

Pairings: Spike/Xander

Rating: PG13

Small and Scaly

by

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Part One

He should have known better. Hell, he did know better. But that hadn't stopped him. No, cause he was an idiot sometimes...okay most times. He kept telling himself that as he power walked through the cemetery. *Shortcut my ass*, he thought angrily as he almost stumbled over another tree root.

A sharp odd sound made him turn around so fast his feet got tangled and he staggered back, landing on his ass in the wet grass.

"Fuck," he mumbled as he untangled himself and got up again. The sound continued. A sharp whistle that made him shiver. It sounded so lost and frightened. He looked over at the gate leading from the cemetery to the

dubious safety of the streets of Sunnydale. He looked back over at the bushes where the sound seemed to come from.

“You know it’s a mistake,” Xander told himself, “You know the second you go over there you’ll get jumped by something big and slimy. Be smart, walk away.”

But he wasn’t smart. People had told him that many times. Teachers had pointed it out, used fine words to hide it but the message had been simple enough. His own father would tell him in no uncertain terms just how stupid he considered his son to be.

Xander walked over to the bushes, closed his eyes and then jumped behind them waiting to be slimed.

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He stood there for a second, eyes closed, and still waiting. Nothing. No slime, no claws, no sharp teeth. He opened one eye and scanned the surroundings. The crypts closest to the bushes seemed empty, the tombstones cast long shadows in the ghostly light from the full moon.

“Well...” Xander said, opened both eyes and slowly turned around. If he just walked calmly away, fate might not notice him and he could walk out of the cemetery unharmed.

The screeching started again, this time it sounded heartbroken and strained. It also sounded as if it was coming from somewhere near Xander’s shoes.

He could run. He could just run like hell and not look back.

He was good at running...when he wasn’t falling over his own feet. He ran away from danger all the time. It was his special ability. Buffy had the super strength and the destiny, Willow had the whole witch thing, complete with vamp doppelgangers and Xander?...Xander could run like the wind.

He could dash, he could jog or scamper. Hell, he might even trot.

But no! Cause Xander Harris was an idiot so instead of running like the hounds of hell were hunting him...he looked down and saw small blue eyes looking back.

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The baby? Demon spawn? The progeny of evil? gurgled at him and drooled. Xander looked around the cemetery again. Maybe the little guy's mother was out finding some tasty corpse to munch on? And if that was the case then he really needed to get away before she decided she preferred fresh meat.

He knelt down and pulled the dirty blanket closer around the demon baby.

"Sorry, buddy," Xander whispered, "Gotta go now," he stood up and started moving away toward the gate. The sad whistling started again. He looked back and sighed. God damn it! He stomped back to the bushes and looked down at the unhappy baby.

"Shhhh," Xander knelt down and patted the baby's emerald scaled skin, "Just be quiet, okay?"

The baby stopped crying and grabbed on to Xander's thumb with its small hand.

“Wow! You’re really strong for a little guy,” Xander tried to pull his hand back but the baby wouldn’t let go.

He was still struggling when he heard some hooting and laughing from somewhere near the back of the cemetery.

“Fledges!” Xander groaned and finally managed to pull his hand back. The baby immediately started its wailing again. Xander took one look at the three fledges, running around chasing each other and coming closer to the gates, before he made up his mind.

“I’m so gonna get myself killed,” he said, grabbed the baby and hurried out of the cemetery.

Part Two

The demon spawn snored and the emerald scales on its forehead seemed to scrunch up. The scales lifted slightly and made a rattling noise. A loud wet sound echoed

through the basement and then Xander felt something warm spreading over his hand and down his wrist. He cradled the bundle against his chest and looked at his hand. It was covered in yellowish brown goo.

“Ew!” Xander shook his hand sending demon baby spawn poop all over the basement. His stomach made a horrible rolling motion and he gagged. “Oh, God,” he moaned and was about to pinch his nose when the stench attacked his sensitive nostrils, only to stop when he saw the yellow goo dripping off his fingers. He gagged again and looked sternly down at the spawn. It was looking at him, its blue eyes curious.

“Don’t look at me like that,” Xander said and put the bundled up baby on the floor. It started squealing pitifully and Xander sighed. “Just a second,” he called over his shoulder as he ran into the small bathroom and found some towels and a washcloth. He drenched the washcloth in warm water and walked back to the baby. The second the small blue eyes locked on him the squealing stopped.

Xander knelt down and started unwrapping the dirty blanket. When he finally reached the last layer he lurched up and stumbled into the bathroom and

sacrificed his lunch to the Toilet Gods.

“How the hell can something so small make something so stinky?” Xander groaned and kept retching.

The strange whistling squeal started again and Xander started thumping his head against the toilet seat. The squealing got louder and Xander stood up and walked back to the baby on unsteady feet.

“Okay,” Xander said looking down at the crying baby, “I need something that can filter out that unbelievable stench,” he looked around the basement. “Ah ha!” he said triumphantly and grabbed a clothes peg off the coffee table and pinched it on his nose. His eyes watered and he tried to distract himself, from the pain blossoming across his nose, by focusing on the poop still smeared on the dirty blanket.

Again he knelt down and started untangling the rest of the blanket.

“Okay,” Xander said in a nasal voice, “So you’re a little girl,” he pushed the blanket away and started drying the gunk off the baby. It wasn’t really working. He was just smearing the dirt around, getting it all over the place.

“Fuck,” Xander whined.

He rubbed at a spot on the baby’s stomach but it just wouldn’t go away so he leant closer. The little girl was waving her small chubby arms around. She smacked him on the cheek.

“Hey,” Xander warned, “No smacking the Xanman!” he scolded.

The baby looked solemnly at him and then grabbed on to the clothes peg and pulled it off. Xander screeched and grabbed on to his nose as he jumped up and danced around. The baby giggled and gurgled.

“Oh,” Xander said pointing at the little girl, “You liked that did you?”

More giggling and drooling.

“Fuck,” Xander sighed, “There’s no way we’re getting that shit off you like this,” he bent down and picked up the naked baby. She grabbed on to his shirt and smiled up at him.

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Xander was standing under the warm spray of the showerhead, his eyes closed and his head tilted back. The baby was resting against his naked chest, one of Xander's hands cradling her, the other washing the green scaly skin with a soapy washcloth.

The baby moved restlessly for a second, then rested her head against Xander's shoulder and fell asleep. Xander looked down at her. She didn't look dangerous. Her emerald scales shining as the water flowed over her skin, the small greenish locks of hair clinging to her nape and forehead.

He took one of her small hands in his and looked at her nails. Black, they looked more like claws than nails but the fingers themselves were chubby and they clenched around Xander's thumb.

"What the hell am I gonna do with you?" Xander whispered.

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T-shirts, it turned out, were excellent demon spawn

diapers. He'd found the one his aunt Sarah had given him. A weird pink thing with an even weirder neon green design on the front. .

He had made a nest on his bed by forming a ring out of a couple of blankets. The little girl was sleeping there, her small snores filling the basement.

Xander cleaned everything up. The dirty blanket, the towels and the washcloth he had used were put in a bag and dumped in the trashcan outside.

He sat down on the edge of the bed and watched her sleep.

What was he supposed to do now?

He could call Giles and ask him...but he'd tell Buffy and she had a tendency to slay first and ask questions later. So maybe he should call Willow? Good old best friend Willow. But she wasn't great at keeping secrets. She would get all angsty and she couldn't lie to Buffy worth shit. No the Scoobies were not the people to ask about this.

The baby whimpered and Xander put a warm hand on

her cheek. It seemed to calm her down. She sighed contently and carried on sleeping.

Maybe he should just go and put her back where he'd found her. Her mother would be looking for her and Xander could just slip into the cemetery after sunset and put the baby back.

Yeah, that was what he had to do. Xander looked out the window at the rising sun. He'd call in sick and stay at home. All he had to do was keep her a secret until nightfall.

He could do that.

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Xander was pressing two pillows against his ears. The high-pitched squealing was killing his eardrums. He looked down at the baby. Its little mouth was wide open, tears ran down her cheeks and her small hands were clenched into fists.

“Shhhh,” Xander tried again, “Please. Shhhh,” he threw the pillows down on the bed and picked the little girl up.

He checked that there wasn't a new load of yellowish brown goo in the t-shirt diaper, he rocked her back and forth. He knew it wouldn't help. He had been doing those things for the last three hours. Thank God his dad was at work and his mom was too drunk to notice.

"Look," Xander yelled, "I can't feed you cause I don't know what the hell you eat." The wailing continued. Xander sighed and put the baby back down in the middle of the nest. He tucked the blanket back around her, only to watch her furiously kick it off.

What he needed was emerald-scaly-baby-demon formula but he was pretty sure they didn't sell that down at the local 7 Eleven. Not even in Sunnydale. So what was he supposed to do?

"Think, Xander," Xander said and slapped his forehead, "Think." He started pacing back and forth in front of the bed. The squealing grew in volume. "I found her at the cemetery. Her mother left her there...maybe. Why do demons hang around graveyards? Um...fledges do it because they do the whole rising from the dead thing...same goes for zombies," Xander stopped and looked down at the baby,

“She’s not a vampire or a fledge. So why would her kind hang around the dead...” he slumped down on the bed, “What’s at the graveyard?...There’re only dead people there. Dead people equal...dead people equal...dead meat?...Flesh!”

Xander bolted up the stairs and then stopped in front of the door that lead to the kitchen. He opened it slowly. The light was turned of and he couldn’t hear anybody moving around...not that he could hear much with all the squealing coming from the basement.

He walked into the kitchen and slowly closed the door behind him.

“Flesh...flesh,” Xander mumbled quietly and opened the door to the fridge, “Bingo,” he smiled and pulled out some steaks. His mom had probably been too drunk to actually do anything with them, so they were still raw.

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“Open up,” Xander said and pushed the spoon, with a small piece of raw steak on it, against the baby’s mouth, “Please, come on. Just open up,” Xander coaxed. The

baby was sitting propped against the headboard of his bed, surrounded by pillows and blankets. Her small chubby legs and arms flailed wildly.

Xander kept gently pushing the spoon against the green lips until they parted. Xander grinned triumphantly and threw his hands up in the air.

“And the crowd goes wild! Let’s hear it for Xander Harris!” he made applause noises cupping his hands over his mouth.

“Blah,” Xander turned and stared at the piece of meat the baby had spit out on his bed.

“Hey!” Xander said and pointed an accusing finger at the little girl. He watched as the pouting lower lip started to tremble and the squealing slowly began, “No no no,” Xander begged and grabbed the spoon and put a piece of the raw steak in his own mouth, “See?” he chewed animatedly, “Mmmmmm,” he mock moaned with joy, “Tasty,” he said and almost gagged, “Yummy,” he tried to swallow but instead ended up spitting the vile meat out on the bed.

The baby clapped her hands and reached out and picked

the meat up.

“Don’t eat that. I already drooled all over it,” Xander reached out for it but the baby stuffed the piece of already chewed steak into her mouth.

She swallowed it and looked expectantly up at Xander.

“Guess I know what I’ll be doing while we wait,” Xander said and picked up a new piece of raw meat and started chewing it.

Part Three

“Here you go,” Xander said and knelt down and gently put the demon spawn down on the grass behind the bushes. She was wrapped in his favourite blanket. The dark blue one his grandmother had given him when he was a kid. He looked around nervously and then stood up. She was looking up at him. Her blue eyes curious and her small forehead scrunched up.

“Okay,” Xander said and took a step back, “I’m just gonna go...and then your mom can come find you,” he looked over his shoulder. The graveyard seemed quiet, almost peaceful. It wasn’t of course, Xander knew that, but right now things looked okay.

“So it was nice meeting you. Apart from the poop and raw meat thing...” he shifted restlessly and then ran over to the gate and out of the cemetery. He stopped on the other side of the gate and leant against the brick wall surrounding the graveyard. He closed his eyes and tried to calm down.

Her mother would come find her. She’d find her and then the whole diaper changing and meat chewing would be demon mom’s problem.

A small whimpering noise made Xander clench his eyes shut and his hands scraped against the old dirty bricks. The whimpering turned into louder squeals. Not loud enough to attract attention. Not yet, anyway. Xander stood up straight and started walking away from the cemetery.

It wasn’t like his life wasn’t fucked up already. He really

didn't need to add the care and feeding of demon spawn to the mess. Nope, no way.

And she was just a demon.

A small defenceless baby demon. She couldn't even chew her own food. Xander stopped walking. He turned around and looked over at the cemetery. He could still see the gate. Iron with the words Green Meadows worked into the design. And if he held his breath he could hear her squealing. Frantically.

He started running back.

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"Don't think there's much blood in it," Thomas said and prodded the squealing bundle by his feet.

"She smells okay," Lila sniffed the air and knelt down. She traced the baby's cheek with a dirty long fingernail.

"Just a snack," Thomas said, "We should be out looking for something bigger and tastier."

“Yeah, but we have all night for that,” Lila pointed out, “I say we just drain her,” Lila turned around and saw Thomas disappear in a cloud of dust.

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“She’s not a fucking snack!” Xander snarled and pushed the stake through the stunned vampire’s heart.

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Okay so he sucked, big time, at following through with his plans. He looked over at the demon spawn. She hadn’t taken her eyes off him once since they had arrived back at the basement. He had attempted to go to the bathroom but the high-pitched frantic squealing had been a great incentive to cross his legs and just hope she’d fall asleep soon, so he could go pee.

“Look,” Xander said, “I really need to pee. I mean, my eyes are watering up here.”

The baby giggled.

“I’ll just be gone a few seconds. I’ll hurry,” he promised and started walking over to the bathroom.

The lower lip started quivering and the blue eyes were suspiciously shiny. He took a few more steps. The demon spawn opened her mouth a little. Xander reached the door to the bathroom and walked in. The squealing began, louder and more frightened than before.

“Okay,” Xander threw his arms in the air, walked out of the bathroom and over to his bed where the baby was propped against the headboard, “But no peeking,” Xander warned and picked her up.

The demon spawn blew spit bubbles.

“Nice,” Xander said as he walked over to the bathroom, “Really charming.”

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She was sleeping now. He really didn’t have to watch her do that. She seemed to be an expert. But he just couldn’t help himself. She was wrapped in his brown t-shirt, the one he usually wore at work. It was cotton and it had

been washed so many times by now that it was incredibly soft. He had tucked a blanket over her but she had kicked it off.

He watched her whimper, her small arms and legs jerking as if she had been startled. Xander rubbed her small hands, the baby stopped moving around and sighed in her sleep.

“What the hell am I supposed to do now?” Xander whispered in the dimly lit basement, “I can’t really drop you off at the local daycare and I can’t take you to work with me.”

He really liked his current job. Working in construction gave him this whole instant gratification thing. He could see that his work meant something. The building changed and was finished because he made it happen. Well, him and the other fifty guys on the team. But still...it beat flipping hamburgers and watching the residents of Sunnydale gain weight.

“Who do I know...” Xander wondered as he curled up around the baby, “Who do I know that’ll look after you when I’m at work?”

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“So you need to check if the t-shirt is dry if she starts screaming,” Xander explained as he unwrapped the baby from the blanket, “If she’s dry but still fussy then she might be hungry,” Xander put a small jar of meat on the rickety table, “I already pre-chewed that so she should have no problem eating it,” he said and looked at the babysitter.

“You got all that?” Xander asked and narrowed his eyes.

“You chewed this and then spit it in a jar?” Clem asked and frowned down at the jar standing on his card table.

“You eat kittens,” Xander said glaring at the flabby skinned demon.

“Uh huh. So when are you coming back?” Clem asked.

“I’ll be back around four,” Xander said, “No, make that five. I’ll need to buy diapers and baby clothes and stuff.”

“You sure it’s smart to keep her?” Clem tickled the

demon spawn.

“Probably not but...you know,” Xander mumbled and smiled down at the baby.

“Just remember to bring back those kittens we agreed on,” Clem said as he picked the baby up. She grabbed on to his ears and pulled.

“Yeah,” Xander grinned.

“I want at least one of them to be an orange tabby,” Clem said and patted the baby’s back.

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Why the hell were there so many different kinds of diapers?

Poop was poop. It went in the diaper and then you threw the diaper out. Eco-Friendly Baby Diapers? Should he buy those? Training Pants? Why did a baby need training pants? What did gel free mean? And size...he needed to know what size. Where was the Pampers Demon Size Diapers when you needed them?

Fuck it. Xander grabbed a pack of Huggies Supreme. They had to be good if they were called Supreme. Was one pack enough? Judging by the amount of t-shirts he had thrown in the thrash...probably not. He put two more packs in the shopping cart next to the first one.

He turned around and noticed a shelf full of baby wipes. He definitely needed those. Unscented, scented or flushable? He grabbed five packs of the flushable ones and dropped them in his shopping cart.

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"Can I help you?" the woman asked.

"Um...yeah," Xander looked around the baby clothes department and swallowed, "I need some clothes for a baby that's this big," he held his hands out showing her how big.

"Oh," the woman, her nametag said her name was Florence, smiled indulgently.

"Yeah," Xander nodded and looked pleadingly at her.

"Well, what kind of clothes were you looking for," Florence asked.

"Baby clothes," Xander said.

