

*Just a little bit of craziness from my LJ, full of cliches, larks, and other bits of careless self-indulgence. Not originally intended to be a real story, but it got long  
6,068 words*

## **A Week of Wrong**

by  
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### **Monday**

Xander held up his hands as if begging the film to stop rolling. "Okay, no, no, no, see--this is *not* the part of the buddy-cop movie where the two guys have to pretend to be gay, and if it *is*, you can consider me officially leaving for popcorn."

"Will you shut it?" Spike spat the words out like bits of gravel.

"No, I will not--"

Spike spun and shoved Xander up against the alley wall, clamping one hand over his mouth, and hello, why the hell wasn't Mister Chip issuing the smackdown? Another failure of American technology; the Japanese now, they'd know what to do with vampires who shoved their cigarette-smoky hands under your nose with no respect for your personal bubble.

"Do you know what a Swadhhyu demon'll do if it gets within claw range?" Spike asked.

This was the point where Xander should have shoved Spike's hand aside or maybe gotten in a bite for the home team, rah, but the vampire's fierce gaze fixed him with the question and he shook his head in answer.

"It'll pin you to the ground, open up a hole in your belly," he poked a finger into Xander's navel, "and spend the next two hours slurpin' your guts up like capellini."

Capellini? Xander thought. And then: Ewwww. A wave of faintness washed through him, making his knees start to buckle.

Spike took his mouth-covering hand off but kept the other wrapped in Xander's shirt and yanked him away from the wall, craning around the edge of the alley to check on the status of their monster.

Xander cleared his throat softly. "So explain the part again where kissing makes the bad demon go away?"

"They don't eat prey that's mating."

"I hate my life. So. Much."

"I hate your life too," Spike said irritably, and then his body stiffened. "Oh oh."

"Oh oh?" Panic gripped Xander's capellini. "Oh oh?"

That was the last thing he had a chance to utter before Spike kissed him.

Xander struggled against fate, of course. His strict heterosexual code demanded that he try to twist from Spike's grasp and break from his vile vampire lips, defying death and the brutal Swadhhyu. Which made it hard to explain how he found himself back up against the alley wall, leaning on it for support as Spike's body blanketed him from head to foot, or why a hand had climbed into Undead Boy's back pocket while the other one wound into his bleached and extra-crispy hair.

I hate this, he assured himself, as he heard the Swadhhyu enter the alley and give them a snuffling investigation. And then he kind of forgot about it, kind of blanked out or something, though he thought he heard some moaning sounds that might have been the beast.

There's a lot of tongue, he thought absently, as a passing observation, the way you notice these wet and interesting things. Cool, agile, skillful, like a fish darting in and out of his mouth except not at all fishy, just smoky and boozy and...what had he been thinking a moment ago?

A lot of tongue, a lot of Spike in his mouth, a lot of...oh god, Spike in his mouth!

He broke away long enough to gasp, ready to curse and protest and really, really express his not-at-all-happy-with-this-ness, and oh look. An eight-foot tall monster with red eyes and claws like meat hooks.

Xander grabbed the back of Spike's head and pulled him in for another wild mouthful. And then he lost the plot again for a while, what with all the tongue and the hands and rubbing and somehow the part where his jeans came unzipped, possibly from the rubbing.

"Oh my god," he husked out as Spike drew off just far enough to sniff and chew his neck, the rest of him remaining plastered to Xander from the hips down and everywhere else it counted.

"Oh my god!" a higher voice said in horror, moments before something pulled his vampire away.

No no no, he thought in matching horror, eyes snapping open; this was his personal vampire, not for sharing. Get your own, he thought wildly, before sanity returned and he was forced to zip himself up in front of an audience of saucer-eyed girls.

His personal vampire was clenched in a slayer fist and wore an expression as if he'd just misplaced a thought somewhere over in Xander's pants. Buffy had a stake in one raised hand and had frozen mid-swing toward Spike's ribs. Clearly unable to complete the sentence, she loosened her hand and let it drop from his shoulder.

"Okay," Xander said, holding one hand up and the other hand strategically down. "I can explain this."

Willow's jaw had come unhinged, leaving a one-inch gap between her parted lips, and Buffy had taken on a theatrically stunned expression, the one she wore when she'd just stuck her hand in human remains and needed to make the bad touch go away.

"God, you can kiss," Spike said, still staring at Xander with a frown of surprise.

