

*Xander and Spike put stuff up for sale and make Giles' life a little stranger. Based on Zort's umbrella/naked Giles/microphone thing, and owing something to James and Amy's Domestic Piranhas. (PG13)*

## **The Great Hellmouth Charity Auction**

by

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It was, Giles reflected, quite frightening to see Spike and Xander sitting in a corner of the Magic Box with their heads together, whispering. He had once thought there was nothing on earth more disturbing than Anya blathering on about how good Xander was in bed. He found that the idea of Xander and Spike entering into this sort of relationship was even worse.

Not that Giles had any sort of difficulty with two men being together in that manner. Or rather a man and a male demon, if one was precise. That would certainly be a case of pots and kettles. But honestly, Spike and Xander had been dreadfully annoying when they'd hated each other. Now that they were a couple, they were like a life

threatening disease. Or perhaps a plague of locusts, Giles thought, watching Xander suck down his fifth cookie. He had imagined that Xander might grow out of the teenaged boy appetite for junk food, but apparently construction work was just as hunger inducing.

The store was quiet today. Customers were few and far between. The only sounds in the room were the ticking of the clock and the hushed conversation going on in the corner. It was driving him mad. Giles couldn't take it any more. He stuck his hands in his pockets and walked over to see what those two were giggling over like loons.

"What on earth are you doing?" he asked. He infused his voice with every bit of disapproving librarianism he could muster.

Xander jumped. Spike smirked. Xander looked up at Giles with big, Thumper bunny eyes and tried for innocent. Spike attempted his least irritating look. Neither effort succeeded. Ignoring them as best he could, Giles leaned in to see what they had laid out on the table between them. It appeared to be a layout for some sort of photo album. Without getting closer, though, he couldn't make out the subject of the pictures.

"What's all this?"

The other two gave each other a long look, as if they were communicating on a level Giles couldn't hear. Which, for all he knew, they could very well do. Then Spike shrugged and sat back in his seat. Xander gave Giles a winning smile. Giles braced himself for a crushing load of bullshit. He wasn't disappointed.

"Well," Xander began, "you know how Buffy's broke, right? And we know you're kind of hurting too, since Anya ran off with all that money she embezzled." Giles tried to interrupt but Xander plowed on too quickly. "So we, me and Spike I mean, tried to come up with a way to make some money. Because, you know, Willow has that car to pay for, and Dawn's medical bills, so she's not exactly flush either."

Choosing his words very carefully and speaking very slowly, Giles asked, "What have you done?"

"Well, not very popular these days, but I still have a few connections in the demon community." Spike pushed the pages he and Xander were working on to the edge of the table so Giles could see them. "So we asked around to see what Hellmouthy types might pay money for. This is what we came up with. Regular entrepreneurs, us."

The two of them were so proud that Giles was truly afraid to look. When he did, what he saw made him whip

his glasses off and polish them furiously. Then he put them back on and looked again, just to be sure he was seeing it right.

"Oh dear Lord." Neatly mocked up on the sheets in front of him was a brochure proclaiming "The Great Hellmouth Charity Auction" in puke green lettering. Giles supposed that the coloring would indeed appeal to some of the more demonic citizens of Sunnydale. It would match their skin or hair or some such. That wasn't what rendered him almost speechless. The photographs, and the legends beneath them, had done that little trick.

"Good God," he finally forced out. "Spike, tell me you aren't naked behind that umbrella."

"Course I am. Defeats the purpose otherwise."

"So, what do you think G-man?" Xander asked. "Think it will rake in the cash?"

Oh, so hopeful faces looked up at him. Giles pulled out a chair and dropped into it, still staring at the advertisement. The auction, it said, would be held next week. It would feature various photos, pieces of clothing, and other memorabilia of the more famous denizens of the Hellmouth. Pieces of the Buffybot, for example, would be sold in a box lot, with a starting bid of \$20.00

American. Translations for various demon currencies were in red print under each auction.

The auction would be conducted by one Xander Harris, and there was a very serious picture of Xander, standing behind a podium with a microphone in his hand. The photo of Spike that so unnerved him advertised a dream date with the celebrated once-master of Sunnydale. (Background checks mandatory. Female demons only, please.) Giles supposed that Xander felt women were less of a threat. Or maybe Spike thought female demons would be easier to manage.

He was trying to think of a tactful way to tell them that he wouldn't pay a penny to have a date with Spike, so why should a female Gjurynak demon, when he saw an auction lot that had him jumping back to his feet. And sputtering.

"Good Heavens." Giles indignantly waved the brochure under Xander's nose. Xander sneezed. "Tell me you haven't actually stolen a pair of Buffy's underwear to sell."

"Oh no." Xander shook his head to add emphasis. "No, of course not. Someone could use them as the, er, personal component in a spell right? Spike thought of that. So he

told me what kind of panties Buffy wore and I went and bought a pair."