"I see," Florence sighed, "Boy or girl?"

"Kinda demony," Xander said and then blushed, "I-I mean she's um..." he stuttered.

"Ah," Florence said knowingly, "Yes, they can seem like little devils," she gently guided Xander over to a table overloaded with tiny pink socks and fleece jumpers.

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It was mind-boggling to walk in on Clem crooning lullabies.

It was even more mind-boggling to open the shopping bags and then use half an hour discussing whether or not the pink fleece jumper, with the white bunny on it, clashed with the demon spawn's green skin colour. Or whether he should have bought the unscented baby

wipes instead of the flushable ones.

Xander left Clem's dusty apartment with the demon spawn cradled against his chest but without the kittens, one orange tabby and two grey ones.

He then used thirty minutes figuring out how the hell the carseat was supposed to be attached to the seatbelt. Strapped the baby in the carseat, put the bags in the trunk of the car and drove home.

Part Four

"Oh, grandmother," Little Red Riding Sock - who was really just slightly pink because she used to be a white sock but had been washed with a pair of red boxer shorts - said in a high-pitched voice, "What big ears you have."

"The better to hear you with, my child," came the reply from Big Bad Sock.

"But, grandmother, what big eyes you have," Little Red Riding Sock said and bent slightly as if looking closer at the dirty and smelly green Big Bad Sock.

"The better to see you with, my dear," the Big Bad Sock snarled.

"But, grandmother, what large hands you have."

"The better to hug you with," and Little Red Riding Sock was hugged by Big Bad Sock.

"Oh," the pink sock squealed, "But, grandmother, what a terrible big mouth you have."

"The better to...HEY! Give that back!" Xander demanded when the demon spawn grabbed the stinky green sock and stuffed it in her mouth.

The baby just giggled in a strangely muffled way and then started hiccupping.

"Oh great," Xander moaned, "Now you're never going to sleep," he picked the little scaly baby up and bounced her a little, "Maybe if I scare the heck out of you..." Xander mused, put the baby down on the blanket on the

floor and took the green sock from her.

He walked over to the bathroom and dropped the dirty and drool covered sock in the laundry basket. He then stood still and counted to ten. Looked out at the baby. The demon spawn was busy inspecting her own toes. Suddenly Xander jumped out and growled loudly.

The baby looked at him, blinked and started crying.

"Aw, damn," Xander said and hurried over, picked her up and patted her back as she covered the front of his shirt with tears and snot, "At least you stopped hiccupping," Xander said apologetically.

The baby looked up at him and hiccupped.

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"It was weird," Buffy's voice filtered through Xander's internal musings on diapers.

"What do you mean? Weird?" Willow asked and put another bowl of popcorn on the table.

Pampers seemed to suck more, in the sucking of urine way.

"Just, you know, weird," Buffy waved her hands around and Spike snorted from his position by the stairs.

But Huggies fitted the demon spawn's butt better. No leakage.

"I do believe you need to be a little more specific," Giles said and peered at Buffy over his glasses, "This is after all the Hellmouth."

"It was just like she didn't really want to fight me," Buffy pushed her hair away from her eyes, "This green scaly demon..." Xander looked up at her, all thoughts of diapers forgotten, "It was a female and she was aggressive but not all the time..."

"I'm afraid your explanation is only making this murkier," Giles said.

"Yeah well," Buffy looked over at Spike.

"Was like this," Spike said, stood up and moved away from the stairs, "Demon chit jumped the slayer close to

the gates.” Xander started sweating. Spike turned one of the chairs standing at the table and straddled it resting his hands on the back, “They slapped each other around for a bit, yeah...”

“We did not slap each other!” Buffy said and crossed her arms, “She attacked me and kept going at me. I finally had to just cut her head off.”

“Oh, dear,” Giles picked up one of the books, “Perhaps you could describe the demon?” he asked and was already flipping through the book.

“Was green,” Spike said and looked over at Xander when the human’s breath hitched.

“She had scales,” Buffy added.

“And nice hair,” Spike nodded, his attention still on Xander.

“Nice hair?” Dawn asked and looked at Spike.

“Yeah,” Spike smiled at Dawn, “Shoulder long, looked soft, curly and green.”

"I see," Giles tapped a page in the book, "Strange...If I'm right you're describing a Moirui demon," Giles looked up at Buffy and turned the book around so she could see the drawings.

Xander wanted to rip the damn book out of Buffy's hands but he grabbed hold of the edge of the table instead.

"Why is that strange?" Willow asked and looked at the drawing.

"Well," Giles said and took his glasses off, "The females are peaceful. I've never heard of them attacking and they are almost never alone. They live in big clan groups."

"She was alone," Buffy said and looked over at Spike.

"Only a few fledges that night. Kind of boring really," Spike agreed.

"I think," Xander said and pushed his chair away from the table, "I think I should go home," he walked over to the door, "Early morning tomorrow and...stuff," he managed before he stormed out of the Magic Box.

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Xander made it to the end of the street before he had to throw up in a trashcan. He staggered on for a block or so before he slumped down on a bench.

It felt like the air was thick syrup. Thick and impossible to breathe.

Buffy had killed her. Buffy had done what she always did. The golden girl. The In-Every-Generation-Girl. He leant forward and rested his forehead against his knees.

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"What do you know about Moirui demons?" Xander asked as he gently started dressing the demon spawn in her pink jumper.

"Moirui?" Clem asked and frowned, a move that made the folds on his forehead even out a little, "Loners...that's about all I know about them. Well, that and they eat dead people. They're like the scavengers of the demon world. Harmless mostly."

"I think demon spawn here is a Moirui," Xander said and

wrapped the yellow baby blanket around the sleeping baby.

"Really?" Clem looked down at the sleeping girl as if he'd never seen her before, "I've never met a Moirui so I wouldn't know."

"Look," Xander picked her up and rubbed soothing circles on her back when she started mewling, "Thanks for looking after her tonight," he pointed over at the cardboard box in the corner of the dusty room, "Couldn't find you an orange tabby this time so there're four grey ones in that box."

"Thanks," Clem smiled and licked his lips.

"Yeah," Xander nodded, "Could you look after her every day next week?"

"Sure," Clem said, "Don't do much during the day anyway and she's so cute," Clem gently touched the sleeping baby's cheek. The baby spawn snuggled her face into Xander's warm shoulder.

"How much would a Siamese kitten be worth?" Xander asked when Clem handed him the diaper bag.

"A-a...wow...a real Siamese?" Clem's eyes were filled with want.

"Yeah," Xander couldn't help smiling.

"Well, that would be enough for three days. They're like the finest French cuisine," Clem said and almost drooled.

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Xander looked at the books on the shelves. He let his index finger travel along the spines. He stopped, his finger lingering over a bulky pink and blue book.

"What to name your child," Xander read out loud and took the book down. He flipped through the pink pages. So many names. How was he supposed to pick? A name meant so much. It could be the difference between being cool or being a dweeb. The difference between being accepted and not.

He finally took the book with him over to one of the tables in the library. He closed his eyes and started flipping through the book. Then he stabbed his finger

against a page, opened his eyes and looked down at the name his finger had landed on.

He started laughing.

Nope, no way was he calling his little girl Olga.

"Naming your firstborn?" an old man at one of the other tables asked.

"Yeah," Xander said, "It's much harder than I imagined."

"Hmmm," the man slowly got up and grabbed hold of his cane, "Well," he said as he started walking over to Xander's table, "You could just name her something that fits her as a person."

"What," the old man coughed and Xander pulled out a chair and helped the old man sit down, "What is the first thing you think of?" the old man's grey eyes studied Xander's face.

"Green," Xander said without thinking, "And happy."

"I see," the old man took the book with shaking hands and looked at the index, "There is an index with the

meaning of names," he pushed the book across the table and over to Xander.

"Oh," Xander said and started looking through it.

"Maybe you could start with the word green?" the man suggested.

"Okay," Xander started looking up the word green,
"Wow, that's a lot of names."

"Let me hear," the old man said and sat back in his chair and closed his eyes.

"Beryl, Chloris, Midori, Tawny, Verde, Verna, Viridiana...um I don't really like any of those," Xander said and looked over at the old man.

"Well, try happy then," he nodded at the book.

"Hana," Xander said his eyes locked on the simple name,
"Means happiness."

"I like that," the old man said, "Holds promise a name like that, almost a blessing."

"Yeah," Xander nodded, "Almost."

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"I raise you a Siamese kitten," Clem said and pushed the kitten to the middle of the table. It curiously sniffed the other three kittens already sitting there .

"Hey," Lubnub said and frowned, "How'd you get hold of a real Siamese?"

"Earned it," Clem said proudly.

"Well," Spike said and eyed his own scrawny grey tabby kitten, "I fold."

"Yeah," Lubnob said and threw his cards on the table, "If he's ready to hand over his Siamese then he's gotta have a good hand."

"Good hand. Siamese good," Murgle growled.

Spike kept an eye on Clem, who was smiling happily as he picked the four kittens up and put them in the cardboard

box in the corner. So he'd earned them? Spike wouldn't mind getting in on Clem's Siamese kitten scheme.

Part Five

"Where's Hana?" Clem lifted the brown moth-eaten throw pillow from the old couch. Muffled giggles came from the blanket crawling away from the demon. "Is she hiding here?" he asked and studied the stained couch cushions. The blanket turned and started crawling in Clem's direction. Clem pretended to be busy looking under the couch.

"No," he said as he stood back up, "She's not hiding th...OW!" Clem started hopping around on one foot.

"What?" Xander asked as he hurried over to the startled blanket and the cursing demon.

"She bit me," Clem accused and pointed at the blanket.

Xander pulled the blanket off, revealing a surprised looking Hana. She had a chunk of Clem's sock sticking out her mouth.

"I'm bleeding," Clem moaned and looked at the single drop of blood running down this ankle.

"Don't be so dramatic," Xander rolled his eyes and picked the demon spawn up, "Is Hana a big scary monster?" Xander tickled the little girl and she squealed, "You okay?" Xander walked over to Clem.

"Yeah, yeah," the demon nodded, "At least she's short and can't do any vital damage."

"Thanks for watching her today," Hana grabbed a handful of Xander's hair and smiled happily while she drooled all over Xander's shirt, "I know you had to look after her longer than usual. But I got all my stuff moved into the new apartment. Slayer strength is good for something. You should have seen Buffy lift my new couch."

"So you're all settled then?" Clem pulled out a chair and sat down. He frowned at his bleeding ankle.

“Yeah. It’s a great place. It’s kinda cheap and I think my neighbour, Mrs. Pattiani, is a demon but she seems nice so...” Xander shushed Hana when she started fussing, “Looks like the boss wants to go home. Thanks for storing all the baby stuff while the girls helped me move.”

“No problem, Xander,” Clem said.

~*~*~*~*~

“This is nice,” Clem waved his hand around as Xander gave him the big tour.

“It’s okay, Clem, I know it’s a dump,” Xander smiled.

“Well...um...there aren’t any cockroaches so...and the...um...” Clem attempted.

“A dump,” Xander repeated.

“Well...yeah,” Clem finally conceded, “But you said you had a room for Hana...”

“That’s what’s so brilliant about this place,” Xander said

and walked into the bedroom and over to one of the built-in closets, “It has this little hidden room,” Xander said and opened the closet door, revealing a small room behind it, “Used to be a walk-in closet but the previous owner was a photographer so he used it as a darkroom.”

“This way the girls can come visit without stumbling over the princess,” Clem said.

“Princess?” Xander grinned, “Thirty minutes ago you were complaining about her chewing on your leg.”

“She’s easy to forgive,” Clem said and looked down at Hana sleeping in his arms.

~*~*~*~*~

“Mrs. Pattiani?” Xander said surprised as he opened the door.

“Xander,” the yellow eyed old woman said, “I baked a cake and wondered if you’d like a piece,” Mrs. Pattiani smiled, revealing very sharp teeth.

“Oh...” Xander took a step back, “Please come in.” The

old woman hobbled in, a plate covered with tinfoil in her hand.

“You made it so cosy,” the woman cooed and put the plate on the hallway table.

“Thank you,” Xander said and took the plate with him into the kitchen, “Would you like some tea, Mrs. Pattiani?” Xander asked as he peeled the tinfoil off the plate.

“No, thank you,” Mrs. Pattiani picked up a teddy bear and straightened its bowtie, “Where’s that cute little girl of yours?”

“She’s taking a nap,” Xander said and stared down at the cake. It stared back. “Is...” Xander swallowed, “Are those eyes?” he pointed at the cake.

“Oh yes,” Mrs. Pattiani nodded enthusiastically, “My dear mother’s recipe.”

“That’s...nice,” Xander covered the cake with the tinfoil again.

~*~*~*~*~

“No...No really...yeah, I’m sorry but I just don’t have the time to go on patrol tonight,” Xander sat on the floor with Hana sitting in front of him on a pink blanket, “Yeah...I have a shot at getting promoted and that won’t happen if I’m sleeping at the construction site because I’ve been out slaying fledges and assorted demons,” Xander explained, the phone wedged between his ear and his shoulder, as he tried to feed Hana.

The little demon squealed and spit a piece of meat on the floor.

“What? Weird sound?” Xander glared down at the giggling demon spawn, “Naw, I’m just watching TV,” Xander sighed, “No, you haven’t done something to upset me, Willow. I promise...No Buffy hasn’t either...Spike? I haven’t talked to Spike since the last time I saw him at the Magic Box...Uh huh...Yeah, I love you too. See ya.”

“Now,” Xander put the phone down, “Are you gonna eat your dinner like a good little demon or is Daddy gonna have to chase you?”

~*~*~*~*~

“So you opened a demon daycare?” Spike asked as he sat down on Clem’s couch. The other demon just stood there, eyes big and mouth open.

“I-I-I...that is I mean...um,” Clem tried.

“Cause I’m guessing she isn’t yours,” Spike said and pointed a finger at the demon spawn Clem was holding, “She looks too green to be yours.”

“She’s...um...,” Clem stuttered. Hana was intently studying Spike, her small eyes narrowed and her nose twitching.

Spike smirked and stretched, “So that’s how you earn your kittens,” Spike concluded.

A quick knock on the door drew the three demons’ attention. Hana squealed happily and started rocking back and forth, making it almost impossible for Clem to hold on to her.

“Aren’t you going to open the door,” Spike asked.

“Um...sure,” Clem stumbled over to the door and opened

it.

“Hey, man,” Xander said as he rushed in, “Sorry I’m late. We had a problem on the site,” Xander reached out for Hana.

“Harris,” Spike said and gracefully got up from the couch, “Fancy meeting you here at Clem’s Demon Daycare.”

Xander’s arms froze in the air, he took one step away from Clem and Hana. The little girl started a high-pitched squealing.

“Um...” Xander looked very confused.

“Spike just came by,” Clem said and stared fixedly at Xander.

“Oh...well,” Xander seemed to hover in the doorway.

“So...yeah,” Clem said and tried to comfort Hana.

“I...um...I kinda came over to get my...um...” Xander’s eyes flicked from Clem to Hana to Spike. His eyes finally landed on a DVD case peeking out from under the picture books on the table, “My Teletubbies movie...”

“Oh,” Clem said a little too loudly, “Yeah, man. Thanks for lending it to me. That...um...scene with the pancakes and the chairs and Laa-laa was just...really...” Clem was clearly searching for words.

“Brilliant,” Xander helped, “Yeah, it’s totally my favourite.”

“Barmy,” Spike mumbled, “The lot of you.”

“So I’ll just get my Teletubbies DVD and go home,” Xander hurried over to the coffee table, grabbed the DVD and ran out of Clem’s apartment.

Hana started crying.

“She...um...really likes the Teletubbies,” Clem said lamely.

~*~*~*~*~

“Okay that was way too close,” Xander said as he strapped Hana into her carseat.

“You’re telling me?” Clem shook his head, “For a second

there I thought I was going to throw up that grey tabby I ate for breakfast.”

“Think he bought your story about Hana being your cousin’s step-daughter?” Xander asked and handed the Teletubbies DVD to Clem.

“I think he did,” Clem said and looked down at the DVD case, “I hope he did,” Laa-Laa and Po were grinning up at him, “Wanna know something really scary?” the demon asked Xander.

“What?” Xander leant against his car.

“That scene with the pancakes is actually kinda...entertaining,” Clem admitted.

Part Six

“Well, well...” Xander froze, his hands clutching the front of Hana’s dark blue fleece jacket. He was leaning into the car, attempting to open the harness of the car seat. The little girl looked expectantly up at him. Xander closed his eyes and tried not to panic, “Seems the slayer’s boy is keeping secrets,” the taunting voice carried on.

“Fuck off, Spike,” Xander growled. Despite the fact that

his hands were shaking he still managed to get Hana out of the car seat.

“Shouldn’t you be watching your mouth in front of that,” Spike cocked an eyebrow and pointed at Hana. Xander stepped away from the car cradling Hana against his chest.

“Just go away, Fangless,” Xander said as he shouldered his way past the blond vampire.

“Don’t think I can do that,” Spike smirked, “Wouldn’t want the little bugger to attack you and snack on ya, now would we?”

“Whatever,” Xander mumbled as he walked through the door to his apartment block. His heart was galloping and the damn thing felt like it was trying to push its way through his ribcage. Spike knew. Spike knew and no matter how Xander looked at it...

