched and stroked his arms and chest. He didn't remember Angel cumming or even moving away. He supposed he must have blacked out for a few minutes. That was the only logical explanation.

All he knew was that he felt light and happy. He closed his eyes again and dove deeper into the feeling. He felt lighter, like his body was weightless.

"Um, Xander," Spike said, keeping his voice as calm as possible. "I think maybe you should open your eyes again."

"Don't wanna," Xander whined quietly. "Feel too good."

"Xander, open your eyes," Angel said, his voice sounding slightly alarmed. As well it should. Because Xander was currently floating a good two feet above the bed. Angel looked to Spike and saw wild panic barely held in check

in his Childe's eyes.

Xander opened his eyes and looked at the ceiling. It took him a few seconds to register that it was closer, so he looked to Spike for an explanation and noticed he was floating. "Shit!" he screamed a second later crashing back onto the bed hard.

Spike immediately went to his startled Childe. He pulled Xander into his arms and held him. He looked to his Sire, hoping against hope that Angel would have some sort of explanation for what had just happened.

"Xander, tell us what happened," Angel said carefully.

"I-I-I-I don't know," Xander stammered, starting to shake. "I was just resting. I cl-closed my ey-eyes and then... "

"You were floating. I should have expected his," Angel sighed.

"Really?" Xander asked, calming a bit at Angel's distinct lack of panic.

"Care to share, Peaches?" Spike asked coolly, trying to cover his own fear.

Angel didn't want to bring up Xander's family, but it was the only way to explain what had just happened. "I think your demon heritage is asserting itself. You were supposed to fully mature on your twenty first birthday."

"And that means I can... float... or whatever?" Xander asked shakily. "But that doesn't make any sense. They didn't initiate me into the club, remember. They fucking beat me to death instead. Shouldn't my vamp demon overrule my other demon?"

"The fact that you still have your soul..." Angel was trying to think on his feet. "I think that answers a lot of questions. You're obviously part human, with a mixture of two demons."

"Can you get rid of it?" Xander asked. "I don't want to be like him. I only want to be like you guys. Can you make it go away?"

"These are gifts, Pet," Spike tried to calm Xander. "You're still you."

"No!" Xander said hotly, pulling back from Spike's embrace. "They make me like him. I don't ever want to

be like him. Please, Spike, you have to help me."

"Xander, I don't know if we can get rid of this," Spike implored, trying to pull Xander back into his arms. "I don't even know what this is."

"Please, Master," Xander pleaded but he allowed Spike to pull him close again. He buried his face against Spike's neck and held on. He didn't want this. He didn't want to be a freak to his own Sire. He just wanted to be like them.

"I don't know what to do," Spike answered, holding Xander close. He turned pleading eyes on his own Master. "Angel? Master?"

"We'll think of something," Angel said, responding immediately to the plea of his Childer. He moved closer to the pair and wrapped his arms around them both. He doubted if they could do anything to remove Xander's powers but they could help the boy learn to accept them.

Part Sixteen

Angel and Spike were sipping their mugs of blood shortly after they'd woken up. Xander was waiting to feed until Spike had drunk enough blood to support the both of

them. Currently, his eyes were fixated on Spike's wrist, watching it bend as his Sire drank from the mug.

"You really should get him used to drinking on his own," Angel commented lightly. "If anything ever happened to you where you couldn't feed him, he'd starve to death."

"No!" Xander answered for Spike. "I don't wanna drink any blood but his."

"I know you don't want to," Angel said. "And hopefully you'll never have to, but you should at least be able to bring yourself to do it. It's for his own good, Spike. You know that."

"Master?" Xander turned the puppy dog eyes that always won over his Sire.

"Shhh, it's alright, Pet," Spike soothed. "Angel's just trying to look out for you, the way I'd want my Sire to. I'll give it some thought. It wouldn't be something you had to do all the time, just as long as you knew how in case the day ever came when you absolutely had to."

"Yeah, yeah," Xander said and reached out for Spike's wrist. When his Sire nodded, he rolled up Spike's sleeve

and bit into the flesh. The entire time he kept staring at Angel with a smug expression as he fed.

Angel grinned, hiding it behind his mug as he watched Spike feed his Childe. Xander certainly was a handful. It was going to take both him and Spike to handle the boy now that his powers were emerging. He knew there was no way to get rid of them short of Divine intervention. That meant Xander was going to have to learn to live with them whether he liked it or not.

"See Spike likes feeding me," Xander said, licking away the last of the blood from his Sire's wrist. He still had the self-satisfied grin plastered on his face.

"I know he does," Angel agreed. "But I also know he'd never forgive himself if you died simply because you couldn't feed."

"I'd be able to feed," Xander scoffed. "I'd know how to find an illegal source of blood. It's like choosing between a chocolate bar and lumpy, cold oatmeal. Which would you rather eat?"

"Then prove it," Angel challenged. "Show me you can feed yourself for a single day and I won't say another

word. I'm not trying to hurt you, boy. Spike's not the only one that doesn't want to lose you."

"You can't make me!" Xander spat. "Spike won't make me."

"Nobody's going to make you do anything you don't want to," Spike cut in quickly. "Isn't that right, Sire?"

Angel sighed heavily. "You're spoiling him too much, William."

"Mine to spoil, in't he?" Spike replied. "Now be a good Sire and reassure the boy you won't try and make him do anything he doesn't want to. I told you I'd think on it and I will so just back off for now."

Xander turned the puppy dog eyes on Angel and waited. The truth was he'd thrived under Spike's spoiling and Angel's over possessiveness.

"You know I'd never force you," Angel admitted in defeat. "Just think about it, okay? I worry for you, Childe."

"Drinking only his blood makes me feel better about

what I am," Xander admitted quietly.

"About being a vampire? You shouldn't be ashamed of that, Xander." Angel frowned. He didn't like to think of Xander being ashamed of what they were. It had taken him a great deal of time, and a lot of coaxing from Cordelia, to put his own shame over feeding to rest. He hated the thought of Xander feeling the same way.

"Take your pick, any form of demon freak will do."

"You're not a freak," Spike said stubbornly. "You are what you are. And your bloody demon blood kept your soul from vacating the premises when I turned you. I'd think you'd be glad we didn't have to get Red to charm you up like she did the pouf."

That last comment made Xander smile a little. "You're a pouf now, too."

"I am not a pouf. I'm simply diversified in my choice of sexual partners. Peaches is the only pouf around here."

If his embarrassment meant that Xander would smile, then he was willing to play around. "Define pouf, Willy."

"Oi! Don't call me that. I hate that bloody name," Spike complained loudly. "You don't hear me calling you Liam, do you?"

"Liam?" Xander choked.

"Yeah," Spike nodded. "It was his name before Darla got to him. What? The Watcher never told you about that?"

"Never really thought about, maybe Giles mentioned it and I forgot. So let me get this straight. Angel used to be named Liam and you used to be named Willy? Is it some sort of tradition to pick a new name when you're turned?"

"Only if you really hate the name your bleeding parents stuck you with," Spike told him. "I never could stand Willy. Angel here felt the same about Liam. So we picked names that suited us a bit better. You, though, you still seem like a Xander to me."

"C'mon, you don't like Zeppo? Or I could borrow a page out of Giles' book and go by Ripper."

"Don't you dare," Spike growled. "If I didn't actually like the cheerleader, I'd rip her tongue out for calling you

that. Bitch had no right to say that to you and she was fucking wrong anyway."

Instead of getting mad at Spike's show of over possessiveness, it caused Xander to feel safe. "I like it when you get like that."

Spike blinked at his lover then shook his head. It was hard to figure the boy out sometimes. "Whatever you say, Pet."

"You know what I was able to do today?" Xander hedged.

"What?" Spike asked, quirking his eyebrow.

"I sorta levitated up the stairs."

"Did anyone see you?" Angel asked worriedly.

"No," Xander said, his happiness disappearing at what he thought was a rebuke. "I won't do it again."

"I'm not angry, Xander," Angel said quickly. "But you need to be cautious. Was it dark outside when you did it?"

"No one saw," Xander assured Angel. "I would've been able to tell if I was in danger."

"I was thinking more of you accidentally floating into a sun-drenched room," Angel said. "But tell me what you mean by able to tell if you were in danger."

"Oh, I don't know, I just would've known," Xander said. He wasn't good at explaining how he just knew.

"You think it's something?" Spike asked, studying his Childe carefully.

"Maybe," Xander admitted. "I might have felt you were in danger when we were patrolling last night and the time Cordelia cornered Angel about another pay raise."

"That could come in handy," Angel smirked. "Just make sure."

A sharp cry followed by a loud crash cut Angel off. A second later, he sprang to his feet and raced toward the door. The cry had definitely been Cordelia and Angel had a sinking suspicion she was having another vision.

"Cordelia!" Angel called out and rushed to the main

room to her aid. He helped her off the floor where she was cowering. "Another vision?"

"Oh God," Cordelia moaned, unable to get anything out past the pain at first. She felt strong hands lifting her and settling her on a chair.

"Tell me what you saw," Angel implored.

"Xan-ander," she choked out. "They're coming after Xander. Demons. A lot of them."

"What kind of demons?" Spike demanded, shaking Cordelia's shoulder.

"I'm not sure. Um, People Demons, I think," she said, trying hard to remember every detail of the vision.

