

OK, I started writing fanfic. Spander buddy slashfic, to be precise. If you are a fan of the TV show "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" you'll probably know what I'm talking about. And if not, then you probably won't want to read this - so move along! Vampire Champion fighting on the side of good, taking time out for some hot gay vampire loving is an acquired taste, and it's also NC-17. Anyone under 21 or who happens to be my Mother, DO NOT READ! Anyone else, you have been warned.

I'm warning everybody now, this is my first attempt at creative writing since I was in high school over 20 years ago, so I expect it's going to come out sounding pretty damn juvenile. I'm recovering from knee surgery, so I can blame the Vicodin. I started writing it strictly for my own enjoyment, but hopefully a few others may get a giggle out of it. I had to post it somewhere or I was going to keep switching bits around and fiddling with it for all eternity and never get on with writing Chapter 7. I'll probably give this whole thing an extensive rewrite once I have a whole lot more practice under my belt. I can't seem to write Spike properly, he won't

behave and it's very annoying.

Rating: NC-17, eventually. Anyone who is under 21 or my mother, move along - nothing to see here!

Setting: late Season 6-ish. After Xander skips out on his wedding, but before Spike sleeps with Anya, which doesn't happen because my fic immediately goes AU off into a weird tangent of its own.

Possible Squicks: Adult situations, Explicit M/M sex, sex toys and possibly a little friendly bloodplay.

Disclaimers: Joss is God. I own nothing. If the boys were mine, they'd have spent far less time being miserable and a lot more time frolicking around nekkid.

Reposting: Why the hell would anybody want to repost this? But as long as it's not for purposes of mockage, or going onto Fandom Wank or the like, go right ahead. Just let me know where it goes

Thursday Night Kitten Poker

by

[Thedabara_cds](#)

Part One

Xander stared down into his beer, wondering for the thousandth time just how he always managed to screw up his life so completely. He'd tried to explain to Anya that he just wanted to take it slow, make sure to do it right this time, rebuild trust on both sides. But he'd wound up sounding like he'd wanted to go back to dating her because she wasn't good enough to marry. Then he'd told her everything about the "vision of their future" he'd been shown. All of it, including the frying pan to the head. At that moment he knew he had fucked up beyond repair. They would never be a real couple again. He hadn't meant to, but he'd hurt her so badly she might not ever really trust anyone again.

He really didn't want to finish drinking the beer he'd been staring at for the last half hour. Once it was gone, all that was left was the long lonely walk home to his far-too-empty apartment. Where's a decent vampire attack when you really need one?

Anything to not have to face that God-awful silence just yet.

In true "just when it can't get any worse, it does" fashion, Xander looked up just in time to see an undead smirk in leather looking him over with amusement. "And what's wrong with you, whelp? Someone ran over your dog?"

With careful precision, Xander moved aside his beer and started banging his head on the table.

After the initial shock wore off, Spike grabbed the back of his collar, hauling him upright. "What the bugging hell is wrong with you?"

"I'm totally fucked for life," Xander stated conversationally. "And you?"

Spike just stared at him like he'd grown a new head. Then he smelled Anya's cloying perfume on him, and it clicked. "You honestly thought she'd take you back? After you humiliated her in front of everyone she ever knew? Not bloody likely."

For a moment Xander looked furious, but then he deflated as the truth of Spike's words sank in.

"You're right. Pretty damn stupid, huh?"

Spike pulled out the empty chair next to him and sprawled across it, rather surprised that the kid hadn't just decked him. He pulled out a cigarette and said a little more gently, "Look, you've busted things up pretty bad; stands to reason you're not going to fix things overnight. She's hurt, and she's going to need time, lots of time, and lots of constant groveling from you, I expect."

Xander stared into his beer again with a sigh. "Nope, she and I will never patch it up, no matter how much groveling I do. The trust is gone. Hell, I'll be lucky to come out of this without getting 'toaded.' Did you know she's a Vengeance Demon again? Got her old job back."

"Makes sense," Spike replied. "Going back to what's comfortable, what she's used to. But she's changed now. She won't get the same thrill out of it as she

used to. I doubt she'll stick with it for long." They both sat in silence for a moment, each thinking of happier times, now long past.

"So," Spike asked, breaking the silence, "Wanna go kill stuff? There's no better pick-me-up when you're down."

Xander finished off his dreaded beer and signaled the waitress for another round. "Nah, think I'll just have another round or two and then toddle off to my lonely little bachelor pad."

Spike looked him over speculatively. "Drinking alone in your state isn't going to do you any good. What you need is to be drinking with a bunch of rowdies – pick a few bar fights, smash a few heads together, do something criminally stupid. That'll get your mind off your troubles."

Xander scrutinized the enthusiasm and complete lack of mockage in Spike's face suspiciously. "Why the hell should you care?"

Instead of getting the defensive "I don't, so sod off!" Xander expected, Spike heaved a huge sigh, slouched even further and laid his head back. Then he stated in a voice bordering on petulant four-year-old, "I'm BORED. God. I am so. Bloody. Bored." His voice rose as he warmed to his subject. "No one wants to get hustled at pool anymore! People-watching just isn't the same when you can't corner them and eat them, or at least slap them around a bit! And killing things for the Slayer and her merry band of burkes hasn't exactly ingratiated me with the demon population round town. Thanks to you lot, the few places that I could count on for a bit of rough n' tumble have all banned me now! What bleedin' good is immortality when there's nothing fun to do around here?" His splayed legs betrayed his relaxed posture, jiggling up and down with pent-up energy. "Even *Passions* just isn't the same, now that Timmy's gone." He complained.

Spike craned his neck and opened one eye Xander's way. "I've got two hours to kill, minimum, before I can go cage drinks at Willy's and wait for the Thursday night poker game to start. Do you think

that if you *really* concentrate, you can stop moping about long enough to lose a game or two of pool?"

Now it was Xander who looked at Spike like he'd grown another head. Just as he was working up something suitably scathing to say about that suggestion, Spike stubbed out his cigarette and cut him off. "See here whelp, you need to get out with some guys for a change, and Giles just ain't gonna cut it. When's the last time you went to a party that didn't involve braiding hair? Are you really looking forward to spending Saturday nights out clubbing and cruising for birds *with Willow*? Or fighting off Dawn's attempts to give you a makeover? Or sitting alone, watching *Star Trek* reruns in your socks and underwear?" he scoffed. "That's not what you need right now. A few rounds of pool, then an evening in the company of men, playing a Gentlemen's game and relaxing, that's exactly what you need to get your mind off things." Spike gave Xander a open, guileless smile that had every warning bell in Xander's head blaring like a four-alarm fire drill.

Xander sputtered "Men? A Gentlemen's game? In

the back room at *Willy's*?" He looked Spike over, more suspicious than ever.

"Never said they were Gentlemen, Harris. Wouldn't be any damn fun if they were, that's the point."

Xander thought over his options, and made a tiny decision that was to have some huge long-term consequences. "I don't know what evil plan you're up to, Spike, and I don't really care... But damnit, anything's better than going back to that empty apartment this early. I get to break first, though, seeing as I'm going to be the one paying for the pool table."

Part Two

Xander had a tough decision to make. Possibly a life or death decision. Fight or flee? Cover your ass at all

costs, or go for the gusto and screw the consequences? What were his odds on survival here? Well, you only live once.

"I'll see you two kittens and raise you ... Twenty bucks and that freaky bracelet I won earlier." Xander said with a nonchalance that completely belied the butterflies trying to break their way out of his stomach. He'd learned early on in the evening that most of the other players could hear his heartbeat, so bluffing was out of the question. So he'd been playing it straight as an arrow all night, and should be losing like a good rube, the kind who wouldn't be getting his lungs torn out in a dark alley later this evening. But he'd won several large hands, including the last two - when he'd been expressly trying to lose them. That bracelet gave him the creeps. No way was that thing going home with him. He took another gulp of Tequila. And why does Spike always have to splay his legs and frame his crotch with his hands like that? It's so damn annoying. And distracting. Stupid vampire.

Clem and Spike both folded. That just left Big Bison-

horned Guy and the Tentacled One. Those twitchy little tentacles framing his face had been unconsciously signaling 'tells' all night, and the demon's losing streak was getting him seriously pissed off. If either of them would just call already, then he could show his crappy hand to them, and they could take back their winnings and everybody would be happy. Maybe even keep all their organs.

Both of them did call. And when Xander flipped over his cards... one of them was distinctly different from what he remembered being in his hand a minute ago. Surely he wasn't that drunk, was he? Oh, Holy Hand-grenade, he had the winning hand! Why the fuck hadn't he folded when he'd had the chance? He was never gonna make it home in one piece now.

The Bison Guy was stoic about his loss, but the Green Wormy Guy was seething with resentment. Just when he was sure the guy was going to start spewing bile and melt everyone in the room, he handed him the deck of cards instead.

"Oh, yeah, my deal. So, umm, Baseball?" At the blank looks, he elaborated. "Seven card stud, threes and nines are wild, fours face up get you an extra card."

When the burly demons both bowed out of the game, Xander almost fainted in relief. Apparently, Big Bison guy had young hatching soon, and a very hormone-driven wife sitting on eggs at home. Xander dealt out the next hand minus the two players, and once they had left all three of the remaining players visibly relaxed and let out breaths they hadn't realized they were holding.

"You were bloody brilliant mate," Spike said to Xander with a backslap and a grin that promised nefarious doings. He began to refill Xander's glass for him.

"No thanks, I've had enough booze. My eyes are already playing tricks on me – I've no idea how I won the last few hands." Xander only then noticed just how shifty both Spike and Clem were looking.

"You two were *cheating!* I knew it! You cheated so... I would win? What the hell for?"

"Because it would look too suspicious if Clem won that bracelet himself. But now, it was fairly won in a game of chance by a human with no ties to the Shrevacor clan. And the fact that Clem's girlfriend has her heart set on that exact bracelet is purely coincidence. Right, Clem?"

"Um, right," agreed Clem, not sure why he was feeling in a bit over his head at the moment, what with all the tension suddenly in the room.

Spike refilled Clem's tumbler, threw a crafty glance in Xander's direction, and drawled "Now, that doesn't mean that you *have* to give Clem that bracelet in return for staking you those two starter kittens. You could just give him two back and take that little bauble home with you."

Xander shuddered at the thought and shook his head so hard he almost jerked himself out of his chair. "No! Take it! Get it away from me! That thing

gives me the screamin' meemies."