The sheer wrongness of this made him stammer out, "Shut up!"

Plaintive Willow eyes were stripping all the flesh from Xander's hot and mortified face. "Xander, why didn't you tell us?"

"Tell you? Tell you what? There is no tell."

"It's okay if you're attracted to guys. My first-year psych textbook says that it's considered totally normal now. It's not even in the DSM-IV."

"Oh god," Xander said, training his plea up toward the heavens. "Please let this be the late-night pizza-with-anchovies dream from which I will now awaken."

He did not awaken, or if he did it was to the exact same spot where Buffy was saying, "You son of a bitch." When his eyes popped open again he saw with relief that she was talking to Spike.

"Scuse me?" he said, cocking his head and looking affronted.

"I can't believe you. Taking advantage of someone's sexual confusion to cop a feel? Molesting young boys in alleys?"

"Okay," Xander held up a finger, "wait a minute--"

Spike straightened a few inches and adjusted his Duster of Infinite Dignity. "You're off your nut. I'll have you know I was saving the prat's worthless life from the," he turned with a gesture, noticed the utter lack of menace, and hesitated, "the very large and unpleasant demon that was here a minute ago."

"Uh huh," Buffy said with huge skepticism.

Xander hastened to chime in. "No, he was. Really. The Swaddle-you demon."

"Swadhhyu."

Xander nodded and pointed at Spike in affirmation. "That. To distract it you have to mate--I mean, not *mate*, but fake mate--fake! Hence the perfectly innocent and not at all gay kiss." He fidgeted in place with nervous energy and hoped no one would mention the zipper thing.

"Oh," Willow said. It was the kind of "oh" that made everyone turn to look at you, and Xander was relieved to have all eyes move on to someone else.

"What oh?" Buffy asked, gaze narrowing.

"Oh, I might have sort of forgotten to mention a warning from Giles about a, um...pack of vicious Swadhhyu demons rampaging through the neighborhood." The last several words came out in a guilty rush.

"There you go," Spike said, sounding shaky, as if he'd escaped the guillotine and was only just realizing it. He and Xander exchanged a glance, then quickly looked away. "Well, slayer, you should go kill those nasty critters." He paused, struck by a thought. "Say, if you and Red are going to team up--"

Buffy lifted her stake. "Finish that thought and die."

A sound rather like a cross between a sick cow and an angry elephant reached them from somewhere too close for comfort. Buffy broke into a sprint down the alley. Willow wavered a moment longer, giving Xander a smile that clearly said, "I know you claim you're not gay but I support your gayness anyway because I'm your friend, Xander," then ran after Buffy.

Xander, left alone with Spike, glared at him, daring *him* to speak.

"This never happened," he told the vampire.

"Like I'd want it to," Spike scoffed.

Scowling in unison, they headed off in opposite directions. Of course, they would both end up in Xander's basement by the night's end, but ignoring this fact now was critical to sanity.

## **Tuesday**

"I think you did something wrong," Xander told Willow, who was studying the remains of her spell in dismay.

"No! I did everything the book said."

Spike wandered in from Giles's kitchen and plunked himself down on the far end of the couch at maximum safe distance from Xander. He was swigging the contents of a mug that smelled like fatted calf just after a robust gutting ceremony.

"Crushed mandrake root," Xander read from the book as Willow checked ingredients against his list. "Bone of ibis, turnip sap, white hellebore, oil of blister beetle--"

"Oil of blister beetle!" Willow's voice had turned anxious and sharp. "Where's the oil of blister beetle?"

After a moment of questioning, eyeball to eyeball around the room, everyone's gaze was drawn inexorably to Spike, who was studying the interior of his mug with pensive uncertainty. "Thought it'd add something to the taste," he said, then caught sight of Willow's face. "Well what'd you expect? It's shiny and green and you leave it sitting about on the coffee table. Thought it was an hors d'oeuvre."

Baring her gritted teeth like a scary little fox, Willow stood and aimed a gun-finger at him. "You owe me beetles, mister!"

Which was how Spike and Xander ended up scouting the graveyard that night and turning over logs to aim flashlights at the crawly things underneath.

"I hate you," Xander said for the tenth time. "I could be spooning with Anya right now if you hadn't needed to spice up your toddy."

"Oh please. Not like you're missing your big performance, is it?"

Xander's swinging flashlight beam caught the vampire's smirk. "What the hell is that supposed to mean?"

