

Through the Eyes of a Child

by
Cath

Part One

The battle was still going strong and the Scoobies were losing ground. This demon was a total unknown, even Giles did not know what it was. It wasn't the biggest they had ever fought, only about eight feet, but nothing they did to it had even slowed it down. Wounds healed over as fast as they were inflicted. Xander had attacked from the rear as Buffy came in from the front, Giles jumped in at every opening he saw. Repeatedly they had attacked the demon without much luck of any kind. Buffy's arm felt like lead and she didn't know how much longer she could keep at it, even her slayer strength was giving out. She knew Xander and Giles must be ready to drop. Willow and Tara were calling up every defense spell they had. Their voices were growing hoarser and hoarser but nothing was working against the furred demon. They hit it with spell after spell but it made no difference. The

creature struck out with its left arm and sent the watcher rolling up against a headstone. Giles shook his head *Well at least I didn't get hit in the head again* trying to clear it before rejoining Buffy. As he was getting to his feet he noticed a dark shadow coming from behind him. *Oh Lord if that's another one of the same we're all doomed.* As the shadow got closer Giles began to have a little hope. It was another demon, just not the same demon. Maybe now they had a chance.

"Oi, what in the hell are you playing at now?" Spike snarled as he approached the group. "Don't you lot know better than to mess with a Graz'elktheus demon?"

Giles looked at Spike in shock, "You know what the devil that thing is?"

"Of course I do, said so didn't I? *And just where the hell is my Xan-pet?* Hey Red, you and Glinda knock off the mojo, it don't work. It's immune. Slayer you have to jab it in the middle eye, that's its only weak spot and don't let it get a claw in you, it's poison." Buffy jumped at the demon and started stabbing at the creature's middle eye...nothing happened. "Bloody hell you just won't let a person finish will you? You have to use silver." Spike pulled a dagger from his boot and started running

toward the demon. He leaped up as he got near it and planted the dagger deep in the center of its third eye and just that fast the battle was over. As it fell, the body began to melt into a gruesome slimy mess.

"Ewwww, why do we always get the slimy, stinky demons?" Buffy whined "Why can't they just poof like every self respecting vampire does. Oh well another night, another apocalypse stopped. Everybody OK?"

"It appears that we all survived intact and I will make sure to put in your order for a non slimy demon next time." Giles stated as he cleaned his glasses while glancing around at the group. Willow and Tara were gathering up their supplies, Buffy was cleaning weapons and Xander... "Where's Xander? He was off to my right just a moment ago."

"When did you see the whelp last?" *And why is it always my Xan-pet you manage to loose. You never loose the flippin' slayer bint do you?* Spike began to run around searching behind headstones and mausoleums looking for his Xander.

"Xander, quit fooling around, it's late and I want to go

home and take a long, hot bath." Buffy shouted "I guess we better start looking for him, he just can't be trusted to take care of himself."

One of these days Slayer...this chip'll be history and you'll be a happy meal. Spike's thoughts were not happy ones as he searched for Xander.

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The group split up and started searching in the immediate vicinity for the dark haired boy. They continued searching the cemetery in an ever widening pattern. Thirty minutes into the search the group still hadn't found him Spike was becoming frantic, bouncing from one point to the next with vampiric speed. *Why didn't you wait for me Xan? I told you I would be here. I swear I'm locking you in the bleedin' apartment for at least a month.*

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Finally they heard Tara yelling from across the cemetery, "I found him, h-hurry up, he's hurt. I th-think it may be

bad."

Spike tore across the cemetery. *Not my Xan-pet, nothings going to happen to my Xander. Do you hear me, whoever's supposed to be listening...NOT MY Xan-pet* and was standing over the pair by the time the rest of the group had gotten over to where Tara was. She was on the ground with Xander's head in her lap. He had a bloody gash across his chest that was oozing blood but he didn't seem to be hurt anywhere else. Tara was gently patting his cheeks trying to wake him up but it wasn't working.

"We had better be getting him back to the Magic Box. I will need the books there and we need to get out of the open. The demon might not have been alone. We have to try and find out how to counter act whatever the demon did to him. Spike do you know anything about the effects of a wound from that creature?" Giles did not like the feeling of being helpless, it was his job to know these things.

"All I know is that it's supposed to be bad mojo and you shouldn't get near the claws. No one ever told me what it does exactly." Spike was staring at the boy on the ground wanting to grab him up and carry him away but he knew

Xander would get royally pissed if he made a scene in front of the Scoobies. "Here let me get him, you lot lead the way and I'll carry the whelp." *Xan-pet what have you got in the way of this time? You're going to quit helping the soddin' slayer if I have to tie you to the bed.*

"Spike I thought you said it was immune to magic." Willow's voice was becoming louder and shriller as if she was accusing Spike of causing this. "We quit the defense spells because YOU said they wouldn't work."

"I said the demon was immune to magic not that it didn't have some mojo of it's own. S'like mojo won't stick to it, it just bounces off." *You bloody Scoobies ain't blamin' me for this cockup.* "Now just get out of the way and let me get the boy up off the ground."

"We don't need your help Spike. I can carry Xander and you just go back to your crypt or wherever you hang out now." Buffy snarled. Spike snarled right back at her in full game face, growling loudly.

"Buffy, enough. Do be quiet. Spike please quit encouraging her. Buffy, Spike is the only one with any knowledge of this demon and we may need him there." Giles was nervously polishing his glasses again. Dealing

with Buffy and Spike was like dealing with two very spoiled aggressive children.

"Fine, but if fangless gets in the way or does anything, he's dust." Buffy brandished Mr.Pointy as if to prove that she wouldn't hesitate to use it.

Giles led the way to the Magic Box, lost in thought, trying to figure out where to start looking for a cure for the Graz'elktheus demon's venom or whatever it happened to be. Opening the door to the shop, he motioned Spike over to the research table. Spike gently laid Xander down on the table, smoothing his hair away from his face as he let go. Giles brought a blanket from the office and covered the boy up. He pulled books down off the shelves and frantically began to search for the demon in question. The girls were standing quietly around the table Xander lay on wanting desperately to be doing something just not knowing what they should do. Tara finally took Willow's hand and led her over to where Giles was frantically searching through books. She handed Willow a book, picked up another one and started searching for answers. Buffy just stood off to the side, she knew when it came to research, she would just be in the way.

Xander was beginning to slowly toss his head back and forth softly moaning and mumbling incoherently. Spike went back to the bathroom and wet a towel to wash the blood off his Xan-pet's chest. He gently opened the torn shirt and began to softly wipe away the blood. The wound wasn't deep, just a scratch actually. It didn't look like something that could take the boy's life. *Stop it, Xan-pet has had worse than this and always survived, hell he's had worse from his own flippin' parents.* As Spike leaned down to finish taking off Xander's shirt, he was suddenly looking into the large, dark chocolate colored eyes he knew and loved. *Yeah you're the Big Bad alright, ready to start beggin' for a look at those eyes, anything to show that Xan-pet is in there.*

"It's about time you joined us whelp. Had the watcher and the witches right worried about you, you did."

"Who are you?" Xander asked in a small whispery voice.

"Oh hell...WATCHER get over here...NOW!" Spiked yelled.

Part Two

"Sorry, really sorry, bad boy, did something wrong, please don't yell, won't do it again, pro-miss, won't do it again...puhlease don't hurt me, tell me what I did, won't do it again sorry." Xander had his eyes closed tightly and his whole body was shaking.

Giles ran up to the table just in time to hear Xander's plea for Spike not to hurt him. He looked into Spike's shocked face that he was sure mirrored the look on his own. He couldn't begin to fathom what could have happened to boy to make him so afraid. Xander's voice didn't sound right. It was soft and immature, something was decidedly wrong with the boy.

"Spike..."

" Oi don't start on me watcher, I just yelled for you and he started acting like I was going to beat him." *Oh bloody hell, the parents. Stupid Spike, you know what the fuckin' bastards did to the boy.* "I won't hurt you Xan, was just calling Rupert here to come check your cut."

"Xander you didn't do anything wrong, you got hurt. You got hit with something and there's a cut on your chest. What's the last thing you remember doing?" Giles asked gently. Xander just stared at him in confusion. He looked out the window and saw it was dark out and started to cry quietly, he was in so much trouble. He was late and his daddy would already be home...waiting for him.

"I gots to go home now. It's dark out and I'm apposed to be in when it gets too dark. please..I'mgonna beinsomuchtroubleandproblygetsaspankin.ineedtogohomenow." he was sobbing and in full Xanderbabble mode.

Spike leaned towards the boy and gently took hold of his chin. He turned his head so they were face to face and softly asked "Xander how old are you?"

"I'm gonna be seven pretty soon but now I'm just six," he said trying to sniff back the tears, he was holding up three fingers on each hand. "Can I go home now? I gots to go home now."

"No, you need to lay there for awhile because you got hurt. We need to make sure you are alright before you leave. We'll make sure you aren't in trouble" Giles was also keeping his voice low and even trying not to scare

Xander. He had to remember that this was Xander the child not a man. Oh Lord he really didn't know how to deal with young children.

"You talk pretty, what's your name? Do you have any kids I can play with? I like to play with other kids." He looked around the store, trying to see everything, when he spotted the girls he wiggled his fingers at them. "Hi you look like my Willow, do you know my Willow? Her and Jesse are my bestest friends. I was over a Willow's house playing and then I don't `member anything else. You sure I'm not in trouble?"

Spike smiled at the way his Xan's brain was bouncing from subject to subject, his boy hadn't changed too much as he grew up.

"No Xander, you're not in any trouble. We have to make sure you feel better before you can leave. I want you to lie there while Spike and I talk in the office. Is that alright with you?" Giles tried to keep his voice calm so Xander wouldn't become frightened again.

"Kay. Spike...that's a funny name, is it your really name or a pretended name? Spike's a doggie name, you don't look like a doggie...did your mommy name you Spike? My

reallyname is Al-ex-and-er but my Willow and Jesse just call me Xander it's easiest. Only my daddy and mommy call me Al-ex-and-er but I don't like it `specially when they yell it..AL-EX-AND-ER LA-VELLE HARR-IS. That means I'm in so much trouble." Xander hunched his shoulders up and crooked his finger at Spike "'mere... can I tell you a secret?" Spike nodded yes and leaned down to hear what Xan-pet had to say. "I gets kinda ascares when they yell my whole long name, it means I been bad and I'm really gonna get it." Spike glanced over at Willow and watched as tears ran down her face and she nodded her head. She obviously knew what was going on with his Xan-pet, at least the six year old Xan-pet.

"See those pretties over there?" Spike pointed at the three girls. When Xander shook his head Spike continued. "They're going to watch you while Rup...Mr. Giles and I go in the office and talk. They won't hurt you and if they do just yell and I'll come back and bite them good and proper OK?"

Xander started to giggle and shook his head till the curls were bouncing over his eyes. "'kay what's their names? Will they like me ok, I'll be good, I promise, crossmyheart." Xander watched Spike walk back to the office then turned his head towards the approaching

girls. "Hi my name's Xander... why are you crying? Did you get hurt too? I get hurt lots but I gets all better too. Mommy says I'm just cul..clu..uhmm..clumsy. But I don't really know what that means. I guess it jus' means I get hurt awhooooole lot.

"Wil.."

"Buffy, hush, not now. Ixnay on the illoway. No Xander I'm not hurt just a little sad because you got hurt. You can call me Red, that's what Spike calls me, Okay?" Xander nodded again and Willow finished introducing little xander to the friends he couldn't remember. "This is Tara and that's Buffy...sometimes she yells but she's really okay. She won't hurt you, I promise."

"I don't yell at all and I really want to know what the hell you're talking about." Buffy voice was getting higher and louder the longer she talked. Just then the bell over the door rang and Xander's head spun around and he looked like he was going to start crying again. This time Buffy really noticed the look of fear on Xander's face and there was no denying that it was real. "Hey little man, it's okay. It's just my sister, Dawn. You're not in trouble but she better have a really good explanation about why she's here after midnight."

"You..you're not gonna spank her are you?" Xander asked quietly.

Dawn snorted "Yeah as if..."

Buffy shook her head no, "I don't hit Dawn, ever, and I'd never hit you either, promise"

Dawn was looking from person to person completely confused and not understanding anything. Maybe some bad guy scrambled their brain but good this time.

"Dawn this is Xander, he got hurt and we're taking care of him since he's only six and can't be alone because you know only six and all." Willow talked fast trying to get in everything before Dawnie could say anything. They could see the confusion fading from her eyes and understanding taking it's place.

"Hey, Xander, I'm Dawn and yeah the loud one is my big pain in the butt sister. You're six huh, that's cool. Hey I'm not the youngest anymore, hah. And yes Buffy I have a really good reason to be here so late. Janice got sick, really pukin' sick and her mom thought you might like it if she got me outta there quick".

Giles and Spike came walking back into the front of the shop. They both looked calmer and were wearing very "Willowlike" resolve faces. Whatever they had decided was what would be done and the look on their faces said that arguing wouldn't be appreciated.