"Good, because if she doesn't get that bracelet, heads will roll, starting with mine," Confessed Clem as he expertly scooped it into a leather pouch without touching it. "That thing sets my teeth on edge, but it's a family heirloom, and she's not going to rest until she gets it back in the vault where it belongs."

Xander looked askance at Spike, who said quietly "Long story. Tell you later." Spike then looked him up and down, and for once, instead of feeling that Spike's gaze found him incredibly lacking somehow, the once-over he was getting was spreading a rush of warmth everywhere, making his toes curl. When Spike's eyes reached Xander's face again, their eyes met. And he's doing that thing with his tongue behind his teeth again! Gah! "Besides, I didn't think jewelry made from human teeth braided with demon chest hair is quite your style, pet."

"That's... ish. That's something I'd have been a whole lot happier not knowing. Hey, take the kitties

too, would you? I have a no-pets clause in my lease."

As Xander and Clem packed up the felines, Spike divvied up the other winnings, and realized the kid really had made quite a killing. He pocketed the Clan of Devros ring and a couple of other cheap baubles that would make him a handsome profit in certain demon circles, and let the kid keep the lion's share of the cash in return.

"C'mon Harris, lets get you home. Wouldn't want some slithery nasty to jump you now that you're flush with your ill-gotten booty, now would we?" Spike said with a lascivious little smirk. The comment brought up an instant mental picture that had Xander blushing furiously, and reminding himself that that wasn't what Spike meant at all, so get your mind out of the gutter, already. He told himself he'd never be thinking things like that if he hadn't been drinking rotgut all night.

As they walked to the car, Spike flicked away his cigarette and drawled "So, that wasn't as bad as you

expected, was it? You enjoy yourself? Feel a bit better now?"

Xander thought about it a bit and replied with some surprise "I haven't thought about Anya once all night. So, yeah...I did. Thanks. I guess."

"Don't mention it. Seriously, not to anybody. Don't want anyone thinking that I'm going soft. My reputation is bad enough as it is."

Part Three

"Hey, Spike!"

"Harris. What brings you here?"

"Cheap alcohol. There's a Godzilla film festival on tonight, and watching Tokyo fall is an excellent

reason to celebrate. Besides, Lee's Liquors is the only place that carries that funky stout you like so much. So whadda you say? Wanna watch Toyko get stomped on?"

"You're on."

As the six of them finished the last sweep of the night, Spike hung back a little, hoping to talk to Xander. Buffy had been invading his personal space all evening, mixing quippy little personal digs with oh-so-innocent views of her cleavage and jugular in a way that was usually guaranteed to get his motor running. But now, it just made him deeply sad. She'd said that their little thing, if it could even be called that, was killing her. It was killing him too. They'd been getting along so well when she first came back. He'd been so happy then, and in hindsight, he honestly wished they had never started fucking each other. Because that's all it was to her. He was good enough to pound her raw, but

not to hold her hand, or kiss her, or be allowed to spend any time with Dawnie like he used to. He missed his niblet something fierce, and he was sick of being treated like dirt except when Buffy wanted something from him.

Ever since Buffy had broken off their little... whatever it was, he'd been avoiding her. He would have liked to be able to part friends, at least. But as he suspected, the Slayer hormones were overriding her common sense again. *But not enough to treat him with the tiniest bit of common decency, especially around her friends, oh, no.* He knew that "I want a shag and I want it now, and I really couldn't give a rat's ass what you want" look quite well, and he was having none of it. No way in hell was he going to go home to his crypt anytime soon. If she didn't know where to find him, then neither of them could do something spectacularly stupid. Again.

"Oi, lad. You up for a movie after this?" Spike asked quietly. "Midnight Matinee is '*Death Race 2000*' tonight. We have just enough time for a beer and

chips run before it starts." Spike knew perfectly well that Xander had his own copy of it on VHS. He also knew that the boy had practically worn it out.

"Hmm. I am a bit short on my recommended daily dose of gratuitous violence. And my beer levels are getting pretty low, too... Besides, *nobody* scores my navigator and gets away with it!"

Willow heard low voices, and looked over her shoulder just in time to see Spike and Xander exchange nearly identical devious little smirks. *Holy moly!* First Buffy starts acting bipolar, and then those two start *bonding*. Everybody has been acting all jiggy lately. Perhaps it's time for cleansing spells all round again.

Part Four

Author's Note:

I've been trying to get their clothes off, really I have! They just don't want to behave! But I'm just trying to build trust, friendship, mutual respect and loyalty between them, before I whip out the butt-plugs, rawhide and honey. I'll get to the smut, eventually.

Xander carefully descended the rusty ladder.

"Spike? Are you down here?" He reached the bottom and walked over to the big bed, but it was empty. The dresser opposite was a mess, but had a big sketch of Joyce and her girls taped over the mirror. It was a very good likeness; it captured all three personalities beautifully. Especially Joyce's kind eyes. Xander remembered the look on Spike's face back when he'd furiously declared that Joyce was a real lady, always had a cuppa for him, never treated him like a freak. And Xander had been so sure at the time that it was all just an act. He felt a rush of shame.

"You goddamned tit! Keep this up, and so help me you're *firewood!*"

"Spike? You down here?" he repeated.

"Harris! Give us a hand here, would you?" Spike appeared in the entrance to the sewers, dragging a very big chair. It was dark solid oak and more like a huge throne, with Bacchus heads overlooking the backrest, cloven hooves for feet, and long talons on the armrests. Little naked wood-nymphs were prancing over every flat surface, drinking and frolicking and joyously debauching away with some VERY well endowed satyrs. The chair was an absolute peon to hedonism – it was perfect for Spike. Xander could just picture him reclining there: one leg thrown over an armrest, cigarette in one hand and a bottle of JD in the other...

"Where on earth did you find this? I've never seen anything like it."

Spike plopped down on his bed, pulled out a cig, and deftly lit up. "Remember that dagger I took off of that Dras'nak demon we killed two weeks ago? Well, I traded that for an Altarian Horn of Calling, swapped that and two Buzzcocks CDs with a buddy

of Clem's for a Boracci Talisman of Protection, and then bartered that to the Griffle demon who owns the pawn shop on Park Street for this chair, a pair of short swords he thinks are eighteenth century French but are really seventeenth Century Danish and worth a lot more then he was asking for them, and a damn fine case of single malt."

Spike beamed up proudly at Xander, who was staring, gobsmacked.

"So, I did pretty good, eh?"

"Spike? There's something I *really* need to show you."

"Oh. Dear. GOD!"

Xander desperately held down the giggle that was trying to break out. Perhaps it hadn't been the best idea to spring "Antiques Roadshow" on Spike

without breaking it to him gently first.

"Did you SEE that?" Spike cried indignantly. "This is complete bollocks! In my day, you could pick those up anywhere for less than two shillings! What kind of pillock would pay a hundred dollars for a postcard of some dozy cow in her corset and stockings?"

Xander kept a straight face through sheer force of will. "Well, you heard what he said, Spike; it's especially rare, that postcard is from 1873, and a similar one from 1910 wouldn't be worth half that. Makes you wish you kept some of that stuff now, huh?... You're so good at trading stuff with demons, I'm surprised you haven't tried your hand at antique trading. You probably know more about Victoriana than all those experts put together," Xander said in a completely neutral tone of voice, turning away and biting his lip hard as he retreated to the kitchen. He grabbed two beers and the flyer off his fridge as he heard the TV narrator natter on about a truly hideous old vase that was worth thousands, to Spike's utter disgust. Xander was grinning so hard,

his face hurt.

As Xander plopped next to Spike on the couch and handed over his beer, Spike grumbled, "Antiques sales don't usually cater to demon folk, Harris. We tend to keep very different hours."

"Oh, you'd be surprised the kinds of hours the big rummage sales keep nowadays." Xander grinned as he handed Spike a flyer for a huge sale that weekend. "It's indoors, and only about an hour's drive away. They have about six hundred dealers booths, all different sorts of stuff. If you don't mind skimming through a lot of worthless crap, you can find some really cool things dirt cheap."

Spike glanced at the flyer, then looked over Xander for signs of mockage, but found none. "Sounds like you've done this before."

"My mom and I used to go, when I was a kid. She'd give me two or three dollars, and I'd buy cheap old comic books and used toys," Xander remembered fondly. "Nowadays, I go looking for shabby chic for

my bachelor pad, maybe a pretty bit of old costume jewelry for... one of the girls." His heart ached as he thought of Anya. He realized with a little shock that it had been quite a while since he *had* thought of her. "They also have a bar in the building, with great food and cheap stiff drinks for afterwards. I'll even spot you a twenty in seed money if you want, provided I get to see everything you buy. I suspect it'll be well worth it just to see what you walk out of there with. So whatta ya say – fancy a little roadtrip with me this weekend?"

Part Five

The two of them paused on the head of the stairway landing for a moment, and scanned the bustle below them. The huge auditorium had been open for several hours already, and was hopping

with activity.

"Look at all the people down there. And every one of them hoping to find that one priceless antique going for a song. Can't you just smell the avarice?" Xander mused with a smirk almost worthy of Spike himself.

Spike replied "It's no Portobello Road, but it'll do. It never occurred to me that they had these things here in California."

"First Sunday of every month. Wanna just start at this end and work our way that direction? I got a dealer buddy up in that row who is always willing to buy old poker chips."

Xander & Spike collapsed into one of the plush booths, both of them laden down with the day's loot. The bar was actually part of the VFW hall, but Xander was apparently a card-carrying member of

the VFW and was familiar with the place, which looked like it hadn't been redecorated since 1959. As Spike gratefully lit his first cigarette in hours, an ancient waitress walked up and grinned at the pair. "So how are you kids doing tonight?"

"Fine, Charlene. Tired and hungry, but we made a really good haul."

Spike jaw dropped a little. The waitress knew him? Just how often did Xander come here?

"Good! The usual for you, sweetie?"

Xander nodded.

"And how about you sugar? Need a minute to decide?" Charlene asked Spike with a warm smile, offering him a menu.

"Depends. What's the usual?"

"Beer-battered onion rings, beer-battered fish, hash browns with melted cheese and green beans."

Anything beer-battered here is worth ordering. And they make their own root beer as well, it's the best." Xander informed him with enthusiasm, smacking his lips.

"I'll just have the onion rings and the hot wings, and the strongest beer you have."

As Charlene left for the kitchen, Xander rubbed his hands together and chortled, "So, what'd you get? I'll show you my loot if you show me yours."