“This is a dump,” Spike interrupted Xander’s thoughts as they walked up the stairs and then down the hall.

“You live in a crypt,” Xander pointed out, “I don’t really think you have the right to criticise.”

No matter how Xander looked at it...he was royally fucked. Spike was either going to run off and tell Buffy or he was going to take advantage of his newfound knowledge.

“Could go tell the slayer 'bout your demon spawn,” Spike threatened.

“Goodnight Spike,” Xander said after he had unlocked the door, had walked through it and into the tiny hallway. He watched as the door slammed shut right in front of Spike’s nose.

~*~*~*~*~

The knocking continued for a few minutes. Xander tried to block them out as he got Hana out of her small jacket and kitted hat. The little girls green curly hair stood straight up in the air.

Hana babbled and started chewing on her hat.

“Don’t do that,” Xander said and took the hat away. He was rewarded with a trembling lower lip.

“I can hear you, you know!” Spike’s muffled voice came through the door. Xander closed his eyes and picked Hana up. He walked over to the door and glared at it.

“What do you want, Spike?” he finally asked.

“Oi, who says I want something?” Spike asked indignantly.

“Spike...”

“Look just open the door and invite me in, yeah,” Spike continued.

“Do I look that stupid?” Xander jiggled Hana up and down when she started mewling unhappily.

Spike just snorted. For a full minute Xander stared at the door. Eyes squinted as if he could see through the wood.

“And if I open the door and invite you in?” Xander asked.

“Won’t be telling the slayer then, will I?” Spike answered.

Xander looked down at Hana, she was sleepily clinging to

his shirt, her small fingers grabbing fistfuls of grey cotton. He took a deep breath and opened the door, revealing a smirking Spike.

“Gotta invite me in,” the blond vampire grinned.

“I know,” Xander said calmly, “I just wanted to make something very clear.”

“Yeah?” Spike cocked his scarred eyebrow, “Whot’s that then?”

“If I invite you in...” Xander pointed at Spike, “You keep your mouth shut about Hana.”

“Sure,” Spike nodded.

“No,” Xander said and shook his head, “You promise. If you don’t I’m not letting you in.”

Spike peeked over Xander’s shoulder, “Got cable?” the vampire asked.

“Yes,” Xander said and put a protective hand on Hana’s back, rubbing it as she fell asleep.

“All right then,” Spike looked Xander in the eyes, “I promise.”

“Come in, Spike.”

~*~*~*~*~

Spike watched Xander undress the demon spawn. Her little chubby hands kept getting in the way but Xander was patient and he smiled and talked complete rubbish to her.

“Let’s get your tiny chubby toes out of these socks,” Xander said quietly and proceeded to take the socks off and tickle the small green feet. The baby giggled and shrieked, her little feet thumping against Xander’s red bedspread.

“Who’s got a chubby tummy?” Xander asked and Spike unconsciously put a hand on his own stomach, “Who’s got a chubby tummy? Hana’s got a chubby tummy,” Xander said and blew a raspberry on the little girl’s tummy.

Spike groaned.

“Why don’t you go watch some TV, Spike?” Xander said and shot Spike a dirty look.

“What? And miss all the excitement?” Spike grinned, “What’s next? Her diaper?”

“You know, I have stakes hidden all over the apartment,” Xander informed Spike.

~*~*~*~*~

“So who did you knock up?” Spike asked when Xander finally came into the living room. The vampire was sprawled on the couch, his bare feet propped on the coffee table.

“What?” Xander said and yawned. Spike wasn’t making any sense whatsoever.

“Got yourself a green kid in there, Harris,” Spike said and hooked a thumb over his shoulder in the general direction of Hana’s secret room.

“I found her,” Xander walked over to the kitchen door

and looked back at Spike, “How long are you planning on staying?” he asked glaring at Spike’s smirking face.

“Bout as long as I like,” Spike said and wriggled his toes on the coffee table.

“Great,” Xander mumbled and walked into the kitchen, “Fucking vamp.”

~*~*~*~*~

“Well,” Spike said, turned the TV off and stood up and stretched, “I’m going to bed.”

Xander watched as Spike started moving over to the bedroom door. It was standing ajar so Xander could hear if Hana woke up.

“Where the hell do you think you’re going?” Xander said and stood up so fast he felt dizzy.

“Ta bed,” Spike said and sauntered into Xander’s bedroom.

“Y-y...” Xander tried and pointed angrily at Spike’s back.

He hurried into the bedroom and watched Spike pull the red bedspread off the bed and toss it on the floor, "You can't!" Xander said too loudly and then whispered, "What if Hana wakes up and needs me?"

"Not my problem now is it?" Spike crawled, still wearing his black t-shirt and jeans, under the covers.

"You...You..." Xander tried again.

"Would watch what I was saying if I was you," Spike said and closed his eyes, humming appreciatively as he snuggled under the clean covers, "Might piss me off, ya know. Could make me go tell the slayer about the spawn."

Xander's hands clenched into fists. He grabbed the bedspread off the floor and stomped into the living room.

He was still cursing as he slowly fell asleep curled up on the couch with the bedspread covering him.

Part Seven

Spike woke up in the middle of the night. He stared at the ceiling for a minute, studying the water stains and listened.

He could hear Xander snoring in the living room. The human's breaths deep and regular. Spike could also hear a soft babble coming from the nursery. Like someone singing, quietly.

He pushed the covers off and got out of Xander's bed. Spike stretched, his long lean arms reaching for the cracked ceiling. The babbling was interrupted by giggling. He moved over to the door to the closet, it was standing ajar, and he opened it just enough for him to look in.

The little demon spawn was sitting up in her crib, her fingers grabbing the edge of the blue blanket. She started babbling again and made small giggly noises, her tiny toes wriggling in the white socks. She reached out, grunting, and grabbed the left sock and started pulling it off. But it wouldn't budge and so she pulled harder.

Suddenly the sock came loose and the movement startled the baby. Her small chubby arms flailed for a second before she toppled over and landed on her back with a hard thump.

She started sniffing and then started crying. Spike could hear Xander stumble around in the living room so he hurried over to the bed.

~*~*~*~*~

Xander walked into the bedroom and flipped on the light. He staggered over to the closet door leading into the nursery.

“Hey, Sweetie,” he cooed, “Why so sad?” he walked over to the crib and reached down to pick Hana up.

She kept crying softly against the cotton of his t-shirt.

“Make the damn spawn shut up,” Spike groaned from the bedroom.

“Go take a walk on a bright sunshiny day,” Xander called back and rubbed soothing circles on Hana’s back. She

whined quietly and then snuggled closer. He kept whispering to her until she fell asleep.

“There,” Xander said and put her back into the crib. He pulled the blanket up over her small body and tucked her in.

~*~*~*~*~

Spike watched Xander quietly leave the bedroom, the door to the nursery still standing ajar.

A soft snoring came from the room and Spike closed his eyes and listened to the slow, steady heartbeat of the sleeping baby and Xander’s quiet mumbling coming from the living room.

~*~*~*~*~

Spike sat up in the bed and stared accusingly at Xander. The vampire’s hair was sticking up at the back and he had pillow marks on his cheek.

“Is she dying?” Spike asked and glared at the happy

babbling baby.

“No,” Xander said and pulled a plastic bag closer to him.

“Well, why does she smell rotten then?” Spike eyed the baby suspiciously.

“She’s not rotten,” Xander snapped, “I’m just changing her diaper.”

“You mean,” Spike pointed at the dirty diaper Xander put in the plastic bag, “She’s supposed to smell like that?”

“Yep,” Xander grinned and wiped Hana’s butt with a few wet wipes.

“Disgusting!” Spike growled and crawled out of the bed, “Why the bloody hell are ya doing it in here for anyway?” he waved a pale hand at the bedroom.

“I don’t have a changing table,” Xander explained.

“So you use the bed?” Spike cocked an eyebrow.

“Yeah,” Xander grabbed a clean diaper and finished changing the baby.

~*~*~*~*~

“Look,” Xander hesitated in the doorway. Hana was cradled against his chest, her green curls peeking out from under the blue kitted hat she was wearing.

“What?” Spike drawled and stretched on the couch. He zapped through the cable channels searching for something to use his day on.

“You...” Xander tried again.

“Just out with it, yeah,” Spike said and put the remote down on the couch.

“You won’t...you won’t tell Buffy,” Xander hugged the demon spawn closer, “Will you?”

“Bring back some blood and beer,” was all Spike said.

~*~*~*~*~

“I’m really sorry,” Clem said.

“Yeah, well,” Xander looked down at Hana. She was sitting on the floor playing with a black and white kitten. The little girl would reach out to touch and the kitten would masterfully evade.

“Hey,” Clem said and knelt down in front of the little girl, “Don’t play with the food.”

“Clem,” Xander said.

“What?” Clem stood up, the kitten hanging from his hand, swatting at the demon’s pants with little claws.

“Don’t eat that one,” Xander said and nodded at the hissing kitten. Clem lifted the kitten up and looked at it. It swiped at his face but missed.

“Why not?” Clem looked confused.

“Just don’t,” Xander said, “I’ll take it home with me.”

“Sure,” Clem nodded and put the kitten down.

“So...” the demon said and watched Hana’s attempt to catch the fast moving kitten, “Spike’s living with you

now?”

“Oh yes,” Xander scratched his neck, “He’s watching TV, eating my snacks and sleeping in my bed,” Xander sighed, “I’m really glad I have you, Clem.”

“Well,” Clem blushed and looked uncomfortable, “Then you won’t like what I’m going to tell you now.”

“What?” Xander eyed the demon suspiciously.

“My sister is getting married,” Clem beamed with pride.

“Congratulations....but I just don’t see...” Xander began.

“She lives in Minnesota,” Clem looked down at Hana, she had given up catching the kitten and was now fascinated by her own fingers, “I’m going to her wedding...in Minnesota,” Clem continued, “Which isn’t in Sunnydale,” he ended lamely.

“You’re leaving me?” Xander almost shrieked and grabbed hold of the front of Clem’s green shirt.

“You’ll be okay,” Clem said, “Just let go of my shirt, okay? Okay? Xander?”

“You’re leaving me,” Xander repeated but slowly let go of Clem’s shirt and took a step back.

“Just for a week,” Clem tried to comfort Xander, “It’s just a week.”

“What am I gonna do about Hana?” Xander asked, “I still need to go to work.”

“Look...um...maybe you could get Spike to baby-sit?” Clem asked tentatively.

“Are you nuts?!” Xander asked.

~*~*~*~*~

“Why’re you looking like death warmed over?” Buffy asked when Xander dropped by after work to help Giles with some new shelves in the Magic Box.

“Hard day at work,” Xander groaned.

“You need a backrub?” Willow offered.

“M ’k,” Xander mumbled.

“I beg your pardon?” Giles looked searchingly at him.

“Said...” Xander tried to stand up straighter, “I’m okay.”

“So you can go patrolling with us tonight?” Buffy leant against the wall and seemed to study him.

“Um...no,” Xander said and flinched when Willow pouted.

“Oh,” Willow said and started leafing through the old dusty book in front of her.

“I have to do some extra work tonight...at home,” Xander found his screwdriver and started putting up the last of the shelves, “I could use the extra cash and...”

“It’s okay,” Buffy said and patted his shoulder, “We’ll be fine without you.” Xander took a deep breath and concentrated on the shelves.

~*~*~*~*~

“Oi,” Spike looked accusingly down at Hana. She had crawled across the floor and was now playing with his boot laces. She looked up at him with big watery eyes and sniffled. The kitten studied the both of them from the safety of the laundry basket Xander had left in the living room.

“Oh no you don’t!” Spike warned the demon spawn. Her lower lip started quivering. “Oh, bloody hell...play with ’em, then,” the vampire said and turned his attention back to the female wrestlers fighting on the TV screen.

Hana slowly untied the black bootlaces.

~*~*~*~*~*~

“How long’ve you had her?” Spike asked and watched Xander chop the raw steak into small pieces.

“Two months now,” Xander said and looked over at Spike, “There’s fresh pig’s blood in the fridge.” Spike opened the fridge and took out a pack of blood.

“Clem’s been helping you out all this time?” Spike asked

and shoved Xander away so he could get a mug out of the cupboard.

“Yes,” Xander glared at Spike, “You know, you could just have asked me nicely if I’d hand you a mug,” he said.

“Yeah,” Spike nodded, “Wouldn’t have been much fun though, would it?” Spike grinned and emptied the pack of pig’s blood into the mug. He turned his attention to the microwave oven.

“Oh I forgot you’re a...” the rest of what Xander said was drowned out by the noise coming from the microwave.

“What?” Spike turned and looked at Xander, “I’m a what?”

“A bastard,” Xander said and walked past Spike with a plate filled with little pieces of raw steak on it in his hand.

“I’ll let you know...” Spike followed Xander into the living room, “I’ll let you know my parents were...What the bloody hell are you doing?!” Spike watched Xander put a piece of raw steak in his mouth and chew it for a second. Then he took it out of his mouth and put it in Hana’s mouth.

“I’m feeding her, Brainless,” Xander said and turned his back slightly so Spike wouldn’t be capable of seeing what he was doing.

“You chew her food?” Spike asked, suddenly fascinated.

“Yes,” Xander said and kept chewing, “She can’t eat it if I don’t pre-chew it.”

“Blend it, wanker,” Spike said and sat down on the couch so he could watch Xander feed the baby.

“I...tried that,” Xander said and gave Hana another pre-chewed piece of meat.

“And?” Spike scooted closer to Xander.

“And she threw it up. Clem was really upset cause he couldn’t get the stains off his new t-shirt.”

~*~*~*~*~

“Look,” Xander eyed Spike uncertainly, “Clem is going out of town next week and I could only get time off Thursday

and Friday...so....”

“Whot?” Spike looked up from the paper he was reading.

“So I need you to take care of Hana Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday,” Xander clarified.

“Not bloody likely, that,” Spike said and returned to his paper. Xander grabbed it, “Now you look here...” Spike started and pushed the kitchen chair back.

“No,” Xander said and leant down so his face was level with Spike’s, “You listen! You want to stay here? Yeah, sure you do. Well, I have to work for you to stay here. And you’re only getting to stay here because I don’t want anything to happen to Hana. So here’s the deal,” Xander slammed the paper down on the kitchen table, “You look after Hana three days next week and you get to stay! Clear?!”

Hana started crying in the nursery. Spike and Xander both stared at each other as if this turn of events was a total surprise to both of them.

“Yeah,” Spike nodded slowly, “Yeah, I get it.”

“Good,” Xander said a little more calmly,
“That’s...um...good.”

“Better go see...” Spike pointed in the general direction
of the nursery.

“Right,” Xander said and walked out of the kitchen.

Part Eight

“Spike?” Xander asked from the couch. Hana was sitting
on his lap chewing on a small teddy bear. She made quiet
growling noises as she mangled the fuzzy ears.

“Whot?” Spike asked, his hand hovering over the door
handle.

“Where’re you going?” Xander turned a little so he could
look straight at the vampire.

“Out,” Spike said evasively.

“I can see that...” Xander nodded and put Hana down on the floor. She looked up at him and whimpered but her attention was fast turned to the TV-remote Xander had abandoned on the floor next to her.

“Yeah,” Spike said and opened the door to the hallway. One of their neighbours walked past and took a peek inside. Spike growled at the old man and he hurried on down the stairs.

“Out where?” Xander persisted.

“I’m going over to Clem’s. He’s having a last poker game before going to see his sister, yeah,” Spike crossed his arms and glared at Xander.

“Spike?” Xander cocked an eyebrow.

“Whot?” Spike groaned and closed the front door again.

“You’re leaving Strife here,” Xander said and pointed at Spike.

“Who?” Spike asked.

“Strife,” Xander repeated. Hana looked from Xander to Spike and grinned. A long drop of drool hanging from her lips.

“Who?” Spike pushed his hand into his duster pocket.

“The kitten you’ve got hidden in your duster,” Xander explained.

“Bloody hell,” Spike threw his hands in the air, “It’s not even a purebred...”

“Put Strife down,” Xander said and pointed from Spike’s duster to the floor.

“Yeah, yeah,” Spike grumbled and pulled the hissing black and white kitten from his pocket, “Here,” he said and put it on the floor, “Happy?”

“Immensely so,” Xander said and smiled down at Hana, who was clapping her small hands together. The kitten looked pissed off and strolled, tail held high, into the kitchen.

“Git,” Spike mumbled as he walked out of the apartment.

~*~*~*~*~

Spike watched Xander wander around the living room, picking up his work boots and his lunch.

“You have the number to my cell phone, right?” Xander asked anxiously and hugged Hana one more time.

“Yeah,” Spike nodded and stretched as he got up from the couch.

“And the one to the main office?” Xander picked Hana up and kissed her green forehead.

“Got all seven numbers you wrote down for me,” Spike said and walked into the kitchen. The fridge door was littered in small post-it’s with numbers and instructions on them. They made a very intricate system on the white door.

“Okay...so...I’ll,” Xander had followed Spike into the kitchen, still holding on to Hana. The demon spawn was patting Xander’s cheeks.