"It's innuendo, precious." He rolled the words off his tongue like honey. "You know what it means."

"Freak."

Spike halted unexpectedly, hand fanned to his belly. "God."

Xander moved on, then returned after a minute when it became clear Spike was rooted to the spot. "What is it?" he asked, shining his light up and down the other man's body and pretending like he had good reason to.

"Beetle isn't sitting well."

"Please tell me you're not about to yak up beetle juice. I thought vampires never got sick."

A scowl pulled Spike's face tight but couldn't sustain itself and turned back into a frown. "I'm not sick. Just feel funny."

"Of course you feel funny. You drank *beetle oil*! What could have *possibly* made you think that was a good idea?"

"Mmmm."

The lowered angle of Spike's head was giving Xander a hincky feeling and if this had been a movie it'd be the moment just before the monster snapped awake and showed you its hungry fangs. Spike's flashlight beam was pointing at the ground and he'd begun stroking his abs through his tee-shirt as if they were the most interesting thing in the world. Xander would have argued this point with himself if he hadn't found the lazy motion of Spike's fingers so mesmerizing.

"Dru used to say blister beetle was an aphrodisiac." Spike lifted his head and smiled predatorily at Xander. "Thought she was cracked, of course. Used to dump the stuff when she turned her back, pretend I'd quaffed it...then make sure to give her an extra good time." He strolled closer, forcing Xander to back up a few stumbling steps. "Should've listened to her, though."

"Stay back, fiend of darkness!" Xander fumbled for a cross.

"Mmm." It was the sound of an animal who'd scented something curious, and Spike kept closing in. "You smell nummy."

Xander got the cross out and held it up defensively. "Don't make me--"

Spike knocked it from his hand with casual ease and hauled him in by his neck for a kiss. Their second kiss, second official kiss, and second kisses were the ones where you tried to figure out if the first was just a fluke.

"Fluke!" Xander accused desperately after taking his mouth away. "That first kiss, just a fluke! And you, you're a strange, murderous, neck-sucking...okay now, stop that." The neck sucking, he meant. Or the hand laddering under his shirt to thumb circles on his ribs, or the other one cupping his left asscheek. Wait, which? Hmm. Well, it was all good--no, no, bad! All bad! Terrifying and inappropriate!

Spike pushed him backward onto the grass and dropped across his hips in a straddle before he could recover. "Hello, pretty."

"Get off me!"

"Look at that," Spike told him, leaning forward and washing his palm back and forth across Xander's chest. "You're all flat and tasty like a crepe." Disconcerted, Xander could only gape up. "A blood-filled crepe." Spike's tone took on a note of wonderment as if this culinary possibility were occurring to him for the first time ever. "God, that'd be good right now. Wonder if Lucy's working the IHOP tonight."

"Um...Spike?"

"Hey! Hey!" The vampire began feeling around his own head, distressing it into stiff tufts. "Beetles--in my hair! Get them off!" He rolled off Xander, beating at his scalp in a panic.

"No!" Xander said, trying to grab Spike's attention and his wrists. "No beetles."

Spike went still, peering at Xander for reassurance. "No beetles?"

"No," he said, gazing into that pale, worried face. "Nothing up there but the snakes." *Man*, he thought as Spike's eyes went wide in horror. *I am such a bastard.*

"Get them out," Spike begged, pitching his head forward into Xander's lap.

Xander's eyes glazed over. "Uh huh," he said distractedly, petting Spike's moaning head. "There there."

He managed to gather Spike up and drag him into motion, an armful of lurching, loopy death that ground to a halt every thirty seconds. Pause for snake-check.

"God, I feel squiffed," Spike said when Xander had managed to get him moving after one pit stop. His tone was surly and he directed a suspicious look at Xander. "What's the matter with me--hey! What did you do to me?"

"Spike! Pay attention!" Xander held his arms and shook him a little, feeling like Lloyd Dobler. "You're incredibly high and you must chill! If you don't, I'm going to tie you to a tree and let the squirrels run up and down your body with their tiny little feet."

Spike whipped his head to one side, scanning the treeline with high paranoia, then looked back at him very seriously and said, "Don't leave me for the squirrels, Xander."

"Are you going to be good?"

From Spike's absorbed frown this appeared to be no simple question but a conundrum that only years of study would solve.

"Just say yes," Xander advised.

"Yeah, okay."