"People demons?" Spike repeated back. "What does that mean?"

"Were they Purson Demons, Cordelia?" Angel asked, his ability to interpret Cordelia-speak having improved during his time with the girl.

"Like, duh? Do I look like a walking demon

encyclopaedia?" Cordy sniped back. "Get Wesley to find me a picture of what a purse demon looks like and I'll tell you whether that's it or not."

"Spike, get Wesley. Now!" Angel ordered. "Xander, get Cordelia some aspirin and a glass of water."

A few minutes later Cordelia was sitting comfortably on a chair trying to get rid of a headache when Spike pulled Wesley into the room. "I got the Watcher and his books."

"I take it Cordelia had another vision," Wesley said, taking in the pained expression on the girl's face. "Spike mentioned something about Purson demons?"

"Yeah, like I said, purse demons," Cordy sighed. "Tell me what they look like. They were people demons."

"Well, yes. Purson demons can take on the guise of humans," Wesley said. "They can morph back and forth, similar to how a vampire's face will change."

"You mean I could be some icky slimy thing under all this?" Xander piped up.

"Oh, they're not slimy," Wesley put in quickly. "They tend to be more leathery than anything else. With facial ridges not entirely unlike vampires. I should think the melding of the two would go quite well actually."

"Ewww," Cordelia chimed in and Xander just cringed.

Angel decided it was time to try some damage control. "You might not be able to change at all," he said.

"Just like I can't float and I can't tell when there's danger near?" Xander shot back, running a hand through his hair. He'd been trying to accept this like Angel and Spike wanted him to but it was just too much. And if it was too much for him, how long would it be before it became too much for Spike?

"You've got special gifts, luv," Spike came up behind his Childe and wrapped his arms around the younger man's waist. "We'll get through this together and even if you grow horns, I'll still love you."

"You sure about that?" Xander tried to kid, the desperate tone of his words ruining the attempt.

Spike whispered into Xander's ear. "I'd even suck on them. You'll always be beautiful to me."

"Thanks," Xander whispered back, relaxing a bit in the face of Spike's continued reassurance. "I'm sorry to be such a prat about all this. I know you guys think I should be glad I'm a freak but..."

"Ummm, hello? Look around, Xander," Cordelia said. "We're all freaks. I'm like a receptor for the wishes of The Powers That Be. Wesley is a super geek with a leather fetish. Everyone knows Angel and Spike are freaks."

Xander actually chuckled at that. Leave it to Cordelia to pull him out of his funk and put things into perspective again. "Alright. Enough feeling sorry for myself. Now what exactly did you see?"

"I saw flashes of Xander being attacked," Cordelia tried to explain. "There were so many of them. They were all big, ugly men."

"How many?" Angel asked, glancing up at his Childer. He didn't like this. Cordelia's visions normally came to pass fairly quickly. If an attack was coming, it was coming

soon.

"A dozen, maybe more."

"Where was the attack?" Angel pressed. "Was it here?" That would only make sense. If they were warned, they would keep Xander inside where it was marginally defensible.

"It was some place with water," Cordelia said. "It's hard to tell. The visions aren't clear cut. I just remember there was water nearby."

"Well then, I think the thing to do for now is to keep Xander away from the water," Wesley said. "That might buy us some time to figure out what these creatures want and how to stop them."

"I bet they're the Brotherhood," Xander put in.

"No doubts about that, Pet," Spike said. "Sounds like they've come to even the score. Don't you worry, though. Me and Peaches can handle 'em."

"This is my fight," Xander said. "You won't do this without me."

"Never dreamed of it," Spike said. "But this is gonna be bad. Killing bad. You might even see some faces you recognize. You need to be prepared for that."

"You mean the men who were always around my house growing up that my father passed off as 'uncles'?" Xander scoffed. "My mother? My grandfather?"

"Possibly," Angel said. "Though I doubt if your mother will be there. They don't have much use for women other than to breed. She wouldn't be invited along on a raiding party. But you can bet your Grandfather will be there."

"She told me he'd avenge my father's death. She's probably locked up in that damn basement she grew up in," Xander laughed darkly.

"If she hasn't been resold already. Don't give her a second thought, luv. She let that bastard kill you," Spike said fiercely. "If you ask me, the bitch got off too easy as it is."

"You're all my family now," Xander said and then looked around. "Even if it is a really, really weird family."

Part Seventeen

Xander was on edge. He'd been feeling more and more claustrophobic the more he was forced to stay in the hotel. He knew the others were right to be cautious but it still grated on him. At this rate he'd never be free of his father's kind. Today was the worst day yet. He felt like he imagined a caged tiger must feel. And he couldn't seem to get rid of the nagging sensation that something was wrong.

Spike and Angel wouldn't even let him out of the hotel and one of them was always with him. It was like they were babysitting him. It was driving him insane. He might be Spike's Childe, but he wasn't a kid.

What made it even worse was that he couldn't even complain about it. Not really. They were just trying to protect him. He'd gotten fed up and snapped at Spike and the hurt look on his Sire's face was enough to silence him for the rest of the day. He didn't want to hurt his

Sire's feelings, but they were driving him out of his fucking mind.

Spike was currently watching some soap opera he'd recorded during the day. Xander wandered aimlessly around until he heard the phone ring. He let it ring thinking Cordelia would answer it like she usually did, but it kept ringing. She must have gone out on one of her famous spur of the moment shopping sprees. He picked up the phone and answered, "Angel Investigations."

"Don't say anything," the voice on the other end of the phone said. "We have your pretty little friend, boy. Do what you're told and we won't send her back to you in pieces."

Xander didn't dare speak, just grunted an affirmation into the receiver.

"Good boy," the caller chuckled. "Come to the cannery down by the docks. You've got one hour. Come alone or the first thing you'll see is her head on a pike."

Xander grunted into the phone again, not taking the risk of offending Cordelia's kidnappers. He hung the phone abruptly and tried to think of a plan to get away from

Spike's watchful eye.

"Who was that?" Angel asked, dropping some files on Cordelia's desk.

"It was a wrong number," Xander said. "Just some nutjob."

"I know you're restless, Childe," Angel said, laying his hand on Xander's arm. "But this won't last forever. As soon as we get a lead on these guys we'll get this taken care of once and for all."

"Yeah, yeah... sure," Xander repeated. "Listen, I'm just gonna go up to the roof to be alone for a while, okay?"

Angel started to protest but stopped. Xander obviously needed a little time to himself. He contented himself with the knowledge that nothing could get up to the boy without going through the lot of them first. "Alright, but try not to stay up too long or Spike'll come looking for you. It's only a few hours until sunrise."

"Yeah, okay," Xander said and then he looked Angel directly in the eye. This might be the last time he saw his Grand-Sire. "Thank you."

Angel frowned at the boy, something not quite right about the way Xander said that. "Just be careful," he said, pushing the thought aside as worry for his Childer. None of them were handling this enforced incarceration well.

"Spike, I'm just going up to the roof for a bit. I don't want you to miss your show," Xander lied. "I'll be good."

"You sure, Pet?" Spike called, rising from his chair. "I could go with you. Just to be safe."

"No. Just think of this as a sign of how much I love you," Xander said, trying to pass it off as a quip. He still wanted one of the last things he said to his Sire to be 'I love you'.

"Alright," Spike said. "But don't stay up there too long and try to keep out of sight just in case."

"Don't worry about me, this is just something I need to do."

Spike watched as his Childe headed up the stairs toward the roof. Something was certainly bothering the boy, that

much was obvious. Spike chalked it up to cabin fever but told himself he'd go check on the boy shortly. It wouldn't do to let his Childe start taking after the broody one.

Xander got up to the roof and scaled down the fire escape on the backside of the building. He doubted he would live through the night, but he was determined to get Cordy out alive. He found the cannery easily enough. He had a moment to wonder why demon types seemed to gravitate to refineries and the like then a large man with skin like leather and tall ridges on his face was walking out to meet him.

"You must be the bastard spawn of Archeron's female," the large demon spat.

"Yeah, that'd be me. Now where's my friend?" Xander asked, dispensing with the pleasantries.

"Follow me," the male demon said and showed Xander into the cannery.

Xander followed wordlessly. There really wasn't much to say. He knew how this was going to play out. It would be the same as it had been in the alley behind his house, only this time he was pretty sure it would end with a

stake through his heart.

In the middle of the room he came up to a large cage with demons surrounding it. Inside was Cordelia, who looked at him with imploring eyes. It frightened him that she didn't talk. She always talked, especially when she was afraid.

"Let her go," he said. "You got what you wanted. You don't need her anymore."

A large, obviously older demon stepped out of the group and laughed. "Don't give me orders boy."

"Let. Her. Go," Xander repeated, shifting into game-face as he did. He wanted Cordelia out of there. He didn't want her to have to watch what was going to happen to him and he didn't trust these guys to live up to their end of the bargain after he was dead.

But the older demon wasn't scared, instead he just laughed and jostled Cordelia's cage. "Do you have any idea who I am?"

"Oh sure. You're the guy that my Sire is going to spend a year or two torturing to death. And that's if Cordelia gets

out of here in one piece. Hurt her and there's no telling how long Angelus will keep you alive."

"I would be your grandfather, spawn," Archeron hissed. "If my son-in-law had done his job correctly, you'd be dead now."