"How on earth would Spike know what sort of underclothes Buffy has? Wait," he said, holding up a hand to keep Spike's mouth from flapping open. "I don't want to know. What I do want to know is if Buffy is aware of this."

"Sure she is." Spike gave him a look. "We wouldn't want to take a chance on her whomping up on us, would we? We cleared it. She thought it was gross, but possibly a good money maker."

It was almost believable. Almost. "Something tells me you let her in on the auction, and the dream date with Spike, but not the underpants."

"Hey now, I resent that." Xander snatched the auction catalog away from Giles. "I'll have you know that we have permission for 90 percent of what we're selling. Up to and including the almost but not quite worn by Buffy thongs to be used under leather pants."

"And what, pray tell, does the other ten percent consist of?"

Casually, as if he were just going to get a nice cup of blood, Spike stood up and took the brochure from

Xander. He started backing away while Xander tried to distract Giles. He wasn't fooled. Putting himself between Spike and the door, Giles held out his hand. "I think you'd better let me finish looking at that, Spike. Now."

With his best authority figure attitude firmly in place, Giles planted himself in front of the entrance to the shop and stared at Spike. Spike bared his teeth. Giles stared. Spike appealed to Xander, who tried the doe eyes again. Giles stared. Finally Spike decided just to make a break for it. There was an undignified scuffle, which ended with Giles holding the pamphlet in one hand and Spike's left ear in the other.

"You will sit down. You will let me finish looking this over. You will not touch each other. You will not speak. Is that clear?" Giles shoved Spike down into a chair across the table from Xander, then glared in turn at each of them until their heads bobbed in meek acquiescence.

It took every ounce of effort in him to keep his comments to himself while he flipped through the rest of the leaflet. Giles decided that he would simply store it all up and let them have it when he was done. But really, what were those two thinking? They offered a wide variety of merchandise, from the aforementioned underpants to a custom forgetfulness spell by Willow to

a dizzying array of costume jewelry, donated by Dawn. Perhaps he should bid on the forget spell, so he could put this insanity right out of his mind.

He was only vaguely aware of Spike and Xander, but he could tell they were following his instructions. No noise, and very little motion. It was nice to know they could still occasionally follow an order. The appalling list of items for sale went on and on, including a book that just happened to be in his library and a love-token bracelet made out of the armpit hair of a particularly rank demon (at a starting bid of only a dollar and a half that was quite a steal for a fertility charm that actually worked).

The last two pages made him go absolutely still. He read them twice, three times, just to be sure he had a full understanding of Spike and Xander's perfidy, then he turned his look upon them. Spike, who had been picking through the bowl of candy Valentine's hearts on the table, was in the process of pushing a small pile of them towards Xander. Each little heart had the sentiment "Bite Me" stamped on it. Some small part of Giles' remaining rational mind catalogued that under appropriate. The rest of his mind was engaged in thinking up new words for death and dismemberment.

Apparently realizing that Giles was finished reading, Spike and Xander both glanced up cautiously. And froze. Like Bambi in the headlights. Giles was pleased. That would make it easier for him to turn them into something dreadful.

"Where did you get these?" Giles was exceptionally proud of the quiet evenness of his voice. He was utterly in control. He would not beat them. Turn them into warthogs, perhaps, but he would not whack them. Carefully closing the brochure and tucking it under his arm, Giles planted himself more firmly and waited.

They exchanged another one of those short mental communications, then Spike nodded and began to speak. "Well, they were sort of a donation, Rupes. Put the word about that we would take donations for the auction, didn't we? And some civic duty minded soul sent those to us."

Nodding vigorously, Xander continued. "Yeah. And while I know they're something you would never offer up on your own, well, we were pretty sure you would be willing to just let it slide. I mean we'll give you all the money we earn off of them. That ought to pay off that huge bill you have from when Anya wrecked your car. And really, what's so bad about them? I mean, not that you're bad

now, but you were a sight to behold when you were twenty-something."

Giles unclenched his teeth and chose his words very carefully. Then he started yelling. "Are you mad? How could you possibly think I would let you do this? What sort of idiot do you think I am? I want the originals immediately. And I want this auction called off."

Guiltier looks had never been seen. "Well that would be hard, G-man. We already put up posters."

"Yeah. And s'not like you have a reputation to uphold as a school teacher anymore. You're a magic shop owner. People expect you to be eccentric. And those qualify all right." Spike grinned widely. "*American Pie's* got nothing on you and that plum pudding, mate."

A matching grin broke out on Xander's face. "Yeah, no kidding. How messed up did you have to be to let Eth, I mean someone, take those pictures?"