Back at Giles's place everyone was eating popcorn and watching a John Woo movie. Quite a cozy picture they made; Willow curled under an afghan, Buffy curled against Riley, Giles mellow and tweedy in an armchair. They glanced up as he dragged Spike across the threshold, looking completely unfazed by the vampire's drunken-sailor sway or how he was draped against Xander and reciting French poetry. Xander wanted to kill them all.

"Did you get the beetles?" Willow asked around a mouthful of popcorn.

"So help me," he said, dropping Spike like unfolded laundry onto the couch, "If anyone says the word 'beetles' to me one more time, I will lie down on this floor and cry like a little bitch."

"I think that's no," Buffy said to her.

"Je préfère au constance, à l'opium, aux nuits, l'elixir de ta bouche où l'amour se pavane--."

Willow's hand froze as she was tossing back more popcorn, Giles's as he was lifting a drink. Xander put his hands to his face and pulled down slowly, trying to stretch the taut muscles of his jaw back into normal alignment.

Spike, eyes glowing, gazed adoringly up at Xander and murmured, "Quand vers toi mes désirs partent en caravane, tes yeux sont la citerne où boivent mes ennuis.""

In the pause that followed Giles, drink still arrested in mid-air, stared across the room at Spike as if he'd just seen a deer plowed down by a semi.

Buffy twisted her neck to look up at Riley. "How come you never quote poetry to me?"

"Okay," Xander said, collecting their attention. "Can someone please focus on *my* problem?"

The problem stood up then, shucked off his coat, and weaved in place like a snake waiting to be charmed. Everyone stared at this floor show with fascination. "Hot in here," he said, running a hand across his outraged hair.

"Why does Spike have bedhead?" Willow wondered aloud.

Giles straightened and set down his drink. "Xander, please tell me you haven't been kissing Spike again."

"Wait a minute," Riley said. "Xander's been kissing Spike?" He looked around the room. "Why didn't anyone tell me Xander's been kissing Spike?"

Spike peeled his shirt off over his head and then began turning in a circle, searching for something. "Where'd I put my dressing gown?"

"Is he drunk?" Buffy asked.

"He's high on bug oil," Xander explained in the simplest possible terms, feeling that she was very lucky he didn't have a gun on him. "Make him not be."

Having managed to pull off his boots in a dance everyone had tacitly ignored, Spike hopped to a standstill and gazed admiringly at Xander. "You're just like cousin Jack," he marveled, then gave him a more critical squint. "Only whiter and not so married."

A choking, stifled noise didn't quite make it up from Buffy's throat.

"We should probably find an antidote," Willow said, getting up.

"Now, er, a moment," Giles broke in thoughtfully, "let's not--let's not be too hasty. This might be a unique opportunity for study. Very little is known about William before he was turned--in this state he may be able to provide some details of his background and upbringing that would fill the gaps in our accounts."

Shirtless, barefoot, and confused, Spike had been giving Giles wobbly focus, but seemed to have trouble making sense of his words. Losing interest, he turned back to Xander. "We going to shag now?"

"Hanley's Catholicon," Giles said sharply to Willow. "I think you'll find something in the section on toxins. Hurry, please."

"Okay," said Riley as if he'd just worked through a long and complex equation to find himself without an answer. "So when did Xander start kissing Spike?"

## **Wednesday**

"So Monday, there's this giant demon that only attacks the celibate, and Tuesday Spike sucks down a beetle cocktail and mistakes me for his boyhood snug-buddy." Xander shook his head. "I'm telling you, the universe is trying to set me up with Spike, and at no point recently did I sing, 'Matchmaker, matchmaker, make me a death match'."

Willow's friend Tara raised her brows questioningly. "Are you sure it's not just coincidence?"

"Maybe he's got a secret crush on you," Willow suggested, grinning.

"Secret?" Xander repeated. "I'm sorry, what was the secret part?" Obviously not the part where he'd licked Xander's face like a friendly dog or humped his leg in the alley. No secrets there: that was what you'd call over-sharing.

"I'll bet he kisses good," Willow mused. "A hundred years is a lot of time to practice." A sly glance flicked Xander's way.

"Any opinion I have on that goes with me to my grave--where I hope to remain dead."

"Is that Spike?" Tara asked curiously, and Xander looked up from his drink in a panic to see the vampire trailing behind Buffy and Riley. Even from across the crowded floor of the Bronze Xander could tell his temper was simmering toward a boil.