"Oh he did his job correctly, I just got lucky," Xander said. "So I take it you're here to finish the job, huh? Well, go ahead, but let her go first. You know as well as I do a human has no place here."

"I've become rather attached to her and you're here now," Archeron said. "Why shouldn't I just keep her?"

"Because if you let her go there's at least a chance that Angelus won't hunt you and your entire line down like dogs," Xander said. "In case you didn't notice, he gets kind of testy when his humans are threatened."

"That's because you're his bitch now," Archeron laughed.

"Yeah, I am," Xander shrugged. There was really no point in trying to explain his relationship to the demons that were going to kill him. Let him think what they wanted.

"Let the female down," Archeron waved his hand at the cage. "Do you want to hear about your mother, boy? She sends her regards."

"I'll bet she does," Xander muttered. "I guess she's the one that ratted us out. I can't believe I was actually worried about her."

"I bet that comforts her when she's in the slave pens."

"Is that supposed to upset me?" Xander asked, refusing to feel anything but contempt for the woman. "I offered her a way out. She made her choice. It was the same choice she made when she let my bastard of a father kill me. If you ask me, she got what she deserved."

"And that's why you'd never had made a decent member of the Brotherhood," Archeron said even as Cordelia was dragged from the cage. "You were too weak, too much of your human blood came out."

"Yeah, well you can enjoy making it all come out again when you kill me," Xander said. He turned to Cordelia, wishing he had time to really say goodbye. "Tell Spike I love him. Angel, too."

That was the last thing Xander was able to say before they threw him into the same cage Cordelia had occupied.

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Spike had been watching his taped soap and when the tape stopped, he looked up at the clock and realized Xander was still on the roof. "My boy's been up there for a long time," he commented to Angel.

"Let him have some space. This hasn't been easy for him," Angel said. He knew Xander felt trapped. He also understood that the boy wasn't going to put up with it for much longer. They were going to have to do something even if it turned out to be wrong.

"It's been awhile since he fed," Spike hesitated. "I should go up and feed him. He always feels better after he's fed." Of course, Spike also felt better after he'd fed his Childe, but he had to maintain a certain amount of machoness.

"Give him a little longer," Angel said, trying not to grin. "If he's not down in a few more minutes you can go up

and get him. He probably just wants to vent where you can't hear him. You know how he gets when he thinks he's upset you."

"But he could be hungry," Spike protested, already getting antsy. "And he's alone."

"Because he chose to be," Angel said, putting a bit more steel in his voice. "He'll come down when he's ready. Don't crowd the boy."

"Since when do you dictate how I treat my Childe?" Spike snapped. Xander wasn't the only one feeling the stress of the situation.

"When it's necessary," Angel replied smoothly. "We're all stressed out. Xander wants some space, you will give it to him. He hasn't even been gone an hour yet. At least give him that much before you run after him like he's an errant puppy."

"Fine," Spike snapped and sat there staring at the blank television screen. After a while he finally sulked, "I'm bored."

"Really? I couldn't tell," Angel quipped.

“Well, what are you gonna do about it, Peaches?” Spike challenged, even making sure to use the nickname Angel hated.

Angel came out from behind the front desk and strode over to his Childe. He towered over him, using his height and Spike's position on the sofa to add to the effect. "Just what would you like me to do about it?" he challenged.

Spike licked his lips and put on his most insolent face. He wasn't the only one who was comforted by feeding, but he usually had to get Angel in a sexual mood to get that. “Maybe I want you to shut me up?”

Angel moved in closer until his legs were pressed against the front of the sofa and his body was just a few scant inches from Spike's face. "You want me to fill that nasty mouth of yours up with something?" he purred seductively. "I've got just the thing."

Cordelia rushed back to the Hyperion, having run from the cannery. The demons had taken all of her money and she didn't even have a quarter to call home. She just wanted to get back, not even thinking of a collect call. She burst into the lobby, tears spilling from her face

and yelling for her friends. "Angel! Spike!"

"Cordelia!" Angel shouted, jumping back from Spike.

"What's happened?"

"They got Xander!" she sobbed.

"Who?" Angel demanded roughly. He heard Spike growl behind him and join him at Cordelia's side.

"The demons! His family got him."

"Where?" Spike managed to get out, his eyes glowing as he forced himself not to shake the answers out of the girl.

"The old cannery by the docks," Cordelia said. "They grabbed me and forced Xander to trade himself for me."

"I will fucking kill him when we get him back," Spike ranted as he headed for the door, mindless of the fact that dawn was fast approaching.

"Spike! The sewer!" Angel spat as he began tossing assorted weapons onto the table. "Cordy, get Wes on the phone and tell him what's happened. Have him meet us

there."

"Get him back, please," Cordelia begged, even as she rushed to the desk. "I'll get Gunn and his crew, too."

Spike rushed back to Angel and gathered the weapons in his arms. "It's not your fault," he whispered to Cordelia before hurrying toward the sewer access. He knew they wouldn't kill Xander right away, they'd want to play with him a bit first. That meant there was at least a chance his boy was still alive.

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Xander's screams echoed through the large building. His cries were inhuman and only induced laughter from his tormentors.

"You're a strong one," the large demon admitted. "I'm glad. I would hate for this to end prematurely." He drew back his arm and lashed out at Xander again, the razor sharp claws on his hands slicing through both cloth and flesh as if they were nothing.

Xander tried to move away from his tormentor, but his

bonds held him in place. "You know what the beautiful thing about our claws truly is?" His tormentor was talking as if this was a casual everyday conversation. "Sure, they're nice and sharp, but the truly beautiful part is the poison that infects the wound and leaves the victim in torment."

Xander tried not to scream as the demon sliced into him again. He could feel the poison flowing into him, making his body writhe in pain. He wasn't going to give the bastard the benefit of hearing him scream, though. Not if he could help it.

"It's almost a shame you didn't join the Brotherhood," the demon ran his claws over Xander's back. "I could have had a lot of fun with such a pretty one like you."

"Fuck you," Xander spat weakly. He knew exactly what the demon was implying and he'd stake himself before he'd give himself to this bastard. He belonged to Spike. Nobody took him but his Sire.

"You wish," the demon laughed. "I wouldn't touch a filthy, bastard spawn like you."

"Good, 'cause I'd rather bathe in Holy water than feel

your hands on me," Xander replied. He could feel himself getting weaker as his blood oozed from the gashes across his chest and stomach. He almost wished the bastard would get on with it already but the part of him that wanted to live wanted to hold onto every second he had left.

"Chak, strip him!" the demon called out, stepping back from Xander. "I want to make him really bleed."

"He's already healing," the other demon complained. "Even with the poison. Pure humans are so much easier to torture, but at least this half breed will last longer."

Rough hands grabbed at Xander's clothing and began ripping it from his body. He grunted as the material dug into his wounds before giving way under the demon's strength. He was fairly sure they weren't going to rape him but that made him wonder what they were going to do.

Part Eighteen

Angel thought it was a bad sign that they didn't meet any resistance, but that only made him run faster. They would pay big for taking his Grand-Childe, even if he had to track down each and every one of them.

Spike counted in his head in the most obscure demonic language he could think of as he ran. He needed to calm down. If he didn't, he was likely to walk in there and simply implode once he got a look at what they'd done to his Childe. He knew Xander was hurt, he could feel it. The only thing that kept him from totally losing it was the fact that, hurt though he may be, Xander was still alive.

Dawn was fast approaching, even as they crashed through the manhole cover closest to the cannery. They met no guards and the large doors of the warehouse were wide open. "We have to check if he's there," Spike cried out.

"Spike! He's your Childe. Try and sense where he is," Angel instructed.

Spike concentrated hard and felt a warm tingling in his head. "He's in there!"

Angel nodded and led the way, making sure to enter first. He didn't want his distracted Childe running headfirst into a trap. And he didn't want Spike to be the first to see whatever had been done to his Childe. From the smell of blood in the air, Angel knew it was bad. The place reeked of Xander's blood all the way outside.

"Hurry up, Angel!" Spike growled. He had to get to his Childe's side.

"Caution, William," Angel whispered. "Getting dusted won't save your Childe."

"He needs me!" Spike growled. "I can feel him calling for me."

"Which means he's still alive. And that means we still have a chance to get him back," Angel hissed, grabbing Spike and stopping him from rushing into the room. "Use your fucking head."

"I can't sense any enemies," Spike hissed. "I'm going to him!"

"You will wait!" Angel commanded. "I'll go in first. If it's

clear, you follow. Do you understand me?"

"Then do it!" Spike didn't want to waste time arguing.

Angel glared at Spike again to make sure the other vampire hung back, then slowly entered the building. The first thing he saw was an iron cage hanging from the ceiling. It had been hoisted up so it hung just under the windows. Angel understood in an instant. They had hung Xander there and left him, content to let the early morning sun finish the boy off.

Xander was naked and laying on the bottom of the cage. Blood was dripping from the base and pooling on the concrete floor below. Xander was covered in blood and wounds from head to toe, but that was not Angel's most immediate concern. The morning sunlight was only a few precious feet from hitting his body.

"Spike! Get in here!" Angel roared as he raced toward the cage. There had to be a lever or pulley somewhere to lower the thing. He just had to find it. Fast.

Spike dropped his weapons and ran full speed at the sound of Angel's voice. What he saw made him want to collapse and weep, but he couldn't. He saw the sunlight

creeping ever closer to his vulnerable Childe.