“Give it here,” Spike said and reached out for Hana. The little girl smiled and took Spike’s hand. Xander narrowed his eyes and wouldn’t let go of her.

“She’s not an it, Spike,” he practically growled.

Spike just rolled his eyes.

~*~*~*~*~

“Right,” Spike said and plopped down on the couch with Hana in his arms, “So...” he looked down at her upturned happy face, “I say we watch some TV, yeah,” Spike nodded and grabbed the remote. He flipped through the channels a few times and groaned.

“M not sitting here watching Oprah,” he kept zapping until he found some wrestling, “Suppose we could just watch that then,” he put the remote down on the coffee table and stared at the TV-screen.

Hana squirmed around and started whining.

“What?” Spike looked down at her. She wriggled her tiny butt until she slid down from his lap and onto the couch,

“You want ta sit on the floor?” he asked.

He put her down on the floor and leant back against the couch cushions. He argued with the stupid bints on the Jerry Springer Show, “My brother is a two-timing cross-dressing slut? Bloody stupid Americans!”, yelled at Oprah, “No I haven’t read that barmy book, stupid chit!”, until Hana started crying.

“What?” Spike looked down at the tear streaked little face. Hana just continued to cry, “Come on then,” he sighed and picked her up.

He carried her into the kitchen and stopped in front of the fridge.

“Let’s see then,” he found the start of the post-it trail, “Hana crying...here it is,” Spike’s finger followed the arrow drawn on the post it, “Is she wet?” he read out loud and looked searchingly at Hana.

“You wet?” he asked but Hana kept crying, small tears rolling down her eyes, “Right then,” Spike followed the arrow to the post-it that said *yes*.

“Says here you need a change...” Spike’s voice trailed off.

“Bloody hell,” he whispered and closed his eyes.

~*~*~*~*~

“Let’s try this again,” Spike said from the other end of the bedroom. Hana was on the bed, the soiled diaper only unhooked in one side. She looked over at Spike and started crying again.

“Don’t you start,” Spike said and slowly walked back to the crying baby. He reached out and unhooked the other side of the diaper. A stench unlike any he had smelled before reached him.

“That’s just not right,” Spike said and backed off and walked over to the window. He badly wanted to pull the blinds up and open the window. Just to get some fresh air into the room...but the sun was up and he’s just end up burning to death.

“Not necessarily such a bad thing,” he mumbled and looked back at Hana.

“Come on,” he tried to encourage himself, “You’re

William the Bloody, Scourge of Europe,” Hana wailed, “You’ve killed people with spikes, you have,” he continued, “What’s a little turd compared to the time you spooned that bloke’s brain right out of his skull with a teaspoon?”

Hana started grabbing at the diaper and Spike hurried over, took the diaper, rolled it up, ran to the bathroom and flushed it down the toilet.

~*~*~*~*~

Hana was looking at Strife. The kitten was licking its tail. Now and again it would look up and stare right back at the green baby. Hana suddenly shrieked so loudly that Strife hissed and ran out of the living room and into the kitchen.

“Oi,” Spike yelled at the black and white lightning when it flew past him. He was holding a plate filled with raw steak in his hand. Hana started babbling and rocking excitedly back and forth on her bottom.

Spike sat down on the floor in front of her and looked down at the little girl. Hana’s eyes were locked on the

plate. Spike tried lifting the plate slowly, Hana's eyes followed.

"Must be starving," Spike said and took the first small piece of raw steak between his index finger and thumb. A single drop of blood dripped down on the plate. "Well here goes," Spike put the piece in his mouth and started chewing. Hana watched him intensely, her little pink tongue coming out to lick her green lips.

Spike made a scrunched up face, carried on chewing and then looked thoughtful.

"Not bad, really," he said as he took the small piece out of his mouth and put it in Hana's open mouth. The little girl made a contented happy noise and smacked her lips.

~*~*~*~*~

Xander stumbled through the door. His shoulder hurt...Who the hell was he trying to kid? His whole entire body hurt...His soul hurt.

"That's what you get out of working construction," he reminded himself as he pulled his work boots off and

quietly put them on the floor by the door. He closed the door, locked it and continued into the living room.

The TV was on but the sound had been turned off. The living room was bathed in a sharp blue and white light that made Spike's blond hair stand out in the shadows of the room.

Spike was sleeping on the couch, his head resting on what looked like a pile of clean diapers. The vampire's arms were cradled around a softly snoring Hana, one pale hand resting on the little girl's small back. Hana snuggled closer to Spike's chest, her tiny diaper clad butt wriggling slightly as she got comfortable.

"Well, what do you know..." Xander whispered and watched as Strife jumped up on the couch and curled up around Spike's bare feet.

Part Nine

“Spike?” Spike pulled the blanket over his head, the coarse cotton rasping against his shoulder.

“Spike?” Xander repeated, “Look, I gotta go,” something was put down on the bed next to the vampire’s head, “Could you give Hana a bath today? Spike? Spike!”

“Whot?” Spike lifted the blanket just enough for him to see Xander’s face. His view was suddenly filled with a grinning baby. Hana shrieked and pulled at the blanket with her small hands.

“Hey!” was all Spike could muster as he blinked sleepily at the babbling girl.

“Look,” Xander said and pulled the blanket completely off Spike, “Oh my God! You’re...you’re c-completely...” Xander slapped a hand over his own eyes and looked away but then he gasped and reached down so his other hand could block Hana’s view of Spike.

“Bloody stupid humans,” Spike grumbled and pulled the blanket around him again, “Get all nervous just cause you get a look at a guy’s pecker,” he started searching for his jeans.

Hana giggled and grabbed at Xander's hand.

"You're naked in my bed. Naked, Spike! That means your man-parts have been rubbing against my sheets for the last...Oh God I'm gonna have to burn those sheets."

"All right, calm down," Spike said, "I've got my jeans on." Xander experimentally peeked out from between two fingers.

"Good...that's good. Clothes is of the good," Xander kept mumbling.

"What were you going on 'bout before you started screaming like a little girl?" Spike smirked.

"I do not scream like a girl!" Xander protested but then noticed Hana rocking back and forth on the bed, "Right...okay," he took a deep breath, "You need to give her a bath today, okay?" Xander looked at his wristwatch, "Shit! I'm going to be late."

~*~*~*~*~

"What'd ya say we wait with the bath and just hang

around in front of the TV?” Spike asked the demon spawn as he lifted her into the living room. He put Hana down on the couch and sat down next to her.

Spike turned the TV on and started flipping through the channels. He stopped for a second on MTV, “Bleeding boy bands,” the vampire growled, “Haven’t got a gram of talent between them,” he kept going through the channels until Hana suddenly made a high-pitched shriek and started bouncing up and down.

“What’s that then?” Spike said and tilted his head, “The Mr. Men Show?” he turned and looked at Hana. Her eyes were huge and she was following the funny characters on the screen. A strange messy pink squiggly thing seemed to fascinate her the most.

“s’pose we’ll watch that then,” he said and leant back and closed his eyes.

~*~*~*~*~

Spike woke up when some god-awful music filled the room. It sounded like a demented brass band.

“What?!” he said and sat up straight on the couch. Spike looked to his right but the couch was empty, “Bloody hell!” he jumped up and looked under the coffee table and then he knelt down and looked under the couch.

“Pet?” Spike called. He started frantically searching the living room, lifting up pillows, looking under piles of laundry, he even looked between the couch cushions. Nothing. She was gone.

He ran into the kitchen.

“Hana!” he yelled and pointed a shaking finger at the little girl, “You get Strife’s tail out of your mouth! Right this minute!”

Hana looked up at him, the black furry tail slipping out of her mouth, her lower lip quivering. She made little sniffing noises. Strife snorted, looked from Hana to Spike and started licking his white paw. Hana started wailing.

Spike picked her up and shushed her, “There, there, ‘s all right.”

~*~*~*~*~

Spike banged his head against the wall and looked down at Hana's upturned face. She looked as if she was concentrating very hard. Now and then she'd make small grunting noises. Her little green face slowly turned purple.

"Mark my words, young lady," Spike said as the stench slowly filled the bedroom, "You'll be the youngest potty-trained child ever."

~*~*~*~*~

"Right," Spike said and flushed the toilet, "Down the drain that goes," he turned around and was halfway out of the bathroom when a deep rumbling sound made him turn around.

He stared at the toilet. It seemed to be shaking slightly.

"What the..." Spike walked over to it and looked into the bowl. The water rippled, "Don't think it's suppose to do that," he mumbled. The water seemed to move and then it slowly started rising.

He stood there for a second and just frowned. The water kept rising and rising until Spike suddenly understood.

“No,” he whispered, “Please don’t. God no! No no no no no no no no no!” Spike held his hands up, pleading. The water just kept rising.

Spike turned to the bathroom cupboard and started pulling things out of it. All kinds of toiletries were thrown over the vampire’s shoulder. A yellow rubber duck flew through the air and hit the wall over the sink with a squeak.

“Harris, you bastard!” Spike growled as he kept searching, “Were’d you put the bloody...Ah ha!” Spike triumphantly held the plunger over his head.

He then turned and attacked the toilet.

~*~*~*~*~

Xander unlocked the front door and walked into the apartment. He could hear water running and high-pitched giggling. He smiled. Things had turned out much better than he had expected them to. It looked like Spike

and Hana were getting along and his boss had said he was up for promotion.

He stretched and let his jacket slide off his shoulders and kicked his boots off. He grabbed the jacket and hung it in the hallway closet. He stood there and looked at his jacket. It was hanging next to Hana's little blue coat and Spike's duster.

"Imagine that," he whispered. He closed the closet door and walked through the apartment. Toys were strewn all over the floor, Hana's favourite blanket was spread out over the couch. It looked cosy. Like a home should, lived in and filled with life.

He walked down the small hallway and leant against the doorway to the bathroom.

Spike was kneeling next to the tub, the front of his t-shirt soaked through, making it cling to his skin. He was gently rubbing the washcloth over Hana's little back. The demon spawn kept slapping her hands into the water, trying to catch the soap bubbles causing water to splash all over the place..

"Hi," Xander said softly and smiled when Hana looked up

and reached out for him, “You need to finish your bath, Honey,” he said and knelt down next to Spike.

Part Ten

When Xander came home, late Wednesday night, he stepped into a quiet and dimly lit apartment. He took off his jacket and put his tool belt on the floor next to Spike’s black boots. He almost screamed when he felt something rub against his legs but just in time he looked down and saw Strife. The black and white kitten purred and started batting its small clawed paw against his boot laces.

Xander bent down and picked the kitten up before he walked into the living room. The TV was on but the sound was muted and only a company logo flickered on the screen. Xander was on his way to the TV, intending to turn it off, when his booted foot hit something. He had been walking slowly so whatever it was probably hadn’t been broken.

He looked down and stifled a giggle.

Spike was curled up on the floor. His hair standing up in odd places as if small hands had played with it. The vampire was holding the remote in his right hand, his left hand was clutched around the yellow baby blanket. The blanket only covered Spike's chest. Xander took a deep breath and closed his eyes. He could feel the 'aw' struggling in his throat and there was no way he was going to let it out.

He tiptoed into the bedroom and opened the closet door that led into the hidden nursery. Hana wasn't there. Her crib was empty, the mobile hanging over it swayed lazily in the silent room, the colourful animals slowly turning.

Xander felt panic flood his body with adrenalin. He ran into the living room and jostled Spike with his boot.

"Whot?" Spike muttered and got up.

"Where is she?" Xander hissed and grabbed on to Spike's shoulders.

"Who?" the vampire started and then looked startled, "Was right here," Spike pointed at the floor where he

had just been sleeping.

“Well she's gone,” Xander looked frantically around.

~*~*~*~*~

Spike and Xander both stood in the doorway to the kitchen, their mouths open.

“What the hell?” Xander managed to mumble. Spike just made a small sound, like air whooshing out of a balloon.

Hana was asleep on the kitchen floor, surrounded by the entire contents of a giant bag of chips. A bag of flour was spread all over the baby and the floor, the white dust making her look as if she had been asleep long enough for dust to settle on her.

She was drooling. The patch of linoleum floor under her cheek was a mess of caked flour and tiny mashed pieces of potato chips.

Xander knelt down and picked her up. Her head tilted to the left and she snored. Spike reached out and gently dusted the flour and the chips off her face. His fingers

lingering over the green scaly skin.

Hana opened one eye groggily and made a deep purring sound, closed her eye and went back to sleep.

“I’ll go get her cleaned up and in her crib,” Xander said and cradled the tired demon spawn against his chest.

“I’ll...” Spike waved a flour covered hand at the mess on the floor.

“Yeah,” Xander snorted and walked out of the kitchen.

~*~*~*~*~

Xander stood in the doorway to the kitchen and watched Spike attempt to clean up the dirty linoleum floor. The blond vampire kept cursing and muttering about small green devils.

Xander smiled and knelt down and started picking the bigger pieces of chips up and dumping them in a bowl.

“Could just use the vacuum cleaner,” Spike said and shook his fingers to get the white flour off them.

“And wake the green devil? I think not,” Xander opened one of the kitchen cupboards and pulled out a small broom and dustpan. He handed it to Spike and got up to find a bucket and some dishcloths.

When he turned back, with the bucket filled with soap water, Spike was growling and in game face. Xander put the bucket down on the floor and started chuckling.

“Whot?!” Spike snarled and glared at Xander with yellow eyes.

“I’m...sorry,” Xander giggled, he waved a hand at Spike and the floor and started laughing. He pressed the dry dishcloths against his mouth so Hana wouldn’t wake up.

“Barmy bugger,” Spike snorted, his golden eyes slowly turning blue again.

Xander was laughing so hard tears were rolling down his cheeks. He finally just slid down against the fridge and landed with a bump on the dirty floor, his chest heaving and the dishcloth pressed tightly against his mouth. The bucket filled with water bumped against the cupboard and some of the soapy water sloshed over the edge.

Spike chuckled and punched Xander lightly in the arm. Xander dropped the dishcloth and pressed his lips together, desperately trying to hold the laughter in.

Spike started laughing as well, his blue eyes shining and the hand he had punched Xander with lightly gripping the human's shoulder. Spike leant against Xander's side and tried to keep quiet.

"Bloody hell," Spike squeaked and Xander made a muffled choking sound and just couldn't hold it in anymore. His laughter filled the kitchen, made his body shake and Spike shake with him.

"Oh...oh...my...God...S-Spike," Xander laughed.

"Wanker," Spike laughed and turned his face so it was pressed against Xander's neck. Xander turned his head, a big smile splitting his face in two, and stared at the vampire. Xander's breathing slowed down and they just looked at each other for a few seconds.

"Um..." Xander said uncertainly.

"Yeah," Spike agreed and pulled a little away.

“Better,” Xander said and pointed at the dirty floor.

“Yeah,” Spike nodded and grabbed the dustpan and the broom.

~*~*~*~*~

Xander stretched on the couch, his feet hanging off the armrest. He opened his eyes and squinted at the clock hanging on the wall over the TV.

Xander groaned and pulled the blanket over his head which only meant that his feet were left bare and cold. He cursed quietly and curled up, tucking his feet under a corner of the blanket. He attempted to go back to sleep but he could hear someone singing.

He pulled the blanket away from his face and listened.

It was too quiet for him to hear the words so he got up and shuffled quietly to the bedroom. The singing voice was coming from the nursery. Xander leant against the door jamb and watched Spike quietly sing to Hana.

“There was a little girl and she had a little curl

Right in the middle of her forehead;”

Spike tucked at one of Hana’s greenish curls,

”And when she was good she was very, very good,
But when she was bad she was horrid.”

Xander chuckled and said, ”Amen.”

Spike turned around and looked slightly ashamed but when Xander didn’t do or say anything else, he shrugged. ”Took me forever to wash that bloody flour out of my hair.

Hana reached out for Xander and he took her and tickled her chubby little feet.

”She needs a bath and I guess the bed linen needs to get changed as well,” Xander brushed his fingers through the little girl’s curls, making small clouds of flour float into the air. Hana sneezed. ”Good thing Daddy is home today, isn’t it?” Xander blew a raspberry on Hana’s cheek and she shrieked and clapped her hands.

”Yeah,” Spike said and stood up. He stretched and groaned, ”Being the Scourge of Europe wasn’t as much

work as looking after the nipper,” Spike pointed a finger at Hana and laughed when she tried to bite it.

~*~*~*~*~

”I think I might go into the kitchen and find a big knife,” Xander groaned. Spike just turned his head lazily and looked at the human,

”Stabbing myself in the eyes can’t be anywhere near as painful as watching this shit,” Xander nodded at the TV.

”Seems to like it,” Spike said and looked at Hana. She was holding on to the coffee table, her small body swaying a little as she fought to stay upright as she danced.

”But why Barney?” Xander moaned, ”Shouldn’t he be dead? He’s a dinosaur for God’s sake! He’s supposed to be extinct.”

”Must have killed off the other dinosaurs with his horrid singing, yeah,” Spike mused and watched Hana dance while she had a death grip on the edge of the coffee table.

"I love you , you love me, we're a happy family. With a great big hug and a kiss from me to you. Won't you say you'll love me too..." Barney sang.

Spike started singing as well, "I shag you, you shag me, we're a horny family, With a great big hump and a kiss from me to you..."