"Irreparably, apparently." Giles was calm. Unnaturally so. He was through with yelling. It would never work against these two. It would only serve to make them feel like they'd gotten the best of him. They had not. Emphatically not. "But you're quite right," he continued. "Those will fetch a nice price on the Hellmouth market, I'm sure. And

as we are all in desperate straits financially, I fear I must bow to the logic that whatever may sell is worth exploiting."

The conspirators looked at one another again, this time obviously alarmed. "Giles? Are you really okay with this? It was kind of a joke. Not the auction, I mean, but the thing about your pictures. Right Spike?"

"Huh?" Spike caught Xander's repressive frown and his face lit with understanding. "Oh yeah. I mean, sure enough. We were just having you on. The pictures never have to go anywhere. We'll get you those originals too."

With a very stiff upper lip smile Giles waved off the offer. "No, no. Entirely unnecessary I assure you. I want you to have every chance to make this a success. So much so, in fact, that I insist that you let me make a donation or two to the catalog."

"Er, what sort of a donation?" Spike moved back until he was standing behind Xander, and laid his hands protectively against Xander's shoulders.

"Oh, Watcher sorts of things."

"When you say Watcher type things do you mean book and amulet type things?" Xander asked. "Or do you mean

Xander dresses Spike in Anya's bunny outfit and plays find the carrot type things?"

That particular image made his head hurt, and Giles took a moment to rub his temples. Pushing his glasses more firmly into place, Giles crossed his arms over his chest and gave them an arch look. "More along the lines of Xander does a striptease in front of a few hundred drooling Melkesh demons while on his failed summer road trip, and someone took pictures sort of things."

"There are pictures of that? And I don't have copies?" Spike appeared to be genuinely perturbed. Then his expression turned calculating. "You really want to make money on that one, mate, you should sell them to Angel. He'd pay a good bit for pictures of my boy in the altogether, he would."

Giles gaped at Spike. Xander's elbow connected solidly with Spike's midsection. It made the most interesting thud. Spike doubled over holding his stomach, and Xander turned back to Giles, suddenly all business.

"Okay, your pictures for mine. Deal?"

"Not at all." Giles curled his lip. "I happen to know that I am the only one besides the photographer to see the pictures of you, Xander. I have no idea, however, how

many people have seen the photos of me, how many more there are than just these few, and who you got them from."

"Right. So we negotiate."

"Yes. I think that would be the wisest course of action."

There was a standoff for several moments, then Spike started to chuckle. Obviously he had recovered from Xander's forceful shushing technique. Giles and Xander both looked at him questioningly.

"Right," he said. "As if there's anything wise about any of this. What I want to know is how you got those pictures of Xan here, and who took them?"

"Yes, well, I'm sure you do. I am not, however, inclined to tell you. Unless of course you want to tell me what makes you think that Angel might want them."

"Hey!" Xander stood up and put himself between Giles and Spike. "Negotiating here. Less with the discussion of a part of my life that no force on earth can make me discuss, okay? And you, bleach-head. Not with the Angel lusting after me, which even though I once accused him of checking out my neck, I never believed."

That was just the opening Giles was looking for. "Yes, well then I'm certain you understand how little enthusiasm I have for auctioning off those pictures of me. Now, why don't you tell me who gave them to you and how they got them."

One final silent conversation passed between Spike and Xander, then Xander picked up his messenger bag and pulled out a stack of photos. "Here. The originals. Don't worry. No one else has seen them. At least not through us."

"Where did you get them?"

"Nicked them." Spike shrugged at Giles' incredulous look. "What? The last time your old love was in town he left behind a whole bag of stuff. In the hotel room. No one thought to take it with them."

"Oh good Heavens." Giles couldn't believe how easy that must have been. And how much they had all overlooked Spike in the past. Xander was trying not to smile, giving Spike a glinting look of approval out of the corner of his eye. "You'll withdraw these from the auction?"

"Yeah. If you give Xan those naked pictures of him, and tell him how you got them."

"I'm afraid I can't tell you that. But I can produce the photos." Giles waited until Xander nodded reluctantly before holding out his hand to shake on it and seal the deal. Xander waved off Spike's protest and pumped Giles' hand. Giles tucked the pictures they had given him away in his briefcase, and handed them their brochure, minus the pages that he was featured in.

"Yes. Well. I'll go and dig up those pictures, shall I?"

"That would be much of the good. Yeah, definitely. Oh, and, no problems with the rest of the auction, right?"

"None. Whatsoever. So long as no one else objects to the use of their, erm, things." Like a pair of spring headed dolls, the two of them nodded again. Satisfied, Giles made his way towards the front of the shop. As he was leaving, he could hear Spike and Xander begin a whispered conference. He smiled in anticipation of the next battle when he heard Xander mumble that they could always bid on Willow's forget spell, couldn't they?

The End