They both started pulling out and comparing their purchases. To Xander's surprise, Spike's musical tastes didn't just run to punk rock. He had bought several old 78 r.p.m. records, a few 45's and a battered old record player that folded up into a little suitcase. He was quite excited about the prospect of hearing the old tunes again for the first time in decades. He'd gotten a few old leather-bound books as well. Xander had bargained down a dealer for a nice old Bugs Bunny planter from the 1940's and a lovely carved and inlaid jewelry box for Willow. And his friend had given him a very good

deal on several old sixties Mexican monster movie posters in return for the poker chips Xander had gotten at a garage sale the month before. And Spike had haggled hard for a delicate Victorian choker for Dawn, that Xander knew she would squeal in delight over and probably never take off again. Spike's coup de grace, though, was an old Masonic watch fob with a gold skull with red eyes. The dealer had thought they were red rhinestones, but Spike was quite certain that they were rubies. Then their food came, and they both worked on plowing through everything they'd ordered.

By the time they were on the road back home the sun had gone down, so Spike chucked the blanket in back and went through Xander's box of CD's. What he found there astonished him. Sure the kid liked NSYNC, but he also liked the Reverend Horton Heat, Squirrel Nut Zippers, Ray Charles and the Talking Heads, B.B. King and Bob Marley. And French accordion music. And Hawaiian Slide Guitar Christmas Classics. The kid has diverse tastes, he thought, I'll give him that. He put in a Cab Calloway CD, and let his mind wander back to another, much

happier time.

"You like Cab Calloway? Wait a minute – why am I surprised?"

"Like him? He's bloody brilliant, he is! You shoulda seen him back in his prime. Voice like a dark angel, and a body that moved like sex on legs. He had one of the sweetest asses I've ever seen on a man... and my, but he knew how to use it. He really was something."

"You?? And Cab Calloway?!? Well...Damn."

Author's Note:

For the record, as far as I know Cab was always straight as an arrow. But to me, Spike is like Greta Garbo, his allure transcends gender. No one can resist his charms.

Part Six

SMUT WARNING!!! At this point, I'm going NC-17 on this fic.

If you are under 21, or do not approve of hot man-on-man action, let alone gay vampire snuggles, then stop right now! Go home. Move along, now. There's nothing to see here.

Xander threw his keys on the table and wandered to the bathroom, stripping down and shedding clothes the entire way. It had been an exhausting day, he was covered in sticky sweat, and his skin itched like mad from all the concrete dust. Nothing was going to stop him from getting a long hot shower, right now.

As the hot water soothed his sore muscles, he [smiled](#) in anticipation of the evening. He and Spike had been spending a lot of time together of late, and he'd realized that he really looked forward to it. They'd MST-3K'd everything they watched, from bad sixties horror films to old Dr. Who TV shows to "World's Strongest Man Competition" reruns. They shared a liking for old gangster films, especially Bogart and Cagney, and the Marx Brothers, and cheesy old serials like Buck Rogers. Xander was a semi-regular at the weekly kitten [poker game](#) now.

And the couple of times that Spike took him out clubbing to "pull the birds" were *so much better* than clubbing with Willow, there was no comparison. Willow tried, she really did, but she hovered like a mother hen at straight clubs, scared every girl in the place away from him, and at Sunnydale's only gay club, well, the attention he'd scored while Willow was off trolling the room for hot babes had made him want to run screaming.

But Spike made him feel completely at ease, to the point where he could get up on the dance floor and shake his thing without feeling like a complete fool, or maybe just not caring how the hell he looked. And the girls flocked to them, just glad to hang with two guys who clearly were having so much fun. He'd quickly lost count of the times they'd both been hit on or outright propositioned. Spike was an amazing dancer himself, and Xander had felt *sooo* hot and sexy, the way everyone was looking appreciatively at the pair of them up on the dance floor, gyrating madly with whatever gorgeous girls they were dancing with at the moment. Xander had never felt so free, so unashamed of himself, so

wanted, like every pair of eyes in the room were undressing him and liked what they saw. It lasted right up until Xander looked over at Spike, and felt a niggling itch in the back of his brain that felt uncomfortably like envy. It wasn't envy of Spike either, it was the long-legged hottie draped over him, gyrating like she was trying to get his jeans pried off using only her ass muscles that he was envious of. He suddenly had a huge urge to walk over, peel the slut off of the sleek vampire, and grind his own hips hard into Spike's, make him groan, make him pant. He felt all the blood rush to his groin, and dizzy with want, completely panicked. Without a word to his dance partner, he stumbled back to their table and downed a large swig of his now warm beer, trying to figure out at what point he'd gone completely insane.

He did not want Spike. Spike was a guy! An undead guy! And Spike was not gay, any more than he was. And he was so NOT gay.

....Except that one time in Oxnard. And well, he did check out other guy's butts, you know, just for

comparison sake. Ok, so he was somewhat bi. Not that he liked to broadcast it or anything.

And yes, Spike had mentioned a few little things here and there that led him to believe that vampires were a lot less concerned with gender labels than humans were.

But Spike had never shown any interest in him personally, not that way. And Spike had become a very good friend to him. He didn't want to jeopardize that. Willow and the girls meant a lot to him, but they either stifled him with too much care and concern or completely dismissed his problems as unimportant. They were all too involved in their own problems to notice him much lately, anyway. Spike genuinely enjoyed spending time with him, liked the same things, and he never realized how empty his life had been, even when Anya lived with him, until Spike had come along and just hung out with him. Outside of sex, he and Anya just didn't share many interests in common, and he could see now that it wouldn't have worked out long-term. In a weird way, he felt closer to Spike now than he

ever did with Anya.

So, when Spike found him back at their table, he lied and babbled that he was still missing Anya a bit, and feeling a little too weird yet to be pairing off with anyone again quite so soon, and that he was a little surprised that Anya wasn't the only woman who was quite so direct about wanting sex, NOW. To Spike's credit, he brushed off the girl he'd been dancing with, and several other more pushy ladies throughout the evening who'd wanted one or both of them in no uncertain terms, and made it clear that Xander's having a good time was his first concern. It gave Xander a warm, fuzzy feeling that disturbed him greatly.

And that night was the first that he'd caught his mind wandering to the blond vampire while stroking himself in the shower. The devious smirk that meant "Let's get into trouble, baby!" ...the way his eyes would go up and down you like he was eyeing a nummy entrée...the faint smell of cigarettes and butter-soft leather...the way those tight jeans clung lovingly to every curve... No, no,

no, NO! Not going there. Xander turned up the cold water for good measure. That way lies madness. And humiliations galore.

Drying himself off and wrapping a towel around his waist, he walked back out to his bedroom. And stopped short at the vision lying on his bed, his breath catching in shock.

Spike reclined there, a picture of utter relaxation, knowing smile in place, dark red shirt unbuttoned, framing an utterly lickable chest, and... oh, God... no pants, nothing else, just a lazy hand pumping his swelling erection like he had all night to just lie there and drink in the sight of Xander in a towel. All that cold water had been for nothing, as the sight of Spike sent a dizzying rush of blood to Xander's flagging erection, instantly rock hard again and straining to knock the towel aside and introduce itself.

"Took you long enough. I was afraid you were going to stay in there all night. I started without you. You've got some catching up to do." Spike drawled,

eyeing Xander's body hungrily and letting his other hand skate across his own chest, teasing the nipples there. A pearl-like drop of fluid leaked past Spike's foreskin and dribbled down his cock, and Xander watched its journey in fascination, unable to stop from licking suddenly dry lips. *He's uncut*, his brain helpfully supplied; *you knew he would be*. As his eyes followed the movement of Spike's hand up and down, mesmerized, he nearly missed the vampire's whispered words. "C'mere pet. Know what you want; come have a little taste." Without conscious thought, Xander crawled up the bed between Spike's artfully splayed legs. As he leaned forward and traced the wet path of pre-come back up Spike's prick with his tongue, they both moaned brokenly. Then brown eyes locked with blue as he gently sucked the quivering length down as far as he could, his tongue mapping every inch along the way. Spike's flesh throbbed and jerked in his mouth, and the cool feeling of a velvety rock-hard cock sliding back and forth along his palette coupled with the vampire's groans and whispers of encouragement were driving Xander towards his own climax far too quickly. He ground himself

against the comforter beneath him, certain his pounding heart was about to explode straight past his ribs and splatter all over the room.

When Spike suddenly pulled himself out of Xander's mouth, he whimpered at the loss, only for Spike to turn around and stretch out alongside the length of Xander's body, clasping the boy's own cock firmly at the base and stroking his thighs and balls deftly with fingers, lips and tongue until Xander was begging brokenly for release. When he felt Spike's tongue gently flicking across his slit and gathering up the pre-come that was steadily leaking out, he screamed. Then noticed that Spike's cock was right in front of his face, and turnabout was fair play, after all. Inspired by some of the naughty things Spike was doing to him, he grasped Spike tightly around the base of his weeping prick, and slowly licked a line from perineum to balls, stopping to delicately suck and mouth each one of them in turn as he carefully pumped his hand up and down around Spike's shaft. The whimpers and groans escaping from the lips wrapped around his own cock meant that Spike must really like that, so did it

again. And again. Spike started to push him away, mumbling about not being able to hold back any longer, but Xander just clamped both hands around smooth pale hips, wrapped his lips around the silky pink head of Spike's cock and kept sucking, unprepared for the rush of power and sheer unbridled lust he felt when Spike wailed and bucked, and shot load after load of salty goodness across his tongue and down his throat.

As Xander finally released Spike's cock with a last friendly lick, Spike returned his attention to giving the whelp the best blowjob of his young lifetime. Just as Xander started shuddering all over, Spike carefully inserted a wet finger deep in his ass. With a hoarse scream, Xander free-fell over the precipice, fucking Spike's mouth and shooting more spunk than he ever had before – seeing stars before his eyes, and feeling some orgasmic out-of-body experience coming on...

And then Xander woke up.

In his own bed alone, panting like he'd run a

marathon, still trembling and shuddering with the aftershocks of the best orgasm of his life, and covered in his own come.

"Oh, Dear God, no. Please, no."

Author's Note:

Oh, Dear Lord. I'm actually writing smutty fanfic! And posting it where people can SEE it!! I must have gone completely insane. Thank God my mother is a computer illiterate. I just hope my hubby never sees this, or I'll never live it down. It'll be far too much fun for him, teasing me about it.

Part Seven

Xander was at the end of his tether. His subconscious was clearly out to get him. He'd thought the dream he'd had was just an aberration and refused to think about it again - and he didn't;

not until after the weekly poker game.

It had been just another Thursday, nothing special at all, about broke even, went straight home afterwards. A good time had by all, but nothing to write home about. Until he hit R.E.M. sleep, that is.