To Hana's great delight, Xander snorted beer all over the couch and Spike's jeans.

Part Eleven

"That's bloody disgusting," Spike said as he watched Xander sleep with his mouth open, drool dripping down on the couch cushions. Xander was breathing hard as if he was having trouble getting enough air into his lungs.

"Oi!" Spike said and kicked the couch. Xander snorted and then gagged. He sat up and blinked bleary eyed at Spike.

"What?" he said in a stuffy voice.

"You're gonna be late for work," Spike said and walked into the kitchen.

“M ot goin m notty,” Xander mumbled and slowly slid sideways until he was stretched out on the couch again. His feet hanging awkwardly off the armrest.

“Whot?” Spike asked and walked back into the living room.

Xander started snoring, small spit bubbles clinging to the side of his mouth.

“I said,” Spike leant down and poked Xander’s shoulder, “Whot?”

“I don’t know,” Xander said, his voice hoarse.

“What do you mean you don’t know?” Spike asked, feeling as if they were having two different conversations.

“I don’t know...” Xander sneezed, “...what you said,” he groaned and pulled the blanket over his head.

Spike took a deep unnecessary breath and tried again, “Won’t you be late for work?”

“M notty,” came the answer from beneath the blanket.

“You’re notty?” Spike frowned, “What the hell does that mean?”

“Notty,” Xander said and pulled the blanket down, he glared at the vampire, “Means I’m notty,” he pointed at his nose. At Spike’s blank stare he sighed, pushed the blanket off himself and staggered to his feet. He almost tilted to the right but Spike reached out and steadied him.

“You all right?” Spike asked and took a better look at Xander’s pale face.

“I’m sick,” he mumbled and rested his head on Spike’s shoulder.

“Could just have said so,” Spike pushed Xander back down on the couch.

“Did,” Xander blinked, “I’m notty,” he pointed at his nose again and was about to say something when he sneezed all over Spike.

“That’s just...” Spike couldn’t find the words to describe

the yellow-greenish mucus dripping down his black t-shirt.

~*~*~*~*~

Hana studied the rumbling monster that had taken over the couch. Every few seconds it would cough or press tissues to its face and make really loud honking noises. The monster turned and shivered, the blue blanket fell off its shoulders and landed on the floor in front of Hana.

“Blanket,” it rumbled in a rough voice, “Bike? ’M cold!”

~*~*~*~*~

“Better not get too close to that,” Spike said and carried Hana back into the nursery. The little girl started squirming in Spike’s arms, trying to get down, but he just smiled and put her down in the crib. He picked out a few toys from the toy shelf and gave them to her.

“Bike?” Xander called from the living room.

“Yeah! Yeah! I’m coming,” Spike rolled his eyes and Hana giggled and started chewing on her teddy bear.

~*~*~*~*~

“I don’t remember eating that?” Xander said, his head resting against the toilet seat.

“Bloody disgusting, you humans, with your bodily functions,” Spike muttered from the hallway.

“Spike?” Xander managed to say loud enough for the vampire to come into the bathroom.

“Yeah?” Spike scrunched up his face when the smell of vomit hit him.

“Did we have spaghetti yesterday?” Xander blinked up at the vampire.

“That’s it!” Spike crossed his arms, “You’re going to the hospital.”

“It’s just a cold,” Xander dried his mouth with the back of his hand, leaving a line of snot across his face.

“You’re stinking up the whole flat,” Spike said accusingly.

“Humans don’t die because of a simple cold,” Xander held on to the toilet as he slowly got to his feet and shuffled over to the sink to rinse out his mouth and wash his hands.

“Could have fooled me,” Spike said as he stomped out of the bathroom.

~*~*~*~*~

Spike was sleeping, his body covered by the red bedspread, one leg hanging over the edge of the bed. He groaned, turned and opened his eyes to stare up at the ceiling. Something was different. He couldn’t really figure out what it was. He just had this sense of something being out of place, tilted slightly off kilter.

He concentrated his hearing on Xander. The human was wheezing, the air whooshing in and out of lungs that had to work extra hard because of the congested airways. Xander mumbled in his sleep and coughed.

Spike sat up and pulled the covers off. He moved over to the door to the nursery and looked in. The Mickey Mouse nightlight bathed the small room in a soft yellow glow. The shadows falling in a way that made the room look cosy. He walked over to the crib and looked down at Hana.

She was sleeping, her small black nailed fingers twitching as she dreamt. Spike reached down to pick her up but his hand stopped abruptly when the heat from Hana's body hit his cool skin.

He gently pulled the yellow blanket off the sleeping baby and saw the sweat soaked clothes clinging to her heaving chest.

~*~*~*~*~

“Wake up!”

Xander fell off the couch and stumbled to his feet, his eyes frantically scanning the living room.

“What's wrong?” he asked.

“She’s sick,” Spike said and pulled the yellow baby blanket closer around the dozing baby cradled in his arms.

“Sick?” Xander coughed, his hand covering his mouth.

“She has a fever,” Spike said and pushed past Xander. He put Hana down on the couch and ran a hand through her green curls. They were damply sticking to her forehead and the nape of her neck.

“Shit,” Xander knelt down and touched her face, “She’s burning up.”

~*~*~*~*~*~

“Is it helping?” Xander asked as he watched Spike give Hana a cold bath.

“No,” Spike growled and filled the plastic cup with more cold water. He let it flow over the small flushed chest.

“There’s gotta be somewhere we can take her;” Xander said and helped Spike wrap Hana in a thick cotton towel as they lifted her into the bedroom.

“Not like there’s a demon hospital,” Spike said quietly and rubbed Hana’s chest dry.

“But...but,” Xander stuttered and started pacing.

“Hana?” Spike called, “Sweetie? Wake up, yeah? You’re scaring us.”

“Maybe Clem’ll know what to do?” Xander hurried out of the bedroom, searching for his cell phone.

~*~*~*~*~

“So?” Spike asked as he held the baby in his arms, her head kept sliding off his shoulder and her hands hung limply down her side.

“He’s not picking up,” Xander clenched his hand so hard around the phone that the plastic creaked, “Why the fuck isn’t he picking up?!” Xander demanded to know.

“How the hell would I know, git?” Spike yelled back and flashed his fangs at Xander.

“Oh God!” Xander sat down on the couch, the phone hitting the carpet with a bump, “Oh God, Spike. What if she...” his red rimmed eyes looked up at the vampire.

“There’s gotta be someone,” Spike said, his voice thick with worry.

“There’s no one...” Xander ran both his hands through his hair. Suddenly he stood up and pointed at the front door, “Mrs. Pattiani,” Xander said as if that explained everything.

“The barmy lady with the eye cake?” Spike frowned.

“She’s a demon,” Xander said and looked hopeful, “She has grandkids, she’s gotta know what to do.”

~*~*~*~*~

“Xander?” the yellow eyed old woman said when she opened her door.

“She’s sick,” was all Xander said as he walked into the demon’s apartment without waiting to be invited in. The old woman looked searchingly at Xander and then turned

her attention to Spike standing outside in the hallway, the unconscious baby resting against his chest.

“Oh poor dear,” she said and waved Spike closer.

“Gotta invite me in, Mrs. Pattiani,” Spike put his hand on the back of Hana’s head when the little girl seemed to start tilting precariously in his arms.

“Come in,” Mrs. Pattiani said and reached out to take Hana out of Spike’s arms.

“She’s burning up,” Xander said as he hovered anxiously beside the woman.

~*~*~*~*~

“Xander?” Spike spoke softly as he stood in the doorway to the bedroom. Xander was curled up on the bed with Hana sleeping beside him.

Xander didn’t respond, the only proof that he was alive, the rise and fall of his chest. A quiet hitch of breath and then a muffled sob. Xander pushed his face into the pillow Spike had been using for weeks.

“Pet?” Spike walked over to the bed and sat down on the edge, his hand touching Xander’s shoulder.

“She...” Xander murmured, his words half absorbed by the pillow. He started sobbing again and Spike crawled onto the bed and spooned up behind Xander. The vampire let his hands pull the human closer as he closed his eyes.

“She’s fine,” Spike said, “ She’s fine now,” he kneaded Xander’s shoulder.

Xander just nodded and buried his face in Hana’s green curls.

Part Twelve

Spike woke up curled around a very warm human lump. Xander’s breathing was still a little laboured but nothing like it had been while the human had been sick. Spike

rested a hand on Xander's broad chest and felt it rise and fall in a steady rhythm. Xander mumbled something inaudible and patted Spike's hand.

"Shhh," Xander mumbled in his sleep, "Sleep, Hana."

Spike smirked and looked over at the door to the nursery. He'd put Hana back in her crib after Xander had fallen asleep. He could hear her strong heartbeat coming from the secret room. He slipped out of the warm bed and silently walked over to the closet. Spike opened the door to the hidden room as quietly as possible and tiptoed into the nursery.

Hana looked small and fragile as she slept. She was spread out on the mattress, her arms stretched over her head as if she was reaching for the crib bars. She made small snoring noises.

Spike turned his attention to the wooden box standing on the dresser next to the crib. He opened it and took out a piece of white cloth. The vampire slowly unwrapped it, revealing a stack of paper thin and almost see-through green squares the size of a fingernail. He took one and wrapped the rest in the cloth and stored it in the wooden box again.

Spike held the small green square up and looked at it. It really just looked like a thin piece of plastic. He leant over the side of the crib and gently pushed it against Hana's lips. The baby grunted in her sleep and opened her mouth just enough for Spike to push the green square between her lips.

Spike stayed until he was sure the thin square of medicine had dissolved in the little girl's mouth, then he walked back to the bedroom, curled up next to Xander and fell asleep.

~*~*~*~*~

"The doorbell is ringing," Xander pushed at Spike's shoulder.

"Then go open the door," Spike said and pulled the covers over his head.

Xander was just about to answer that when Buffy's voice floated through the apartment.

"Xander? Xander we know you're home," the slayer said

loudly, "We just came by...cause Willow's worried," there was some mumbling then, "Well, you are," more mumbling, "Xander?"

"Shit!" Xander said and jumped out of bed.

"Xander?" Buffy tried again, "You there?"

~*~*~*~*~

"Oh God! Oh God!" Xander kept frantically mumbling while he picked up stuffed toys and baby clothes as if his life depended on it.

"Xander?" Buffy was starting to sound pissed off.

"I'm just getting dressed," Xander hissed at the door just loud enough for her to hear, "You wouldn't want to see me in all my manly nakedness!"

Spike stumbled out of the bedroom with Hana's pink blanket bundled up in his arms.

"Did you hide everything?" Xander asked and picked up the last toy.

“Yeah,” Spike said and scanned the living room, “Bit’s sleeping and I closed the closet door. Slayer won’t find anything.”

Xander handed Spike the last toys and seemed to freeze, “What about you?” Xander asked.

“What about me?” Spike looked confused, his fingers clenching around the blanket and the stuffed blue cow.

“What if they ask why you’re here?” Xander grabbed hold of Spike’s shoulder. Xander’s voice was nothing more than a garbled whisper.

“Know I’m staying here, yeah,” Spike said and patted Xander’s arm.

“Xander?” Willow asked uncertainly.

“We gotta open the door,” Xander said as if he’d forgotten how to do that.

“I’ll just,” Spike lifted the blanket and the toys slightly.

“Yeah,” Xander nodded, “You do that. Hide it.”

“Right,” Spike said and disappeared into the bedroom.

Xander walked over to the front door and took a few deep breaths. He rubbed his hands against his grey sweat pants, trying to get the damp feeling to go away. He reached out for the lock, turned it and opened the door.

“Hey,” he smiled at the two women standing outside in the hallway.

“You took your time,” Buffy said and smiled at him.

“Um...yeah I was just getting ready to take a shower when you knocked. Wasn't really dressed,” Xander babbled and waved the slayer and the witch into the apartment, “So what brings my two favourite girls to my humble abode?” Xander said and noticed a picture book peeking out from under the couch. He pushed it out of sight with his foot.

“I tried calling you this morning but you didn't pick up the phone,” Willow said and sat down on the couch. She looked around the room and then turned her attention to Xander.

“Oh...I was...um...sick...The flu,” Xander stuttered and coughed.

“But you’re okay now?” Buffy asked and sat down next to Willow.

“Oh yeah,” Xander nodded.

“Was snoting all over the bleeding place,” Spike said as he sauntered out of the bedroom.

“Spike,” Buffy said and nodded sharply in greeting.

“Buffy,” Spike said, “Willow.”

“What were you doing in Xander’s bedroom?” Willow asked.

“I was...” Spike began but Xander interrupted him.

“He sleeps here sometimes.”

“In your bed?” Buffy studied Xander.

“No no no no! A world of no!” Xander held up his hands as if he was pushing her words away.

“So what was he...” Willow waved her slim hand at the bedroom door.

“Live here, don’t I,” Spike simply said, “Boy’s been good enough ta give me a little room in his closet for my clothes and stuff.” Xander sighed deeply and nodded and kept nodding, “Stop nodding,” Spike whispered to him and the human stopped immediately. Buffy glared at Spike and Willow looked confused.

“Okay,” Xander squeaked.

“Why don’t we go make the girls something to drink?” Spike suggested and took hold of Xander’s hand.

“Okay,” Xander repeated.

“You chits just watch the telly,” Spike said and pointed at the remote on the coffee table.

~*~*~*~*~

“Something weird is going on,” Buffy said as Willow turned on the TV and started zapping around.

“Well, he’s been sick...” Willow tried.

“Spike seems a little too comfortable here,” Buffy looked around the small apartment, “And what’s with the commanding thing he just did to Xander?”

~*~*~*~*~

“You need to pull it together,” Spike said and took out three sodas from the fridge.

“I think I might pass out,” Xander said quietly.

“They won’t find out,” Spike said and looked at Xander, “They won’t find out if you pull it together.”

~*~*~*~*~

Buffy stood just outside the kitchen door. She frowned and looked back at Willow. She was still trying to find something to watch on Xander’s old TV.

“They won’t find out,” she heard Spike say, “They won’t

find out if you pull it together.”

Maybe it was time she called Angel.

~*~*~*~*~

“Angel Investigation,” Cordy said as she picked up the phone, “We help the helpless...Buffy? Look we have other things to do that fix your messes...Yeah, we’re actually really busy...Xander? What’s wrong with Xander? I’ll get Angel on the other line. Just a second,” Cordy looked down at the phone and pushed her chair back and stood up.

“Angel?” she called.

“What?” Angel asked from his small office.

“Buffy’s on the phone,” Cordy walked over and looked into the office. Angel was sitting at his table surrounded by old dusty books.

“Is she hurt?” Angel asked and got up so fast his chair hit the wall behind it.

“No...She says it’s about Xander,” Cordy couldn’t keep the worry out of her voice.

“Xander?” Angel looked down at the blinking light on the old beige phone on his desk.

“Just pick up the phone,” she glared at him until he did as he was told.

“Hallo, Buffy?” Angel pulled the chair back to the desk and sat down. Cordy hovered over him, her fingers nervously rubbing against the leather spine on one of the old books.

“What is she saying?” Cordy asked. Angel pushed the speaker button on the phone and Buffy’s voice filled the office.

“He’s acting really weird. I mean weirder than normal,” the slayer sighed, the sound a deep whoosh coming through the phone, “He never spends time with us anymore, he’s all mysterious and he’s...I don’t know...”

“It doesn’t necessarily have anything to do with the Hellmouth or anything demon,” Angel pointed out.

“I know,” Buffy agreed, “But then there’s Spike.”

“What’s that short cockney done to Xander?” Cordy asked.

“I’m not really sure he’s done anything,” Buffy said, “But we went to visit today and Xander was acting really weird and Spike is living with him. But it was like...Spike was giving orders...”

“Orders?” Angel asked and frowned down at the phone.

“Yeah...nothing big but Xander did as he was told and you know how he is,” Buffy continued.

“Not really good with orders,” Cordy said.

“So I was thinking that maybe Spike can do that thrall thing that Dru could,” Buffy said.

“No,” Angel shook his head, “Spike never could do anything like that. Not many vampires can. Dru was just really good at it.”

“So no thrall?” Buffy asked.

“I doubt it,” Angel rubbed his hand against his face,
“Look Buffy...Could you handle this on your own?”

“Is everything all right in LA?” Buffy must have pressed the phone too close to her mouth because the words came out as a hiss.

“We’re on the verge of a full blown demon clan war,” Cordy said.

“Two clans are killing each other off. Taking innocent human bystanders with them in the melee,” Angel sighed, “They’re accusing each other of abducting the heir of their clan. The heirs of both clans have vanished.”

“It’s this whole Romeo and Juliet thing,” Cordy explained, “It seems the heirs met and fell in love. They skipped town. At least that’s what we’ve figured out so far but the chieftains of the clans...well they won’t listen.”

“And then there’re the rumours about them having a child...It’ll get really messy if we can’t find them and bring the heirs and the child back to the clans,” Angel ended the explanation.

Part Thirteen

“And this little green piggy went to market,” Xander gently pulled on Hana’s toe, “This little piggy stayed home,” Hana squealed when Xander tickled the next toe and she slapped her small fists on the bed.