"Right then, we've, that is Spike and I, have decided the Xander is going home with Spike tonight. It makes the most sense."

Buffy jumped up and started yelling immediately "No way am I letting fangless take Xander to his crypt. Not going to happen. Who knows what he'd do."

"I have to agree with Buffy" Willow stated firmly, "I can take care of Xander, I have before."

"Girls you can argue all you like, it has already been decided. Spike will take Xander to "his" apartment. Buffy you have Dawn to think of and your, ahem, other duties. Willow, you and Tara live in a dormitory, not the place for a young child and I have the store to take care of and research to do. Spike is the best option at this point."

"Mister gi..umm..giles"

"What is it Xander?"

"Why can't I go home? I really need to go home afore I get into more trouble."

Spike came over and touched the top of Xander's head, "Your parents aren't here right now are they? That's why I'm going to be taking care of you for awhile. *Like the rest of my undead life* Is that okay with you?"

"Mommy and Daddy aren't here? Where'd they go, is it time for them to visit grammy again? Maybe I can stay with my willow, sometimes they let me stay there." His voice started to quiver slightly. *Oh no Xan-pet not the tears again, bleedin' Master vampire and can't take a few soddin' tears.*

"Xander honey, your Willow isn't here right now either. She's with her mommy and daddy right now," Willow had trouble controlling the waver in her voice. She remembered how the Harris's always tried to find someone to shove Xander off on whenever they went somewhere. "You'll like staying with Spike. He'll be lots of fun and I bet you he'll watch cartoons with you."

And just how did you know me and my Xan-pet watch cartoons together, Red? "Alright then all settled then, you about ready to leave Xander? You look like you're getting a little tired there." Spike watched as Xander tried to cover up a huge yawn. "I think I need to get you home. Tell everyone `night and we're gone."

"kay, I'm ready now. Do you live in a house? Do you have a yard. How...how bout a swing huh? Do you have one of them?" *Hell Xan-pet, you haven't changed since you were six have you? How I the hell can you talk like that and still breathe?* Spike carefully helped Xander off the table, holding him around the waist so he wouldn't fall. Slowly they made their way to the door. "Bye Dawnie, bye Red, bye Tara and Buffy and mis..ter Giles bye." Xander was wiggling his fingers in a little goodbye wave as Spike helped him through the door.

"Take a breath Xander, you'll see them again tomorrow. Let's go get you to bed." Spike held on to Xander's hand like he was afraid he would disappear if he let go and led him out the door into the night.

Part Three

Inside the Magic Box, Buffy finally exploded in anger.

"Why is Spike taking care of Xander, soulless evil dead guy, remember? How can you think he can take care of a little kid and what is with this being scared, crying and thinking we're going to beat him? Why can't we just take him back to his parents so they can take care of him? That's where he should be. Or even Anya. Why can't Anya take care of him? I mean I know they are on the outs because of the wedding and everything but she still might help take care of him."

"Buffy, to begin with Anya most decidedly cannot be trusted to care for Xander. She's still upset with him and besides that she is also not in town right now. You must remember that Xander's mind may be six but his body is that of a grown man. Do you really think he would want any of you helping him to dress, to bathe? Spike is the most logical choice. I have to try and find a way to bring him out of this and I can't do that while babysitting. I need to research and it is quite possible that I may end up having to get in touch with the council. There may be something in one of the watcher diaries about this

demon. I will also consider calling on Angel and Wesley, one of them may happen to know something about this demon. As for the being scared and not going to his parents, I think Willow may know more about that than I do even though I have my suspicions."

Willow shook her head sadly and started to tell her friends things that she had never mentioned to anyone but Jesse when he was still alive. Jesse had understood, he had seen it happen. "Buffy, we didn't all have great parents. You had a good mother and well my parents may not pay me much attention but they never hurt me. Xander isn't that lucky, his parents aren't like that...they're mean, hateful drunks. That's the reason he used to sneak over to my house all the time. When they started drinking and the fighting got worse, he would sneak out..he..he started doing it when he was four." Willow started to sob and for a minute couldn't say anything else. "I tried to always be there for him, I would wash off the blood and put Superman Band-Aids on the cuts and tried to get him to tell me what happened but he would never say the words. The story was always that he fell or something tripped him. It just wasn't possible for him to come right out and say it was his parents. He pretended that nothing happened and each time he

went back to them. I think it was still going on until he moved to his apartment."

"No way, I would have noticed if he was getting beat up. We saw him nearly every day Willow. Do you really think they were still beating him up and none of us noticed?" Buffy was beginning to cry herself as she thought of all the times she had ignored how slowly Xander walked, how carefully he moved around, or the bruises he sported even when they hadn't fought anything for awhile. "They really were hurting him weren't they? Why didn't you say something? I could have....we could have stopped it, showed them what it feels like to really be hurt. There had to be something I could do." Buffy didn't like feeling helpless especially when it was her friends who were getting hurt.

"It was up to Xander, Buffy. You can't make someone ask for help. I tried for years to get him to admit that something was going on but he pretended that everything was fine. I think it's how he coped, that and making a joke out of everything. He just couldn't admit that something was really wrong." Willow's shoulders slumped in a defeated posture, "I really tried Buffy. This is new for you but I've been living with it since I was four years old. I was five when I finally figured out that

monsters could be the people that were supposed to love and take care of you before that all I really knew was that my friend was hurt. I tried so hard to be there for him and love him.." Willow broke down and sobbed. Tara pulled her into a hug and slowly rocked her back and forth, gently rubbing comforting circles on her back.

"We know you tried sweetie. You did everything you could." Buffy watched the two as comfort was given and received. She hadn't felt this helpless since sending Angel to hell.

"Buffy we know you want to help Xander but Willow is right. You can't help someone until they are ready to ask for help." Giles was polishing his glasses again trying to keep his fingers busy and wishing, not for the first time, he had the ability to let Ripper out to play. That would teach the boy's parents to beat him, a little of their own back at them. He felt as guilty as Buffy, he hadn't noticed how often Xander was hurt either. For now the best thing he could do was what he did best..research. He had to find out everything he could about the Graz'elktheus demon. There had to be a way to help Xander.

Part Four

Walking home with the six year old Xan-pet was an experience not soon to be forgotten. Spike kept a tight hold of his boy. The one time he let go, Xander was running and bouncing all over the sidewalk trying to take in everything, peeping in windows, looking around corners and peering into trash cans.

"Oi, you keep yourself right by me, hear. There's all kinds of beasties out there in the dark just waiting for a right tasty treat like you." Xander came to an immediate stop and crept back over to stand closely by Spike's side.

"Beasties..they'd eat me?" Xander asked quietly.

"Yeah, ghoulies and ghosties and beasties. But don't you worry about them. You just stay close to me and I'll keep you safe. None of them things'll mess with Spike, after all I'm the Big Bad ain't I?" Xander looked up at Spike with large somber, questioning eyes. Xander had learned early to never put his trust in an adult but just maybe Spike would keep him safe and not let anything hurt him. "See, that didn't take too long did it? We're going in that building right there. That's where yo..ah..my flat is. We need to get you inside, cleaned up and to bed."

"What's a flat?"

"I forgot you American types don't know the proper names. That's what proper English speakers call an apartment."

"I talk english. My mommy is always saying "Open your mouth and speak english, stoopid."

Spike's snarl surprised Xander and his eyes started to tear up. "Now don't you even start the water works again Xan-pet. `M not mad at you, but nobody should call you stupid. You're a right smart little boy, all polite and everythin'. And you talk American not proper English but then you are American-like so you don't know any better."

Xander looked at Spike and the smile that spread over his face was as warm and bright as a sunny day. *Now there's my Xan-pet. I knew he was in there somewhere.* "You really don't think I'm stoopid or nothin'?"

"Just said so didn't I? Hey whelp no running in the hallway you. You don't wanna wake folks, now do you?"

"Sorry spike, won't run no more, `k?" he came back and stayed right by Spike.

Spike just shook his head. How is it that his Xander couldn't see that he was as tall as Spike was or that his long legs could keep up with his? He looked him almost straight in the eyes but still thought he was only six. There must have been some wicked big mojo in the Graz'elktheus' claws to cause this. Hell fire it was going to be hard being with Xan all the time smelling him, touching him but having to keep thinking of him as a child. Would he ever be able to wrap his body around Xander's again, to curl up over his back as he buried himself in the inferno that was his Xan-pet, to taste the sweetness that was his blood *Stop it you bloody pillock. You can't think that way right now. Xan-pet needs you. He's a child, keep that in your bleedin' head.* Gods he could remember the first time with Xander like it was yesterday..

Six months earlier.

~~Like any self-respecting vampire during the day, Spike was stretched out in his crypt, sleeping like the, well, like the undead. Something was interrupting his sleep, a sound, a presence that shouldn't be there. Spike rolled off onto cold concrete floor and crouched behind the coffin. Cor, don't tell me it's them army arseholes again, haven't they done enough? He tilted his head to the side and

listened carefully to the heartbeat of the invader. What in the hell is the whelp doing prowling around during the day. It seemed odd that Xander would be coming here alone without the Slayer to protect him. Spike stood up and sauntered out from behind his hiding place. "That's a good way to get yourself dead boy, sneakin' in on sleeping vamps like that."

Xander looked Spike in the eyes and then slowly started raking his eyes up and down Spike's body. Spike could smell the arousal rolling off the boy in waves. Xander prowled closer to the vampire, loose hipped and slinky like a large cat on the prowl.

"What the hell are yo...mmrhlgg.." Before Spike could get another sound out, Xander had latched on to Spike's mouth and was trying to suck his tongue out of his head. Xander pulled back to take a breath then plunged back into the delicious, cool mouth. Spike ran both hands through Xander's dark hair and held on, using his own tongue to counter Xander's every move. God the boy's mouth was the sweetest thing Spike had ever tasted. Xander ran his hands down over Spike's shoulders to the hem of his tee shirt, leaving his mouth only long enough to pull the shirt over the vamp's head, then dived back in. He finally left the soft, swollen lips and started to gently

kiss his way around Spike's jawline and down his neck, stopping to lightly suckle where his pulse should be. Spike let go of Xander's hair and reached around to grab on to his ass, pulling him tightly into his painfully hard erection. Spike was rocking their aching hardness together as Xander continued his moist kissing trail from Spike's neck, across his collarbone, down his chest, stopping to lick and suckle a small rosy brown nipple. Spike couldn't hold off any longer, it had been too long. "Gods pet, can't stop, gonna cum now, don't stop, now pet now.." Spike threw back his head and howled as Xander bit down on the nub and pulled Spike's hips in as hard and close as he could. He kept rubbing their denim clad hardness together till he yelled out his own completion and latched onto Spike's neck, biting down hard. They both hit their knees, neither willing to let the other go.

"Want you Spike, want you on me, in me, taking me. Please Spike want you." Xander had pulled Spike down on his body and was arching his hips up trying to build up the delicious friction again. "Please Spike, in me now, want you to take me, fuck me Spike, fuck me now." Spike sat the boy up and ripped his shirt down the front pulling the remains off his shoulder and throwing the pieces in the corner. He took a minute to just stare at the golden tanned chest before he started to unfasten the jeans, he

didn't know what had set the boy off but he wasn't going to worry about it.

He pulled away from Xander a minute to untie and remove the boy's trainers, then he jerked the jeans and boxers down off his legs. Straddling the boy's thighs, Spike reached up and tweaked the flat brown nipples until they stood up hard against his fingers, eliciting a loud moan from Xander. "Please Spike.." Xander was tossing his head back and forth and sobbing his pleas to the vampire, "Fuck me Spike, fuuuuck meeee."

Spike rolled off long enough to shuck his own jeans and roll back onto the boy. He started at Xan's mouth and slowly worked his way down, kissing and lightly nipping down Xander's neck. He continued down his chest, stopping to torment Xan's nipples then continued his journey down pausing a minute to stroke his tongue in and out of the boy's navel while still tweaking the hardened nipples, then down to the crisp, dark curls surrounding the again hard drooling erection. He took one long swipe with his tongue, from root to head, circling and teasing the slit with the tip of his tongue.

As he slipped his mouth over and engulfed Xander's engorged cock, his finger began to lightly play up and

down the cleft of Xan's ass, stopping every once and awhile to rub at the rosy pucker, lightly pressing in on it with one finger. During one strong suck, he breached the hole with one finger and began to gently stroke in and out. Xander was panting and arching his back off the concrete floor. "Spiike, gonna..can't.. oh please..now..now." Spike pulled his mouth off Xander's cock and grabbed hold with his hand, milking the pulsing organ as stream after stream of hot cum spurted over his hand.