The dream he had that night involved Spike winning him in a game of kitten poker, throwing him down on the table, shredding his jeans and *claiming him* right in front of all their cheering and applauding poker buddies. He'd really wiggled out after that one.

The following evening was spent at the Magic Box, researching the latest nasty that had crossed Buffy's path. With Giles gone, it was a lot harder to even know which books to look in. Xander was nervous as a scalded cat, until he realized that Spike hadn't even been invited. Then he felt oddly disappointed.

That night, he'd dreamed that he and the whole gang were back in the old high school library. When he opened the huge box of donuts he'd brought,

the Scoobies fell on them like a school of piranha. If he hadn't let go of the box, they might have gnawed off his hand. As he backed away from the culinary carnage Spike grabbed him, told him he was hungry for something quite different, and promptly tried removing Xander's tonsils with his tongue. This time it was Xander who threw Spike down on Giles' library table, yanked off his jeans and rode him hard and fast in front of everyone. But it wasn't like the other dreams where he was both squicked and so incredibly horny he would come in his sleep; not this time. Not with Giles peering from all angles and taking notes, Buffy repeatedly pouting and telling him "That's *not* the proper way to stake a vampire!" while licking powdered sugar off her fingers, and Anya asking why she couldn't join in, or at least take some photos and post them on the internet.

This couldn't go on. He had to make it stop. He had to do something!

He needed some advice, badly. He needed to talk to Willow.

In the end, he didn't tell Willow everything, just enough to try to get a potion or something from her to block his "nightmares." But instead of a potion, she gave him a "Talisman of Seeing" to wear at all times. She insisted that dreams were the brains way of solving problems it couldn't figure out while awake, and the Talisman should help him understand what his subconscious was trying so hard to tell him.

He wanted to tell her that he seriously preferred not knowing, but he didn't think she'd buy it.

What he didn't know was that in the last few days Willow had seen more then he'd realized; and after a lot of thought about it, she decided that Spike and Xander were a good influence on each other.

Part Eight

Author's Note:

Author's Note: There's a bit of Buffy bashing ahead. I tried to keep it to a minimum. I take issue with a lot of her behavior in season 6, but I have nothing against her. Much. Just trying to get plot out of the way, so I can get back to the smut.

Later that evening, everyone was back at the Magic Box researching again. Including Spike this time. Xander quickly noticed Buffy was making Spike very uncomfortable: finding any excuse to invade his personal space and "accidentally" rubbing against him as she reached for a book, and positioning her chair to make sure she showed her legs and cleavage to best advantage. Spike just ignored her and did research like he'd been told to for once in his unlifetime.

After over an hour with no success, Buffy upped the

ante. She stood and stretched, and said she wanted a break, and would Spike mind joining her in the training room for a little sparing session? To everyone's surprise Spike replied in a disinterested tone that he didn't enjoy getting the tar kicked out of him as much as he used to, ta very much. But that the niblet could always use a bit more self-defense training - helpless little girl living on the Hellmouth and all. Dawnie latched onto that idea like a rabid terrier, and by the time Buffy had held firm enough to get Dawn pouting sullenly in the far corner, Spike was ensconced back on the stairs, pretending to be deeply immersed in the huge manuscript in his lap.

After that, she changed tactics and started in on the vamp, finding any excuse she could to make a scathing comment or bait him into an argument. She also clearly tried to keep Dawn too preoccupied to say more than two words to Spike. After dozens of barbs missed their mark, Xander was just about ready to give her a time out and make her go stand in the corner. Is this new, he wondered, or was this how she usually behaved, and he'd somehow never

noticed it before? No, he was sure this was something she never did before she, umm, came back.

Something was clearly up between the two, and he had no idea what it was. Until now, it had been a given; Spike loved Buffy, and Buffy merely tolerated Spike for Dawn's sake and because he could be damn handy sometimes. But something had drastically changed, and unless he'd missed his mark, the abject adoration from afar wasn't forthcoming anymore, and it was galling her.

Now that he'd thought about it, it wasn't that out of character for her. She'd never had the slightest interest in him either, but it hadn't stopped Buffy from acting the tiniest bit snotty towards him sometimes, when he'd first hooked up with Anya. She'd been *jealous* – how come I didn't get that at the time, he thought?

Meanwhile, he could tell that Spike was just about reaching his boiling point. The guy had shown the patience of a saint tonight, and Spike was no saint.

He was amazed that the vampire had lasted this long. Xander didn't want to cause Spike any more trouble, but... he needed to get him away from Buffy before one of them exploded. They were both his friends now, and he didn't want to see them kill each other if he could help it. He needed to distract Buffy, throw her off balance, and right now.

More nervous than he'd been since his first night of kitten poker, Xander played his hand. "Well, I'm catatonic, here. I can't even focus my eyes on the page anymore. I'm going home." He turned to Spike, his tone deliberately casual. "So Spike - wanna come along, watch some football and finish off that skanky lager you have left in my fridge?"

He carefully ignored the row of dropped jaws around the table, including Spike's, as he gathered up his coat and satchel. As he headed towards the front door and sanctuary, Buffy exclaimed "What the heck is going on here?!? Since when do you hang out and get all pally with *Spike*?"

As Xander casually backed towards the shop's

entrance, he shrugged and replied in an even tone, "Since I found out we both like football. Coming, deadboy?" In the blink of an eye Spike had beaten him to the door, and was holding it open for them both.

"But, but, he's *evil!*"

"You don't have to be "good" to be a Packer fan, Buffy, you don't even have to be human, you just have to be male. Night, everybody!" With that they swept out the door, leaving Buffy sputtering, Tara blushing, and both Willow and Dawn wearing enormous grins.

As they headed in the direction of Xander's apartment, he asked Spike the double jackpot question. "What the hell is up with Buffy? She's acting so weird lately! Maybe Willow should check her out, make sure she's not under a spell or a curse or something."

Spike pulled out a cigarette and formed his reply carefully. "If you're gonna do that, ask Glinda to

check Buffy out; she has better control over the mojo. Truth be told, Red would do the slayer a lot more good if she paid some rent and helped about the house more. Buffy's a single mum now, holding down two full-time jobs. And she's still not breaking even. Top that with being yanked out of heaven. And Giles leaving her to sink or swim on her own. Be enough to break anyone's spirit, it would." He lit his smoke and took a long drag. "I've tried to help, but she won't accept it from the likes of me. The fact I'm the only one that noticed just seems to royally piss her off."

Xander could feel Willow's talisman humming against his skin. Spike's words were the unvarnished truth, but it wasn't the whole story either. Best not to push his luck at the moment though. He'd figure out what it was that Spike was hiding soon enough.

"You're right. I'll talk to Willow, and give Giles a call too. She's lasted longer than most slayers. If she's burned out, she deserves a little vacation. At the very least, the Council should pitch in on her bills. There must be something we can do for her."

Part Nine

Author's Note:

Author's Note: R for violence. Buffy Bashing alert!

This is a little ugly, but should be the last of it. Then we can get back to the smut.

Xander squeezed through the big gates of good ol' Restview and headed towards Spike's crypt; a bounce in his step, a grin on his face, and six bags of gen-u-ine O-pos in his satchel. The talk with Willow earlier had been emotional, but cathartic. The call to England had been much harder. Giles had been both dismayed and determined to get Buffy considerably more help with her expenses than he'd been able to give her on his own. If the G-man had his way, she was going to be the first paid slayer in history, and as far as Xander was

concerned, it was all Spike's doing. He couldn't wait to tell everybody. It was time to celebrate!

Nearing Spike's doorway, Xander ground to a halt and pulled out his stake as he heard raised voices and the sound of breaking glass inside. He cautiously approached the wide-open door with as much stealth as he could manage.

"Oh, I understand *fine*, slayer! I'm supposed to pine away in abject misery until the next time you decide you need a good hard rogering! How dare I get on with my unlife without you! Well, screw that! *I'm done*. Unless you need backup patrolling or someone to sit with Dawn, *stay the hell away from me!* Quit -"

The sound of a fist hitting flesh was followed by a huge crash.

"*You* stay the hell away from Dawn, I don't want you coming anywhere near her! The same goes for Xander, for all my friends!"

"They're my friends too, damn you, and if -"

Xander heard another loud crash, and decided he'd heard enough.

Buffy was reveling in the fury of a slayer scorned; and punctuated her sentences with blows and vicious kicks. "*You* don't have friends. You only have potential victims! How many times have you told us? *You're evil. We can't trust you.* As soon as that chip is out of your head, you'll turn on all of us. And from now on you *will* stay away from my friends, or I'll tell them your chip has stopped working, and you tried to kill me again. See how friendly they are then, huh." She smiled with bitter triumph.

"Christ, Buffy. You, you wouldn't do that. Not even to me."

"Just watch me."

As the slayer pulled her leg back for a final good boot to the gut, a furious voice behind her said "I think I've seen *quite enough.*"

Xander passed Buffy without a glance, and knelt to examine the bloodied heap at her feet.

Spike gazed up at him with a mixture of relief and profound embarrassment. He looked pretty bad. Xander murmured softly "Jesus, Spike. Are you OK?"

Buffy, rather abashed, ventured quietly "Xander, I know how this must look, but-"

Xander shot up and was suddenly right in her face, wearing the most enraged look she'd ever seen in her life. His voice shook with barely contained fury.

"Buffy, you are a dear friend and I love you, but you are SO on my shit list right now. I can barely stand to look at you. *GO HOME*, before I say something we'll all regret."

Buffy, taken aback, stuttered "But-"

"*NOW.*"

He turned back to Spike, dismissing her without another glance. She watched for a moment as he cautiously took stock of Spike's injuries, then left without another word.

One of Spike's shoulders was dislocated, the mere sight of it was making Xander queasy, and he had several broken ribs. His right eye was rapidly swelling shut, and he was pretty sure his cheekbone was cracked as well. There were a few cuts and scrapes too, but it could have been a lot worse, he told himself. At least she hadn't been pissed off enough to dust him.

"Let's get you cleaned up. Can you stand?"

Xander put an arm around his waist as gently as possible, and half-carried him over to the sepulture he used as a table. On the way, the injured vamp started wheezing and coughing up blood. Xander's nausea went up a notch. He pulled out his handkerchief and handed it over, motioning to the blood dripping down Spike's chin. "One of your ribs must have speared your lungs, so try not to talk or

breathe until we get those wrapped." It was a good thing he knew where Spike kept his medical supplies. Even a vampire needed stitching up now and then.