"Xander, listen to me," Angel called out as he searched for a way to lower the cage. If he couldn't find one soon he was going to have to climb up there and try to pry the door off barehanded. "Stay as flat to the bottom of the cage as you can."

"Master?" Xander was barely able to whisper. "Master... please help me..."

"We're coming, pet," Spike called out. "Just hang on a tic and do what Angel says. Don't try to sit up or move or anything. Just stay right where you are."

"Master," Xander continued to repeat piteously, sobbing softly.

Angel finally found a wire cable attached to one of the beams and tore it off, tearing his own flesh in his haste to quickly lower the cage to the ground. As the cage was lowered, it swung dangerously into the sunlight.

"Careful, Sire," Spike hissed, knowing better than to yell and distract the other vampire. It seemed to take forever, but Angel finally managed to lower the cage to

the ground. As soon as it was down, Spike rushed forward and attacked the door.

They hadn't bothered to secure it with a hex or too strong of a lock because Xander was in no condition to get out. But Spike was motivated by his Childe's continued pleas and ripped open the door.

Angel quickly shrugged out of his coat and handed it to Spike to wrap the trembling boy in. From the amount of blood on the floor, it looked like Xander had nearly bled out. That was almost as deadly for a vampire as it was for a human. "He needs to feed and we need to get him home," Angel said.

Spike picked Xander up like he weighed nothing and carried him towards the manhole cover. "We'll feed him in the sewers where it's safe. We'll both have to feed him."

"Can you manage him?" Angel asked, ready to help carry the boy if need be. He, too, would feel safer feeding Xander in the sewers. This building had too many windows for any vampire to feel comfortable in.

"Yes!" Spike growled. He wasn't going to let Xander out

of his arms right now for anything. “Just get the cover so I can get him down there away from the bloody sun.”

Angel nodded and moved quickly. He had the cover off and waiting before Spike made it over to him then he was following his Childer down into the cool darkness. He watched carefully as Spike set Xander down and thrust his wrist into the boy's mouth. He would make sure nothing approached as he fed. Once they had Xander back at the Hyperion, he'd take his own turn feeding the boy.

“C’mon, luv,” Spike ordered. “You gotta feed.”

Xander forced his eyes up to those of his Sire. He could see the fear in his Master's eyes but he was too tired to do anything about it. All he wanted to do was close his eyes and sleep. Somewhere deep down, though, he knew that if he went to sleep now he would never wake up again. Using the last of his strength, he bit down, sinking his fangs into the proffered wrist.

Spike sat there and stroked Xander’s blood-matted hair as he fed. He let the boy drink just as much as he dared. “Angel, get your arse over here, it’s your turn!”

"No," Angel shook his head as he pulled Spike to his feet. "He can feed from me back at the hotel. One of us needs to be at full strength in case we run into anything on the way back. Can you carry him again?"

"Yeah, let's get a move on," Spike said. He picked up Xander and settled the lanky body in his arms, thankful of vampire strength.

Angel led the way again as they hurried back to the hotel. It was slower going this time as a seriously depleted Spike carried his Childe. Angel actually had to keep him from stumbling a few times as his legs weakened. "We're almost there," Angel told Spike as he braced him once more.

"Good. I feel like I'm carrying him from hell and back." Spike wouldn't let his Childe think he wasn't strong enough to protect him.

They finally made it to the hotel and Angel helped Spike get Xander inside. They rushed him over to the nearest couch and laid him down, then Angel tore into his own wrist and shoved it under the boy's nose.

"No!" Xander protested the foreign blood. "Not my

Master!”

"Feed!" Angel commanded, glaring at Spike. This was the very reason he'd wanted Xander to feed on someone other than Spike. They didn't have time for this nonsense right now. Xander was still dangerously low on blood.

“If you don’t feed from Angel pet, we'll have to force feed you,” Spike tried to reason with his panicked Child.

"Master?" Xander gasped, staring at Spike in horror. He didn't want to feed from anyone but Spike. Spike was his life. That was how it had been from the beginning. He didn't want to change that.

“You have to feed from him to get better,” Spike explained. “I’m almost drained myself. I can’t give you anymore right now.”

"I... I can wait," Xander said, the effort of speaking even that much taxing his system.

“You'll do this because I command it,” Spike snapped. “I'll never make you do it again, but you will do it now!”

Xander cringed at his Master's tone and obediently pulled Angel's dripping wrist into his mouth. He had to reopen the wound but as soon as the blood hit his fangs he began to suck hungrily. The demon in him howled for food and Xander wanted to get it over with as quickly as he could.

Spike moved closer to Xander and stroked his face as he fed. "It's not so bad, luv," he crooned. It was hard to see his Childe feed from someone, even his own Sire. "You've tasted it before in my blood. This will get you all nice and strong again."

Xander shuddered as Spike crooned to him. He couldn't tell his Sire how the taste of Angel's blood made his stomach clench. He didn't want to hurt Angel like that. All he wanted was for Spike to tell him he could stop so he could go curl up in a corner someplace where bad things wouldn't hurt him anymore.

Angel made Xander drink until he could tell he was at least out of immediate danger. When he touched Xander's face to indicate he could pull away, Xander did, pulling his fangs out with a sob. Spike had spoiled the boy too much for his own good and now it could threaten his life, but the boy was so fragile right

now. "Would it make you feel better if your Sire fed you from now on?"

Xander nodded, refusing to look up. He clutched his knees to his chest, ignoring the pain that shot through his body at the movement. He wanted to curl up and die. He almost wished the sunlight had gotten to him. He hurt, inside and out, and didn't know what to do to make the pain go away.

"Angel, his wounds should be healing now," Spike noted with alarm.

Angel looked at Xander and frowned. Spike was right, the boy's wounds should have at least started to heal with that much blood in him. Instead, they continued to ooze, draining away the very blood they had forced him to ingest. "Put him to bed," Angel said. "I'll see what I can find out about the ones that did this."

As if on cue, Wesley, Cordelia and Gunn burst in the front doors of the Hyperion. "Angel! Spike! Are you here?" Wesley called out.

"Oi, Watcher!" Spike called out as he lifted Xander from the couch. "Over here."

"You got him out safely," Wesley commented as they ran towards Spike and Xander. "When we got there, the place was covered in blood, but deserted."

"Yeah, we got him out," Angel said. "But something's not right. He's not healing. I need you to help me find out why."

"Did they cut him with their nails?" Wesley demanded. In the days they'd spent waiting for the Brotherhood to attack, he'd spent every waking moment studying up on Purson demons. He hoped he knew everything that there was to know about them.

"Looked like it," Angel said. "He's been worked over pretty good but some of the wounds definitely looked like claw marks. Why?"

"Purson demons have a poison in their claws that stops their victims from healing," Wesley said. "Like an anti-coagulant, but stronger." He was already trying to remember if he'd read anything about a counteragent.

"Is there an antidote?" Angel asked worriedly. Anti-coagulants were bad. Even feeding Xander wouldn't help.

It would be like pouring water into a sieve. The blood would simply run right back out again, but without blood, Xander would turn to dust.

"I think there was an obscure reference in one of the minor demonology tomes from the early sixteenth century," Wesley said. "I'll have to look it up, but if I remember correctly, it's very complicated. I'll need someone who's adept at magic to mix it."

"Then get someone," Angel said as he headed after Spike and Xander. "He's bleeding out almost as fast as we're putting it in him and he won't drink from anyone but Spike."

"I have herbs that will slow the bleeding. I'll get them together. Cordelia, ring up Sunnydale and get Willow here as soon as possible."

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Spike carefully laid his charge on the bed, cringing at the soft hiss of pain his lover let slip. He was scared. He knew that Xander was still in danger, that his boy would die if something wasn't done. Spike had never felt so helpless

in his life. Not even when he'd first been chipped.

"Sshhh... easy, luv," Spike whispered as he settled next to his Childe. "You're safe now."

"Happy that I'm gonna die in your arms," Xander sighed, cringing in pain.

"Stop that!" Spike said, wishing he could give his Childe a good shake for even thinking that. "You are not going to die. I won't allow it. Angel and I can keep you alive until we figure out what's wrong."

"It hurts so much," Xander complained. All he wanted to do was sleep.

"I know, luv," Spike said. "And I'm sorry. I wish I could take the pain away. Just hang on for a little while longer. We'll figure this out and you'll be good as new in no time."

"I just want to sleep..."

"Then sleep, pet," Spike said, unable to deny his Childe the relief that sleep could bring. "I'll be here when you wake up. Just... don't leave me, Xan."

"I want to sleep, but... but I feel if I do, I might not wake up."

"Don't you leave me, Xander," Spike pleaded. "I need you with me. I can't do this on my own anymore. So you stay with me. Don't make me have to follow you."

"You don't mean that," Xander begged, grabbing at Spike's clothing desperately.

"Yes, he does," Angel said from the doorway. He had no doubt that Spike would follow his Childe into death if need be.

"Then you can't let me die," Xander begged Angel now.

"Cordy's getting some help but until they get here you're going to have to do what we say and not fight us on it even if you don't like it," Angel said, trying to prepare Xander for what was to come. "Wesley's working on something to slow this down a bit and help with the pain. He should be up with it soon."

"I'm hungry again," Xander whispered, looking at Spike with pleading eyes. The blood he'd ingested had only briefly quelled his hunger.