As soon as Xander quieted and sank to the floor, Spike had him on his stomach and was pulling his ass up. He began to prepare Xander with his cum soaked fingers first one, then two fingers finally pushing in three finger and scissoring them to get the boy ready. He pulled his fingers out and lined up the broad head of his erection with the now loosened hole. "Easy Xan, gonna make it good, don't wanna hurt you, can't hurt you.." He pushed in, working his way gently past the grasping ring of muscle, then pushed slowly till he was buried balls deep, stopping to let Xander's stretched muscles relax around the invading cock. He felt like he was in an inferno, had any other ever been so hot? It had been a very long time since Spike had been like this with a human, he couldn't remember it ever being this hot, this good.

Xander pushed back against the impaling hardness, "Now Spike now, if you don't move now I'm gonna kill you..again. FUCK ME!" Spike pulled out until just the tip of his erection was still in the boy then plunged in with one fast strong stroke. "Yeeesss, fuck me, fuck me hard, harder.." Grabbing Xander's hips, Spike began to piston his cock into the grasping hole, angling his stroke so he hit the boy's prostate with every powerful stroke, going faster and harder until he felt the tightening feeling in his balls that meant he couldn't last much longer.

Xander was reaching down with one hand trying to latch on to his weeping erection wanting..needing something, some relief. Spike pulled his hand back up and grunted "No you don't boy I've plans for that." With one more powerful push, Spike threw back his head and roared. Before Xander could move, Spike had flipped him over and sucked his pulsing dick into his mouth, stroking his teeth down the underside. "Oh God now Spike, now, do it please do it, want it, want it, want it." As Xander's cock began to erupt, Spike pulled off and sunk his fangs deeply into his groin. Xander's body bowed up until only his head and heels touched the cold concrete floor and there seemed to be no end to the cum shooting from his cock. Spike had never tasted anything so pure, so sweet as his

boy's blood. It was like the finest chocolate, laced with honey and cinnamon with the added spice of his boy's surrender. Taking two more mouthfuls from the boy, he carefully pulled out and licked the wounds to stop the blood flow. He crawled up Xander's shuddering body and rolled to his back taking the boy, no, the man, with him...

Spiked shook his head as if trying to erase the pictures in it. It wouldn't do to be thinking like that right now. He took his key out and unlocked the apartment door. Xander slowly followed him through the door, twisting and turning his head from side to side so he wouldn't miss seeing anything.

"Alright then whelp let's see about getting you to bed. It's getting' kind of late for you to still be up."

"spike I'm..uh..well..i'm..?"

"Spit it out then Pet, nothin's gonna happen to ya if you ask for something."

"I'm kinda hungry, can I have something to eat maybe."
Right then, you can do this Spike, what would be okay to give little Xan-pet this time of night? Hell you know the whelp's appetite.

"Right then, how about some cereal. That's good late at night ain't it? We got Fruit Loopy things, Chocolate puffy bits and somethin' with a tiger on the box. What sounds good to you Pet?"

"Uh, can I have fruit loops? I really like those and that's tony the tiger he goes grrrr-eat on the television `mercials." Choking back a chuckle Spike set a bowl on the table with the milk and cereal. When he turned around to get a spoon he heard a very quiet "Uh oh".

"I'm sorry spike, I'll clean it all up right now. I don't need the cereal, I'll just go to bed `kay?" Xander had tried to pour his own cereal out of the box and had missed. Little pastel rings were rolling all over the tabletop.

"It was just an accident Pet. Help me put them in your bowl then I'll do the milk." Spike poured milk over the cereal and sat back to watch Xander as he inhaled the bowl of cereal. "Hey now you don't need to be choking yourself, no one's gonna take it away from you."

When Xander finished his bowl of cereal, he put the bowl and spoon in the sink and turned to Spike but before he could say anything a huge yawn split his face. Spike

showed him the bathroom and told him to wash up for bed. While Xander was washing, Spike brought him in some sweats and a T-shirt to sleep in. It was the closest his boy had to pajamas.

"Here you go pet, let's get you in these so you can get some sleep." Xander's tired-clumsy fingers were having trouble with the buttons on his shirt so Spike reached over to help. He unbuttoned the shirt and then unfastened the button on the top of the boy's khakis. It didn't take Xander long to get out of his clothes and into the soft, worn sweats and tee. Spike had to lead a very tired almost asleep Xander into the bedroom and lay him on the bed. As soon as his head hit the pillow, Xander was snoring lightly. Spike covered him gently, kissed him on the forehead, and went back to the kitchen to fix his own late night snack. Good thing he had just stocked up on blood, he wasn't going to have much free time in the next few days. Spike took one of the plastic pouches out of the fridge, opened it and poured the dark thick fluid into a mug. After heating it in the microwave, he sat down in front of the TV, sipping his midnight snack. There were still some loose Fruit Loops on the table and Spike thought *What the hell..* picking them up and adding them to the blood in the mug. "Not bad these." He

picked up the box and poured some of the fruity cereal into his warm blood and started to eat.

Part Five

Spike was stretched out on the sofa dead to the world, literally. He knew that it was daytime outside and his body resisted waking up. His mind kept telling him he needed to wake up and check on Xander. The boy was too young to leave alone but his demon kept telling him “daytime-sleep-too much sunshine-sleep”. The decision was made when he heard the sound of a heartbeat coming closer to him.

“Mornin’ whelp.” Spike yawned loudly and forced his eyes open. He looked over at the boy resting his head next to his on the sofa. “Why so sad mate? You look like your puppy just died.”

“Nope, no puppy, can’t have one. Nothin’ to do spike, no

toys, no my Willow, no Jesse.” Xander shrugged his shoulder and sighed deeply.

“Well how about TV then? You can watch cartoons while I fix you somethin’ to eat.”

“Cartoons? really I can watch cartoons? oh but there’s no cartoons in the day spike, just morning time and saturday.”

“Oh ya’ think so huh?” Spike grabbed the remote turned the TV on and hit the numbers for the Cartoon Network feeling really glad his Xan-pet liked his cartoons enough to pay for them. “How’s that pet?”

“Look spike look, it’s the space ghost. I really like space ghost, he’s cool. I watch him at my Willow’s house sometimes.” Spike left Xander in front of the TV while he fixed some brekkie for him.

“Here you go whelp. Here’s some more of those fruit loopy things and some hot chocolate. That ought to be good and nummy. If you’re still hungry I left some of those chocolate ringy ding things sprouts like on the table.” Spike left the boy eating in front of the TV and went to the kitchen to warm up something for himself.

He brought his cup into the living room sitting down on the sofa and watched his boy eating slowly, mesmerized by the action on the TV. When he finished his cereal Xander looked up and noticed that Spike was watching him. He got up from the floor and snuggled up next to Spike on the sofa. His nose twitched as he caught the scent coming from the cup in Spike's hand.

"Watcha drinkin spike? It kinda smells like blood. Are you drinking blood?" Spike's brain was racing trying to figure out what to say. He should have known to be more careful. He knew his boy wasn't stupid no matter what the other lot thought. "Spike?"

"Yeah whelp?"

"Are you a vampire?" If Spike had a beating heart, it would have stopped. His mind was racing *What in the hell do I tell him? How much should I try to tell him?*

"What makes you think I'm a vampire Xander?"

"Weelll your drinking yucky blood and last night..well..ummm..I couldn't see you."

"What do you mean you couldn't see me? I was right

there with you.”

“In the bafroom, I couldn’t see you in the mirror. Everybody knows you can’t see De-racula in the mirror and he drinks blood and he’s a vampire. Are you a vampire too?”

Oh hell, as his mum used to say ‘In for a penny, in for a pound’ “Yeah sprout, I’m a vampire but I’m a good vampire see, not like that flippin’ arse Dracula. He’s just a big poncy show off. I don’t hurt folks anymore and help the white hats.”

“You...you know DE-RACULA?”

“Well I just said that didn’t I? The bloke owes me money don’t he. Never did like the pouf though, puts on airs he does going all “Look at me I’m the prince of darkness”. Xander fell back against the sofa giggling uncontrollably and kicking his legs about. When he finally quit laughing Xander went over to the table and ate the sugary snack cakes Spike had left out for him. He came back and settled down again in front of the TV. Spike yawned deeply and stretched out on the sofa. “OK sprout I’m gonna lay here and sleep a bit while you watch your cartoons.”

Xander sat quietly in front of the TV watching cartoons, every once and a while glancing over at the sleeping vamp reassuring himself that Spike was still there.

Two hours later Spike was shocked out of his nap when something hit him in the nose. He jerked upwards and a paper airplane fell off his face. From the mess in front of the sofa he surmised that Xander had gotten bored and had found some paper to make airplanes with. *Well at least the whelp had found somethin' safe to do* He jerked his head around as he heard a bunch of what had to be elephants running down the hallway preceded by another airplane. The elephants turned out to be Xander chasing the airplane. When he got to where it had fallen he picked it up threw it up in the air and chased off after it. Spike watched the game for a while then caught the boy as he ran by again. "Here whelp don't you think that's enough?"

" umm, nope." And off he went down the hall, into the bedroom, back down the hall, over the back of the sofa, around the kitchen and back down the hall again and again throwing and then chasing after the paper airplane. Spike was getting worn out just watching. There has to be something wrong with Xander, even he knew this

wasn't normal. Spike needed help with this but who should he call? Slayer doesn't know much about kids neither did the watcher. Red, that's who he needed. The witch would know what was wrong. He picked up the phone and hit the number that would connect him with the witches. When Willow picked up the phone Spike didn't even give her a chance to speak.

"Need your help Red, there's somethin' wrong with Xan-pet. He's racing all over the apartment, he won't stop or even slow down and I can hear his heart going too fast. I need you to come fix it." Spike wasn't even trying to keep the panic out of his voice.

Willow tried to keep the laughter out of her voice, "You haven't been giving Xander sugar or chocolate this morning have you Spike?"

"Didn't give him any sugar just those fruit loopy cereal things and some hot chocolate for brekkie and well..."

"Out with it Spike? What else did you give him?"

"Nothin' much just a coupla of those chocolate snack thingies the whelp likes."

“How many snack thingies Spike?”

“Just three...well maybe more like five or six but they’re little things. They couldn’t have caused this.”

Willow couldn’t hold it in any more and collapsed against the wall laughing. Tara came closer so she could hear what was going on even though she had a good idea from what she could hear of Willow’s side of the conversation. “Welcome to the world of SuperXander, Spike. Haven’t you ever seen him after too much sugar and chocolate? He gets hyper and does everything at warp speed. Nothing slows him down.”

“Well how do I fix it, Red? And quit your bleedin’ heehawing at me. I need help.” Spike was beginning to get annoyed at the witch.

“There’s nothing you can do to stop it Spike. He just has to wear down. I promise he will eventually, like tomorrow some time.” Willow was lost to her giggling again and the sound of Spike spluttering into the phone didn’t help. She hung up the phone saw the look on Tara's face and collapsed into giggles again. “Spike and..and Xander and Fruit Loops, hot chocolate and five or six Ding Dongs. Oh Goddess, I have to quit laughing,

my sides hurt.” Tara laid her head on Willow’s shoulder and totally lost control. She was laughing so hard she couldn’t catch her breath.

“Oh Goddess, oh Willow, oh..oh poor Spike. I..I didn’t think I would ever say something like that. Sweetie you think we should go to the rescue? Even Spike doesn’t deserve to be trapped in an apartment with a sugar speeding Xander.”

“Okay Super Wiccass to the rescue. Good thing Super Wiccass don’t have classes this afternoon. Think we should call Buffy and let her help?” Tara glanced up into Willow’s eyes with a look of horror.

“Umh..sweetie just think. Speeding sugar hyper Xander, upset vampire and Buffy? I don’t really think that would be a good idea do you?” The pair was still laughing as they went out the door to go rescue the poor upset vampire.

Part Six

The girls could hear thundering footsteps and griping vamp as they got to the apartment door. Obviously Xander hadn’t started winding down yet. Willow reached up and knocked on the door. “Bleedin’ hell quit banging

on the door and hang on a minute. Xander get away from that door you don't know who's out there. Could be a beastie couldn't it? No you can't climb over that, get down. Xander quit your running, whelp." When Spike finally opened the door the appearance of the vampire was enough to set the girl's giggling off again. He was standing there wearing just his faded black jeans, no shirt, his feet bare, his hair was standing on end and he had a wild pleading look in his eyes. "'bout time somebody showed up to help me. Do somthin' Red, the whelp's making me as crazy as Dru on a bad day."

Just then Xander looked up and noticed who was at the door. He ran over and began hugging both the girls. "Hi RED. Hi TARA did you come to play with me? I made airplanes and I can fly them really good wanna see? Watch me, they fly really really good and it's fun to go try catch them." To illustrate his point Xander began to toss the airplanes and chase after them again.

"Spike, Tara and I thought maybe, if you don't care, we could take Xander with us for awhile and you can rest. There's a little park not far from here that no one really goes to any more so there shouldn't be any one around to see us and since it's afternoon we don't have to worry too much about you know whats. That way Xander can

run around and get rid of some of this energy and you can sleep.” Spike shocked Willow when he grabbed her around the neck and hugged her. “Hey gay here, girlfriend remember. Spike he’s not that bad.” Spike giving her a look that could only mean ‘bad as compared to what’ turned to get Xander.