“This little piggy...” Spike groaned and pulled the covers over his head in an attempt to block out the noise, “was drained ‘cause it wouldn’t leave the poor vamp alone.”

“Spoil sport,” Xander chuckled and started changing Hana’s diaper, “Whoa! Stink alert.”

“Do you have ta do that in here?” Spike gagged and lifted a corner of the blanket so he could glare at the human.

“She needs her diaper changed, Fangless,” Xander frowned as he tried to wipe the demon spawn’s waste away with a handful of baby wipes, “It’s not like I love the smell.”

Spike closed his eyes hoping that he could fall asleep again.

“Aw, fuck!” Xander mumbled.

“What?” Spike reluctantly opened his eyes.

“I ran out of baby wipes,” Xander said and held up the handful of soiled wipes, “You need to get me a new packet from the bathroom.”

“Ain’t me holding a handful of baby poop, is it now,” Spike drawled.

“You know,” Xander narrowed his eyes, “I could just use the sleeve of your duster.”

“Baby wipes you said?” Spike jumped out of bed and stumbled over to the bathroom, “In the cupboard under the sink, yeah?”

“Yeah,” Xander nodded and tried one last time to use the wipes in his hand to minimise the damage to the bedspread.

~*~*~*~*~

Spike winced when he turned on the light in the bathroom. The lamp over the mirror send out a glaring yellow light that seemed to bounce off the tiles.

“Ya know,” Spike said loudly, “I’ve been thinking.”

“Uh huh,” came the intelligent response from the bedroom. Spike grinned at the empty mirror.

“We need to deflect Buffy’s attention,” Spike started pushing the contents of the cupboard around in his search for the elusive baby wipes, “Think I’ve come up with a perfect plan, I do.”

“You’re so smart,” Xander remarked.

“Yeah,” Spike smiled despite the fact that he still hadn’t found the bleeding wipes.

~*~*~*~*~

“You found those wipes yet?” Xander yelled over his shoulder in the direction of the bathroom.

“Can’t find them,” Spike’s muffled voice answered.

Hana clapped her hands together and Xander smiled down at her, “You’re so smart,” he told her again. Hana answered by blowing spit bubbles.

“Can’t find the damn things,” Spike said as he entered the bedroom.

“Here,” Xander moved so Spike could sit next to where Hana lay on the bed, “Keep an eye on her and I’ll go find the wipes.” Xander disappeared into the bathroom and started rummaging around.

“Well my plan is...” Spike said loudly, certain that Xander would hear him, “That we make the bint think we’re sleeping together. A little touching here and there and we’ll wipe all her suspicions away. She’ll be too bloody shocked to see anything else, yeah.”

~*~*~*~*~

Spike had made a mess of the bathroom. Shampoo bottles and extra tooth paste tubes were spread on the floor in front of the cupboard.

“We’ll wipe...” Spike said from the bedroom.

“Yeah, sounds good,” Xander agreed and started looking in the cupboard next to the bathtub, “Just have to find the right ones. Where the hell did I put those extra wipes?”

~*~*~*~*~

“Yeah, sounds good,” Spike heard Xander say.

“Bloody right it does,” Spike nodded down at Hana, “Best idea ever.”

“Got them,” Xander walked into the bedroom with the pack of baby wipes held over his head like a trophy.

“Better get her cleaned up so we can drop her off at Clem’s place,” Xander said and handed Spike the wipes. The vampire took the pack, opened it and pulled out enough wipes to clean up the gooey mess.

“Yeah,” Spike grinned, “Don’t want to be late for patrolling with the slayer.”

~*~*~*~*~

The demons sitting opposite each other were hissing and glaring.

“Please,” Angel sighed and held up his hands in a placating manner, “We won’t achieve anything if the clans aren’t willing to agree on some simple rules of conduct.”

“When they stop killing...” the broad shouldered green skinned demon growled and stabbed a finger at the air.

“Pfftthh,” the female rolled her blue eyes and the jade scales on her forehead rustled slightly, “I have lost more men to this insane...”

“Will you just shut up!”

They all turned and looked at Cordy.

“Thank you,” she said, “We’re getting nowhere. You,” she pointed at the woman, “You have to call back your hit men. Killing off your grandchild’s family members isn’t going to solve anything.”

The broad shouldered demon smirked.

“And you, mister,” Cordy turned angry eyes on the man, “You’ll stop those drive by shootings, right now.”

“How dare you...” he began and started rising from his chair.

“If you as much as think about hurting her...” Angel warned and flashed his gameface.

“We’re getting nowhere,” the female said, pushed her chair back and stood up, “My clan will continue our own search for my grandchild.”

“That child is as much mine as it is yours,” the man reminded her and snarled.

“I will find the child and I will keep it,” she said and pushed a stray green curl behind her ear, “My son fathered it and by the clan laws it belongs to us.”

Angel sat back and pinched the bridge of his nose when the warring parties started screaming at each other across the table.

~*~*~*~*~

“Did you see that?” Willow gasped and blushed.

“I think the guys floating around on the International Space Station saw that,” Buffy mumbled and tried not to stare at where Spike’s hand lingered.

“This is so weird,” Willow muttered, “And not weird as in strange demony activity in the graveyard or Hell Mouth weirdness or even like that time when Xander accidentally walked in on me and Tara kissing, cause that was very high on the weird-o-meter. This is way up there with hyenas and man eating teachers and mummy girls that suck the life force out of people.”

“Just remember to breathe,” Buffy said and gently patted the witch’s back.

“I can do that,” Willow nodded but then sputtered when

Spike pinched Xander's ass, "Deep deep breaths all the way down in my lungs," she wheezed.

~*~*~*~*~

Xander grabbed Spike by the wrist and dragged the smirking demon into the backroom of the Magic Box. Xander kicked the door closed behind them.

"What the hell are you doing?" Xander asked, his eyes dark with anger.

"Haven't done anything," Spike pouted and crossed his arms over his chest.

"You groped my ass!" Xander said loudly but then flushed a bright red, "My ass," he repeated quietly.

"So?" Spike smirked.

"In. Front. Of. Buffy," Xander said real slow in case Spike was an idiot.

"Yeah," Spike readily agreed, "You said you'd be okay with it."

“I said...” Xander sputtered, “I said I’d be okay with you touching my ass in front of people?!”

“Bloody well did,” Spike nodded.

“In what bizarre world did I agree that you pinching my butt was a good idea? It wouldn’t by any chance be the one where Spock has a beard? Cause I really don’t remember Captain Kirk pinching Spock’s ass in front of Uhura!”

“What are you on about, git?!” Spike threw his hands in the air in utter frustration.

“I don’t know, Spike, you pinching my ass kinda fried my brain!”

~*~*~*~*~

“They’re just so cute together,” Dawn twittered and looked over at the closed door to the backroom. Giles frowned uncertainly and started cleaning his glasses.

“Deep breaths,” Willow gasped, “Deeeeeeep breaths.”

~*~*~*~*~

Spike growled down at the three small rat-like demons sitting at the table in the corner of the bar. They squeaked and scattered all over the room.

“Yeah,” Spike flashed his fangs at the vermin, “William the Bloody’s table, this is.”

“Spike,” Willy all but ran to the vampire’s table, “How’re you doing? Good? That’s good! How’s the slayer?” The last few words were said loudly.

“Shut your face and gimme a beer,” Spike stared hard at the little man and slumped down on the creaking chair. Willy hurried over to the bar almost stumbling over his own legs.

The front doors to the bar opened and a slice of blue moonlight shot across the room for a split second before the door closed behind the new arrivals. Spike briefly studied the men. Tall, dark bottle green scales and muscles seemed to be the predominant features both the men had in common.

They sat down at the table a few feet away from Spike and immediately started arguing.

“I’m telling you,” the younger of the two jabbed a finger at the table, “The kid is here.”

“We don’t know that for sure, D’kall. And I really don’t want be the bearer of bad news,” the other demon said and looked around the bar, “You know how she gets. Last week she broke H’lak’s arm because he came back from New York without any news at all. How do you think she’ll react if we get her hopes up for nothing?”

“Okay,” D’kall agreed, “So we check it out some more. Ask around.”

“Look, the kid needs to be found,” the other demon rubbed a hand across his face, the scales made a rustling sound. “How fucking hard can it be to find a green baby?”

“This is Sunnydale,” D’kall snorted, “You’d be surprised what people won’t notice if they don’t want to.”

Spike jumped when a beer bottle was planted in front of

him with a loud thud. He glared up at Willy and flashed his fangs at him. The man made a small whiny sound and scurried off. The demons at the other table briefly looked over at him then returned to their discussion.

~*~*~*~*~

Spike let himself into the apartment. The keys jingled a little when he put them on the small hallway table by the door. He just stood there for a second and listened. Two heartbeats, so Xander had already picked up Hana. He looked around the hallway, smiled when he saw the tiny leather boots. Purple with tiny Tinkerbells on them.

Next to the almost fragile looking booties were Xander's work boots. Big, black and scuffed. Spike toed his own Doc Martens off and placed them on the other side of Hana's.

He walked into the empty and dimly lit living room and picked up a few stuffed toys and dumped them on the couch. He grimaced when he stepped on something that squeaked.

"Bleeding Tigger," he picked the offending toy up and

took it with him into the bedroom.

Xander was sleeping in the middle of the bed with Hana resting on his chest. Xander's left hand cupped Hana's diaper clad butt, securing her and gently holding her in place. Spike just leant back against the doorjamb and watched Xander's chest rise and fall, watched Hana smack her lips in her sleep.

He would have to tell Xander about what he'd heard in the bar.

But it could wait.

Part Fourteen

"No!" Xander said and clenched the small red jumper he was holding, "No," he repeated and shook his head.

"I know..." Spike began.

“You don’t know shit, Spike,” Xander hissed and jabbed a finger in the vampire’s direction, “Rumours. That’s all. Fucking rumours!”

“I checked it out,” Spike tried again, “I started asking around.”

“What?” Xander narrowed his eyes and took a step forward, “How long have you known?”

“A week,” Spike said.

“A week,” Xander echoed, his voice flat, “You’ve known a week and you didn’t tell me.” Xander looked at the little girl sleeping on the bed, her black claw-like nails digging into a stuffed toy.

“When were you going to tell me?” Xander bent the fabric of the little red jumper out of shape. Suddenly he threw it on the bedside table.

“I wanted to be sure,” Spike said and looked Xander in the eyes.

“Are you?” Xander almost whispered.

Spike nodded.

Xander picked Hana up and gathered the pink blanket around her sleep warm body. The stuffed monkey fell, forgotten, to the floor.

“She has a family?” Xander asked as his finger gently traced the jade green scales on the child’s eyebrows.

“I...” Spike sighed and sat down on the edge of the bed, “She has a clan. Two, actually.”

“Who...” Xander sat down beside Spike, their knees touching, “Who’s looking for her?”

“Grandparents,” Spike reached out and moved the corner of the blanket a little so he could see Hana better, “Been looking for some time now,” Hana frowned in her sleep, “Angel’s involved.”

“Angel?” Xander’s voice sounded faint.

“The clans hired Peaches to find her,” Spike repeated what he’d heard in some of the seedier bars in Sunnydale.

“She has a family,” Xander muttered.

~*~*~*~*~

Buffy watched Xander measure the window. His movements were precise and choppy. Like a robot with a glitch. He jotted a few numbers down on the pad he'd fished out of his back pocket. The pencil, small and gnawed off at the top, fell from his stiff fingers.

“Xander?” she rubbed his shoulder.

“What!” he snapped and stared at her.

“Are you okay?” Buffy asked as she picked the pencil up and handed it to Xander .

“Sure,” he answered too fast, “I’m fine.”

He turned his attention back to the window and started making the same measurements, his hands shaking a little and his lips a thin line.

~*~*~*~*~

The silence was a living breathing thing.

It occupied the space between them in Xander's bed. They slept with their backs turned to the each other, slightly curled around their own centre. It sat with them at the table whenever they had time to actually sit down and eat together. Like a stern father demanding peace at the dinner table.

The silence even crept into the nursery. No more nursery rhymes, no more singing. As if the silence strangled every sound, every attempt at conversation.

They sat next to each other on the couch, staring at the screen. Not paying attention, not daring to look elsewhere.

"You come to a decision?" Spike asked as they watched a rerun from the seventies.

"I..." Xander stared fixedly at the screen, "I don't know."

Spike just nodded and reached out for the remote.

~*~*~*~*~

The phone rang and Angel absentmindedly reached out for it and put whoever it was on the speaker phone.

“Angel Investiga...” he started.

“Angel?” a well-known voice asked.

“Xander?” Angel stared at the phone.

“Yeah?” Xander mumbled, “I just wanted to...I’ve heard about the...” he sighed deeply.

“Are you okay?” Angel asked wearily and closed the old tome he’d been leafing through.

“I um...yeah,” Xander seemed uncertain and for a few seconds the only sound in Angel’s small office was Xander’s deep breathing, “I hear you’re looking for a child.”

“A demon child, yes,” Angel said and suddenly wished he could see Xander.

“What...If you found the child...what would happen to h-it?”

“I’d return it to its grandparents. They’ve been fighting for a long time but both clans see this as an opportunity to build some bridges...make peace,” Angel leant forward as he spoke.

“So the child,” Angel could hear Xander swallow, “The child would be cherished...loved...by its family?”

“Xander?” Angel reached out and pulled the phone closer, “Do you have some kind of information? Do you know where...”

The loud click, followed by the insistent beeping, stopped Angel’s questions.

~*~*~*~*~

“The town is overflowing with Moirui demons,” Clem looked nervously around his dusty apartment as if he

expected a few of them to be hiding in the corners, hidden under the dust bunnies.

“Know that, don’t I,” Spike said and leant back against the wall, “Been real careful. Haven’t taken Hana outside for two weeks now.”

“How’s Xander taking it?” Clem asked and sat down on the ratty couch.

“Hasn’t talked much about it since I told him,” Spike closed his eyes and patted his pockets looking for a pack of cigarettes.

“You could leave Sunnydale,” Clem suggested, “There’s plenty of towns where...”

“Think he’s planning something,” Spike sighed as he crumbled the empty cigarette pack he found in his duster, “Git won’t tell me about it.”

“Maybe he just needs time to get used to the thought of living somewhere different,” Clem said hopefully and eyed the kitten that ran across the room.

~*~*~*~*~

Xander squeezed the water out of the sponge.

It fell on Hana's chest and trailed down over her chubby tummy. She squinted up at him and giggled, her toes curling and uncurling in the flow of the water from the showerhead. Xander started massaging her back and she sighed happily and rested her scaly forehead against his bare chest.

He slowly let the sponge travel up and down her small back. Hana rubbed her head back and forth over Xander's chest.

"Ow," Xander looked down at her, "Chest hair and scales do not a good combination make, Sweetie."

She tilted her head back and gasped when a little water hit her right in the face. She huffed and started babbling quietly. Soft sounds echoing off the tiles of the shower stall.

"No?" Xander said and smiled sadly, "Really? You had time to nap, eat, watch Barney AND make a mess in your diaper? That is a very full day, Hana. A very full day,

indeed,” he kissed her small nose causing her to scrunch up her face and squeal.

~*~*~*~*~*~*~

Giles looked at Angel.

“You believe the child is here in Sunnydale?” the watcher asked.

“I do,” Angel said and pulled a chair out, he sat down at Giles’ kitchen table.

“I see,” Giles nodded, “How exactly...”

“Buffy told me about the demon she killed a few months ago,” Angel said and watched Giles take a sip of tea, “Fit’s the description.”

“But what makes you think the baby is still alive?” Giles put his mug on the table, “You know what this town is like. I can’t imagine a defenceless child could survive for very long. And certainly not an infant.”

“Someone must have taken the child in,” Angel said and

pulled a map out of his coat pocket, “The clans don’t normally feel very safe around magic...”

“Yes,” Giles said, “I know how they view it as almost sacrilege to even perform the simplest kind of magic.”

“Well, this child is so important to them that they were willing to use magic,” Angel unfolded the map of Sunnydale and let his finger follow the green outline he had drawn on it, “According to the different spells that Wesley used and the vision Cordy had...” Angel’s finger circled a part of Sunnydale on the map, “The child is somewhere around here.”

“Really?” Giles said and adjusted his glasses as he squinted down at the map, “Xander lives there,” he said and then returned his attention to a different part of the map.

“Does he?” Angel said. He started folding the map slowly.

Part Fifteen

Xander stood frozen, the keys to the front door still in the lock dangling slightly back and forth. He fumbled with the keys, trying to get them out of the lock and into his pocket without looking at them. He just couldn't get his eyes off the sight in front of him.

Spike...The Slayer of Slayers...William the Bloody...was crawling on the living room floor with Hana clinging to his back. The vampire did a weird bucking thing, arching his back a little and raising his butt in the air, that made Hana shriek and tighten her hold on Spike's black t-shirt.

Xander finally managed to get the keys out of the lock but then proceeded to drop them on the floor. The jangling noise seemed to fill the entire apartment. Spike stopped moving, every muscle in his body tensing. Hana bounced up and down on Spike's back, her small diaper clad butt making a soft sound on impact.

Spike slowly turned his head and looked over his shoulder at Xander.

"You..." Xander said and pointed at Spike.