Angel walked over to the bed and handed Spike a blood packet. "You know it's too soon to feed him again. If he wants to live, he's got no choice."

"Master?" Xander had enough strength to lift Spike's wrist and lick it lightly, gazing up at Spike the entire time.

Angel sighed and turned to leave. Spike would do what he wanted and nothing he said would change that. No matter how dangerous it was for him. He'd end up letting Xander drain him and there was nothing Angel could do about it.

"Can I just have a taste before I have to drink from the bag?" Xander asked weakly, still nuzzling Spike wrist. "Just a little bit."

Spike looked at his Childe then back to the retreating back of his Sire. He knew Angel would damn him for it but he didn't care. He tore open the corner of the bag and drank from it quickly, gulping the blood down before thrusting his wrist toward his injured Childe.

"I'll just have a bit," Xander repeated. He closed his eyes and bit into the flesh, sighing with relief.

"Drink, luv," Spike said, stroking the boy's head. He could feel the blood leaving him as Xander fed. His stomach clenched as he was slowly drained, but he didn't pull his wrist away. Xander needed the blood more than he did at the moment.

Finally Xander pulled away and whimpered, "I'm sorry. I just need you so much."

"Don't be sorry." Spike gently swept Xander's sweat-drenched hair away from his forehead and leaned down to place a gentle kiss on his lips. "We'll get through this. I promise."

Part Nineteen

With Wesley's limited skill of herbs, he managed to pull together a special poultice to slow Xander's bleeding. The Scooby Gang had broken every speed limit coming here the moment they'd gotten the panicked phone call from Cordy.

"Where is he?" Buffy demanded as she stormed in, scowling. She had spent the last several hours alternating between fuming and demanding that Giles drive faster. Now all she wanted to do was get her hands on the ones

responsible for hurting Xander. Once that little chore was done then she'd deal with Spike.

Gunn was standing guard in the lobby and pointed a crossbow at her. "That's depends on who you are, but by the bitch act, you must be the Slayer."

"And who the hell are you?" Buffy asked, glaring at the man.

"I'm the man with the crossbow," Gunn quipped.

"Gunn, put it down," Cordelia told him as she came out from behind the front desk. She was stressed enough without watching these two have a pissing contest.

The rest of the Scooby Gang trickled in behind Buffy, carrying a series of bags and boxes. "Back off, Buffy," Giles ordered. "We have work to do."

"Fine," Buffy said unhappily. "But while they're working on fixing Xander, somebody here is going to explain to me just what the hell happened to him in the first place."

"It will have to be me," Cordelia announced. "Spike won't leave Xander's side and I don't want you anywhere

near them right now. Giles, Willow, Tara... they're in Angel's room, Wesley will show you where it is."

"Oh yes, right. Please, follow me," Wesley said as he led the trio away from the lobby.

"Gunn, why don't you check the perimeter or something while Bitchy and I have a little talk," Cordelia suggested. What she had to say to Buffy, she didn't want Gunn around to try and get in the middle of. She knew what that look on the Slayer's face meant. She was just itching to beat the stuffing out of something and if Cordy was right, that current something was Spike.

"Catch, Cordy," Gunn said with a glower in Buffy's direction and tossed her a nine inch sheathed bowie knife. "Use it if you have to, girl."

"Go. Out. Patrol. Guard. Get ice cream. Just don't come back for a good half hour," Cordy said, unable to keep from grinning at her friend.

Gunn gave her mock salute. "Yes ma'am! Gettin' my sorry butt out the door, Ma'am!"

Cordelia watched him go, waiting until the doors were

closed behind him before turning her attention to Buffy. "You want to know what happened? Fine, I'll fill you in. But none of this is Spike's fault. You need to get that through your head right now."

"Ummm, let's see," Buffy started. "Spike was responsible for Xander's safety and he's dead... well, nearly more dead."

"Apparently you're not quite with the program here," Cordelia said, her hands going to her hips as she spoke. "This is my family. That includes Xander and Spike. Now we all appreciate you coming here to help Xander. Xander will even appreciate it when he can think past the pain again. But if you even think about trying anything on Spike, you'd better be ready to go through me to do it. Cause that's what it's gonna take."

"After Willow fixes Xander up, we're taking him home," Buffy countered.

"Hah!" Cordy threw back her head. "As if, honey. You're not taking Xander anywhere. He lives here now. Along with whatever the hell you want to call Spike. Lover, mate, husband whatever. Bottom line, he's not leaving."

“Call it what they call it. Spike is Xander’s Master and Xander is pretty much his slave. I won’t let my friend live like that.”

"You really don't have a clue, do you? And here I thought that blonde was just out of a bottle. Yeah, Xander calls him Master but he only does it to get Spike hot. Angel, too, for that matter," Cordy added evilly. Buffy had been there less than ten minutes and she was already grating on her nerves.

“What did you just say about Angel?” Buffy bristled. “That’s a lie.”

"Whatever," Cordelia said, shaking her head. "But you try to make Xander leave with you and you'll see who Angel sticks up for."

“Just tell me what happened before I have to go all Slayer on your ass,” Buffy growled. “Maybe I'll snap the heels off your Gucci shoes.”

Cordy resisted the urge to tell Buffy just what she could do with said heels and proceeded to fill her in on recent events. The only thing she left out was Xander's parting words to her. She didn't think that was anyone's business

but the three vampires.

“So he tried to sacrifice himself for you? That sounds like something that Xander would do.”

"Yeah. It does. He was always like that. No matter how mean I was to him, he still would have run through fire for me. Actually, he did run through fire for me. He's my friend, Buffy. What he has here is good. Don't try to screw that up for him."

“He belongs with us,” Buffy maintained. “Sunnydale is his home.”

"This is his home now. I'm warning you, Buffy..."

“Buffy, Cordelia,” Tara ran into the lobby. “Willow wants you to come. I think we did it.”

Both girls turned and followed Tara, dropping their conversation for the time being. Cordelia knew it wasn't over. Buffy was bound and determined to take Xander back with her like he was a little kid or something. That was not going to be allowed to happen.

When they got to the room, Buffy demanded two

things. "Is Xander going to be okay and where's Angel?"

"He'll recover," Willow said tiredly as she stroked hair out of the now sleeping boy's face.

"Angel stepped out a few minutes ago," Giles informed her. "He said something about taking care of business and not to wait up."

"Oi, you don't have to worry about our business, blondie. If Angel won't let me go with him, he won't let you go," Spike said. He was laying next to Xander on the bed and trying to keep up his usual gruff act in front of Buffy, even though he was beyond deathly pale. "Could someone get me some blood now? I'm hungry."

"Oh, of course," Cordelia said, quickly hurrying out of the room.

"You're thinking about eating at a time like this?" Buffy huffed in disbelief. "What kind of monster are you?"

"The kind that needs to feed his Childe," Cordelia said, elbowing past Buffy as she brought Spike two warm packets of blood. "Try to drink it all. As soon as he wakes up he'll need to feed again. And if her Bitchiness gets to

be too much just tell me and I'll drag her out by her bleached blonde roots."

Willow whispered to Buffy, hoping she'd understand once it was explained to her. "Xander will only drink from Spike."

Buffy made a face and started to say something but Giles' hand on her shoulder stopped her. She looked up at her Watcher and he shook his head. She frowned but kept her mouth shut. It was obvious that Xander wasn't up to a scene right now, but she was going to have her say whether they liked it or not.

Spike was ravenousness and downed the bags of blood quickly. Even in his sleep Xander needed Spike close. He'd refused to let go of Spike's arm, hugging it close to his body and nuzzling Spike's wrist as he slept.

"Thanks, luv," Spike said as he handed the empty bags back to Cordelia. "It'll be a couple of hours before he comes round. Why don't you order in some dinner for everyone?"

"You should drink more blood," Willow said and then gasped a little. "I can't believe I just said that, but you

should.”

"Maybe later," Spike said, smiling softly at the girl. "Just wanna sleep for now. Be a luv and don't let anyone come up but Angel till we wake, okay?"

“Okay,” Willow agreed, already starting to usher Tara and Giles towards the door. “He’s going to be okay Spike. The bleeding’s already slowed and with you watching over him... and playing teddy bear, he'll heal.”

"Oi! I'm nobody's bleedin' teddy bear," Spike grouched, but there was no heat in his words. "I'll bring him down soon as he comes round. Just give us a few hours."

“Done,” Willow promised. Tara, Giles and Wesley were already out of the room, now she just had to work on Buffy and Cordelia. “Buffy, why don’t you come with me? We can order pizza. You and Cordelia can fight all you want downstairs.”

"I think someone should stay here with Xander," Buffy said stubbornly. "I don't like the idea of him being all alone with fangless."

“Will someone deal with her?” Spike sighed, already

cuddling up with Xander. He was beyond exhaustion and fatigue. "Preferably with a nice pointy stake."

"Oh, I've got the stake," Buffy said, pulling one out of her pocket and brandishing it at the vampire. "So how about you move back from Xander and let me shove it where it really belongs?"

Without moving or opening his eyes, it was Xander who spoke. "You'll have to make it through me first."

"That's enough!" Cordelia said, stepping between Buffy and the two men on the bed. "Get out, right now. And if you threaten anyone in my family again, I will throw you out on your skinny ass."