He checked Spike's hidden stash of liquor and brought over the strongest rotgut he could find there. "We have to pop that shoulder back in. You should down some of this first." Wordlessly Spike used his good arm to take the bottle, uncorked it with his teeth, and swallowed down more than half its contents. Taking a moment to brace himself, Spike nodded to Xander. The young man grasped his arm, took a deep breath, and pulled. Spike couldn't hold back his cry of pain, and instinctively Xander's whole body flinched in sympathy as he twisted the arm back in place. By then, both their faces were ashen and drawn from the task at hand.

As he wrapped up Spike's ribs in silence, Xander got more and more livid over the state of Spike's injuries. It was showing on his face, and that was making Spike far more miserable and upset than the beating he'd just taken.

Xander looked up from his handiwork, and his anger instantly gave way to concern. The Talisman he wore flared so warm it almost burned him. Spike's expressive face was like an open book, his eyes alone spoke volumes.

Xander spoke quietly as he cleaned away a few stray pieces of glass from the cuts on Spike's arms. "I'm not mad at you Spike, I'm mad as hell at Buffy. Just as mad as I'd be at you right now if you'd tried to beat *her* senseless. She had no right to do this. It's not the first time either, is it." At Spike's distressed look, Xander kept pressing him. "I remember how bad your face looked at Dawnie's party. You told us a demon did it. But it was her, wasn't it?" The way Spike refused to meet Xander's eyes told him all he needed to know. "Jesus, Spike. I wish you had felt you could have come to me sooner..... You never should have let it get this bad... But then I'm one to talk, when I never even noticed anything wrong."

Tweezers at the ready, Xander placed Spike's hands

palm up in his lap and got the last few slivers of glass out. Then he finished bandaging him up and put away the first aid kit.

Looking down at his hands, Spike hoarsely spoke. "She wouldn't have done it, you know. Lied to all her friends. She'd have calmed down in a day or two."

Xander snorted, his anger resurfacing. "Oh yeah, because Buffy would *never* lie to her friends..... *Mr. Naked Pushups.*"

Even without a pulse Spike blushed, and hung his head in shame. It was a feeling he'd gotten very familiar with since he'd started being the slayers dirty little secret.

"Don't worry Spike, I get it. Buffy wanted it kept a secret, and Buffy made all the rules. Fuck, you really don't have the best luck with women, do you?"

"What can I say? I'm love's bitch – always have been. My love life has never been anything but a

bleedin' train wreck. Fact of life, s'all."

"Yeah, well, not anymore. I'm not going to stand for it. You deserve better. You are both my friends now, and I expect my friends to treat each other with a little respect. If she can't deal with that, it's her problem. And she better not make this an "it's him or me" thing, because if she does, I'm choosing you."

Spike looked more astonished then if Xander had said he'd invited Angelus and Dru ever for afternoon tea. His expression melted into one of gratitude and utter devotion, a look that was usually reserved for Buffy or Dawn, and Xander suddenly couldn't breathe.

Blushing to the roots of his hair, Xander rose and murmured "I better heat you up some blood."

Part Ten

As the little microwave heated up the first two mugs of blood, both men took a moment to compose themselves. Feeling more vulnerable than he had since he first got chipped, Spike gathered the tatters of his Big Bad persona around him like a security blanket. He was appalled that he'd let anyone see him so emotionally wounded, least of all the boy. He was William the Bloody for fuck's sake, a Master Vampire, with two, count em', two, slayers to his credit! He was not supposed to feel dangerously close to tears just because some pathetic tosser cared about him!

A pathetic tosser who'd called him his friend, and really *meant* it. *Who'd stood up to Buffy for him!* Every time he tried to grasp that concept, his brain would just shut down on him.

Meanwhile, Xander took off the Talisman he'd been wearing and tucked it in a pocket with distaste. It

had been a huge help there for a while, but he'd been sickened by some of the things he'd seen. Willow clearly had a problem that was much more complex and went much deeper than a mere magic addiction. And Buffy – sweet baby Jesus. He'd never realized what a pedestal he'd put her on, until she'd smashed all his idols in one fell swoop. Guess being a champion and being a fool wasn't mutually exclusive. It felt disturbingly like seeing your kindergarten teacher drunk and giving out table dances.

He watched the microwave tick down to zero. He was pathetically grateful that he'd gotten Spike a present. If he hadn't had those bags, he might have been sorely tempted to open a vein himself just to get Spike on the mend a little faster. And just how freakin' weird was that? If anyone had told him a year ago that such a thing would even cross his mind, he'd have laughed right in their face, or decked them. But then, who would have thought he'd become such friends with the guy..... Or have dreams about him that would end in mind-blowing orgasms? How the heck, from where they started

out, did they wind up here? Well, however it had happened, he was glad.

Xander carried the heated mugs over to Spike.

"Here we are! Drink up, so you can grow big and strong like all the other little vampires, and then kill them."

"I'm not an infant, Harris. I don't take well to being coddled. I've had worse, plenty of times. So you can stuff- "

Spike froze, the unmistakable scent of human blood instantly making every cell in his body ache with hunger. He was almost shaking with need.

"Is that what I think it is?"

Xander beamed. "One hundred percent grade A human. And right now, you need it. So c'mon. Stop staring at it and drink it."

Refocusing his eyes, Spike gazed at Xander gravely.

"None of this is real, and I'm still passed out on the floor, aren't I?"

Setting the mugs down, Xander reached over to an unbandaged part of Spike's arm and pinched him.

"Hey!"

"See? I'm as real as it gets, baby. I'd let you pinch me, but I'm betting the chip would fire, and you're in enough pain as it is. So what are you waiting for? Drink it, before it gets cold."

Spike morphed into game face and emptied the first cup with desperation. The velvety texture of it sliding down his throat made him want to moan. He tried to savour the second cup, but his body was silently shrieking for every last drop, as fast as he could get it down.

"I had come bearing good news. I'd thought we could all celebrate together. That idea is pretty shot to hell now, but at least my timing is good. And no reason we can't celebrate on our own, right?" He

held out his hand for the empty mug that Spike was methodically licking clean like a big golden-eyed housecat. With a long agile tongue that would make Gene Simmons jealous. "Ready for more?"

"Always." Spike handed over the mug with a dreamy, satisfied smile. He could feel the blood settling in his belly and spreading warmth outwards, coursing through his veins, each injury flaring briefly in pain and then numbing deliciously as his body started knitting itself back together. It had been so *long!!* Nothing like a starvation diet of pigswill to make a vamp appreciate a damn fine meal! In what seemed like only a few seconds, Xander was there again, shoving another warm sweet-smelling mug into his hand.

"I brought six bags; the last two are in your fridge."

"Not that I'm complaining, mind you, but what are we celebrating that merits such yummy pressies?"

Xander sat beside him and met his eyes with a serious gaze. "You gave Buffy back her freedom.

Willow is going to pay rent and take more responsibility around the house, starting today. And Giles is blackmailing the Council into giving Buffy a steady paycheck, so she can concentrate on slaying and raising her sister." Xander traded mugs with the blonde vampire. "Her life won't be such an endless chore anymore. The worst is over, thanks to you. *None* of this would have happened, if it weren't for you. And after tonight, don't doubt for a moment that I'm going to *love* reminding the Buffster of that. Over and over."

Xander stared at Spike's game face. He'd seen it before, more times than he could count. But he never realized how expressive it was, how still uniquely Spike. Spike, who had stopped licking his mug to stare back at him.

"S'not polite to stare, ya know. Just don't want to waste any. Not often I get a taste of the good stuff."

"It's not that, it's just....umm, I mean, ah... I know it's none of my business, but...umm.....oh, never mind."

"Spit it out, whelp. I'm not gonna bite you."

Xander asked hesitantly, "Are those like Ferrengi ridges? I mean, are they all hard and boney, or kind of squishy? Does it hurt to change when your face is banged up like that? Could I.... Could I touch it?"

Spike blinked, and nodded. Xander reached out and very gently ran his fingertips across the ridges on Spike's forehead. They felt both hard and soft, like cartilage covered in muscle. Spike's breath grew shallow and even, and as the boy stroked and explored along his brow and the bridge of his nose, his golden eyes closed and a low purr started rumbling up from deep within his chest.

The vibrations ran straight up Xander's fingertips, through his arm and directly down to his cock, taking most of his blood along for the ride. An enormous rush of lust hit him like an express train, and he pulled back abruptly. He knew Spike would smell his arousal any moment now, and he really didn't want Spike thinking that he was only being

nice because he wanted something in return. He grabbed the empty mugs and ran them back to what passed for Spike's kitchen, babbling nervously. His inner babble was hopelessly stuck on "*He purrs! How hot is that?*"

Spike was dismayed, wondering what he'd done to startle the lad, until he breathed in sharply. Oh, Xander was just aroused... wait a minute. Xander was aroused??

Holy fuck. The whelp wants me! he thought in shock. *How... delicious. How wonderfully delicious.* He grinned in delight.

He'd liked the boy ever since his wanker of a sire had made a pressie of him, not that he'd ever admit it to anyone. Even with all the odds against him and terror flowing from every pore, the kid had still showed guts and had kept his wits about him. Then Spike got stuck with the sodding chip, and they'd hated each other, even as the insults flung between them got progressively less barbed & more... comfortable. Now, the young man had become the

one bright light in Spike's life, outside of lil' bit. Harris never ceased to amaze him with his loyalty, his courage, his kindness. Buffy might be the Chosen One, but Xander was the truly *good* one. He was also quite the nummy treat under those hideous clothes, always had been. Downright succulent, in fact.

So, Harris just might be hiding a secret desire for his hot tight little body, eh? That suited him marvelously. Xander's past was full of self-absorbed bints demanding to be serviced, but he'd never known what it was like to be wanted for himself, to be *pursued*, to be slowly and thoroughly seduced. But oh, that was going to change! Spike was already totally committed to the full-scale seduction of one Xander Lavelle Harris, starting immediately. The fact that Xander still panicked at the mere idea of hot man-on-man action just made the chase all the more fun, and the prize to be won that much sweeter. And Xander Harris was quite the prize indeed.

He was going to flatter and charm, pet and pamper

his dark jewel until the lad was too bedazzled to remember his own name. By the time he was done wooing his sweet darling boy, Xander would be pleading for his touch... his taste... the feel of Spike's cock filling him deep, as he claimed him right and proper... The vampire realized he was panting with anticipation. Oh, yes, Spike thought with a devious leer. We are both going to enjoy this, dear boy. You have no idea.