“Xan-pet, how would you like to go out for awhile with Red and Glinda?”

“Who’s Glinda I thought Red and Tara was here. Where’s glinda? Is Tara going with us? Where are we going? Is it going to be fun? Are you coming too? How long are we gonna be gone? You have to come with us spike and protected me from the beasties.”

“Oh Goddess, I’m sorry I laughed at you Spike, it is that bad. No more Ding Dongs for breakfast and he only gets one at a time and none when he has super sweet cereal and chocolate milk. And whatever you do make sure he doesn’t get any just before bedtime. Xander, Glinda is what Spike calls Tara. Like he calls me Red and you Xan-pet”

Xander’s lip was poked out and he was glaring at Willow like she had just destroyed his life. “But they was good

and spike letted me have them. He's the boss of me." The look on his face definitely said that Willow was not his boss and that was that as far as Xander was concerned.

"Xander do you want to go to the park? Or would you rather stand in a corner for awhile? Don't poke that lip out at me mister it doesn't work." Willow and Spike both looked at Tara in shock. Xander just stood and stared at her.

"I'll be good now and I'll mind. Can we really go to the park?"

"Cor Glinda, didn't know you had it in ya luv. Well come on then whelp you need to get different clothes on and somethin' on your feet before you can go." Xander took off running to the bedroom to get changed, Spike following to help him. When Spike and Xander came back in the living room, Xander had his jeans on and was trying to get his shirt over his head. Spike was carrying his shoes and socks. Spike stopped Xan and gently worked his head into the neck hole and smoothed the shirt down over his boy. "Okay whelp get in the chair and let's get the shoes on."

“I can put on my own shoes on spike I just need some help tying. I don’t do that so good.” Xander got his socks and shoes on with Spike only having to tell him once that he had them on the wrong feet. Spike knelt down and tied his shoes stopping to walk his finger up Xan’s leg to his waist and tickle him. Willow and Tara were watching the interaction between the two and now knew for sure that Giles had made the right decision about who should care for Xander. Spike obviously cared for their friend. “k, I’m all ready now can we go.” Xander grabbed Willow’s hand and was tugging her toward the door. Just as they got to the door Xander let go and ran back to Spike, hugged him and gave him a sloppy “little boy” kiss on the cheek. The vampire looked shocked. “Bye spike be back later. I’ll be good pro-miss.”

Willow and Tara soon learned the same lesson that Spike had learned last night. Keep a good strong grip on Xander’s hand and don’t take your eyes off him. He wanted to see and check out everything. Just as Willow predicted the park was deserted. The equipment was still in pretty good shape though. Willow finally let go of Xander’s hand and he took off running to the swings caught one across his belly and launched into the air swinging wildly. After a few minutes of swinging he was on the run again this time to the merry go round. Yelling

as he went, "Will you push me please, wanna go fast as an airplane." He jumped on the merry go round and sat in the middle. "Push me please, Red would you push me...Tara push please." Tara and Willow ran over to the toy and started to push it in circles but with one fully-grown Xander sitting on it, it wasn't easy. Xander was giggling and yelling "Faster, faster". Willow quit pushing and pulled Tara back for a minute to whisper to her.

"Not too fast, I don't know about this Xander but my six year old Xander used to yell faster until he hurled." Tara went back and gave Xander an occasional push but didn't let it pick up too much speed. As it slowed down Xander jumped off and was gone again. He ran over to the jungle gym and was scrambling over it like a monkey. Willow and Tara stretched out under a tree where they had a good view of the playground so they could watch Xander. He was on top of the monkey bars hanging by his knees and swinging. "Xander don't stay that way too long all the blood will go to your head and you'll throw up."

"Ok I'll come down." He went back to the swings and seemed to be content to just swing. The girls were discussing things they had read that might have to do with Xander's condition and lost track of time. They didn't realize it had been almost an hour since they sat

down. When they looked up the swings were empty and they couldn't see Xander anywhere.

"XANDER, where are you?" No answer. "XANDER answer me now." Again nothing. ALEXANDER LAVELLE HARRIS you better answer me now." Willow knew just what buttons to push with her friend.

"I'm over here. right by the teeter totter. see me?" Willow and Tara were headed over that way when they finally spotted him half way up a tree hanging from a branch. He was beginning to look a little panicky and was starting to cry. "Red I'm stucked, I can't get down. Help please." The branch he was hanging on began to creak and finally snapped "WILLOW help."

"Oh Goddess, Xander, oh no. Oh, please be okay." Xander was lying on his back just staring until he noticed the girls run up then he began crying. "Oh Xander sweetheart are you alright? Where does it hurt? Let me check you out, no don't move until I know you're okay." While Willow babbled, Tara was checking out legs, arms and his neck.

"Sweetie I think he just got the wind knock out of him. There's no blood and he can move everything so calm

down.” Tara was always a calming presence.

“I knowed you was my willow, I knowed it. Why are you all growed up willow? Yesterday you was only six like me why are you so big Willow?” Xander’s crying was becoming hysterical “I want Spike, where’s Spike? He takes good care of me. I wanna see spike. Willow where’s Spike? Why aren’t you six any more? I don’t want you to be all growed up. Did an evil fairy get you or..or..was it a spaced monster? Spppiikkee.”

“Xander honey you have to quit crying now. We’ll go back to Spike’s in a little while when you calm down.”

“Willow why are you big?”

“Umm well...it..umm...it was magic, yeah magic. A spell..yeah that’s right, a spell and ah..well..” Willow had a tendency to get flustered when under pressure.

“MAGIC?” Xander’s big brown eyes got even bigger
“Really magic? But I don’t want you to be growed up who am I gonna play with and..and who’s gonna take care of me when I get hurted? Who’s gonna give me lunches and Band-Aids and let me play with their toys? iii waaannntt mmy ssspppiikkee.” Xander was crying again.

“Xander shh, honey we’re trying to fix it. We’re trying to find a spell to fix Willow all up again. Y..yo..you remember Mr. Giles from last night? Well, he’s a wizard and is going to fix Willow all up. So you two will be the same age again.” Tara looked at Willow and shrugged her shoulders as if to say ‘it was the best I could come up with’.

It was obvious to both girls that Xander was not going to calm down until he got back to Spike. That was something neither witch wanted to face, Spike was probably going to be furious. He really seemed to dote on Xander and acted like a mama bear protecting her cub. Even before he got hurt they had noticed that Spike seemed to be watching out for Xander when they patrolled. It was a much subdued Xander that walked back to the apartment with the witches. When they opened the apartment door Spike was standing in the kitchen. Xander flew across the room and jumped on the vampire, his arms tight around his neck and his legs wrapped around Spike’s hips.

“Here now whelp, what’s the problem?”

Xander was crying again, “I..I..I felled out of a tree and

got..got hur..hurted and you wasn't there and I wanted you. I cried and cried and th..th..that's my Wiiiilllooww. do somethin' Spike, my Willow's gots an evil spell on her and..and..and we gots to help her." Spike held Xander's face against his neck. Vampire strength was certainly coming in handy with the way the boy was wrapped around him. He sat down on a chair without loosing his grip on Xander. He started gently rubbing Xan's back and crooning to the sobbing boy.

"It's ok luv, shhh everythin's gonna be fine. You're not hurt too bad are ya'? You'll be fine. Now you need to stop the crying now, you're gonna run outta water pretty soon." Spike grabbed a napkin and wiped the tears off his boy's face. "Now what's this about Red and an evil spell?"

Willow and Tara looked at each other then at Spike. This couldn't be Spike, he wasn't mad, he wasn't yelling and he was holding Xander on his lap. "He guessed that I was Willow when he screamed for me as he fell. I was so scared I didn't think. So I had to tell him the truth, you know that truth about the evil spell that made me grow up when he's still a little boy. But we told him that Giles the wizard is going to fix me all up pretty soon. So we'll both be the same age again soon, I hope."

“Take a breath Red, I get it. So the great Wizard Rupert is going to fix you up huh? Let’s hope it’s not too long before that happens and you and Xan-pet are back to normal.” Spike was looking over Xander’s head at the witches and there was unspoken understanding in the three sets of eyes.

Part Seven

It had been almost two weeks since the demon had injured Xander, and a solution had yet to be found. There just wasn’t enough known about the demon. Without telling the others, Giles had decided to call for help. He had searched everything he had available but had found next to nothing. Spike was still taking care of the regressed Xander, and never seemed to tire of the job. The girls helped him when they could, even Dawn “babysat” occasionally. Buffy had actually brought him to the Magic Box a few times, and let him play in the training room, after she locked up the weapons of

course. She wrestled and played with him which helped to burn off some of his boundless energy. Xander had become their little brother, and the group was determined to protect him. The one time his drunken lout of a father tried to contact him, he was told that Xander was out of town on business for the Magic Box. The gang seemed to be determined to give him some of the things he missed out on as a child. The first time one of them had given him a present really brought it home to the group just how different Xander's childhood had been compared to theirs.

One week ago....

Buffy was very happy with herself as she walked down the stairs to Xander's apartment. He would love the Lego's set she had bought him, a castle with knights and everything. It even had a dragon. She knew he would like it. Xan always was her white knight, even when she forgot sometimes. As she raised her hand to knock on the door, she heard noises coming from inside the apartment.

"Help me, please somebody, help me, monster's gonna eat me up." Oh God, it's Xan, I knew we shouldn't trust Spike. Buffy burst through the unlocked door, and her blood went cold at the scene being played out before her. Xander was trying to crawl over the arm of the sofa as

Spike came in from the kitchen in full game face. Xander's eyes were huge, and wild looking as he tried to get off the couch and away from the approaching vampire. Before either one even knew she was there, Buffy had dropped the sack, and was over the back of the couch, holding Spike up against the wall with a stake at his chest.

"Give me one reason why I shouldn't just dust you and sweep you out the door." Buffy snarled.

Before she could do or say anything else Xander had run across the room and had her by the waist. He was trying to pull her away from the vampire. She was reminded that this was still a man when she and Xander both ended up sitting on the floor.

"Aunt Buffy, please don't hurt Spike, please. We was just playing the grrr game. Honest it was just a game. Please don't be all mad. Please don't dust my Spike." Xander was still pulling on Buffy while he tried to explain in-between sobs. Buffy dropped her arm around Xander's shoulders, looked up at Spike with a smirk.

"The grrr game huh?"

“Well, yeah. The sprout likes it, it gives him the giggles don’t it.” Spike reached down and ruffled the dark curls on Xander’s head “You like me to chase you all vamp-like, don’t ya, ya silly git?”

“Yep, it’s really fun Aunt Buffy. First he goes all grr...grrr then he chases and chases me and when he catches me he throws me on the floor and tickles me all over. You wanna play with us?” Xander looked up at her with innocent eyes not noticing the twisted evil little smile on Spike’s face.

“Yeah Auntie Buffy, do you wanna play the grr game with us?” Spike drawled putting all the innuendo he could into the question. The look on Buffy’s face was just the response Spike was hoping for. He began to laugh so hard he couldn’t stay standing and slid down the wall. He was very thankful he really didn’t need to breathe, he was laughing too hard to even try.

“Xander honey, see that sack over by the door? It has something in it for you. Why don’t you go get it, okay? I need to beat u...umm talk to Spike for a few minutes.” Buffy stood up bringing Xander up with her and turned him around, pointing out the sack she had dropped. Xander looked up at her, confusion written all over his

face.

“Why’d you buy me som’tthin? It’s not my birthday or Chris’mis or nothin’. You don’t have to buy me stuff. I only get stuff when I’ve been good and not been bad.” The look on Xander’s face made it very clear that he was not used to being given gifts for no reason, that maybe he was not used to being given gifts at all. The idea seemed to be totally new to him. Spiked had stopped his laughing and just sat on the floor watching his boy try to explain. “My Willow and Jesse gets me som’tthin for my birthday sometimes but daddy usually says it’s too fe...fa...fan whats that word?”

“Do you mean fancy, sweetheart?” Buffy asked quietly.

“Yeah that’s it, daddy says sometimes they’re to faaancy and takes ‘em back to the store so I don’t break ‘em. She got me a really neat firetruck once with a ladder and hoses and firemans and a dog, it was so cool but daddy said it was too nice for me to mess up so he tooked it and gave it to my cousin ‘cause he’s older and he oweded his daddy some money.” Spike and Buffy’s eyes met over the top of Xander’s head, the soulless demon and the demon slayer both looking like their hearts were breaking.

“Spike here ta...ta..take him a minute, I, uh need to...uh.. need to...” Spike could see the tears starting to collect and pointed her in the direction of the bathroom. Buffy ran out of the living room barely getting the bathroom door shut before she broke down in heart wrenching sobs. What had that those bastards put her Xander through? How could he have become the loving, sweet boy that had accepted her from her first day in Sunnydale? He had taken everything the hellmouth had thrown at him again and again and he always came back fighting. Why wasn't he mean and resentful? Buffy knew that she probably would be if she had been treated like that. She was truly beginning to understand just what a strong man her friend was. He had to be strong to survive the hell he grew up in. Maybe in a small way helping her and being a Scoobie had helped him stay strong. That thought made her feel a little better, to know she might have helped in some way. Buffy ran the cold water, soaked a washcloth and laid it on her swollen eyes. It wouldn't be right to go back in there with red eyes, she didn't want to do anything that might upset Xander.