"Fine," Buffy huffed, actually stamping her foot. "But when Xander's better, we're having a long talk about blood, sex and brainwashing."

"As if," was all Cordelia said as she shoved Buffy toward the door. Once she had the blonde outside, she closed it behind them. She followed Buffy all the way back to the lobby, making sure she didn't try to double back to the boys.

~*~*~*~*~

Angel crawled in through the sewer access to the Hyperion and strode into the lobby silent and covered in blood. His clothes were torn and the broad sword he had left with was missing. "Where are my Childer?" he growled.

"Oh my God!" Buffy gasped when she saw her ex-boyfriend. "Angel, are you alright? What happened?" She rushed over to him, everyone and everything else forgotten.

Angel shrunk away from her, backing into the shadows. "Stay away from me," he hissed, shifting into game face.

"Angel?" Buffy whispered, stopping a few feet away. "What's wrong?"

"I need to be near my Childer, not you."

"Buffy, come away," Giles said. "Angel is obviously quite upset. His instincts are screaming at him to see to his Childer."

It was then that Spike stumbled out into the hall. He was shirtless, wearing only a pair of jeans, but he was also in game face. He had to use the wall to hold himself up, but he was determined to come to his Sire. He'd felt Angel's distress and managed to get up, telling Xander to stay where he was. "Master?"

"I'm here," Angel said as he hurried toward his Childe. He caught Spike as he sagged on the last step and pulled him in tight. "It's done. He's safe now."

Spike wrapped his arms around Angel's waist, burying his face against his Sire's neck. "He's safe?"

"Yes," Angel told him, stroking his hair with a blood-streaked hand. "I took care of it. How's he doing? Did the spell work?"

"He's stopped bleeding, but he's still weak and almost always hungry."

"Then let's go feed him." Angel leaned Spike against the wall and walked purposely toward the small refrigerator tucked into the corner. He grabbed several bags of blood before heading back toward his Childe.

“Sire, do you have enough blood to feed me?” Spike asked. “I won’t make him eat from anyone else.”

"I grabbed enough," Angel said. He slipped his free arm around Spike's waist and began leading him back toward their room. "I won't make him drink from the bag. Do you think he'll object to feeding from me again?"

“He’s being difficult,” Spike confessed quietly. Spike couldn't tell Xander no at the best of times, but now that he was recovering, Xander was even more dependent.

"Alright, but don't let him drain you too badly," Angel cautioned. He helped Spike into what was considered their room and closed the door behind them. He didn't want prying eyes intruding on something so personal. He thought the others would probably understand. Everyone except Buffy, that was. She would only see it as a sick depravity and turn her nose up at it. He didn't want his Childer to have to put up with that right now.

“At least you didn't make some bloody joke about me being difficult. You smell,” Spike laughed weakly and started to unbutton Angel’s bloody shirt, making a face at his Sire. “Smell like rotten demon blood.”

"Leave it," Angel said softly, pulling Spike's hands away. He picked up a bag of blood and held it out to Spike. "Drink this and feed your Childe while I shower. When I come out you can feed from me."

"Sounds like a plan, mate," Spike said and sunk into the bag with his teeth.

Angel waited until Spike had drunk two of the bags and was settling onto the bed before heading to the shower. He kept his ears trained to the other room, letting the quiet sounds of Spike soothing and feeding Xander calm the rage inside him. He didn't like to admit it, but he was also listening in case anyone thought to disturb the pair.

When he came back into the main room he found Spike still feeding Xander. The boy was slowly sucking on Spike's wrist, but clutching it within both of his own arms. Spike was letting him nurse indulgently, petting his head with his free hand. Angel knew that Xander had drunken his fill and was keeping the wound open just enough so he could be comforted by the act of feeding itself.

"Xander, that's enough now," Angel said, hating to break

their connection but worried about Spike. "Spike's weak enough as it is. Let him rest a bit then you can have some more."

Xander whimpered and pulled his fangs out, but continued to kiss and lick Spike's wrist. He looked up at Angel over Spike's wrist with wide, brown eyes.

"How are you feeling?" Angel asked, hoping to stave off the questions he knew were coming. He still had healing welts across his chest and arms, thankfully though, none of them were poisoned. He tried not to think about the carnage he had wrought. Not that the ones he'd slaughtered didn't deserve it. They had hurt his Childe and for that they paid dearly.

Xander gave Spike's wrist one last noisy kiss and pulled away just enough to talk. "Better. Hungry."

"He'll feed you again soon," Angel said, reaching out and caressing the boy's face. "Are you still in pain?"

Xander smiled up at Angel a little goofily, pushing his face against his Grand Sire's hand. "Willow put some pain killers in that herb shit of hers. Doesn't hurt so much anymore, Gramps."

"I'm glad. I was worried about you." Angel continued to stroke Xander's face. He wanted to crawl into the bed and spoon up behind Xander so he could wrap the boy in his arms and simply hold him.

"I'm tough," Xander giggled and managed to nip at Angel's fingers as they passed his mouth. "Had to do it."

"Had to do what?" Angel asked, wondering if Xander was still a bit confused by everything.

"Had to give myself up for Cordy," Xander explained in a whisper. "I knew you were in trouble, too, but I couldn't get out of bed to help."

"It's alright now," Angel said. "You, me and Spike are going to have a long talk about this later... a very long talk. But for now, just rest and heal."

Xander started to pull at Angel's wrist insistently with the goofy smile firmly in place. "Will you sleep next to me?"

Angel looked to Spike and smiled when he nodded minutely. "All you had to do was ask," he said as he

dropped the towel from around his waist and slid into bed beside the boy.

Part Twenty

After the long drive from Sunnydale and dealing with the crisis, the Scooby Gang was exhausted. They ended up crashing in various rooms throughout the old hotel. It was easy for Buffy to sneak out of her room since nobody wanted to share with her when she was in that mood. She let her Slayer senses guide her. It wasn't hard to hone in on the sleeping vampires. Their presence shone like a beacon, guiding her to their door. She held up her hand to knock, then stopped. She doubted if they were awake, considering how worn out they all were. As quietly as she could, she turned the knob and slowly pushed the door open.

The room was dark with all the windows blacked, but there was a soft glow coming from the bedside lamp. She wasn't sure what she was expecting to find,

but she didn't think it was going to be all three men twined together in the center of the bed.

She gasped when she realized that Angel was naked. Cordelia's words rang through her heart. This couldn't be. Angel couldn't be with them. This was Spike's doing. Somehow, this was Spike's fault. He'd cast some sort of spell over both Xander and Angel. Well, she knew how to fix that.

She slipped her trusty Mr. Pointy from her back pocket and started to creep towards the bed. She'd make it quick before either Xander or Angel could wake up. Everything would work out in the end. She could take Xander home and maybe, just maybe she could start things over with Angel.

She was a foot away from the bed when she heard the growl. It was low and deep, almost below what a human could hear. It stopped her in her tracks and caused her to scan the room, searching for the source. When her eyes landed on Angel she nearly screamed out loud. He was in full game-face, eyes glowing yellow as he growled menacingly at her.

“Back off or I'll kill you,” Angel growled. He'd come too

close to losing Xander yesterday and now Buffy was trying to take Spike away from him. Normally, if Xander hadn't been drugged, he would have sensed Buffy coming with his sixth sense for impending danger, but he was out cold, so Angel had been extra vigilant.

"Angel, listen to yourself," Buffy tried to reason. "You just threatened to kill me. Me. Over Spike. What's he done to you?"

"He's done nothing to me," Angel hissed. "He belongs to me!"

"God, Angel, please," Buffy pleaded. "You sound like Angelus. He belongs to you? I suppose you own Xander too now."

"Yes! They're my Childer!" Angel growled again, pulling Xander closer to him.

"Now's not the best time, Slayer," Spike said, his eyes slitting open to glare at Buffy. He saw the stake in her hand and began to growl along with Angel. He moved forward, putting himself between his near comatose Childer and the threat of the Slayer.

“Why not? I come in here and find out you're fucking my old boyfriend. Then there's Xander! You stole my friend and you're a cradle robber. What did you do to them?”

"We're sharing a bed, not shagging," Spike spat. "And I didn't do anything to them. Now get the fuck out of here before your precious Angel rips your heart out!"

“Angel wouldn't do that!” Buffy insisted, even as she stumbled back. “He still loves me.”

"Get out," Angel hissed. "If you come for my Childer again, you will regret it."

“You have to see that it would be better if you sent Xander home with us?” Buffy decided if she couldn't have Angel, she'd try for Xander.

"Over my dead body," Spike cut in. That bitch wasn't taking his Childe away from him. She'd have to kill him first.

“Wouldn't you like to have your Childe all to yourself again?” she said to Angel.

Angel stared at her for a moment then laughed out loud.

Apparently nothing short of downright nastiness was going to get Buffy away from them. "And why would I want that when I can have them both? I mean, look at them. Have you ever seen two more beautiful men? And the best part is, they're all mine."

"He's right, Bitchy," Spike said, already starting to rub up against Angel. "He likes to take both of us. You just weren't *man* enough to keep him."

"That's disgusting!" Buffy spat. "And a fucking lie. I'm really going to enjoy dusting you."

"One more word," Angel used the tone he only used when he was Angelus. "One more word and I kill you."