Part Eleven

"...the only thing more dangerous than a vampire crazed with blood lust was a vampire crazed with anything else. All the meticulous single-mindedness that went into finding young women who slept with their bedroom window open got channeled into some other interest, with merciless and painstaking efficiency..."

- from "The Truth" by Terry Pratchett

If you asked someone who knew vampires to describe them in one word, they would probably say "bloodthirsty."

But if you asked someone who knew a particular blonde vampire and knew him well, the answer would probably be "obsessive-compulsive."

Fortune **smiled** on Spike in the following days. He concentrated on bestowing as much positive reinforcement, general flattery and innocent bits of body contact Xander's way as he could get away with without raising suspicion. It really wasn't hard, he just let himself admit out loud things that he'd thought for a long time. Once the boy realized that he wasn't being mocked, he lapped up the attention like a starving man. As the days went by, the two spent more and more time together and Spike crashed on Xander's couch frequently. He also mixed in little special favors for Xander with gruff threats to eviscerate him if he ever told a soul what a soft-hearted pillock he was turning into. The third time Xander worked extra-late at the site and came home to find that Spike had a far better dinner waiting for him than anyone who didn't have to eat should be able to cook, he told Spike to stop picking his apartment lock and gave the vampire his spare

key. Spike considered that day a major victory in his campaign to **win** the boy's heart – a day hereafter referred to in Spike's head as VK day.

Meanwhile, Xander had sat down and had a little talk with Buffy. It hadn't been nearly as bad as he'd expected. When she'd gotten home that night, Willow had pretty much babbled out everything happily at her - how they were all going to help her out, even the Watchers' Council, everything that had the witch in such happy spirits since Xander had given her the good news. The slayer remained composed and noncommittal until Willow mentioned that the whole thing was Xander and Spike's idea. Then she started hyperventilating and sobbing in turns, and completely fell apart. By the time they saw Xander the next morning, both girls were still punch-drunk from crying, hard home truths and lack of sleep. The three spent a couple of hours really talking to each other, more candidly than they had since their early high-school days. Xander was pathetically grateful that he hadn't been tempted to put the Talisman back on that morning.

Afterwards he'd called Giles again, and within 24 hours Buffy had been visited by a very sweet little old lady who spent the whole afternoon with her on the back porch, just listening to her talk. And then gave her a prescription for meds and arranged to see her 3 afternoons a week. Buffy had the worst case of post-traumatic stress disorder she'd ever seen. After several sessions with the woman, Buffy wrote a long letter to Spike and gave it to Xander to deliver. While Spike never told anyone what was in that letter, it evidently ended with permission to spend as much time with Dawn as he liked, and a standing invitation to the extended family Sunday dinner at the Summers' residence. The relationship between slayer and vampire was still strained and a bit fragile, but it improved every day.

As time passed Xander finally admitted, to himself at least, that he had developed a crush on Spike. It was absolute torture, sitting next to the guy on his ratty old couch night after night, and not being able to just grab him and kiss him senseless and spend the night making out with him there. Every time he

passed him a beer and their fingers touched, every time they sat together and their bodies made any contact, Xander felt both aroused and horribly guilty for being aroused. He knew Spike only thought of him as a friend, and and it wasn't Spike's fault he was sex on legs, right?

At the same time, Spike was thinking that he wasn't so sure he was going to have the patience for this. It was exquisite torture to sit next to his beautiful boy night after night, and not straddle him right there on the couch and remove those godawful clothes so he could get his fill of the gorgeous body he was hiding beneath them. The boy always smelled of soap, sawdust, chocolate, and something that was just indefinably Xander, and Spike couldn't get enough of it. And when he managed to get a rise out of the lad, so to speak, he smelled even better. But just when he'd get the kid all but panting and he'd be right about to grab him and have a good hard snog the lad would do a runner, babbling the whole way. And just how pathetic was it that he'd started finding nervous Xander-babble so fucking hot?

He'd ideally wanted to tempt the boy into making a pass himself, so he'd be less likely to go all outraged blushing virgin on him afterwards, but enough was enough! A lifetime of getting his self-esteem trampled on, and the kid just couldn't conceive of anyone wanting him. He was going to fix that, by God. It was time to implement more specific plans to seduce the boy.

Spike's first opportunity to put his plans into action came soon after. They were ambling home from the Bronze, not really drunk but only "mildly squiffy," and Spike persuaded Xander into a short two-person sweep just for kicks. When they ran into a Gebrova demon and Xander got stuck by one of it's porcupine-like quills, the vampire couldn't believe his luck. It was time for plan 4b. He never dared to think he'd *ever* have the chance to implement 4b, but there it was, right in front of him!

As Xander yanked the spiny quill out of his upper arm with a cry of pain, Spike exclaimed in a gruff voice, "Damn it, Harris, those are poisonous! We need to fix you up right away, or you'll be sick as a dog for days. Here, let me look at that." With genuine concern masking his excitement, Spike sidled up beside Xander, put one hand on the injured arm and the other on his shoulder, leaned over and calmly began "sucking out the poison."

Xander was flummoxed. He looked down, and Spike was looking right back up at him, still in human face, stormy sky-blue eyes locked lustfully onto his, while sucking on his arm in a way that no doubt wasn't intended to be so stiffy-inducing. Who knew his biceps were such an erogenous zone?

Holy Mother of God, Spike thought. *He tastes like sunshine*. He had to concentrate to keep from humping the boys leg like a fledge in heat.

For a few long moments the pair stood immersed in the pleasurable floaty sensations the exchange produced. Finally Spike pulled back with a last

loving lick to the boy's wound, and then slowly licked the blood off his lips, his gold-flecked blue eyes never leaving Xanders'. Both of them were trembling, and hard enough to cut glass.

"I expect I enjoyed that a bit more than I should have." Spike admitted with a naughty smirk, not sounding the least bit sorry. He wiped off the last traces from his lower lip with his thumb, then sucked it clean with relish. "But you are quite the nummy treat." He added with a mischievous grin.

Xander chuckled ruefully and tested his injured arm, blushing and trying to change the subject. "What I am is a liability. I'm always getting hurt on patrol. It's embarrassing. You and Buffy always have to look out for me, and save my ass when I don't move fast enough."

Bloody brilliant - Opportunity for plan 3! Spike thought, quickly switching gears. Do this right, and there'll be *lots* of body contact involved. "Yeah, Buffy says that often enough. But I notice she never does anything about it except complain. Neither do

you. Stop buying into that crap. If you don't like hearing it, do something about it. You're strong enough, fast enough; you just need more practice. There's *nothing* wrong with you a little training wouldn't whip into shape... I bet if I gave you a few pointers at hand-to-hand, perhaps a knife-throwing lesson or two, you'd give everyone a right surprise."

Xander eyed the vampire with a mixture of suspicion, surprise and hope. "Why is it lately, that you make it sound as if I can do *anything* I put my mind to?"

"Because you *can*... Dumbass." Spike assured Xander smoothly, throwing an arm around his shoulder with a grin, heading towards home.

Part Twelve

Xander threw his keys on the table and began to wander towards the bathroom. It had been an exhausting day, he was covered in sticky sweat, and his skin itched like mad from all the concrete dust. He was dying for a shower. As he pulled his shirt over his head, he smelled something absolutely mouth-watering coming from the kitchen. He recognized it instantly. Spike didn't know how to cook a lot of things, but the few things he did, he did *very* well. It was weird. The same irresponsible blond who prided himself on his laziness refused to make due with spaghetti sauce out of a jar when it could be made from scratch. He wasn't about to tease the vampire about it, though. The food was just too damn good to risk pissing off the cook. Xander would crawl over broken glass for a plate of Spike's spaghetti if he had to. He'd sell off a kidney for his chicken curry.

He ducked into the kitchen and had to smile. Spike was wearing Xander's old "Kiss the Cook" apron. OK, maybe a *little* teasing was in order.

"Gee, the things you see when you don't have a

camera. One of these days, Spike, you're going to make someone a fine little-"

"Hey! It's not too late to chuck all this in the garbage, you miserable git. And you're going to need all the fuel you can get for what I have planned for you later."

"Sorry! Sorry. I'll gladly grovel for a taste of your cooking... I don't think I'm up for another lesson in fighting dirty, though. The last of the cinderblock arrived today. My back is killing me." Xander apologized with a grin, sneaking a couple of long noodles and tilting his head back to capture them at the ends.

Spike memorized the long line of Xander's throat as he caught the spaghetti in his mouth. He ached to lick across his collarbone, then up the long line of muscle to nibble at his ear. His mouth watered as his eyes moved lower, devouring the sight of the boy's tanned abs.

"Have I got enough time for a shower before

dinner's ready? This plaster dust gets everywhere." Xander stretched, completely unconscious of how hot and sexy he looked when he did that.

Spike passed his tongue over suddenly dry lips. "No can do, It's ready now. Besides, you tend to inhale it down without chewing anyway. You can have a nice long shower once you're done eating, then we'll see about that sore back. Go wash your hands, while I dish you up a plate." Spike called out to the young man's retreating back, "And be quick about it - I hate overcooked noodles!"

As Xander disappeared into the bathroom, Spike took the garlic bread out of the oven, deep in thought. He felt like he'd been half-hard ever since the Gebrova demon incident, and he wasn't sure how much more he could stand. He was a little disappointed that he wouldn't get training time with his boy again tonight; he'd *really* enjoyed the hot sweaty grappling they'd done the last couple of days. Xander was a quick study too, and showed real promise. But this situation could work to his advantage. In fact, he had a backup plan all ready

for just this contingency.

After dinner, Xander headed straight for the shower. He scrubbed himself down quickly, determined not to let his thoughts wander to the things they usually did when he was in the shower. It really wouldn't be wise to get caught shouting out Spike's name and fisting himself furiously when the lanky vamp was right there in the next room.

Drying himself off and wrapping a towel around his waist, he walked back out to his bedroom. And stopped short at the vision lying on his bed, his breath catching with a terrifying rush of déjà vu. Spike reclined there, a picture of utter relaxation, knowing smile in place. His pants were on, and his shirt was half-buttoned, but other than that, it was literally Xander's wet dream come true.

"Took you long enough. I was afraid you were going to stay in there all night. C'mere and I'll take care of

your sore back for you."

For long moments Xander stared, frozen in place like a deer in the headlights.

Spike was suddenly beside him, snapping his fingers in front of Xander's face and looking mildly annoyed. "Oi! Harris! On the bed. On your stomach... *Now.*"

Xander's brain had completely shut down and was running on autopilot, and his limbs did as they were told. The commanding tone of Spike's voice left him breathless with lust, and he pressed his erection into the comforter beneath him, hoping to hide it.