"Not a word, Harris," Spike hissed, "Don't you say a single bleeding..."

Xander just shook his head, a small noise escaping his mouth.

"Don't," Spike warned through clenched teeth.

Xander whimpered, his lips twitched uncontrollably.

"Harris!" Spike said almost pleadingly and let Hana slide off his back and down to the floor.

Xander snorted in a, brave, last attempt to keep his composure.

"I'm warning you," Spike stomped across the room until he was standing right in front of the human.

"Spike the big bad..." Xander's eyes were twinkling with amusement, "Spike the big bad horsey!" Xander giggled uncontrollably. The vampire made an annoyed noise in the back of his throat and grabbed Xander by the elbows.

"Fuck you!" Spike pulled Xander closer. Their faces were only a few inches apart and Xander stopped laughing and

took a deep breath, the last giggles ending in a strange strangled noise.

"Oh..." Xander mumbled hoarsely and leaned a little closer to Spike.

"Want a ride?" Spike leered and wagged his eyebrows, breaking the tense mood. Xander nervously licked his lips and was just about to say something when Hana squealed and clapped her hands.

~*~*~*~*~

Someone was playing with his ear. Slowly letting soft fingers trace the curve of the lobe and mapping the soft skin. He grunted and lightly slapped the hand away.

Giggling...someone was giggling.

"Ow!" Spike jerked his head away when a finger was poked into his eye. He blearily opened his eyes and was rewarded with the sight of Hana. Xander mumbled something inaudibly from the other side of the bed and turned his back on Spike and Hana.

"Keep quiet, yeah," Spike said and looked at Xander's tense back, "Needs his sleep."

Hana struggled a little until she was sitting up, her chubby toes pushing against Spike's arm. She started clapping her hands together. Xander grabbed Hana's little pillow and pressed it against his ear.

"Shhhh," Spike whispered, lifted her up and walked into the nursery. Hana bounced in his arms and blew spit bubbles. "Here ya go," Spike said and put her down in the crib. Hana looked up at him with big watery eyes and sniffled, "Now none of that, you hear," Spike admonished. Hana's lower lip quivered and Spike grabbed a few of the toys sitting on the shelf above the crib.

"You don't wanna sleep in there with crumpy old Harris," Spike said and put a stuffed teddy down in front of Hana, "With his warm..." Spike snapped his mouth shut, "Yeah...um...much better in here playing with your teddy and..." Spike squinted at the toy in his hand, "Your weird barmy looking sheep...thing..."

Hana was looking up at him, her blue eyes shining with mischief. She grabbed the sheep out of Spike's hand and

stuffed one of its legs into her mouth and growled.

Spike yawned, quietly walked into the bedroom and crawled back in bed. Xander turned in his sleep and Spike pulled the covers up over their shoulders, wanting to trap the human's furnace like heat inside.

Xander moved closer and draped an arm around Spike, pulling him against his warm chest and buried his face in the soft curls at the vampire's nape.

"mmmmm?" Xander sleepily inquired.

"mmmm," Spike reassured him and patted the arm holding him close.

~*~*~*~*~

Clem looked around the apartment. Toys were strewn all over the floor, the heavy dark curtains were meticulously closed and Spike was folding the clean laundry.

"Well..." Clem said and nodded at the Master vampire, "I gotta admit that I've missed the little critter," he looked down at the little girl attached to his leg. She was sitting

on his foot, grinning like crazy and occasionally bouncing.

"Looks like she's been missing you too," Spike said and folded a pair of small pants.

"Have you missed me?" Clem asked and tried to pull the child off his leg. Hana stubbornly tightened her hold.

"Been too risky to take her outside," Spike started rummaging around in the laundry basket, searching for the other tiny red sock, "With that wanker Angel sniffing around these last two weeks we've had to be extra careful."

"How's he doing?" Clem asked and hobbled over to the couch and sat down.

"Angel? How the fuck should I know?" Spike said and angrily folded the two red socks and put them on the couch.

"No," Clem shook his head, "I mean Xander."

"Oh..." Spike stopped folding the laundry, "Says he's fine. But you know him," Spike fiddled with a loose thread

sticking out of the back of the couch, "Git would claim to be fine even if he had his eye poked out."

~*~*~*~*~

Angel watched how Xander stayed as far away from him as possible. The human had chosen to sit on the other side of the table, next to Giles, but Xander still kept glancing up as if to make sure Angel hadn't moved in the past few seconds.

"Can't see it's our bloody problem," Spike said from the stairs and glared at the other occupants of the magic Box, "So some demons are slaughtering each other? Big deal."

"It wouldn't concern us if they kept the fighting to themselves," Giles said and looked down at the map Angel had unfolded.

"Innocent humans are getting in the way. Getting killed," Angel said while looking at Xander. The human flinched and looked from Angel to Spike. The blond vampire growled low and warningly at Angel.

"Still only a problem in LA," Spike pointed out.

"It'll spread," Buffy said and tapped a finger at the map, "Angel says they tracked the kid to Sunnydale...and...and it looks like...well it looks like I might have killed the baby's mother."

"You didn't know she wasn't dangerous," Angel said comfortingly.

"That's what happens when you just kill any Dick and Jane that comes across your path, yeah," Spike said and crossed his arms.

"I didn't know!" Buffy yelled making Willow jump slightly.

"Maybe if we just calmed down and..." Willow tried.

"I have to leave," Xander muttered and pushed away from the table, "I...eh...have to get up early tomorrow."

"Oh," Willow tried to reach out for Xander just as he passed her. Xander dodged her hand, "Xander?" Willow asked nervously.

"Sorry, Wills," Xander said and looked over at the door, "I'm just really tired."

~*~*~*~*~

The shopping cart was already loaded with baby wipes and weetabix when Xander stopped in front of the shelves overstuffed with diapers. Xander picked one of the packages up and studied the information on the back. The plastic was bright yellow and had little happy elephants printed on it. He was about to put it in the cart when he noticed a baby blue pack of diapers with the name LUVS printed in big white letters on it. A cute baby was grinning at him as if LUVS was the best damn thing in the whole wide world.

"You know," Angel's voice startled Xander enough to make him bump his cart against the overloaded shelves, "You can't really keep her, right?"

"I..." Xander's hands flexed, clenching and unclenching, as he turned, "I know," he finally managed to say as he stared at a point above Angel's head.

"Look, Xander," Angel sounded uncertain and Xander

looked the vampire in the eyes, "You care about her," Angel continued before he looked down at the grey linoleum floor. "And I know..." Angel seemed to search for the words, "I know what it feels like to lose someone who depends on you for everything...someone you love."

"Give me two more days," Xander quietly begged and swallowed the lump forming in his throat, "Two more days...that's all I'm asking for."

"Xander," Angel stepped around the shopping cart and touched Xander's shoulder almost hesitantly, "Postponing it is just going to make it..."

"Just two days. Please," Xander whispered hoarsely, "They've been looking for her since before she was born...What difference will two more days make to them?" Xander ran a shaking hand through his hair, "I saved her. They owe me that much."

"If you try to leave town I can't protect you from the clans," Angel said.

"Two more days and I'll..." Xander took a deep breath, "I'll give her up."

"Two days, Xander," Angel finally agreed, turned and walked away from the shaking human. Angel stopped a few feet away and looked back at Xander, "I know the two of us never saw eye to eye..."

Xander snorted and dried his eyes with the back of his hand.

Angel smiled sadly, "Still..." Angel said and Xander fiddled with the prize tag on a pack of baby wipes, "I want you to know that I'm sorry. If there was any other way..."

"I know," Xander said, "It's...well...it's not okay but...I guess sometimes...Sometimes fate just screws with us."

Angel could only nod as he watched Xander walk away leaving a full shopping cart behind.

Part Sixteen

Xander scanned the nursery. Let his eyes take in the strangely naked room. The toys were all packed and the clothes... All those tiny socks and shirts, folded neatly and placed in the duffel bag. The crib stripped. The bedding with the small pink and yellow ducks washed and ironed.

The room even smelled different.

He took a deep breath, walked out of the room, closed the door behind him and promised himself never to open it again.

~*~*~*~*~

“Could just keep driving,” Spike said, his hand hovering over the car keys dangling from the ignition.

The engine was idly running and making that odd sound. Like a kettle cooling down. Tink-tink-tink. He should take the car over to the mechanic. Have the guy take a look at the engine before it stopped working altogether. He’d been postponing it for months now. Hadn’t had the time. Guess time wasn’t going to be a problem anymore.

“Xander?” Spike reached out and lightly touched Xander’s knee.

“They’re waiting,” Xander said and looked over his shoulder at Hana. She was sleeping in her car seat. Her head resting awkwardly against her shoulder. A light-green strand of hair had escaped her red woolen hat and covered one closed eye.

“There’s still time,” Spike said, his hand still resting on Xander’s knee.

“No,” Xander shook his head, “They’ll keep looking and she...” he breathed deeply, “She deserves better than us dragging her from place to place.”

“She’s not theirs,” the tips of Spike’s fingers painfully pressed into Xander’s knee.

“I...She’s not ours. She...” Xander tried.

“Who’s been feeding her? Changing her nasty diapers?” Spike moved his hand back to the steering wheel, his tight hold on the fake leather making it twist out of shape.

“Spike...” Xander whispered, his eyes locked on the Magic Box on the other side of the street.

“Who gets up at night cause she wakes up crying?”

“Spike...” Xander could feel his throat closing.

“Who...” Spike persisted.

"Don't...please...just don't," Xander pleaded, "Just don't...don't make this any harder than it has to be, okay?"

Spike looked away, the muscles in his jaw working overtime.

~*~*~*~*~

"So what are we waiting for?" Buffy asked and looked up at Angel.

"I've found the child and they've agreed to hand her over," Angel stared into the [mug](#) of blood Willow had just handed him.

"Just like that?" Willow asked, "They don't want anything in return for handing the baby over?"

"No," Angel said and put the mug down on the round table Dawn was sitting at. The teenager looked up and frowned when a drop of blood hit her math book.

"I must say..." Giles started but was interrupted by the door to the shop opening.

~*~*~*~*~

"Hey, Xander," Willow said and smiled as she hurried over to him, "Angel went and solved the whole missing baby thing..." her voice trailed off when she saw what Xander was clutching against his chest.

"Xander?" Buffy took a step forward but then stopped as if they were separated by an invisible wall. Xander walked past Willow allowing Spike to follow him into the shop. Spike looked over at Angel and snarled. His opinion of the older vampire obvious.

"Is that...oh dear," Giles finally managed and pulled out one of the chairs by the table and sat down.

"I don't u-understand..." Willow stuttered and looked from Angel to Xander. Her eyes focusing on the little chubby hand holding on to the collar of Xander's jacket. Hana turned her head, small blue eyes blearily scanning the room. Xander rubbed his hand soothingly against her back when she whimpered and hid her face against his

chest. Spike reached out and gently pulled the woolen hat off the child's head.

"Awww," Dawn abandoned her homework and bounced over to Xander, "She's soooo cute."

"She's a little tired," Xander said quietly and smiled sadly down at the mop of greenish curls resting against his shoulder.

"Scared too, I bet," Spike mumbled.

"Can I hold her?" Dawn asked and touched Hana's scaly hand.

"Don't get too close she might..." Buffy took a step forward but then suddenly blushed, "Sorry. I...um... old habit," she said and looked apologetically at Xander.

"Maybe later, Dawn," Xander said, "Maybe later when..."

"Take your time," Angel said and walked over to Xander, "I told them I'd bring the child back to LA by tomorrow."

"Thanks," Xander said and looked away.

"Yeah, Peaches," Spike growled, "Thanks so much."

"Spike," Xander looked over at the blond,
"Don't...please."

~*~*~*~*~

"So I just kept her," Xander finished his story and looked down at Hana sleeping in his arms.

"What's it like?" Willow asked, "I mean...being a pa..." she noticed Xander flinch, "Taking care of a child like that?"

"Tiring," Xander said and traced Hana's cheek with his thumb, "But..." he looked up at Spike. The vampire had stayed in the background, leaning against the stairs.
"But... in a good way."

Buffy had remained strangely quiet through Xander's retelling of events. Her eyes locked on the sleeping child.

"Xander," Angel said from his position by the door to the backroom. Xander seemed to start as if he'd forgotten the vampire was even there.

"Give me the keys to your car," Spike said and held out his hand in front of Angel.

"Why?" Angel asked suspiciously.

"So I can put Hana's stuff in the trunk," Spike's fingers curled against the palm of his hand. Angel just nodded and handed his keys over. Spike walked over to the door and didn't look back as he opened it and left the shop.

Xander pushed the chair back and stood up, "This is..." he began but then Hana squirmed in his arms and he closed his eyes. He felt a hand on his shoulder and turned his head. Giles was standing behind him. Xander turned his attention back to Angel and swallowed.

"She eh... she likes... bedtime stories and Barney...never understood what she saw in him," his voice cracked, "She's afraid of...of... don't turn off all the light when she's put to bed cause she'll get frightened when she wakes up and..." Xander tried to get his emotions under control, "She hates blended meat. Spits it up and..."

"Oh, Xander," Willow whispered from somewhere behind him.

"She eh...she..." Xander was having a hard time breathing. Hana was looking up at him with wide frightened blue eyes. Her small fingers holding on to his shirt.

"You're frightening her, pet," Spike's voice seemed to come from nowhere in particular.

"They have to know," Xander managed to get out, "She can't..."

"They'll figure it all out," Spike said as he gently took Hana from him, "They'll figure it out. She'll be fine." Hana was whimpering and holding on to Spike's duster, the leather creaking.

Angel took a step forward and reached out for her. Hana pulled as far away from him as she could while Spike was still holding her.

"Shhh," Angel tried to soothe her but she craned her neck so she could look back at Xander. Angel put his arms around her and for a few awkward seconds Spike and Angel were standing uncomfortably close as they both held the child.

"I'll stake you if she gets hurt," Spike hissed so quietly only the other vampire could hear him. Angel nodded once and Spike stepped back leaving Hana in Angel's arms.

The little girl started crying, her hands reaching out for Xander and Spike.

"Better get moving," Spike said hoarsely, "If you're going to make it to LA before sunrise."

"Yeah," Angel agreed and stopped in the doorway. He turned and looked back at Xander, "I'll keep an eye on things. Make sure she's well taken care of."

Xander didn't answer. He just watched as Angel walked out of the Magic Box with Hana.

~*~*~*~*~

The days just seemed to bleed into each other. Half the time he didn't know what day it was. He got up as early as possible. Went to work, helped build whatever they were working on that day and went home. Ate dinner or

at least pretended to.

Spike was there. Hovering. Making sure Xander took a bath now and then. Ate when he forgot to and dragged him out of bars when he'd had enough. The vampire had yelled a lot in the beginning. Told him to stop stumbling through his life.

It should have been a sign that things were worse than ever when Spike stopped yelling. When he stopped dragging Xander out of bars. When the vampire simply sat down next to him and joined him in his misery.

He should have noticed who he was turning into.

~*~*~*~*~

It all fell completely apart when he opened the door to the nursery and noticed a stuffed toy peeking out from under the crib.

"No no no," Xander mumbled as he pulled the little sheep out. Dust bunnies were clinging to the curly fur and Xander frantically started pushing them off. Combing his fingers through the short fur, desperately trying to

clean the toy.

"Xander?" Spike's voice was muffled by the closed door to the nursery, "You in there?" Spike opened the door and stared down at Xander.

"I forgot," Xander said and looked up at Spike from his kneeling position on the floor, "How could I forget her sheep."

"Give it here," Spike said and their fingers tangled up as they both stubbornly held on to the toy.

"She can't sleep without her sheep," Xander said and pulled the toys toward him.

"Just a fucking stupid toy," Spike huffed and pulled back. Xander lost his footing and landed on top of Spike. Neither tried to move. Xander just exhaled and let the stuffed toy rest between them.

"I can't go on like this," Xander whispered.

~*~*~*~*~

Spike listened to Xander sniffing.

Xander had turned his back to him and had curled up around his pillow. Spike finally made a decision and pulled on Xander's shoulder until the human turned around.

Xander was staring at the ceiling. His eyes shining in the dark of the room.

"Come here," Spike said and Xander curled up around the vampire's cool body and finally cried.

~*~*~*~*~

It wasn't supposed to happen like that.

When Xander had pictured it, it had been slow and soft and something they had used days and hours to build up to. It wasn't supposed to be about the both of them being too damn drunk to not do it and not drunk enough to pretend they hadn't wanted it all along.

It was supposed to happen on the bed they'd shared for

months and not half way on and half way off the couch. Xander's back bending painfully and awkwardly as they fought to get at least some of their clothes off.

It wasn't suppose to be so fast they didn't actually get all their clothes off. Wasn't supposed to be about pain instead of pleasure.

It wasn't supposed to be like that.

And now it was too late...

~*~*~*~*~

"You stupid son of a bitch," Spike growled as he hauled Xander up from the damp grass.

"Is he okay?" Clem asked and patted Xander's cheek.

"I'm gonna kill him when he sobers up," Spike started dragging Xander out of the graveyard.

"I'm sure he just took a wrong turn on his way home," Clem tried as he followed the irate vampire.