"You know, was it too much to ask for you to mind your own business for one fucking night?" Cordelia snarled as she stormed into the room. She'd woken up and just had a feeling that something wasn't right. Her first instinct had been to check on Xander. She'd been right on the money there.

"You'd better get this cunt outta here," Spike hissed to Cordelia. "Angel is doing his best Angelus impression right now."

"Consider it done," Cordy said as she grabbed Buffy by the arm. "Either come with me now or I start screaming my head off and you can explain to Giles and the others why you're in their room with a stake in your hand."

Buffy followed Cordelia out of the room and stumbled a little when Cordy shoved her into the hall. Cordy made sure to shut the door behind her, knowing that Angel was beyond upset that his Childer had been threatened yet again.

"What is your malfunction?" Buffy hissed, rounding on Cordelia. "I thought you cared about Xander. How can you just stand by and watch him be used like that? What the hell is wrong with you people?"

"Used? You mean loved," Cordelia scoffed. "He has two of the most powerful vampires in the world wrapped around his little finger."

"Spike is using him. You know it, I know it. The only one who doesn't know it is Xander," Buffy huffed. "This is sick and perverted and it is going to stop."

"Buffy?" Willow and Tara had come into the hall when

the shouting awakened them. "What's so sick about it? Do you have a problem because they're gay?"

"What? Of course not! Wills, you know I don't have a problem with that. What I have a problem with is Spike keeping Xander like some perverted pet. Xander's his puppy!"

Tara peeked out behind Willow and spoke softly, "I don't think you're right. Spike's devoted to Xander."

"Then why won't he let Xander feed like any normal vampire?" Buffy demanded. "And why did he feel it so necessary to take him away from Sunnydale in the first place? I mean, we're his family. He should be with us, not that bleach blonde freak."

"Xander's changed now, Buffy," Willow said. It pained her to say this, but it was true. "He's not our Xander anymore."

Buffy started to reply then stopped as Willow's words sank in. Xander wasn't theirs anymore. She wanted to cry, wanted to rage, wanted to stake something. But there was nothing to be done. Their Xander had been lost the night he'd died. This Xander was the only one left

and that was the part she couldn't deal with the most.

“And he won't let Spike feed him like a normal vampire because he isn't a normal vampire,” Cordelia added. “He isn't a normal fledging. He's Spike's Childe. Spike's like his mother in some warped vampire way. The longer Spike nurses him or feeds him just his blood, the closer they get and the stronger Xander will be.”

"This is wrong," Buffy shook her head, still arguing but most of the fight having gone out of her words. "Spike is keeping him dependent. I know you don't believe me, but it's the truth." With that, Buffy turned and strode angrily to her room. She knew they wouldn't believe her. They didn't see anything except what they wanted to. Just like everyone else.

It was Tara who spoke first. “Maybe he needs to be dependent on someone for once?”

Buffy's only reply was to slam her door. Loudly

~*~*~*~*~

Xander woke up hungry and for the first time in almost

two days, he woke up without serious pain. Sure he was stiff and sore, but the pain wasn't all encompassing. He was sandwiched between Angel and Spike with Spike's neck tantalizingly close.

"Go ahead," Spike murmured sleepily without opening his eyes. He leaned his head back, exposing his neck even more. He could feel Angel starting to stir beside Xander and wanted to get his boy started before his Sire said something to make him back off. Angel meant well but Xander could be incredibly touchy about some things.

Xander whimpered and moved closer, starting to kiss Spike's neck. "I shouldn't feed until you have."

"Go ahead," Angel said, spooning up behind him. "I'll feed him when you're done."

"I'm sorry, I can't help it... never been this hungry before."

"Feed, pet," Spike encouraged. "Sire'll take care of me when you're done."

Spike cradled the back of Xander's head as he started to feed. He knew Xander was needy when he wanted to

feed from Spike's neck and not his wrist like they usually did.

"Yesss..." Angel hissed, his head resting on Xander's shoulder only inches from where the boy fed. He locked eyes with Spike and stared, letting all his aching want show through. It felt so good to be with them like this, to be a part of them. It was what he needed most after everything that had happened.

Xander pulled away just enough to speak and whispered, "Do you want me, Master?"

"Oh God, yes," Angel replied, his body already responding to the softly spoken words. He ground himself against Xander's backside, relishing the feel of the boy's tight body against his arousal.

Xander went back to feeding slowly, glad he hadn't punctured a major artery, but instead fed at the junction between Spike's neck and shoulder. Spike continued to cradle Xander's head and moaned, "Do it, Master."

Angel didn't have to be told twice. He reached down and tore the thin pyjama pants Xander had been dressed in away from his body. Spitting on his fingers, he slid one

finger inside the boy while reaching for the tube he knew was in the nightstand.

Spike and Xander were already hard and grinding against each other. "Hurry, Master. We won't last long."

Angel quickly squeezed some of the cool gel onto his equally cool flesh. He spread Xander's cheeks and placed the head of his cock at the boy's hole. One slow push later and he was sheathed inside him to the hilt, his hands gripping the boy's hips hard enough to bruise.

Xander bared his own throat to Spike even as he started to rub against him more frantically. His body hadn't been raped, but his mind had by the torture he'd survived. Now the touch of his Sire and Grand-Sire was healing him.

"Yes, that's it," Angel crooned as he began to thrust.

"Give yourself to us. You belong to us, Xander. All of you. For all eternity. And no one... no one takes what belongs to us."

Spike knew he couldn't take much blood from Xander, but he had to complete the bond. He wanted to completely encompass his Childe. "Drink from him a

little, Master," Spike implored and then bit into Xander's shoulder blade.

Angel nodded and let his fangs slip into Xander's neck. He took a single sip, knowing the boy couldn't stand to lose any blood at the moment. As he did, he rocked forward hard, rubbing his cock over Xander's prostate as he did so.

Xander bit down hard into Spike and howled as his orgasm overcame him. The last thing he remembered was a complete sense of belonging and safety.

Slowly, the two master vampires withdrew from the boy. Angel pulled his rapidly softening flesh free of the boy as Spike drew his fangs back out. "He'll probably sleep another couple of hours," Angel said as he got up and headed toward the bathroom to clean up.

"He's worn out, but he felt happy," Spike said, even as he lay on the bed and petted an unconscious Xander. "Oi, I could use a fag."

"Don't let your Childe hear you say that or he'll get the wrong idea," Angel called out from the bathroom. When he came back to the bed he held a warm washcloth out

to Spike. Sliding back into bed, he began to clean Xander up, wiping away the last traces of their joining.

“If I wanted a gay man, I got you, honey,” Spike quipped with a lisp. “What I need is a cigarette. Haven't had one in days.”

Angel leaned over Xander and kissed his Childe on the mouth. “Mmmm... much better than usual. You should give those things up.”

“That’s what the boy says,” Spike sighed. “That’s why I have to sneak out back if I want one.”

“You should quit,” Angel said again. “Just think how it would make him feel if you gave that up for him.”

“I said it’s been a few days since I had one,” Spike growled. “He’s been able to change me more in a month than Dru was able to do in a century. You know he asked me to stop gelling back my hair and let it grow out like the poufy way I used to wear it?”

“I thought it was getting longer,” Angel remarked. “It's amazing the things we'll do for the people we love.”

"You know, you used to be down right dead sexy when yours was longer," Spike actually pulled out a pout.

"I suppose I could be persuaded to let it grow out a little," Angel said. "On one condition."

"What's that, Master?" Spike let the title slip easily.

"Let me handle the Slayer. She won't get near you or your Childe. Not without staking me first. So just let me handle her. Agreed?"

"That's asking a lot, old man," Spike growled low.

"I know," Angel nodded. "But it's for the best. If things go badly, I don't want Xander to watch you two trying to kill each other. Besides, if you go at it with her, he'll try to get in the middle of it."

Spike rolled over so that he could look down at Xander who cuddled against him even in his sleep. "Alright, maybe it's nice to be taken care of for once."

"Don't worry, boy. I'll take care of you both. Now why don't you have a drink before he wakes up again?" Angel offered his wrist to his Childe. He couldn't offer his neck

without bending over Xander and he didn't want to risk waking the boy. They would simply have to make do with this for now.

Spike took Angel's wrist and licked at his pulse point. "Thanks for protecting us both."

"Always, Childe. Now feed and grow strong."

Part Twenty-One

"I was hoping you could stay around for Xander's sake," Cordelia said to the group gathered in the lounge of the Hyperion, then glared at Buffy, "But I don't think that's such a good idea now."

"What's wrong, Cordelia? Afraid once the others see what I've seen they'll catch a clue?" Buffy asked testily. She had no doubt that if Giles and the others would just listen to her for a moment they'd see what was being done to Xander. Then maybe they could get him away

from Spike and back to Sunnydale where he belonged.

"You mean the boys playing vampire dog pile?" Cordelia shot back. "Yeah, so what if they're doing the horizontal mambo?"

"As if," Buffy snorted. "I don't know what Angel was doing there but he certainly wasn't doing that with them."

"Hello!" Cordelia huffed with a hair flip. "Were they naked?"

"Shut up!" Buffy practically screamed, rounding on the ex-cheerleader and taking a step in her direction.

Cordelia backed up but shouted, "No, you shut up! Xander and Spike are Angel's little love monkeys, so you'd better get used to it."

"Um, Cordy, I don't really think everyone needed to know that," a still-weak Xander commented as he made his way toward the people clustered in the lobby.