Trying to distract his Xan-pet from Buffy's quick departure, Spike reached down and picked up the bag. He handed it to Xander. “Here whelp, why don'cha go ahead and see what sla...Auntie Buffy bought ya.”

Xander sat in the middle of the floor with his legs spread open with the sack sitting between them. "Look Spike, look it's legos...a really big thing of legos and it makes a castle and...and look there's horses and knights with swords and armor and them long pointy things..."

"That would be a lance, sprout."

"Yeah, a lance thingie and oh wow, look, it's a for real dragon with wings and everything." Xander was bouncing up and down in excitement. When he saw Buffy coming back down the hallway, Xander jumped up and ran to her nearly knocking her off her feet when he grabbed her in a hug. "Thankyou, Aunt Buffy, thankyou. I'll take really good care of it and be really careful and not lose any of it, I pro-miss."

"Sprout, why don't you take it over to the table and open the box up. That way you don't loose any on the floor." As Xander walked away, Spike pulled some money out of his jean pocket and shoved it at a surprised Buffy. "Slayer, I need you to go get the fanciest fuckin' firetruck this bleedin' town has. Make sure it has all those extra bits on it. It's kinda light out now or I'd do it myself." Buffy grabbed the startled Spike around the neck and hugged

him.

“Xander, I’ve got to go for awhile but I’ll be back later. Maybe Dawnie can come back with me, and we’ll help you with your legos.” As Xander waved at her, she leaned over towards Spike and whispered “We’ll also discuss how come six year old Xander knows you’re a vampire.” Buffy walked out the door laughing at the surprised look on Spike’s face.

“Oh fuckin’ hell...”

Part Eight

“Again with the bangin’ on the door. Don’t you lot have anything better to do then keep coming around here and knocking on the bleedin’ door all the time. A vamp can’t catch a decent nap around here. Whelp’s asleep, but can a poor over worked...” Spike threw the door open in disgust and froze in shock.

“Peaches, what in the hell are you doing here?”

“Are you going to invite me in or do we talk about this in the hallway where everyone in the building can hear us?”

“Yeah, come on in just be quiet, Xan-pet’s asleep finally. I need the peace and quiet. Don’t get much o’ that with a six year old running around. Never saw so much energy in my life.” *Yeah, you’re babbling Spike. Sound like a right idiot too. Hell, it’s just Peaches. Yeah, just my pouf of a sire and everything always stays so peaceful when he shows up, don’t it?* “Not that it isn’t just lovely to see you Peaches, but what in the hell are you doing here? Thought you left Lovely Sunnyhell for good.”

“Giles called about the problem with Xander. There isn’t too much known about Graz’elktheus demons, and what is known isn’t very helpful. I had a few contacts in LA that had access to some of the more rare books that mention them. Wesley and I brought them to Giles. Hopefully, they’ll find something in them.”

“Oh hell, Watcher junior is here too? Please tell me the flippin’ cheerleader isn’t with you. That’s all the hell we need. I’m tellin’ you right now Angel, if that fluff brained bint does one thing to upset Xan-pet she’s...” Spike didn’t

finish. Just what could he do to her? Wasn't like he could drain her, or hurt her none. Fuckin' chip, soddin' soldier boys. When he got rid of the damn thing is his head, there was going to be drained soldiers, from one end of this country to the other. Teach them to mess with William the effin Bloody he would.

“Spike, Cordy's not here to cause trouble and if you don't like it, YOU tell her to leave.” Spike had to laugh at the look on Peache's face. He knew too well that no one ordered the cheerleader around. Hell, get that chit on a rampage and she made Angelus look like a tame kitty. Neither vampire had noticed the bedroom door open while they were talking.

“Spike, loud voices waked me...” Angel's head went up as he caught the scent of the boy in the air. Something wasn't right. It wasn't just the clean scent of cinnamon and chocolate mixed with musk that was Xander's unique scent. It was changed somehow. He drew in a deep breath and suddenly the meaning of the smell clinging to the boy hit him.

“WILLIAM, what have you done?” Angel had taken Spike to the floor, straddled him and was shaking him so hard his head was hitting the floor. Both of them were in

game face and snarling. “What did you do, childe? The boy reeks of you. You’ve marked him, haven’t you?” Before Angel could say another word he was attacked from the side. He was so surprised, he let go of Spike and rolled.

“You leave my Spike alone. I’ll hurt you, you don’t touch my Spike.” A fist hitting Angel punctuated each word. Angel curled his body up so that his back took most of the blows. He was not returning any of them or even attempting to fight back. He had been told that Xander thought he was six, but until now he hadn’t really believed it. He could smell the difference in the boy, not just Spike’s mark. “You don’t hit my Spike you..you stupid, ugly, vampire guy.” Angel was very glad at that moment he was a vampire; Xander could really hit. If he had been human he would have been seriously hurt.

“Come on whelp, that’s enough. Angel wasn’t hurtin’ me any. You calm yourself down now, Xan-pet. XANDER, enough, no more hitting!” Spike had grabbed the boy, and was holding on to him. He picked him up and sat down on the sofa with Xander in his lap trying to calm him down. “Peaches isn’t a bad guy, promise. He’s a friend of Auntie Buffy and Mr. Giles. Me and him are, well kinda related like.”

“ But he hitted you. He shouldn’t hitted you, spike and ..and grr faces weren’t playin’ this time. Spike, why did angel-peaches call you child? You’re not a child, you’re a growed up.” Spike looked at Angel and cocked his eyebrow up.

“Well, Angel-peaches, do you want to answer that one? The whelp is right smart and doesn’t miss anything. It’ll pay you to remember that.” Angel looked sick, either from his new nickname, or the idea of having to explain. Then it struck him, Xander hadn’t been scared of their vamping out, and had called him a vampire guy, actually a stupid, ugly vampire guy.

“He knows?” Angel asked.

“Yeah, guessed he did. Like I said, he don’t miss a thing, my Xan-pet. He figured it out the first day. Remembered watching Dracula and knew the signs. Xan, do you remember how Dracula made other vampires?”

“Yep, he bited them on the neck, and dranked alllll their blood, and they went to sleep. When they gotted up, they was vampires too. He bited this lady and she got sick. He wanted to bited her again, but they wouldn’t let

him, and and then these men they hit her right here with a wooden thingie. She yelled really loud and died.” Xander was touching himself on the chest to show where the lady got hit.

“That’s how I got to be a vampire, pet. Angel wanted me to be a vampire too, so he bit me right here.” Spike showed Xander the marks on his shoulder. Xander lightly ran his fingers over the mark then looked over at Angel with huge eyes.

“You bited Spike? Did you hurted him?”

“Yes, I bited..umm..bit him, but it was a very long time ago.”

“Why?” Spike hid his smile. He knew his Xander well enough to know he wouldn’t be satisfied with just part of the story.

“Well, I, um..I saw him at a party, and I was with another one of my childer.”

“What’s a childer?”

“That’s what we call someone we make into a strong

vampire. They are like our children, so we call them our childer or our childe. Spike is my childe and that makes him one of my childer. I have another childe named Drusilla, and she really liked Spike, but he wasn't Spike then. He was William. She wanted to make him a vampire so he could live with us, but she wasn't very strong so I brought him over."

"If droo...dru...silla is your childe, where is she? Is 'silla your sister, spike? Why isn't she strong? Spike's really strong. I wanted a sister but mommy jus' kinda laughed. Why did she want spike? How come you was William, Spike? I likes Spike better, it's cool." Xander was in full babble mode and didn't seem to be slowing down anytime soon. "What's brought over? Brought over where? Did you have to take him somewhere? and.. and if Spike is your childe...yo..you're Spike's DADDY?" Spike was right, the boy was smart.

"Only when he's being annoying. The rest of the time I'm his Sire."

"What's a sire?" Angel looked at Spike pleadingly.

"Okay whelp, enough. Back to bed with you, way past your bedtime."

“Tuck me in? Please...story maybe?” Pleading, melted chocolate, puppy eyes were hard to resist.

Spike rolled his eyes dramatically and sighed deeply. “Well, if I have to. I could probably manage a tuck. But how ‘bout Peaches here doing the story bit?” Angel looked at Spike in horror. Xander saw the look and began to back away again.

“No, s’okay spike. I’ll just go to bed. Angel-peaches don’t have to tell me nothin’. You talk to your daddy and I’ll go sleep. He came to see you, not me.” Xander turned around and was headed back to the bedroom. Spike came up behind him and picked him up, wrapping both arms around him.

“Told you I’d tuck you in, didn’t I? Ya trying to get out of a bedtime tickle, sprout?” Xander was laughing hysterically as Spike tickled his sides while he carried him to the bedroom. Angel followed behind them.

“nuf spike, no more tickles..Spiikee.” Xander was kicking his legs and shrieking with laughter when Spike threw him onto the bed. “No tickles...let me up, Spike...gots...gotta..” Without another word, Xander

jumped up and ran to the bathroom.

“You will tell him a story, Peaches.” Spike’s tone of voice stopped just short of it being an order. “Xan-pet doesn’t think anyone wants him. His bastard parents evidently have beaten him down since he was a baby. You shoulda seen him when Slayer bought him a prezzie. Poor little blighter didn’t know what to do with it, said he didn’t deserve it. He soaks up every little bit of attention he can get. Did you ever notice how much the boy likes to be touched and to touch?” Angel shook his head yes “From what Red says, he never got that when he was little, at least until he met her. There was another one too; a boy named Jesse. The three of them were inseparable and they gave Xan a place to escape to, someplace safe. They were more his family than the other bastards.”

“I don’t remember a Jesse. Why isn’t he around to help now?”

“My bitch of a GrandSire, your sire. Darla changed him right before the Harvest started. The night of that attack on the Bronze, Xander staked him. My boy still has screaming nightmares about it. I try to tell him it wasn’t his friend he killed, but it don’t do any good.”

“You really love him don’t you?”

“He’s my heart, Angel. We were together for awhile before this happened an..and.. if it never changes, I’ll still be here. I’ll be here with him, taking care of him, till he draws his last breath. Even if he still thinks he’s six. He’ll have a happy life this time, won’t be no beating or mistreating. He’ll have what makes him happy. If..if this hadn’t happened, I would have brought him over, sire. We talked about it. He wanted to wait a coupla years. Xan-pet only wanted it if Red could do the soul thing. But not now, not if he never gets better. It would be cruel.” Pale reddish tears dampened Spike’s face as Angel pulled him into his arms, embracing his childe. No matter how hard Angelus had tried, he could never beat the caring out of this childe. William always gave his whole heart to those he loved. They pulled apart when Xander came out of the bathroom. Spike wiped at his face and said, “There you are, sprout. In the bed you go, nice and snug.”

Angel sat on the edge of the bed and gently pushed the dark curls off Xander’s forehead. “You ready for a story Xander? I think I can remember one you might like.” Spike lay down on the other side of the bed and pulled Xander back against him, so they could both listen. Angel grinned, he knew his strong, powerful childe was a

sucker for his stories.

“Once upon a time, there was a beautiful, green world called Eire. In this land, the magical folk lived. There were leprechauns, who were wicked little pranksters and the Sidhe, they that were the beautiful Elven people. The Sidhe lived in a secret realm, hidden from humans. They were tall and graceful with voices soft and sweet as a warm spring rain. They all had greener than green eyes and their ears were pointed up top. They were mighty archers and lived among the trees, always being respectful of them. But that’s not what our story’s about.” Angel smiled at the little groan of disappointment from Xander and Spike. “This story is about the fae folk, the fairies of the land. They were the caretakers of Eire. The fae saw to it that the land was always lovely and green, with glorious flowers of all kinds, each kind of flower having its own fairy to see to it. This story is about a human princeling, Uilliam, who was taken from his wee bed by the fairies. The fae often took human babes and left changlings in their place...” As Angel told the story, his rich voice began changing, falling easily into a thick brogue...the sound of his past, the sound of Ireland. Spike smiled at the princeling’s name, he knew it was meant for both of them, William and Liam.

Part Nine

Sundown found the Scoobies and the AI team together at the Magic Box. There were books scattered everywhere. Giles and Wesley were arguing quietly over some obscure phrase in some little known demon dialect. Willow was in her usual place, pulling up information from her computer. Angel and Spike were working their way through a pile of musty books, mostly written in strange demon languages. Cordy was sitting with them, pretending to be doing the same. Buffy and Gunn had taken one look at the pile of books and headed into the training room. The quiet of the studying was broken by the sounds of something being hit and grunts from whichever one was on the receiving end, probably Gunn. Tara and Dawn had Xander on the floor, playing Go Fish with him, trying to keep him occupied so the others could research. His ever-present firetruck was by his side. Every so often Xander would glance up and look at Cordy then quickly put his head back down. When she noticed what he was doing, she would wiggle her finger at him every time he looked up, he would smile shyly and look back down. Willow closed the cover of her [laptop](#).