"What the hell is he doing here?" he asked when they reached the table.

Buffy set down her purse and shrugged up into a chair. "Giles had a thing," she said vaguely.

"What, he couldn't chain him up in the tub again? He's not supposed to be here. I offloaded him--my life along with my basement was supposed to be completely de-Spiked!"

Spike's mood looked much improved after Xander's outburst, his expression settling down somewhere between smirk and sex, with the dark, heavily lidded eyes that could mock a man to death.

"Make him stop staring at me," Xander demanded, as Buffy took out a compact and checked her lipstick. "He's going all sexy and bedroom-eyed!" He realized at the odd looks he got that he'd said exactly the wrong thing. "Which, let me make clear, I am completely unaroused by."

"Isn't Anya coming?" Buffy asked.

"Yes, but--"

"There you go then." She patted his hand. "Just hang with your girlfriend and you'll be safe from the big gay vampire."

"Hey!" Spike protested. "*Not* gay here."

Oz arrived tableside with the aplomb of a tugboat docking, just in time to catch the comment. "Hi," he said to the group at large, then glanced sideways at Spike. "Did I miss gay chat?"

"Spike's not gay," Buffy said, filling him in. "He's just a big ho."

"Unsurprising." Oz's voice was bland and preoccupied. "Outside of normal societal boundaries, sexual morals and conventions would take on less importance, declining into stylized rituals and ultimately into meaninglessness."

Spike stared down at him with what might have been respect while the rest of them digested this.

"So hey," Oz said. "Anyone in for a pitcher?"

Fortunately for Xander's peace of mind, Anya arrived soon afterwards; with an equal share of fortune, no one mentioned anything about vampire kissage, including Spike, though he did order a bowl of cherries and then slouch while doing distracting things to them with his tongue, one by one, until the bowl was empty and Xander was half-ready to take Anya in the bathroom and bone her senseless.

"Let's dance," he said to her in a strangled voice as Spike worked the last cherry back and forth between his teeth in a contemplative and horribly expert way.

He dragged her to the dance floor and they shimmied like old pros until they were both out of breath and it was entirely Xander's fault that the fight happened. He was keeping one eye on the table to make sure Spike stayed put, but the crowd made it difficult, and what with all his neck craning Anya grew certain that he was staring not at Spike but at the blonde co-ed dancing somewhere in his line of sight, so of course she slapped him. It got his attention; it was like being whanged with a revolving door in a Marx Brothers comedy. As the dancers nearby slowed to watch and listen she berated him for his cruelty and his insensitivity and his roving eye and his penis and then stomped off. People clapped in her wake. Grimly, Xander took a tiny bow on her behalf and pushed his way back to the table, which at the moment was deserted but for Spike.

Three jello shots had been left lined up on the table top among their empty friends. Xander tossed them back in quick succession.

"Bird fly away on you?" Spike commiserated with fake sympathy like the tragic asshole he was.

Xander slammed down his third shot glass. "This is Wednesday."

A wary look came over Spike's face. "Yeahhhhh."

"It's date night. I have no date. You know whose fault that is? It's your fault."

"How's that?"

"You owe me a dance," Xander said, grimly, belligerently, and a little bit...whoa, he thought as he slid off his chair. Room spinning, jello haze, hey, was that a vampire? Spike had an arm around him, half holding him up. Crap, had he swooned? Nah. Men don't swoon.

"This is a stupid coat." Xander plucked at Spike's leather. "You look like...like a disco cowboy." He laughed at his own wit and then had to find his balance when Spike let him go and took off the coat. Underneath he was wearing all black. Black jeans, belt, and huh, a surprisingly nice black shirt with the sleeves rolled up.

By the time his head cleared, Xander had somehow relocated to the dance floor and was staring at the unbuttoned vee of Spike's nice shirt and the white, white skin showing there.

There wasn't enough space between their bodies to toast bread, he noticed, and looked up into Spike's strange eyes.

"We're dancing," he mentioned, just in case Spike had missed that, then realized his hand was resting on that amazing triangle of sexiness where neck joined shoulder, the vampire sweet spot. He palmed Spike's neck, rubbed his thumb across the collarbone and then up. When Xander caught his eye again, the vampire was gazing at him like dinner, lips ever so slightly parted. That called for a kiss, tongue even, and as their mouths closed negotiations, something like a light switch snapped on and Xander came to and felt what he was about to do with every shocked, electrified cell of his body. He made a ragged sound and forced Spike's mouth open, finding an angle that made so much sense he finally got it, he got geometry.