"What? It's true," Cordelia huffed. "You're, like, wearing his shirt right now, aren't you?"

"Whether it's true or not isn't the point," Xander said. He walked over to Cordy and hugged her, something he'd wanted to do since getting back but had been unable to. "Buffy doesn't need that thrown in her face right now. She's tense enough as it is."

"I can't believe you're defending that bitch," Cordelia sighed. "You care too much, Xander."

"Yes, I do," Xander said. "I care a great deal about everyone here. So let's try to get along. For me. Okay?"

"She wants to take you away from us and doesn't understand you're a vampire now," Cordelia actually pouted at Xander and glared yet again at Buffy.

"No one's taking me anywhere," Xander said firmly, casting a glance toward Buffy as he did. He meant it. He wasn't leaving L.A. This was his home now whether Buffy realized it or not.

"Will you at least visit or let us visit?" Willow piped up. It was Willow's way of showing Xander she supported his decision.

"It'll probably be awhile before I go back to Sunnydale, but you're welcome here anytime," Xander said.

Spike had pushed past Angel and was at Xander's side in the blink of eye. He wanted to put on a possessive air in front of Buffy and wrapped his arms around Xander's waist, pulling Xander against his chest. "What my boy wants, my boy gets," he purred. "And he always liked your company, Red."

"Thanks," Willow replied, grinning at the vampire's obvious display. "Maybe next time we come there won't be any like major battles going on. We could do the whole tourist bit."

"Ah, maybe we could... could go on a double date," Tara suggested, taking Willow's hand and then she looked at Angel. "Or is that a triple date?"

"Let's just call it a family outing," Angel said, grinning at the girl. She was a strange one, Willow's mate, but she came through for Xander and that was good enough for him.

"Is everyone gay here?" Buffy half shouted in exasperation.

"I believe the correct term is bi-sexual," Angel said matter-of-factly. "At least where myself, Spike and, I presume, Xander are concerned. Since Willow was with Oz before Tara, that would apply to her, too. I'm afraid I don't know Tara well enough to make that kind of assumption." Angel smiled softly at the girl, doing his best to make her feel like she belonged.

Giles coughed slightly and looked down at the floor. He turned red and raised his hand. "Better count me in."

"Now see, I always knew there was something I liked about you, Watcher," Spike smirked. "Guess you're in the minority, Slayer. The rest of us appear to be into equal opportunity."

"Hey man, if you wanna play for the other team, that's all well and good, but I'm all about the ladies," Gunn said. "Now Wesley, you might as well fess up, too."

"Ha ha," Wesley said. "I have never played for the other team, as you put it. I prefer the ladies."

"He's just in touch with his feminine side," Cordelia said as she walked and patted Wesley's arm. "He's a man's

man. Oh, I mean a manly man.”

Wesley didn't bother to reply. Instead he swatted Cordelia on the backside as she walked past, earning himself a punch to the shoulder and a loud guffaw from Gunn.

“Breeders,” Xander snorted at their horseplay.

"Hey, it's us breeders that keep you guys in food, I'll have you know," Cordelia shot back playfully.

“No comment. So,” Xander laughed and then looked between Gunn, Wesley and Cordelia. “Who’s hooking up with who? It’s just a matter of time.”

"None of your business," Cordy said quickly. She did, however, take the hands of both Wesley and Gunn, letting her actions speak for themselves.

“Oh d-dear,” Wesley muttered and looked at Gunn.

"Kids these days," Angel said, shaking his head and grinning widely.

“You tell them, Gramps,” Xander laughed and then

coughed weakly.

"Hey, you take it easy now, pet," Spike said, immediately directing Xander to the nearest chair. "You've still got a ways to go before you're all healed up."

"I think Xander can stay here and watch cartoons or whatever with his friends," Angel dictated. "I know you'll be getting back to Sunnydale soon now that the Purson demons are taken care of. Wesley, feel free to bond with Giles over your books. Oh and Buffy?"

"Yes?" Buffy said, slightly dazed by Angel's take-charge attitude with everyone.

"Xander's staying here and he belongs to Spike and me, just as much as we belong to him. If you upset either of my Childer in any way or even breathe one word about this again I'll be forced to show how protective a Sire can really be."

Buffy stared at her former lover, mouth gaping. She couldn't believe Angel had just threatened her. This was not the man she had fallen in love with. She turned to Willow, her eyes filling with tears but found only sadness on her friend's face. Turning to Angel once more, she

nodded, the only reply she felt capable of at the moment.

“You'll find someone of your own kind someday,” Angel said. He didn't want to soften the blow of this warning, but he had loved the girl at one time. She was just as much a child as the rest of them here.

Buffy nodded again, her eyes huge as she tried to keep the tears pooling in them from spilling down her face. She didn't want to cry in front of Xander. He had enough to contend with as it was and he always hated it when one of "his girls" cried.

“Hey, Buff? Why don't you come sit next to me?” Xander offered, indicating the chair next to him. “We can watch whatever you want.”

Haltingly, Buffy moved toward her friend. She didn't look at Spike and Angel as she moved past them, her eyes fixed on Xander like he was a beacon. She sat beside him then tentatively reached out and took his hand. “I just want you to be safe. Be happy. That's all.”

Xander squeezed her hand back and smiled at his old friend. “I will be. I just ended up on a different path than

you. I know you were only trying to protect me in your own way.”

"I wish you'd come home... back to Sunnydale... but I know that isn't the place for you right now. I just can't help wishing it was. I don't want to do this without you."

“That’s the thing, Buffy. You never needed me to do this. You were born to do it. Angel says he needs me here. He says with my gifts I can help The Powers That Be.”

"I do need you," Buffy said, smiling through her tears. "Maybe not to kill demons and stuff, but I need you to keep me sane. You make me strong, Xander. When things started to look bad, you were always right there no matter how scared you were. You have no idea how that makes me feel, knowing you're scared and still helping me. Look, I'm not trying to make you leave. I know you belong here now. I just wanted you to know."

Xander got out of his chair on shaky legs and pulled Buffy into a hug. “We'll always be family. I love you, and I know this sounds cheesy, but I’m in love with Spike... and Angel.”

Buffy stiffened at the mention of Angel but kept her mouth shut. She hugged Xander gently, mindful of both her strength and his recent injuries. She didn't want to let him go, but she knew he'd end up hating her if she tried to keep him by her side. If she truly wanted to keep Xander, then she had to find a way to do this.

Epilogue

Xander was the first to push open the manhole cover and crawl out of the sewers. He was also the first to complain. "Ah man, why do demons have to explode? And what's with the purple slime?" He helped Cordelia out after him and tried to brush some of the sticky, smelly slime off of his body. He just managed to rub it in and scowled. "You'd think being able to fly would've gotten me outta the way faster, but, oh no..."

"Why couldn't you have a really useful power like turning into a giant shield or something?" Cordelia asked as she wiped her hands on her now ruined outfit.

“Hey, you might have been the one who knew there was a demon down there crawling up through the pipes to people’s toilets, but I was the one who knew he was in our can with that nifty little danger sensing deally.”

"Well next time there's a demon in our toilet, you can deal with it on your own. I don't even want to think about what some of this goop is." Cordelia shuddered and headed toward the bathroom. "At least there're enough showers in this place so nobody has to wait," she called out as she closed the door behind her.

Spike and Angel had already crawled out behind them and Angel was scowling at the gunk covering his leather duster. Spike just laughed and said, “Pretty boy here is havin’ a fashion crisis.”

"Just hose it off," Xander said, having first hand knowledge of trying to get monster guts out of clothing. "Cordy can take it to the dry cleaner with her stuff in the morning."

“It will always smell,” Angel sniffed and gagged. “I don’t even know what it smells like. I’ll have to get a new one.”

“You’re such a Prima Donna,” Spike snorted.

"Like you wouldn't do the same thing," Angel shot back. He was actually feeling pretty good, ruined jacket aside. The fight had been hard, but they had won. Xander was getting more and more control over his powers. The boy was fast becoming a force to be reckoned with. Angel was proud of him.

“Yeah, cause he’s a bigger Prima Donna than you are,” Xander quipped. He leaned his blade against the nearest wall and pulled his own shirt off. It was his birthday gift from Wesley and now his favourite weapon.

"Ha bloody ha," Spike said as he began to disrobe as well. His eyes lit on his Childe and he grinned as he watched the young one. Xander was growing up fast and getting more beautiful every day. His muscles were filling in nicely, broadening his shoulders and arms even more than they already were. Except for the height difference he was as big as Angel.

“He’s watching my ass again,” Xander sing-songed and wiggled appropriately.

"He always was an arse man," Spike laughed. "And never good at hiding it. Big scary, alpha vamp."

"You keep wagging that ass around and I'll do more than just watch it," Angel said as he pulled his shirt over his head and threw it on top of his ruined coat. He toed off his shoes next then started on his pants. If his Childer wanted to play, he was more than willing.

"Sure you're not too tired, old man?" Xander challenged with a snicker. "I know us young ones were on the front line today."

"Never too tired for my two favourite Childer," Angel said softly, his voice low and silky as he spoke. "But what about you? You were on the front lines as you said. You sure you can handle us both?"

"I handled you both this morning, didn't I?"

"That you did, pet," Spike laughed. "That you did."

The End