“Bored now.” Willow dragged out the words.

Cordelia shrieked, Angel dropped his book on the floor and Giles cup of tea rattled against the saucer and spilled. Both men just stared at Willow. "WILLOW, that wasn't even funny. Are you trying to scare me to death?"

Buffy and Gunn came running from the training room, armed and looking for whoever was attacking. "Where is it?" Buffy asked, her eyes darting back and forth looking for the enemy. Gunn was at her side, battle-axe up and ready.

"Well..ehhh..Willow scared me!"

"Oh yeah, Wills is just so scary, Cordy. Did she brandish her laptop at you?"

"No, she said she was 'bored now'." Cordy explained.

"Wills, that is so not funny, somebody might have tried to stake you." Gunn was looking between the two women with a look of total confusion. Willow was giggling until Xander stalked over to Buffy with his fists resting on his hips, looking like a little gunslinger ready to draw down

"Whos gonna staked my Willow? Nobody hurts my

Willow.” Xander was scowling, looking from person to person, trying to figure out who to be mad at.

“Xander honey, it was just a joke, no one is going to stake me, promise.”

Gunn finally couldn’t stand it anymore, “Would someone please tell me what the hell is going on?”

“Wouldn’t mind knowing that myself.” Spike joined in.

“It started when Cordelia got jealous..”

“Buffy, I was so not jealous. I mean, what was there to be jealous of?”

“You were so jealous. How else did Anyanka get her claws...” Giles clearing his throat stopped Buffy in mid sentence. He cast his eyes over to Xander and for once, Buffy actually got the point. Tara stood up and stretched.

“Little guy, why don’t I take you across the street for a treat. I need to get out of here for a little while. Ice cream?”

“Hey, what about me? I like ice cream”

“You can come too, Dawnie. Well, Xan, ice cream?”

“Yep...chocolate? Spike, can I go with my Glinda?”

Xander picked up the firetruck and went to stand next to Tara and Dawn.

“Yeah, go on sprout. Mind your manners. Glinda...”

“I know Spike. Don’t worry, I’ll take good care of him.”

“Ready, Glinda.” Xander took Tara’s hand and head for the door. He looked back over his shoulder and grinned, “You can all growed up talk now.” The three went out the door as the rest of the people sat in silence for a minute, then erupted in laughter.

“Anyway, Cordy made this wish thingie, that I never came to Sunnydale. Well, Anyanka was right there waiting for her to do it. Presto..no Buffy and Sunnydale becomes Vamp Central. Xander and Willow were both vamps, favorites of the Master. The one I was supposed to be here to defeat.” Buffy stuck her tongue out at Cordy.

“Oh, very mature Slayer. Glad my Xan isn’t here to see

that. Would like to 've seen my boy as a vamp though. Bet he was effin gorgeous. But how did you all get to see vamp Willow?" Willow became red faced as Giles, Buffy and Angel laughed.

"I'm afraid it was another of Willow's less successful spells. After Anyanka became human she lied to Willow and told her she was trying to find a treasured family heirloom. The heirloom was actually her power source. She convinced Willow to seek the amulet with a spell. Well, the spell went wrong and evil Willow arrived in our Sunnydale. She was...was quite..."

"Yeah she was, Giles. She was hot, very hot and really evil in this uber evil, all leather, thinks she's Angelus kind of way. Her big thing was saying 'Bored now.' I swear she must have had the attention span of a gnat." Cordy cast very mischievous eyes at Willow. "She was also on the very gay side, even goosed herself."

"CORDELIA!! I don't think they needed to know that." Willow's face was now as red as her hair.

"Well, it could have been worse, she could have been calling you 'puppy'." Cordy smirked at Angel,

Angel hit the table with his head, several times, “Couldn’t help yourself could you? Just had to say that.” Spike was on the floor roaring with laughter. Every once in awhile he would stop, point at Angel say 'puppy' and start roaring again.

“Gunn, I suggest you forget you ever heard this story. Cordy, you and Wesley forget as well, please.” Angel was pleading.

“Angel man, there is no way I am forgetting this, ever,” he snorted, 'puppy'.”

“Okay, that was fun but we need to get to trying to fix my Xan-pet. There has to be something.” Everyone started grabbing books and Willow returned to her computer.

Out on the street:

“Xander, don’t you let go of my hand. No wandering off this time, okay?”

“I’ll be good, I promise.” Tara held the hand that didn’t hold the firetruck and headed across the street.

“Is that where we get ice cream? I wan’ chocolate and chocolate syrup and chocolate sprinkly things and...and whip-did cream stuff. A biiiggg bowl.” Xander through one arm out wide to show how big a bowl he wanted. Tara and Dawn both giggled.

“Do you think we should do that to Spike? Remember the Ding Dong nightmare?” Dawn had an evil look on her face.

Tara looked just as evil, “Why not. Aren’t we supposed to make things up to Xander?” Both girls grinned at the thought of what tonight would be like for Spike.

Xander’s eyes were huge as he looked at all the pictures of ice cream treats on the shop walls. Ice cream was something he didn’t get very often. “Can...can I get ..” He didn’t finish and put his head down. “Sorry, not ‘apposed to ask for things. It’s rude and I gets in trouble for it. I jus’ wanna a little banilla one.”

“Screw that...”

“DAWN Summers!”

“Well, it’s not right and I don’t like it. If he wants Death

by Chocolate, he gets it, and I'll even pay. And if Spike doesn't like it, then..."

"Dawn Summers don't you dare say that again." Tara couldn't act too angry, she agreed with Dawn. Xander was watching the two and trying to cover his mouth so they couldn't hear his giggles. "So you think that's funny, huh Xander?"

"Yep, can we gets ice cream now?"

"Yep" Tara answered copying Xander, "What do you want, little man?" The young girl behind the counter had been watching the interaction and couldn't quite figure out what was wrong. She knew Xander as a good customer and something was off. He was acting funny and carrying a toy firetruck. She caught Tara's eye and pointed to her head. Tara nodded then left Dawn and Xander debating ice cream flavors and went over to her.

"What's wrong with Xander? He's a regular in here and we really like him."

"He had an accident awhile back and has a brain injury. He thinks he's a little boy so could you, you know, kind of play along?" The girl's eyes teared up but she nodded

yes.

“Okay, what would everyone like.”

Tara answered, “I want a single of Berry Blend sorbet, Dawn wants two scoops of Caramel Fantasy in a waffle cone and the Xan-man wants two scoops of Triple Chocolate with hot fudge and whipped cream.”

Xander whispered in Tara’s ear, “Oh yes, I forgot. He wants chocolate sprinkles too.”

“That’s sound about right for him, but...only two?”

“Two’s plenty, we’re trying to limit his chocolate consumption a little.”

The girl laughed, “I can understand that. I’ve seen him after an all chocolate Monster Sundae. It’s not pretty.”

Tara carried her and Xander’s ice cream to a table and Dawn followed, steadily licking on hers. After setting his firetruck on the floor, Xander began shoveling it in like he was really afraid it would disappear. “Hey, little man, slow down. No one’s going to touch it. I promise.”

“immsst goomm.” Both girls watched him enjoy the treat. He already had chocolate all over his mouth. It took so little to make him happy. They both enjoyed watching him. When he was finally finished Tara had to ask the counter girl to wet a napkin for her.

“Xander, you are a big mess, a big chocolate mess.”

“Better clean up good then. Beasties ‘ll eat me alllll up. Spike says they like little boys ‘cause they’re fullled up with candy.”

“Well, I’m sure Spike would know what the beasties like since he knows most of them.”

“My spike knows the beasties?” Xander gasped.

“Sure, he plays poker with them.” It suddenly struck Dawn that maybe that was something Xander really didn’t need to know. Thank heaven she hadn’t said kitten poker. “Well, I think we should forget about that one.” They headed out the door to return to the Magic Box. Xander was walking right in front of the girls. They all turned when they heard a ‘meow’ come from the alley. Before they could stop him, Xander had taken off.

“XANDER HARRIS you get right back here. You know better than to...” Tara quit yelling when she saw what was in the alley. Four very large, horned demons were running toward them. One grabbed Xander and wrapped his arms around him. Two went for Tara and one after Dawn. Xander was screaming loudly. Tara yelled for Dawn to run then dropped to her knees and started to chant. You could feel the power gathering in the air. Before she could finish one of the creatures hit her over the head. Dawn was doing her best to fight back. She didn't spend all her time watching Buffy train for nothing. She dropped the first demon with a hard, sharp kick to the groin. But the other two were just too much for her. One picked her up and threw her into a wall. She was still conscious and trying to get up as she watched the demons carry Xander down the alley. He had quit making noise and that really scared her. She had to get to the shop; she had to get to Spike.

No one looked up when the door opened, they knew it was almost time for the three to return. Spike and Angel both caught the scent of blood in the air at the same time and jumped up.

“Spike...help...Xan..please...” Spike had the girl in her arms before she could fall.

“DAWNIE!! Let me through. Spike what’s wrong with Dawnie?” Buffy was in panic, kill something mode. Looking around for the enemy.

“Oh Goddess, where’s Tara?”

“You gits just get yourselves back. Give the Niblet some air.” Spike sat on the floor and held Dawn in his lap.

“Okay Bit, what happened.”

“In the alley, go now. Hurry, they took Xander and hit Tara in the head, demons, big ones. By the ice cream place, HURRY!” As Cordy sat down with Dawn, Giles began pulling weapons out of the closet and tossing them into waiting hands.

Cordy was crying quietly, “I’ll take care of Dawn, you go get my Xander, NOW!”

Spike and Angel were in the alley helping Tara up before the others could get there. The witch was very unsteady on her feet.

Spike began checking out the alley for signs of Xander when he came across the firetruck, lying where Xander

had been grabbed. Spike hit his knees and howled. The others in the alley got chills up their spines from the sound. Buffy and Angel went over and knelt by Spike, trying to comfort the hysterical vampire.

“Sire...my Xan-pet, they took my mate.” Bloody pink tears were streaming down his face. “What am I going to do? Sire?”

Angel wrapped his arms around Spike and helped him up. “We’ll find him, childe. We will tear every part of this city to pieces until we do. We’ll find your mate, calm down, Wil. You can’t help if you can’t concentrate. You’re our best help in finding him. You can sense and smell him better than I can. You marked him.” He walked Spike, still clutching the toy; back over to the where the witches were standing.

“Spp..sp..spike, I’m so sorry. We tr..tried to stop them. Th..th..they were w..waiting for us to pass by. Th...the...they were just to b..big.” Willow put her arm around Tara to support her.

“”Shhh, Glinda I’m sure you did your best. Now how many, what kind and which way?”

“There were four of them, b...big, really big, greenish, short fur and t..two curling horns. They were waiting for us and went straight for Xander. W...we heard a kitten and he t..t..took off before I c..could st..st..stop him.” Tara gave into her emotions and was sobbing on Willow’s shoulder.”

“Vorklash demons, muscle for hire. They’ll do anything for a price.” Angel had run into their kind before. “We spread out and start from here, three groups. One group goes with me; one goes with Spike and one with Buffy. These guys are strong and work together. Watch out for the horns. Remember, we have to try and take one alive. If Xander isn’t with them, it could be our only way to find him. Willow you need to get Tara back to the Magic Box and check her out. Let’s go.” They moved off in three different directions. Spike and Angel kept sniffing the air trying to catch the scent that was unique to Xander.

While the hunt for Xander was getting organized, the demons had headed for the sewers. They had been told not to hurt the humans and had tried their best not to. They had especially been told what would happen to them if they hurt the dark male. They had no doubt that the person who hired them would carry through with the threats made against them. The man was struggling

against them and it was hard to hold him and not hurt the puny human. At least he had quit making so much noise. After almost an hour in the sewer, they climbed out by an old abandoned house. This is where they had been told to bring the man. They carried him through the door to where their employer was waiting for them. They sat the man down in front of their employer and backed up.

“Hello, my Dark Kitten.”

Part Ten

“Hello my Dark Kitten.” Drusilla walked over to the shaking boy and cupped his chin. She brought his head up until he was looking her in the eyes. “I’ve come to help my Spikie’s boy.” Drusilla began sniffing the air around Xander. “I smell Daddy on you. Is my Daddy here too, Kitten?”

Xander’s eyes became huge and round like an anime

character as he whispered, "You know my Spike?"

"Yes, Kitten, he was my Spikie before he was yours."

"Ar...are you 'silla? my Spike and Angel-peaches told me 'bout you." No matter how many times Angel had tried to explain about his name, Xan still insisted on Angel-peaches. Spike, of course, thought it was hysterical and refused to correct him.

"Yes, my pretty boy, I'm Drusilla. The stars told me I must come help Spikie's little Kitten. My Spike loves you. Do you love my Spike, pretty Kitten?"