Their feet had stopped moving, but feet were a far distant worry, feet were South America and this was some kind of northern-pointing pole where Xander was fucking open Spike's mouth and making himself breathless.

"Fags," someone said, voice carrying over the music, and Spike ripped away in a flash and snarled in game face toward the sneer. Little cries crashed like surf somewhere to Xander's right but didn't seem important.

"Xander!"

It was Buffy's voice, and *that* now, that always meant important. He turned his head obediently toward her. First sign of trouble and there she was, Sheriff Summers, face scrunched, body bristling, indignant and ready to rumble. This time she didn't seem to know who to hit. He smiled, but then she knocked Spike away from him and that was less funny.

"Hey!" he said. "What the hell do you think you're doing?"

Buffy stiffened with awareness of the people around her, as if suddenly realizing how her action looked in headlines--Girl Flies Off Homophobic Handle at Local Dance Club--and he could tell that her awkward position just made her angrier. "I was going to ask you that," she snapped.

"I'm sorry," he said loudly. "Do you have a problem with my homosexuality?"

She folded her arms with nervous reflex and cast tiny glances around her. "You know I don't, Xander," she said in a low, testy voice. "Especially since you don't *have* any homosexuality."

"Hey. I have buckets of homosexuality."

"You heard him, slayer. Now why don't you run along back to the Corn King? That one's straight enough to keep your itch scratched."

It was the kind of thing you shouldn't say to Buffy if you were an unsouled vampire, and Xander knew that, he was sober enough to know that, but he still jerked in his skin when she punched Spike and sent him reeling into a knot of dancers.

She didn't look at all regretful.

Spike pushed up to his elbows and considered his position on the floor, working his jaw around as if he were tasting both blood and humiliation.

It was like any one of a dozen other times before and every other time Xander had nourished a warm, satisfied glow at seeing the prick go down hard under Buffy's fist. Now he felt ill. It occurred to him in the moment between one disco-ball strobe and the next that he'd caught some odd and very wrong germ from kissing Spike, something like blister-beetle fever that he should definitely be trying to find the antidote for. It would be easy to walk away from Spike now and he should.

He stepped over and stretched a hand down and helped Spike up instead. "Come on," he said. And then there was the longest walk: back to the table to get Spike's coat, and from table to door, which involved blowing off all his friends.

His head was a muddle. The planets were out of alignment; Xander was certain that magical forces were to blame for sending his week off the tracks and into the weird.

Magic or Spike. Take your pick.

## Thursday

Morning was an "Oh, god," and a queasy stomach, followed by a long shower in which Xander vowed that jello would never pass his lips again in any form, not even if he were in a hospital in full traction and Nurse Sharon Stone was serving it to him from her cleavage.

The thought of Nurse Sharon had surprisingly little traction for his morning wake-up wank and he frowned down at himself, water sliding down off his hair on all sides, as he tried to remember how this fantasy went.

"Wake up," he said to his dick. "It's time for your sponge bath."

Well, never mind. He was hung over. From the jello shots and the big fight with Anya and the something-or-other with Buffy and, oh yeah, the fact that he was incredibly, dementedly gay.

He managed to smack the shower off and clap a towel on and stumble back out into the basement without killing himself, and with every wet step he was certain he'd find Spike rolled up like a fruit-bat in his bedsheets, but he wasn't. He was asleep on the couch, and holy shit, Xander thought, coming to a full floored stop. Holy shit.

There was his green ratty couch surrounded by read newspapers and crusty glasses that hadn't been returned to the kitchen and a bowl fused with dried blood-soaked cornflakes. Pizza box, a dozen beer bottles, the TV Guide. This was just the debris of the past week, all perfectly normal, but it framed the couch and made the body on it that much more...real.

Had he really never noticed this before now?

Dead guy, pale and still as anything you'd dig up, but preserved like some expensive doll. Large as life, muscled like a surfer, arms and legs bent at uncomfortable-looking angles on the narrow cushions. Long, lean, from the buttercup head to the bare feet. Shirt off, probably chucked somewhere across the room. One hand riding low on the stomach, top jeans button undone; face turned

toward the couch back, pinched and concerned about something even in sleep as if he were carrying on a silent argument with himself and was determined to win.