With no warning, the vampire climbed up and straddled the boy's hips, and Xander bit his lip hard to hold back a moan. Spike grabbed the bottle of massage oil he'd stolen specifically for this very purpose, and poured a small amount into his hands. He'd even heated up the bottle of oil beforehand; he wanted everything to be perfect for his beautiful boy.

He started working on Xander's sore muscles with slow sweeping strokes moving from his spine outward. He patiently worked each knotted muscle he found until it relaxed completely.

For long minutes he kept working in slow, sure strokes until Xander felt languid and content. A low rumbling purr started in Spike's chest as he worked, making Xander smile with a happy sigh. If he was dreaming again, he never wanted this one to end.

"You've been dreaming about me, pet? I'm flattered."

"Holy crap, did I say that out loud? Just ignore me."

"Tell me about these dreams of yours. What are we doing in them?"

Xander tried to think up some lie, but his brain wasn't working properly.

Spike teased in an amused voice, "Were we

cheating at kitten poker? Or beating the snot out of some baddie together?" After a moment of quiet, he continued thoughtfully in a soothing, almost hypnotic tone that slid over Xander like warm caramel. "...Do you ever dream of us like this? ...A good meal... a hot shower... a soft bed... You, lying warm and naked under me while I explore every inch of your body with my hot little hands?" Spike started flexing his fingers deep into the muscles in Xander's shoulders, slowly traveling downward. His lips followed, scattering light kisses and nips along either side of the boy's spine from his shoulders all the way to the small of his back. Xander's breath caught on a ragged gasp.

Spike stretched out over Xander, chest-to-back, stroked his arms and nuzzled his hair, breathing deep and slow. "Have I ever told you how delicious you smell? How blissful you taste on my tongue?" He licked at the spot on the back of the boy's neck where it met his shoulder blades, making him whimper and tremble. "Have you any idea how painfully hard you make me without even trying? How badly I want the feel of you beneath me, or

above me, while I make you mine? There isn't a single part of you that I don't know, and *want*." Spike ghosted kisses up to his ear, and nibbled it with a happy sigh.

Xander's brain finally jump-started, and he pushed up and turned over onto his back underneath Spike, looking into his lust-filled eyes with the expression of someone who'd been hurt far too often.

"That's not funny, Spike. I'm not stupid. Y-you could have anyone you wanted. You can't possibly want *me*."

"But I *do*!" Spike countered. "Feel how much." Spike grabbed Xander's hand and placed it firmly against the angry prick trying to break its way out through his jeans. Xander's hand flexed against the bulge, and Spike's eyes rolled back into his head as he groaned softly, shuddering with need. Taking Spike by surprise, Xander suddenly rolled them both, reversing their positions and straddling the distracted vampire. Leaning down, he searched the vampire's eyes deeply. Spike willed him to see the

truth of what he'd said, grabbing Xander's ass with both hands and grinding his crotch upwards into his, biting his own lower lip with a soft whimper. *God help me, Spike thought, if Xander shoves me away and says I'm beneath him right now, I don't think I could take it.*

Finding what he'd been looking for, Xander lowered his head and nibbled the vampire's lower lip teasingly, then ran his tongue along it. Spike could have sobbed in relief. Instead he sighed with pleasure and ran a hand through Xander's hair, holding his skull firmly in place as Spike deepened the kiss, running his tongue along the boy's and acquainting himself with every millimeter of his lovely mouth. For countless moments their tongues and hands explored everywhere they could reach as their bodies rubbed and strained against each other until Xander finally had to pull back for air.

Xander unbuttoned the vampire's shirt and hesitantly stroked the well-defined muscles he found underneath. With a shy coquettish smile, he stated "You're remarkably overdressed, you know."

Spike growled softly, and flipped them over again so he was back on top. Sitting back up with a lascivious smirk and grinding into Xander just enough to torture the both of them, he reached for the bottle of oil and said firmly, "I'm not finished with you yet."

Pouring out a little more oil into his hands, he stroked along his dear boy's shoulders, and down across his pecs, taking time out to briefly tease and pinch the hardening nipples there. Then his hands moved lower and his mouth followed the trail his hands had left, laving and sucking at Xander's nipples until he squirmed and whimpered. God! How he adored that sound! His tongue continued it's journey downward and tickled his darling boy's navel; he paused to nibble playfully at a hipbone, and then lifted a leg and brushed soft kisses along his inner thigh, ignoring the part of Xander that was most obviously begging for attention. All the while Spike told Xander in low whispers how beautiful he was, how sweet, how sexy, how much he wanted the boy, what he was going to do to him, and how

very much he pleased him. When he licked behind Xander's knee the boy started pleading incoherently. Much as Spike loved to hear that, he decided to take pity on him.

Cupping Xander's balls and rolling them gently, he lapped a slow line from the base of his cock to the tip. He kissed the head softly, flicked his tongue in the slit, gathering up the fluid leaking there, making Xander scream and buck, and then slowly sucked his quivering length down to the root. Xander ran his hands through Spike's hair and babbled broken encouragements between gasps and moans, while Spike concentrated on giving the whelp the best blowjob of his young lifetime. Just as Xander started shuddering all over, Spike stopped and pulled away from him. Xander protested with a wordless whine and reached to pull him back down, but instead Spike grasped the boy's hands and placed them on the fly of his jeans with a naughty grin. Spike added in a low voice that could melt butter, "I've a prezzie for you, sweetheart. Go on – open it."

Xander's shaking fingers could barely manage the

buttons, but finally he released Spike's cock from its prison and stared at the impressive length. Xander murmured "Wow!" his eyes as big as saucers, making the vampire feel obscenely smug. Spike encouraged Xander to tentatively explore his tackle for a bit, carefully moving the foreskin back and forth, huge dark eyes transfixed with lustful awe.

When Spike could stand it no longer he pulled away, quickly removed his jeans and stretched back out on top of his lover, pressing his erection into Xander's with a groan. Gazing deep into aroused brown eyes he started a slow rhythm, grinding and thrusting back and forth, their cocks rubbing together with delicious friction. Xander arched and wailed, and Spike lifted each of Xander's legs in turn and wrapped them around his hips. Panting harshly, Xander pulled Spike's head down and one hard frantic kiss followed another. Spike swiveled his hips from side to side, sliding their pricks back and forth over each other. Xander began to shudder again, begging brokenly for release. Spike reached between them, grasping both their slick cocks in one hand, and gave them a squeeze and a twist of

his wrist. Xander keened and bucked, his whole body arching off the bed in a taut bow, shooting long thick lines of spunk between their bodies. The sight of Xander's face in utter rapture flung Spike off the precipice, and he followed his sweet boy into heaven with an unholy wail.

After the last broken cry of ecstasy faded and Xander was reasonably sure he wasn't going to pass out after all, Spike brought his hand from between them up to his lips, licking the sticky fluid there with relish. He sucked a finger into his mouth, and Xander felt his flagging erection start impossibly to rise again at the sight. Spike looked down on him with a triumphant smirk, and a little hip-wiggle. "Hold that thought, pet. If I'm not mistaken, you need another shower now. I'll scrub your back for you, if you like."

Part Thirteen

Spike got up and retrieved his duster and an ashtray. With a groan, Xander grabbed the box of Kleenex from his nightstand and started cleaning himself off. He looked over at Spike like he was crazy. "You want me to walk to the bathroom and take another shower when I can barely move? At least let me wait until the feeling returns to my legs again!"

Spike still looked smug, and completely unrepentant. "Aw, did I exhaust you? Where's that Viking stamina I've heard so much about?" Spike bent over to retrieve his lighter from his jeans. Retort on his lips, Xander was suddenly struck speechless, entranced by the indescribable beauty and allure of Spike's ass. He couldn't have looked away if he'd tried. Then Spike turned and caught him staring, and the smirk was back in spades.

"Don't worry love, we'll work on building up your stamina together. It's a hard job, but someone's got to do it." Spike stretched out next to Xander,

lighting up and blowing a long column of smoke upwards.

Xander declared in exhausted outrage, "There's nothing wrong with my stamina! I'm a horny teenager, not a miracle worker! Just give me a minute to catch my breath here, and my stamina will give yours a run for your money, Bucko!"

Spike was tickled to death. "Promise?"

Xander's annoyance at being teased was quickly forgotten. *That's not teasing, that's flirting*, he thought. *Spike is flirting! With me!* Breaking into a grin, he looked Spike up and down appreciatively and drawled, "We'll see."

Leaving his cigarette smoldering in the ashtray, Spike turned on his side and faced Xander, leaning on one elbow and idly stroking his lover's chest with feather-light touches. "I can wait. I can be a very patient man." At Xander's half-suppressed sputter of disbelief, Spike added, "I can! Sometimes... When it's important enough." The lecherous leer returned

as Spike tugged on one of Xander's nipples. "And I doubt I'll have to wait all *that* long."

Spike used his tongue to soothe Xander's aching nipples as his hand wandered lower, teasing the light line of hair that ran along the young man's 'treasure trail' to his returning erection. "Once you're ready I have several things in mind for you, and now you've taken the edge off we can take our own sweet time." Xander could *feel* the all-body tingle rush straight to his crotch at the things Spike said, and his hips jerked as his swelling cock sought out Spike's wickedly teasing hand. Spike chuckled and whispered, "See? I told you. Ready again in no time at all."

He attacked Xander's mouth with deep slow kisses and soft nibbles, while stripping his lover's prick like he'd had a hundred and twenty-odd years of practice at it. When Xander moaned and reached over to return the favor, Spike growled into his mouth and started thrusting his hips back and forth, fucking Xander's hand as they both stroked and squeezed each other. When Xander tore his mouth

away to gasp for air, Spike started licking the column of his lover's throat and purring under his breath. Xander tried with all his being to gather his scattered thoughts and form coherent words, but all that came out was "Fuck me, *please, fuck me now!*"

Spike pulled away, and reached under the bed. To Xander's surprise he placed a small bottle of lube in the boy's hand and said a little sheepishly, "With this chip in my head, I'm not so sure I can. So I was rather hoping you'd fuck me."

Xander gaped in sheer astonishment. He'd been fantasizing about the vampire a lot lately, but in all the various scenarios for their first time this one had never even occurred to him. He realized that Spike was starting to look pissed that he hadn't immediately jumped at the offer. His voice shook as he stammered, "Oh... OK, I-I could do that."