"course i do. He takes care of me and 'tects me from the beasties." Drusilla laughed, delighted with the pretty Kitten that was her Spike's mate. "Spike told me you was his sister and your daddy's Angel-peaches...why did you send the beasties for me? They hurted Glinda and Dawnie. th...they hitted Glinda in the head an..and throwed Dawnie at the wall." Xander had begun to cry again. "I wannnt my Spike. Take me back to my Spike."

Drusilla ran one cold finger down the crying boy's face, "Don't cry Kitten, I'm going to take you back to Spike...must do the magic first. Miss Edith tells me that I

have to do it. Must make the pretty boy well again for my Spike. Everything has to be turned back around and rightside up, back to the way it was. You, my beautiful Kitten have a destiny, the stars are singing of what you and my Spike will do and what I must do to help. I have to make you all shiny again.”

Xander just stared at the vampire not really sure what she had just said. He didn't understand any of it. He didn't like this place, it was cold and dirty. He wanted to go home to Spike. “I need to go home now. I'm not 'apposed to be out in the dark and Spike is pro'lly lookin' for me. Will you take me home? I wanna go home, please.”

“I'll take you home to Spike later, Kitten. We have magic to do together; Auntie Dru will make it all better. First we have a tea party, with my pretty dollies. Do you like my dollies? My daddy gave me this dolly and Spikie gave me the pretty one with the little spike in its head. Aren't they pretty? Miss Edith is in the other room, she can't come to the tea party, because she's being punished right now. Do you want some tea?” Dru had sat Xander down at a small table and was pouring something from a teapot into a cup. “Here Kitten, drink it all up, then you can have cakes. We have to wait to do the magic; the one the stars

named isn't here yet. When he gets here Miss Edith and I will fix you all up."

"Uhhh, Auntie Dru, I can't drink this, it's blood, little boys don't drink blood." This lady was scaring Xander, he couldn't understand what she was talking about. He just wanted to go home but he wasn't sure where that was, Spike would find him. He just needed to be good and stay here and his Spike would come get him, he just knew it. "Auntie Dru, ca..can I lay down please? I'm kinda tired now."

"Of course, pretty one. You rest until the magic doer gets here." The vampire started to dance in circles, "Must do the magic, must return, repeat, redo. The wicked one will be here soon to fix Dark Kitten all better. He'll make you all shiny and new again, Kitten. You sleep now, Auntie Dru and Miss Edith will watch for the magic man." Xander lay down on the dusty, moth eaten sofa and dozed off.

The sun was just breaking over the horizon when the hunters returned to The Magic Box. They had found nothing, no sign of the demons or the boy, but they had to stop so the vampires could get in before the sun came

up. Cordy and the LA contingent had gone back to the motel for some sleep, Angel had chosen to stay with Spike. His childe seemed lost and he wanted to be there for him. Spike was sitting on the floor with his back against the wall cradling Xander's toy fire truck in his arms. Angel knew he was trying to put up a brave front, but his Wil could not hide the hurt from him. He went over and sat on the floor next to Spike and pulled him up against his chest, rocking him gently.

"We'll find him, William. He's still alive and we won't rest until we find him."

Buffy came over and stood in front of the pair. "What do you mean 'he's still alive'? How can you know that?"

"Buffy, Spike would know. If anything hurts Xander, Spike will know as soon as it happens. Spike, you have to tell them, they have to know everything." Angel was still holding his childe, not wanting to lose the closeness that had been missing for so many decades.

"Whelp didn't want this lot to know yet. He wanted to wait; it was just private like, for me and him. It's not right, not fair, we were supposed to have forever together. He was gonna help the scoobies for another

year then we were going to travel. He wanted to go to England to see the places I knew as a human. Hell, Peaches, he even wanted to come see you and get to know you better. Said you was family and needed to know about us. Family's important to Xan, it's what he did with you lot. He made you his family cause his is so fucked up, not that you lot are much better sometimes. You ignore him, use him when it's convenient for you, when you need muscle or flippin' bait. My Xan's always there for you, Slayer." Spike closed his eyes and rested his head against Angel's chest.

"You an..an..and Xander? As in a couple? When..I mean how..no don't want to know that..when..how long? Is that why you've been taking care of him? Giles? You knew?"

Buffy wasn't sure what to ask or what to believe. Xander had always been the goofy, sweet friend that had a crush on her. Now he was gay and with Spike? She looked at Spike and this time could see the devastation on his face, he loved Xander. It was obvious if you just looked.

Giles nervously removed his glasses and began to rub the lenses, "Yes, Buffy, I knew about Xander and Spike. I found out entirely by accident, I..well..le..let's just say I walked in on them one evening when they were

supposed to be helping clean up the training room.”

Spike snorted. “Got a surprise that night didn’t you, Rupert? Don’t know who was more shocked or who turned brighter red, you or my Xan-pet.” Spike paused remembering that night and the position Giles found them in; pants down to their knees with Xander bent over the vault Buffy practiced on. God, he got hard every time he went into that damn room now. “This isn’t just a quick fuck ‘em and leave ‘em. He’s my mate, Buffy. It’s forever with us and if he never gets better, I’ll still be here taking care of him.”

Buffy sat on the floor next to Angel and Spike, reached over and took hold Spike’s hand, “You really love him, don’t you?”

“Couldn’t help but love him.” Spike started to laugh. “Whelp wouldn’t allow anything else. Stalked me he did, I found out later he had been at it for weeks. He finally got tired of waiting for me to get a clue and showed up at my crypt. One minute I’m laying there asleep, next minute I’m on the floor with a wiggling Xan-pet on top o’me. That was the first time we were together. After, well, you know, won’t say it or Slayer’ll get her ‘ewww’ face on, afterwards he told me the Vampire Union should

take away my membership card, because he'd been following me and I hadn't noticed. Peaches, you should have seen his face when I told him that he'd belonged to me for the last four years, that he just didn't know it."

"Xander belongs to you?" Dawn had come over and joined the group on the floor.

"Well yeah, was given him, wasn't I? It was the first time I came to Sunnyhell, don't you remember, Slayer? Peaches was trying to trick me so they could get away, he pretended to be Angelus and offered me the boy."

"But that was just a trick, he wasn't serious." Buffy remembered that night well.

"Don't matter, to a vampire a gift from your sire is a very serious thing. Why do you think Xan-pet's survived so many attacks? At first it was just word of mouth, it was passed along that he belonged to a master and now well, they smell my claim on him and know it would be their death if they touched him."

"I'VE GOT IT!! I think I have the general area pinpointed." Willow and Tara were leaning over a map of Sunnydale and Willow was holding a small pendulum over it. Giles

rushed over to the table to check what she was doing.

“Willow, how do you know that it is pinpointing Xander? It could be anyone.”

“Weeeelll, it’s..I..I kinda put a location spell on him a long time ago and it’s still working so that’s of the good, right? I mean, we can find him this way and at least know where to start looking. Buffy can start looking now and Spike and Angel can go tonight. It was just a little spell, Giles, so none of us could be held in Sunnydale and not be found. I only did it to help and look, it’s helping.”

“Willow, breathe. If I understand what you just said, you cast a location charm on Xander..”

“On all of you, well, except for Angel and Spike because, you know, it works from your life force and hey, vampire there, no life force. I just wanted to help.”

Giles had removed his glasses and was cleaning the lenses, stalling for time as he tried to figure out what to say to the young witch. “Willow, it is all well and good that you wanted to help, but you should have mentioned this before now. Did you ever consider talking to me about the spell first and possibly asking permission

before you cast the charm? You know how Xander feels about magic. From now on, at least ask before you cast. Now let's see if we can tell where in Sunnydale he is being held." The whole group was gathered around the table staring at the map.

"I know that area, there's several abandoned houses. Shit, I know where he's at. There's this big, old house right in the middle of that block, me and Dru looked at it once. It was before we moved into that warehouse. It's got a sewer access in the cellar, that's probably how they disappeared so fast, the bleedin' sewers. We have to go, now, before they move again." Grabbing the weapons from where they had laid them when they come in, the group headed for the back door.

"Dawn, I want you and Tara to stay here with Willow. If the others call or show up, let them know what's going on." Buffy ordered.

"Buffy, I'm going too.."

"No, you're not, Dawnie. You and Tara were hurt last night and I want you to stay here and stay safe. Please, just once, no arguing, okay? I would make anyone that was hurt stay behind, not just you. Do you hear Tara

arguing about it? You two won't be at your best and we don't know what we'll run into." Dawn grabbed Buffy and hugged her.

"Just bring him back, okay?"

"Promise." Buffy headed to the back door, the vampires had already run to the sewer access and were at the bottom waiting for the rest.

"God, I hate these damn tunnels, they stink really bad and they're hell on my shoes."

"Tell you what, Slayer, we get my Xan-pet back and I'll buy you a pair of proper galoshes for wearing down here."

"That's nice, Spike but isn't galosh that red stew stuff with paprika in it."

Spike, Angel and Giles were laughing, "That's goulash, Slayer. Galoshes are rubber boots that you put over your shoes."

"Well, they sound alike, how was I supposed to know?" Giles just rolled his eyes.

Using Willow's map to guide them, they made their way through the tunnels heading for the other side of Sunnydale. After walking for what seemed like hours, Spike began counting exits.

"This one opens up in the cellar and no windows so we won't have to worry about the sun. Angel and me'll be able to see the best so you two stay behind us. You better hold on to each other, if I remember it right, this cellar has no light of any kind. Wincing at the noise the door made, Spike carefully eased the door open and looked around the room before leaving the tunnel. He didn't want to run into any surprises. It was completely dark in the damp, musty room; there was no light at all, just a deep stygian darkness. They could hear something moving around on the floor above them and were walking very carefully towards the steps. The two humans finally had to grab hold of the vampire's arms and be led across the room. Without some form of light, they were totally blind. As they got closer to the stairs, they could hear the faint sound of voices from upstairs. The vampires started growling and stopped so quickly that Giles ran into Angel. Angel and Spike were sniffing the air, trying to figure out what had their senses going crazy, causing them to vamp out..

“Fuck, it’s Dru. Dru’s got my boy. I swear that if she’s hurt him, she’s dust. Oh God what if she’s turned him? Peaches, you’ll have to do it, I can’t, I won’t.”

“What in the hell are you talking about, Spike? What will Angel have to do?” Buffy did not like the way this conversation was going.

“The last time Dru tried making a childe, I had to put the poor bugger down. He was a raving lunatic. My princess on her worst day wasn’t as crazy as that poor sod. If..if she’s turned my Xan, we can’t let him leave here. And before you ask Red, no, the soul restoration spell won’t help. There’s something in Dru’s blood that makes the turning go wrong.”

“Wil, calm down. We don’t know why she’s here or why she took Xander. Let’s just go..” Angel was interrupted by a blood-curdling scream coming from upstairs. The vampires tore up the stairs leaving the humans to stumble their way up. The scene they rushed into was like something out of a nightmare. Drusilla was holding Xander by the arm, leading him towards a large demon, it was another Graz’elktheus demon just like the one that had attacked Xander in the cemetery over a month ago.

Xander was screaming with fear and calling for Spike. The boy was fighting and trying to pull away from the vampire. Before Angel or Spike could move, the demon pulled back his arm and with one quick movement clawed down the center of Xander's chest reopening the original wound.

"NO!!! XANDER.." Spike flew across the room, pushing Drusilla out of the way and catching Xander before he could hit the floor. He sat on the floor and pulled the boy into his lap, rocking him and howling, a high pitched keening noise that raised goosebumps on the skin and made the hairs on the back of their necks stand up. Angel had Drusilla by the arm keeping her from moving.

"Daddy, you're hurting my arm." Drusilla was pouting.

"Why did you do it Dru? Why did you hurt Xander? Jealous because of Spike?" Angel was violently shaking his child.

"Didn't hurt, only helped the Kitten. The stars sang to me that I must do the magic and save Dark Kitten for my Spike. Miss Edith told me I had to get the magic Demon and make Kitten all shiny new again. Spikie, Kitten will be all better now. We did the magic and now he'll be new

again. Will he be my little brother, Spike?”

While the Angel tried to make sense of what Dru was saying, Buffy had gone into slayer mode and gotten rid of the demon. Unfortunately, it stunk even worse in an enclosed space. “Shit, I forgot it was a slimer. The sewer would smell better than this mess. Guys, we may want to get out of here while we can still breathe, it’s getting kinda rank.”

Spike picked up Xander and was heading for the open cellar door when Drusilla grabbed his arm, but she let go quickly when he went into game face and hissed at her.

“Daddy, please tell Spikie I was a good girl, I only did what Miss Edith said I must. I was good and didn’t even taste the Kitten. Spike mustn’t be mad at me, I had to do it, I had to make my Kitten all better.” Drusilla began to weep as Angel pulled her towards the door.

They made their way back to the sewer entrance, Buffy holding Dru while Angel helped Spike get Xander down into the sewer. “I’m taking Xan home. There’s an entrance in the basement, s’why he got that apartment. You lot go on to the shop and get the others. Angel, I don’t want Dru there, I don’t care what you do with her

just keep her away from my mate.”