"Boy grew up on the Hellmouth, Clem, he knows falling asleep at the cemetery is goddamn stupid."

Clem watched as Spike pushed Xander into the backseat of the car and slammed the door shut.

"This isn't going to have a happy ending...is it?" Clem asked.

Spike stopped pacing back and forth. He turned and stared at Clem as if he'd never seen him before.

"I've been thinking about turning him," Spike confessed brokenly, "He'd stop worrying about her..."

"He'd stop being Xander," Clem said.

"Yeah," Spike nodded and looked up at the stars.

Part Seventeen

Xander sat at the bar and stared down into the murky yellow beer sloshing around at the bottom of his glass. He traced the edge of the glass with his thumb and he kept his eyes locked on the logo stamped on the side of it.

Spike wouldn't drink this brand unless he didn't have a choice. Called it piss. Xander took a gulp of it and smiled slightly. Spike might be right. At least it did its job as it slowly spread warmth and tranquility through his body.

It never lasted long, the numbness. Never as long as he would have liked.

Xander held his hand up just as the bartender walked by and a new glass of beer appeared in front of him just as the old, and sadly empty, glass disappeared.

The other regulars had stopped trying to get him to talk after he'd replied with nothing but dismissive grunts. He wasn't there to talk, he wasn't there to get lucky. He was there to forget and hopefully get drunk enough to stop feeling so damn miserable.

"Hey," a drunken voice slurred.

“No use talking to that jerk,” the middle-aged peroxide blond sitting to Xander’s left said.

“Can talk to my own son if I want to,” the well-known voice stated, “So just shut the fuck up, slut!”

Xander’s fingers clenched so hard around the edge of the bar that his knuckles turned white.

“Hey, Tony,” the bartender said and nodded at him, “You want the usual?”

Tony must have answered with a nod because a bottle of beer was pushed into the drunk’s hand.

“Dad,” Xander whispered and turned just enough on the barstool to look at his father.

“Haven’t seen your ugly face around the house lately,” Tony said and took a healthy swig of beer.

“Haven’t lived there for months,” Xander answered and turned back to his beer.

“Huh,” Tony shrugged, “Hadn’t really noticed.”

“Didn’t expect you to,” Xander mumbled and took another gulp of his beer.

“Look at you,” Tony said and leant closer to Xander, “Big man drinking beer and not even offering to pay for your dad’s.”

Xander looked up and stared at the large mirror behind the long bar desk. It was covered in fly shit and badly needed a good cleaning. He watched his own reflection. His father was still leaning into Xander’s space, his arm heavily around his son’s shoulders. Xander studied their faces.

“Seems I-like,” Tony hiccupped, “the apple doesn't fall far from the tree, huh?”

Xander felt sick. He pushed away from the bar and his sudden movement toppled the barstool. His father clumsily stepped back and narrowed his eyes in anger.

”S-stupid bastard,” Tony swayed a little from side to side as he watched his son run out of the bar.

~*~*~*~*~

Willow put another of the newly arrived books on the shelves by the register. Her fingers felt strangely numb as if they were asleep. She picked up another of the books, steadied the pile on the floor with her foot. She looked down at the brown leather cover, the book was old and the edges fragile.

"Willow?" Buffy asked and took the book out of the witches hand.

"Mmmmm," Willow answered absentmindedly.

"Maybe you should just sit down for a few minutes," Buffy suggested, "I'm sure the books can wait and if..."

"He doesn't smile anymore," Willow interrupted, "And I think," she whispered, "I think he's drinking."

Buffy's shoulders slumped and she just nodded, "I know."

"I tried to talk to Xander about it but...it's like..." Willow reached out for another book from the pile and ran her slim hand over it, a small cloud of dust danced in the air, "It's like he's only partly there."

"He's..." Buffy couldn't find the right words, "He's mourning, Willow."

"But he shouldn't do that alone," Willow hugged the book against her chest.

"He isn't," Willow and Buffy both turned and looked at Dawn. She was sitting at the table surrounded by school books, "He's got Spike," the teenager pointed out.

"But...but..." Willow looked from Buffy to Dawn, "He's my best friend. He...I mean, I want to help him."

"Maybe you can't," Buffy said softly.

"But... Do you think Spike can?" Willow's voice trailed off and the vampire's name was nothing more than a whisper.

"I think Spike might be the only one who understands," Buffy said.

~*~*~*~*~

Spike woke up to the muffled sound of crying. He sat up on the couch and blinked at the dark living room. The TV had been turned off at some point after he had fallen asleep and the half-empty bottle of JD had vanished from the coffee table.

Spike kicked the blanket, that had fallen off him, away and stood up. He stumbled over his own boots as he walked over to the bedroom door and stood there listening for a few seconds. Spike walked into the room and over to the closed door to the bathroom. He could hear the water running in the shower. Another muffled sob made him push the door open.

Xander stood fully clothed under the spray of the showerhead, getting soaked. His dark hair was plastered to his forehead as he pressed his face against a folded towel. The shower curtain was open and the water made the floor tiles slippery.

Spike stepped in behind Xander and grabbed on to the broad shaking shoulders. He could feel the freezing cold water soak through his jeans and t-shirt, making the black fabric stick to his chilled skin.

"Xander?" Spike said and rested his forehead against the taller man's back.

"He said..." Xander's voice quivered as he finally turned his head enough for him to speak, "He said I was like him."

"Who?" Spike ran a hand down Xander's back, feeling every shiver through his sensitive fingertips, "Who told you?"

"M-my dad," Xander let the wet towel fall to the floor, "He's right, Spike," he closed his eyes, "He saw right through me."

"Not like him, Xander," Spike promised, "Never were like that bastard."

"But I am," Xander persisted as Spike turned off the water and started helping Xander out of his cold drenched clothes, "I'm no better than him. Just another alcoholic Harris to add to the growing pile of human shit my family keeps producing."

Spike growled as he knelt down and helped Xander step out of the clinging pants, "Not like those wankers."

Xander just sighed and held on to the vampire's shoulder for balance.

~*~*~*~*~

"I just don't see how I can help?" Angel said and looked from one clan leader to the other.

"We need a..." the tall emerald female waved her hand, "A mediator, I suppose," she turned and looked at the Moirui demon sitting on the other side of the big grey marble table.

"We need no such thing," the man boomed and the scales on his forehead rustled as he looked aggressively from Angel to the woman. The young male sitting next to the female clan leader stared down at the tabletop.

"Then how do you suggest we solve this problem?" she asked.

"There's nothing that needs solving," the leader of the Yara clan snarled at her, "The child stays with my clan. The child follows the mother," he shot an angry look at

the young male, "That's the traditional way things are done."

"Where is Hana staying now?" Angel asked.

"Midori," the female corrected him. The young male sighed and ran a shaking hand through his dark green hair.

"Midori?" the Yara clan leader scoffed, "Her name is Turkessa."

Angel pinched the bridge of his nose and sighed.

"What?" the female asked disbelievingly.

"She should have a name to show her pride in the Yara clan," the demon rumbled and crossed his arms over his broad chest.

"Midori is a traditional name used for many generations in the Verdell clan," she said and stared aggressively at her opponent.

Angel looked over at the young man. He seemed nervous and tired. His fingers holding on to the edge of the

marble table as if it was the only thing holding him up.

“Just because your son...” the last word was hissed as the leader of the Yara clan stabbed a finger in air, “...finally found his way home doesn’t mean you have more right to the child than we do.”

“My son fathered the child,” the woman said and got up so fast her chair skittered across the floor behind her.

“Well, he should have taken care of her then,” the voices grew in volume as the leaders started arguing, “Maybe my daughter would be alive today if he had stayed with her.”

The young man looked as if he’d been slapped.

“My Vireo is a man of honor,” the female practically screamed.

“Well, where was his precious honor when the slayer killed my daughter and my grandchild was left to be raised by a human,” the Yara leader asked loudly.

“We wanted to get away from the two of you,” Angel heard the young man mumble.

“The child stays with the Verdell clan,” the female leader said and slapped the table with her hand.

“How dare you...” the Yara leader started.

Angel tuned out the argument and watched as the young man quietly got up and left the room.

~*~*~*~*~

Xander turned over in his sleep, his arm flopping awkwardly against the pillow. Spike watched as Xander found a more comfortable position to sleep in. The vampire curled around him, his hand resting on the warm soft stomach.

A sliver of sunlight had found its way through a tiny gap in the curtain. Spike watched as the beam of light traveled over Xander’s thigh and up across the suntanned skin toward the human’s hips. Even though it was inches away from Spike’s fingertips he could still feel the heat from the sunlight. Spike splayed his fingers across Xander’s stomach. He could feel the muscles working underneath the soft tissue when Xander

stretched in his sleep.

The heat intensified as the slice of sunlight traveled closer. Spike narrowed his eyes and watched as smoke started rising from his fingers. The smell of burnt flesh filled the room and Spike closed his eyes and bit his lip as pain shot up his arm and settled in his chest. Xander mumbled something and then turned, shielding Spike from the light.

~*~*~*~*~

Giles looked a little surprised when Spike handed him a bottle of fine whiskey.

“Is this cursed somehow?” the watcher wanted to know.

“Cursed?” Spike asked.

“Do you need me to see if it has been cursed or...” Giles tried to explain.

“It’s a gift,” Spike said and tapped a black polished nail on the bottle.

“A gift?” Giles seemed to become more and more confused.

“Emptying the house of liquor,” Spike said, “Saved this from going down the drain.”

“Xander was going to pour eighteen year old scotch down the drain?” Giles sounded appalled.

“Better than pouring it down his throat,” Spike pointed out.

“Quite,” Giles nodded and looked down at the bottle in his hand, “Well, in that case,” Giles adjusted his glasses, “Thank you.”

~*~*~*~*~

“That’s the last one,” Xander said as he poured the bottle of cheap whiskey down the kitchen sink.

“Yeah...” Spike nodded and grabbed on to Strife when the cat tried to lick a small puddle of liquor.

“We still need to talk,” Xander looked at Spike. Strife

hissed at the both of them and strolled out of the kitchen with its tail held high.

“Was hoping we wouldn’t have to,” Spike honestly said and leant against the kitchen counter.

“I need to know if...” Xander’s fingers were clutching at the empty bottle, “You and me...the sex and...” Xander’s voice trailed off.

“Yeah?” Spike looked down at his boots.

“Was it just... you know,” Xander put the bottle down on the counter between them, “A drunk thing?”

Spike looked up as if the question startled him, “A drunk thing?” he parroted.

“We never...before...” Xander swallowed.

“No,” Spike said and shook his head, “Wasn’t a drunk thing. Wasn’t a thing at all.”

“What do you mean?” Xander asked.

“Wanted you,” Spike said, “Just happened to be drunk when I finally got you.”

~*~*~*~*~

“Tell me about them,” Vireo said as he looked at Angel. The other guests in Caritas were listening to a large blob of yellow slime crooning ‘My Way’ on the stage.

“Why?” Angel asked and looked at the young demon. Vireo looked worn out, his blue eyes were glazed and he had dark bruises under his eyes.

“My mother...” Vireo stared down at his drink, “She means well.”

“So does the Yara leader,” Angel said.

Vireo laughed, the sound sad and despondent, “Everybody means well.”

“Why did you leave her behind, unprotected?” the question had bothered Angel for some time.

“We started hearing rumors about our clans looking for

us,” the young demon sighed, “We thought... I went to New York, made it easy to track me. We hoped we could divert them. We were supposed to meet up in Sunnydale.”

“Things didn’t work out like you planned,” Angel said.

“Do they ever?” Vireo asked, “They... my mother and Ferryn’s father they argue about names. They argue about unimportant things while my little girl won’t eat and never laughs or smiles.”

“Why do you want me to tell you about Xander and Spike?” Angel finally asked.

“Xander and Spike...” Vireo said as if he was tasting the names, “I want to know who my little girl misses.”

~*~*~*~*~

Xander stood staring at the crib. It seemed naked. The small mattress stood on its side leaning against the wooden bars.

“Maybe we should move all this out?” Xander’s voice

was barely audible in the dimly lit room.

“There’s no rush,” Spike answered from the doorway,
“But if you need it gone...”

“What I need...” Xander looked at the lonely stuffed toy sitting on the dusty shelf, “What I need, I can’t have,” he whispered.

~*~*~*~*~

He watched as the human and the vampire patrolled the graveyard. They never strayed far from each other. Their shoulders bumping together as they walked and the back of their hands close enough for their knuckles to be touching.

He stood hidden behind an old crypt. His fingers digging into the worn and crumbling stones. The moon cast its silver light on the trees, making them look tall and sinister as their long shadows fell across the old tombstones.

The human whispered something to the vampire, his voice soft and teasing. They both chuckled and the

human pointed over at a corner of the graveyard with the heavy battleaxe he carried.

~*~*~*~*~

Xander stopped a few doors down from their own front door and just stared. Spike grumbled displeased when he walked right into Xander's back.

"What?" Spike asked and ran a hand down his duster to get rid of the last fledge dust clinging to the leather. Xander didn't answer, he just kept standing there blocking Spike's view of the hallway. The vampire stepped around the human only to stop moving so suddenly he almost tripped over his own feet.

"Um..." the jade green demon standing outside their front door said and awkwardly fiddled with the baby carrier strapped to his body. A halo of green curls were sticking out from behind the dark blue fabric of the carrier, "Angel gave me your address."

"Hana?" Xander said disbelievingly and laughed when he got an answering happy squeal from the carrier. Xander hurried over but then stopped in front of the demon.

“Here,” the demon said and unsnapped the carrier. Xander reached in and gently lifted Hana out. The little girl patted his face.

“Hana,” Xander said and hugged her. Spike walked over to him and touched the little girl’s curls.

“I uh...” the demon said uncertainly.

“Thank you,” Xander said, “Thanks for letting us see her,” he reluctantly handed her back but the demon shook his head.

“Could we go inside?” the demon asked.

“Right,” Spike fished a key out of his jeans pocket. He unlocked the door and opened it, stepped back and let Xander carry Hana inside. The demon followed with the empty baby carrier still strapped to his chest.

“I’m...my name is Vireo,” the demon said and reached out his hand.

“Spike,” Spike said and shook the offered hand, “And that’s Xander,” Spike pointed at Xander.

Spike just stood there for a second, the door still wide open behind him, before he closed it and ushered the demon into the living room.

“She looks thin,” Spike said as he sat down on the couch next to Xander. Hana reached out for him and Spike took her and buried his nose in her hair.

“She won’t eat,” Vireo said and smiled when he heard Hana giggle, “I haven’t heard her do that since I came back.”

“What?” Xander said and turned his attention to the demon sitting in the recliner, “She laughs all the time.”

“Not any more,” Vireo said and shook his head.

“When do you have to go back?” Xander said quietly and tickled Hana’s feet. The little girl squealed and grabbed on to Spike’s duster while trying to squirm away from Xander’s fingers.

“Tonight,” Vireo said, “I’m leaving tonight.”

Xander just nodded not trusting his voice enough to say

anything.

“My mother...” Vireo began, “The clans can’t agree on anything. They keep arguing about where Hana should stay. With the Verdell clan or the Yara.”

“She staying with your clan now?” Spike asked.

“Yes,” Vireo nodded, “I still have more right to her than my mother and Hana’s grandfather do. And...” he stopped talking and just watched Xander and Spike as they cuddled Hana between them, “I’ve come to a decision.”

“A decision?” Xander asked.

“I’m going to leave tonight...” Vireo smiled when Hana clapped her hands together and quietly hummed a melody, “Alone.”

“Alone?” Spike asked confused.

“I don’t...what about...” Xander stuttered.

“The clans?” Spike finished for him.

“I’m going to inform them of my decision,” Vireo pulled the baby carrier off, “They might be angry but when push comes to shove I have the last word according to clan laws.”

“They can’t take her back?” Spike asked.

“No,” Vireo stood up and let the carrier fall down on the recliner, “She’s yours.”

~*~*~*~*~

Xander slowly woke up. He kept his eyes closed wanting to hold on to the dream he’d had for just a little longer. He pulled the covers up over his shoulders, cocooning himself in the warm bed.

“Wake up,” Spike’s voice drifted into the darkness behind Xander’s eyelids.

“No,” Xander murmured.

“Come on,” Spike demanded.

“Was having a nice dream,” Xander said defiantly.

“Yeah?” Spike sounded amused, “‘Bout what?”

“Hana,” Xander sighed and burrowed further down under the covers.

“Did she smell something like this,” Spike asked. Suddenly something cotton soft was pressed against Xander’s nose and a vile stench filled his nostrils.

“Oh my God!” Xander yelled and rolled away so fast that he rolled right off the bed.

Xander fought against the sheets tangled around his legs for a few seconds before he finally managed to stand up. Spike was standing on the other side of the bed with a bundled up diaper dangling from his fingers while he held on to Hana with the other, balancing the little girl on his hip.

“Can you say ‘Xander’s a daft twat’ Hana?” Spike smirked down at the child.

“So it wasn’t a dream, then,” Xander said as he almost stumbled over the sheets.

“Does this smell like a dream?” Spike let the diaper plop down on the bed, “You take that and throw it in the trash, yeah,” he said and walked out of the bedroom with Hana peering over his shoulder.

The End