The angle of his neck, the shape of his wrists--the sudden memory of Spike pouring him into bed and tucking him in and turning off the lamp, then crossing the room.

What, Xander thought, I'm not worth taking advantage of?

Hormones were building a twister up through his body. Sharon Stone was off pouting in a corner of his mind. Meanwhile Xander was taking snapshots that were half reality and half imagination. He could see Spike's hand resting across his belly just above his undone button; he could imagine his own mouth there, could imagine sucking denim.

He sat down on the edge of the bed, but it was across the room. When his toweled ass hit the floor, Spike jack-knifed up from sleep with a deep breath, blinked once or twice, and focused on him.

"What are you doing down there?"

"Sitting. In my...towel. In my basement. Where I have every right to sit."

"Riiiiight."

"Why," Xander began, then stopped. This was going to be a bitch. He could taste his embarrassment already.

Spike tilted his head and dangled his arms off his knees. "Why what?"

"Why the hell didn't you have your way with me last night?"

"Because I respect you, Xander, and I'd like our first time to be special."

"No, really."

Spike's face relaxed into glinty-eyed satisfaction as if Xander had passed a test. "You stank of jello and looked ready to heave. You better now?"

"You know how a doctor peels off a rubber glove after surgery and it turns inside out with that wet, smacking sound and ends up on the floor all bloody and crumpled? That's my stomach right now."

"Better eat up then."

The look on Spike's face drove Xander out of his towel, into jeans and then into a dash up the basement stairs to the kitchen where he scarfed half a bottle of juice and some kind of crunchy snack bar in two minutes before barreling back down. He threw himself onto the couch next to his very own personal, private, live-in vampire and bounced a few times. Out of breath, he was only able to gawk at Spike for a few moments.

"Eager puppy, aren't you?"

Xander realized he was ogling Spike's chest just as if he'd been a topless stripper of the female variety. No tits, so why the naked thrill? He wasn't quite sure, but there was a familiar ice cream song playing in his head. He wanted to lick his way up and down all that creamy goodness.

"Come here," Spike said and started to draw him closer.

"Wait, wait. There are a few ground rules." That got him an eyebrow. "So we both understand here: this is just about sex. You're a sexy, devil-spawned bastard and I'm just conducting a few youthful experiments. And this is morally questionable," he went on as Spike took his wrist and drew him across the length of the couch, "I know that, and if I think too hard about all the evil things you've done with that mouth, if I think too hard--"

But then he was being folded into Spike's arms and kissed and he forgot what he was going to say, as he'd hoped to. He was being held, then Spike was leaning back and he was being pulled down, and there was full-body contact, skin, and fingers holding his jaw at a certain angle. They kissed until Xander's hips began rubbing and refused to stop, and then Spike reversed them, tipping Xander down onto his back across the couch and resting himself with just the right amount of pressure along the length of Xander's body--amazing smooth torso, the weight of legs in jeans, muscles of his back as thick and heavy as a tiger's, and Xander's brain shorted out as he arched and when arching couldn't budge Spike off he arched some more, grinding up against heaven as if trying to struggle out of a blanket of earth.

"Oh god," he said as heat flared across his face up into the roots of his hair and Spike gently bit his neck. "Do that again, harder--"

He got a snarl and there was the crunchy sound of bone flowering into demon while Spike's hand snaked between their bodies, popping buttons and zippers and then he lifted up his head and made Xander look at him, golden-eyed and fuck-ugly and angry and that's when Xander drew a ragged cry into his lungs, a scarf of air that went all the way through his body, and came like crazy.

Spike came too, why wouldn't he, but he wouldn't talk afterwards. He went silent and broody for the rest of the day, low and dark as a storm cloud, zombified by TV. It was a reminder that Spike was committed to evil and thwarted by his chip, yadda yadda, a terrible waste, so Xander went to work and left him to it.

## **Friday**

On Friday as Xander was being bested by an angry fledge in Laura Ashley casuals, Spike flew to his side, dusted the bitch, and yanked him to his feet just as Buffy and team galloped up in a flurry of sneakers and worried cries.

"You stupid sod," Spike said furiously, then turned and stomped off. And that felt very much like the end, Xander decided, as the others clustered in a comforting way around his sorry ass. But just as he was about to make some self-deprecating joke and get on with his life Spike whirled and shoved back into Xander's face and kissed him, angry, angry, angry, cradling Xander's face gently between his hands.

**The End**