Buffy handed Dru off to Angel and went to stand next to Spike. “I’ll go with you and help. You can’t get Xan up out of here alone, Spike. Come on let’s get him home and clean that wound up.”

“Thanks, Sla...Buffy.” Spike took off quickly and Buffy had to run to catch up with him. The rest headed for the tunnel that would lead back to The Magic Box. It was a long tense walk to the opening behind the store with the heavy silence only broken by the sound of Drusilla’s occasional weeping. Giles went up first to open the back door so the two vampires could run straight in, it was in the shade but still daylight. As they walked in, the three girls who had been waiting ran up to them, all talking at once, but it was Willow who first noticed the extra vampire.

“Dru..Drusilla? Where did she come from? Angel, why are you hanging on to Dru? Where’s Xan...” Before she could say another word, the front door flew open and the rest of the Angel Investigations team came in.

“ANGEL, what in the hell is your insano-childe doing here? And where in the hell is my Xander? I thought you

were going to get him and again I ask ‘what in the hell is Drusilla doing here?’” Cordelia was working herself up to a full-blown fit when Drusilla broke away from Angel and flew over to Willow, grabbing her around the waist and hugging her.

“Please, Little Tree, please tell daddy I had to do the magic. I had to make the Kitten all better for Spike. The stars were screaming at me that I must do it. I had to get the magic demon here to help my Dark Kitten be all better.” Willow didn’t quite know what else to do so she started patting Dru on the back trying to calm her. “I was a good girl, Little Tree, I didn’t taste at all and he smelled so sweet, but Miss Edith said I mustn’t taste Kitten because he belongs to Spike now. Kitten is my new brother, I would never hurt him.”

“Angel? What did Dru do? And where’s Xander?” Willow was nervous having Dru so close but knew Angel could stop her from doing anything and the vampire seemed quieter standing by her and Tara.

“She’s the one who had him kidnapped and when we got there, another demon like the first clawed Xander across the same spot and Xander just collapsed. Spike and Buffy took him back to his apartment and we came here to

gather everyone up and head over there. It turns out there is basement access into Xander's building. Now, Dru...princess, why did you kidnap Xander? You need to tell daddy all about why you did it."

"Told you. Had to do the magic to make it better for Spike and Kitten." Drusilla almost looked sane and lucid at that moment.

"A..an..Angel, do yo..you th..th..think that maybe s..sh..she means it? Sh..she was trying to h..help Xander? I thi..think she's se..serious about it. H..her aura never ch..chan..changes." Tara could see that Drusilla's aura never changed as she explained. It stayed a pure blood red, shot through with threads of the finest silver, Drusilla, as insane as she was, was truly a seer. "Sh..she's really a s..seer. Her aura is ri..ribboned with si..silver."

"Angel, Tara knows what she's talking about, she can see auras and knows how to read them. It's her gift."

"S..he's like Cordelia, only instead of blue for human, C..Cordelia's is b...blue and gr..green but it's sh..shot through with s..s..silver. That m..means s..seer. Drus..s..silla's is dark red with s..silver."

“Well, that makes sense, I’m not totally human anymore. To live through those killer brain attacks, I had to be made part demon. Not a word out of you Willow.” Cordy pointed her finger at the redheaded witch.

“I wasn’t going to say a thing about suspecting that all along, but are you sure they did it recently? I mean I always suspected...”

“WILLOW! I WAS NOT A DEMON BEFORE!!”

“That’s not what the guys that dated you said.” Willow ducked behind a giggling Drusilla.

“We need to head to Xander’s. I’ll take Dru through the sewers and meet you there.” Angel offered his arm to his childe and escorted her back to the door, put a blanket over them, and ran with her to the sewer opening.

Spike was going out of his mind. It had been over twenty-four hours since the demon had clawed his Xan-pet and he still hadn’t woken up. The group in the living room was driving him crazy, he just wanted to be alone with his mate. He heard the television come on and the talk of ordering food..okay that was it, enough. Spike stomped

into the living room.

“Alright you lot..OUT! Get your stuff together and go home, now. You’re bloody well driving me crazy.”

“Spike..” Buffy stammered.

“Childe..I’m..” Angel stared speaking.

“Don’t want to hear it. Scoobies go home. Angel take your bunch to the hotel and take Dru with you. I want to be alone with Xan, I want quiet and you lot don’t know the meaning of the word. I have everybody’s phone numbers and if anything happens, I’ll call, immediately. Now, GET. OUT.” Spike was standing at the door holding it open, obviously not going to give them a chance to argue. After Spike ‘helped’ everyone out the door, he headed back to the bedroom. Xander lay in the middle of the bed, perfectly still and if Spike hadn’t been a vampire, he would have thought he wasn’t breathing.

Spike kissed his mate on the forehead and went to the kitchen to heat some blood, he was going to eat, shower, and then go to bed. He was so tired; he was about to drop. He was running on auto-pilot as he finished his blood, stripped off in the hallway and got in the shower.

His mate had to wake up, he had to be better, and nothing else would be acceptable. "I can't even bring him over, shit, he could still think he's six." Spike stood under the pounding shower and cried out his frustration and pain, bloody red tears mixing with the water. He wanted his Xan-pet back, he missed his humor and that wide, crooked smile that made him want to throw the boy down and fuck him through the floor. He finished up and headed to the bedroom and lay down next to Xander. "Pet, I'm here, I just need you to come back to me, I miss you." The vampire curled next to the human letting his warmth soak into him and soothe his anguish until he fell into a deep sleep.

It was totally dark in the apartment, but he didn't need to light to get to the kitchen for a drink. Maybe some hot chocolate with little marshmallows, that would be good and it might help him get back to sleep. He poured milk into a pan to start heating while he got the rest of the stuff out of the cabinet. He would always think of Joyce when he did this, this was always her solution to feeling down. He was just reaching for the bag of marshmallows when the kitchen light was turned on.

"Pet, what did I tell you about being in the kitchen alone." As Spike spoke, Xander jerked up and the bag

went flying out of his hand.

“AARGHH! Are you trying to give me a freaking heart attack??? What do you mean ‘being in the kitchen alone’? Have you lost your mind? Spike?”

“Xan-pet?” Spike asked in a whisper.

“Yeah, that would be me.” Spike ran over to the brunette and grabbed him in a crushing hug, kissing him on every bit of flesh he could reach. “Spike, breathing getting to be a problem here.” Spike loosened his hold on his mate but kept running his hands over him as if he needed the reassurance that it really was his mate. “Spike, what in the hell is going on? You’re acting really weird.”

“She did it, she really did it. My princess really knew what she was doing. What’s the last thing you remember, pet?”

“Uhh, fighting some big demon thingie in the cemetery. Why?” Xander was looking very confused.

“That was over a month ago. You got wounded and the mojo did something to your brain. You..well..you thought you were a child.”

“A child?”

“Come here, pet.” Spike turned to other lights on and led the confused man into the living room and motioned to all the toys scattered around the room.

“I was a child..and you took care of me?”

“Of course I did, wouldn’t let anyone else. You’re my mate, my love. I would take care of you forever.” Spike couldn’t stand it any longer and grabbed Xan in another crushing hug. “Gods, I missed you, Xan, have to have you, have to have you now. Please, pet need to be inside of you, need to feel you, thought I’d never be able to do it again, thought I’d lost you.” Xander grabbed a double handful of soft blonde hair and pulled the vampire to him and attacked the cool mouth. He could feel that his mate didn’t need gentle, he needed it fast and hard, confirming that his lover was with him again. Spike put one leg behind Xander’s and gently swept his legs out from under him, turning their bodies so the human came down on top of him.

“We need something..need lube. You stay right there, don’t you move blondie.” Xander ran to the kitchen and

got the small bottle of olive oil. He didn't have time to look for lube, Spike needed him now. "You just lay there and watch me. This is for you, love you Spike, love you forever."

The brunette ripped his boxers off and then pulled Spike's down his legs and off. He knelt down by the vampire, leaning over and gently kissing him as he took the cap off the oil and poured some on his fingers. He reached down and rubbed it between his ass cheeks, breaching his opening with one finger, not stopping till it was all the way in. Spike was watching him intently; his eyes changing between blue and gold, while his love began preparing his body just for him. Xander threw his head back and moaned as he added a second finger. He started using them to fuck his own ass, working the slick oil in as far as he could. Spike began panting as he watched his beautiful mate add a third finger, using them to stretch the tight little rosette.

"Xan..please, can't wait..need you now." He gasped when Xander poured some of the oil over his hard cock and slowly lowered himself onto the rigid length, pausing for a moment to let his body adjust, then lifting himself almost off Spike's cock and slamming back down. "Gods, pet..more." Spike grabbed Xander's hips and began to lift

him almost off, then pulling him back down while he thrust his hips upward, impaling his love on his cock. He was reveling in the feeling of being in Xander's moist, hot sheath again. "Can't stop, pet, going to cum, feels too good." He grabbed Xander's hard, weeping length and started to squeeze and pull the hard cock in the same rhythm Xander was using to fuck him. He wanted them to cum together, needed this reaffirmation of their love. "With me, love, cum with me. Together, always together, love you Xan, love you forever." He pulled Xander down on him one last time and thrust up, filling the grasping channel with his cold cum. When Xander felt Spike's cock spasming in completion deep in his ass, he screamed as his hot cum shot out onto Spike's stomach. He collapsed on top of Spike, panting and trying to catch his breath. It was ten minutes before either could move

"God, Spike that was..that was incredible. Uh, Spike, why are there Transformers staring at me? I don't own any..hey, these are my old Transformers and there's my Hot Wheels. These are my old toys. Where'd they come from?"

"Red. She knew how those wankers you call parents were so she kept them. She said you left them at her house to play with so no one would take them from you.

She's been saving them for you."

"She's had them all this time? For me?" Xan's eyes were glassy with unshed tears.

"Of course she did, git. They love you, Xan. Red brought all these over, Slayer and Bit bought you the Legos and had as much fun as you did putting the things together, Glinda bought those games. She said that all little kids needed Candy Land and some silly thing with little cherries. Of course, Rupes is responsible for the books, proper British classics like Winnie the Pooh naturally."

"Naturally and the fire truck? Where did it come from?"

"Me. When I heard what the bastard of a father did with yours, I sent slayer out to get you a new one. You never deserved to be treated like that, pet. It don't matter what excuse the bastard used, you never deserved it."

"M..my parents? I..I talked about them? I never talked about them to anyone before. I didn't want anyone to know." He was having a problem catching his breath.

"Xan-pet, easy. Take a breath luv. Xander, I didn't say to breathe like a bloody racehorse, slow it down a bit. Don't

want to have to put a paper bag over your face. Yeah, you told us about everything. It was all we could do to keep Slayer from paying them a visit, not that I wouldn't have gone with her. We all know, and we all still love you."

Xander had tears streaming down his face; "I never wanted anyone to know what they were like. And they don't think I'm bad?"

Spike pulled his boy tightly to him. "Of course they don't think you're bad, pet. They all love you. Hell, even Peaches told you a bedtime story."

"ANGEL!! Deadboy's here an..and..a bedtime story?? Oh shit, do I really want to know anymore?"

"Probably not, even though you would have loved the look on his face every time you called him Angel-peaches. We need to get cleaned up so I can call the lot of them. I promised them I would do it if anything changed."

After a quick shower, Spike got on the phone and called everyone involved and told them they needed to get to the apartment right away, but not telling them why.

“You are evil, my love.”

“You just figuring that out, pet?” Spike posed Xander by the bedroom door so that he would be the first thing they all saw as they came in the door. He was holding his fire truck to his chest like he would never turn it loose, wearing the sweats and t-shirt the group knew he slept in.

“Here they come, pet and it’s all of them. Oh, did I mention that the cheerleader was with them?” Xander hit Spike upside the head then nodded to him to let them in. “Here we go, Xan.”

Spike waited till they knocked then slowly opened the door. The first thing they saw was Xander, standing there holding his firetruck.

“Hi Angel-peaches. Are you going to tell me another story?” The entire group groaned, it hadn’t worked, Xander still thought he was six. Drusilla began to laugh at the upset looks on everyone else’s faces. “Come on Deadboy, how about it?”

“Sure I’ll rea..Dead...deadboy? Harris, that was not

funny.”

“Yes, it was, Angel.” Buffy laughed as she ran to grab Xander. “My Xander shaped friend is back.” Willow pushed Buffy out of her way so she could get the next hug.

That seemed to release the rest of the group and they all rushed up to Xander, laughing and touching him. They had to make sure he was all right and really better. Xander had finally been hugged by and shaken hands with all but one of the large group. He walked slowly over to the last person and gently pulled her into a powerful hug.

“Thank you, ‘Auntie Dru’. Thank you for bringing me back to Spike.” Xander rested his cheek against the top of the vampire’s head and just held her. He owed everything to her. She had brought him back to Spike, back to his forever love and his forever friends.

The End