Spike grinned and gave him a quick hard kiss, then turned onto his back and pulled his legs up and out, spreading himself wide. "Go on then – get me ready

for that massive stiffy of yours." Xander dazedly pulled himself together, got some lube out of the bottle onto his fingers and hesitantly ran them under Spike's balls and back between the pale cheeks of his bottom. Cautiously Xander circled Spike's hole, teasing and pressing gently but only barely going in. Spike sighed and mewled in frustration until finally Xander breeched his entrance properly with a finger.

"C'mon pet! I'm not made of glass."

Xander added a second finger. Spike was surprisingly warm, and so tight! He made the mistake of wondering what that was going to feel like around his cock, and froze. Desperately he tried to think about something, anything that wouldn't make him come all over himself. *Giles in a dress. Angel in a dress. With fishnets and four-inch pumps. OK, my Dad in one of Mom's dresses. Oh, thank God, that was working.*

"For fuck's sake, don't just sit there with your fingers up my arse, do something! Please! Just –

yes! Yes! That's it, love... Ahhh... Very nice, pet. Oh, yeah - Oh! Right *there!*"

Xander started moving his fingers in a steady rhythm, scissoring them and rubbing over Spike's prostrate as often as possible. He was trying hard to keep from coming too soon, but Spike kept breaking his concentration.

"Oh yes, that's perfect, love... So, have you?"

"Have I what?"

"Ever thought... *mmmm*... about you and I together?"

"Maybe, once or twice."

Spike just grinned like a loon and squeezed hard around Xander's fingers.

"*Jesus!* OK, a few times. Only when it's been a really long day, and the research is putting me right to sleep –"

"That – *ooohh*, don't stop – that would be a daily occurrence, love."

"Well... Sometimes I've watched you sitting on the library stairs at the Magic Box, and you looked so good, lounging there all boneless and sexy, and I've imagined things." Xander couldn't believe he was saying this, somehow talking about sex with Spike seemed far more intimate than the actual sex. His face was beet red and he was terrified; but somewhere deep down inside himself Horny Xander was bludgeoning Shy Xander unconscious with a 30-pound lump hammer.

"Mmm, Good things?"

"Naughty things ...things like ...kneeling in front of you, opening up those skin-tight jeans and sucking you off like candy right there in front of everyone." Spike gasped as a third finger joined the other two. Xander smiled wickedly. "Think you'd want to try that sometime?"

Spike looked blissfully happy. "Ooh, I'd like that, pet. I'd like that, *really*, quite a lot."

"I thought you would."

"But right now, I want you to come up here and fuck me."

"Hmm, are you sure you're ready? I wouldn't want to rush you."

"I've been ready for fucking weeks, now stop teasing and bloody get up here and ram your dick up my ass! *Now, Goddamnit!*"

Strangely enough, Spike acting pissed off made him feel much more at ease. He removed his fingers and grabbed up the bottle of lube again, generously coating his stiff length. The vampire grasped his own erection at the base, holding off any chance of an early orgasm. Xander positioned the head of his prick at Spike's entrance, and very carefully pushed his way in. Once the head of his cock slipped past the tight ring of muscle, he paused for a moment to

catch his breath, held on tight to the vampire's legs, and oh so slowly eased in deeper. With a moan filled with raw need, Spike grasped Xander's hips, thrust back hard against him and drove Xander's length inside him right up to the hilt.

Xander saw shooting stars behind his eyelids. Never before had he felt anything like the painfully tight velvet glove flexing around his cock. It was sweet agony, fantastic mind-blowingly good agony. He started a steady rhythm of fast thrusts in and slow pulls out of Spike's grasping channel. Both of them were panting and moaning, and gripping each other hard enough to leave bruises. Xander bent down and captured Spike's mouth in a searing kiss, one hand reaching between them to stroke along Spike's throbbing prick in time to his thrusts. Spike retaliated with hard possessive open-mouthed kisses along the boy's neck and shoulders that were sure to leave several quite decent hickeys.

Xander's thrusts sped up until he was slamming into Spike like a furious piston engine. He buried his head into the vampire's shoulder, sucking on the

side of Spike's neck like a lamprey, trying his best to raise a mark there to match the ones he'd received. The reaction was immediate: the vampire bucked and roared as he shot his load between them. Muscles convulsing and clenching tightly around his erection like an unholy vice, Xander followed his vampire into paradise, emptying himself deep inside Spike's quaking body with a strangled cry of pleasure.

They nestled together with a soft sigh, Xander's arms wound tightly around his lover. The silence was broken only by Xander's breathing and Spike's soft purring.

Xander woke to the feel of Spike cleaning him with a warm washcloth. He rubbed his eyes like a sleepy four-year-old, and looked the vampire over with a bemused smile. He was dismayed when Spike pulled away and he saw that the vampire had put his jeans back on.

"Where you going?"

"I thought you might prefer the bed to yourself. I can kip on the couch." Spike's tone was casual, but he wouldn't look him in the eye.

"Nooo! No couch! Bed! Nice big comfy bed!" Xander pulled back the covers with a huge yawn. "C'mon, get in here. I wanna cuddle s'more."

Spike debated for a moment, then shucked off his jeans and climbed back in beside his boy, pulling the blanket up over them both. Xander immediately grabbed the vampire with a sleepy grin and curled around him, draping himself over his lover's body with a casual acceptance that tugged at Spike's heartstrings painfully. He could get used to this. It was like lying beneath a giant hot water bottle, and Spike couldn't even remember the last time he'd felt so contented. Xander dozed back off almost immediately, using Spike's shoulder as a pillow. Spike nuzzled his sweet boy's hair, inhaling his scent in deeply, savoring the languid warmth curled around and over him until his eyes fell shut and he too fell into a deep, dreamless sleep.

Part Fourteen

Xander woke the next morning still curled around Spike, his chest up against the vampire's back. He'd been hugging his lover tightly in his sleep, and his morning erection was already getting very friendly with Spike's backside. He lay there for a while, marveling at how much heat Spike reflected back, yet how deliciously cool the other side of his body was. Come the hot muggy days of late July and he was going to have a lot of trouble keeping his hands off of the poor guy. Not that he wasn't having trouble already.

With a few small kisses to the nape of Spike's neck, Xander reluctantly dragged himself out of bed to answer the call of nature. He was brushing his teeth when he got his first glance at himself in the mirror. Wow. Three big, very obvious hickeys. A few little

bruises here and there too. The ones on his hips looked suspiciously like handprints. He probably should be worried about how to hide all the marks right now, but all he could do at the moment was think that Spike must have really enjoyed himself last night. He couldn't suppress a wide, goofy grin as he remembered what they'd been doing when he'd received those hickeys. Thank God he had two whole days before he had to be back to work. Two whole days with Spike, and hopefully most of it spent in bed.

Once he was showered and dressed he got breakfast going, then microwaved up a mug of blood. The scent of warming blood this time of day usually got Spike up and headed for the kitchen, although he wasn't very coherent until after he'd had his late morning cuppa and a smoke. Xander could relate - he wasn't exactly a ray of sunshine until his second or third cup of coffee, either. Sure enough, Spike blearily wandered into the kitchen right as the microwave dinged and turned itself off. Barefoot and shirtless, his bedhead hair curling and sticking up in tufts, he was so adorable Xander

wished he could get a picture of him like that. Without Spike smashing his camera into tiny pieces, anyway.

Spike retrieved his mug of blood. Seeing the sappy smile that Xander wasn't quite fast enough to hide, he came up behind the boy and gave him a quick squeeze and a kiss on the side of the neck on his way to the kitchen table. No awkwardness, no regrets, no not-so-subtle digs. Xander realized that Spike was just as comfortable being around him as before, acting almost the same, just more tactile. Xander's nerves subsided as he knew then that everything was going to be all right.

Humming happily, Xander dished up two plates of scrambled eggs, bacon and toast. He made sure that Spike's Tabasco sauce was on the table, and then sat down and tucked into his breakfast like the starving teenager he was, content to wait and see what Spike would say once he finished waking up.

After scarfing down most of his plateful, he caught Spike staring at him warily. "You okay?" the vampire

asked gruffly.

"Me? I'm more than OK. I could eat a horse... Umm, how about you? You all right?"

Spike threw him a smirk. "Fine. Pleasantly sore in all the right spots." Spike's humor faded. "Looks like I roughed you up a bit though. Kind of surprised you didn't take one look in the mirror and decide to stake me in my sleep. I guess I just forgot myself. Heat of the moment and all. Sorry 'bout that."

OK, so maybe there was a little awkwardness to get out of the way. "What, these?" Xander gestured at his neck. "I'm not. Sorry, I mean. I'm kind of proud of 'em. If I were still in high school I'd be considered totally cool right now. Hickeys show that somebody likes me." Xander's face was turning a lovely shade of pink.

"Oh, I more than like you, pet." Spike's trademark leer slipped easily back into place.

Xander grinned back shyly as he got up and cleared

away the dishes, trying to hide how nervous he was getting. "So, I was OK? Crap, and could I sound any more like a freakin' girl?"

"You were incredible, love. You blew my bloody mind... In fact, you're so good at it, I'd almost think you'd had lots of experience at bugging." Spike's voice went from an aroused purr to jealous and deeply suspicious.

"What? No! I never! I, um, I sort of... well, I bought this book last week. I figured if I wanted to be a good lover I should at least know what I'm doing. But I never did it with anyone before. I mean, not *that*." Xander face was hot from blushing so hard.

Spike's eyes glassed over and the anger faded. "Oh. I see. Smart idea. Your book worked a treat," Spike rumbled with a speculative smile. He wondered how quickly he could talk the boy into going back to bed so he could further the lad's education.

"Oh. Good... I was sorta hoping you might want to do it again sometime."

In a flash, Spike was across the room and had pinned Xander to the counter. "How about now?" The vampire ground their hips together, leaning forward and outlining the marks he'd left on Xander's neck with the tip of his tongue.

"No! I mean yes, *God* yes, later, but Dawnie will be here soon. Not that I don't want her to know about us, I do, if there's an actual us yet to know about that is, but I don't want her walking in on the middle of any naked fun, you know?"

"Oh, there's definitely an 'us,' love." Spike captured his lips in a demanding kiss, wantonly plundering the boy's mouth until Xander felt all boneless and wobbly. "But I see what you mean. I suppose that means I shower alone." Spike sighed, his lips forming a pout that he knew would usually get him just about anything he wanted. He started stroking Xander's back. "As soon as we get Dawnie dropped off tonight, I expect you to make it up to me. I want to get a look at that book of yours." The vampire reached lower to pat and squeeze Xander's bottom.

"You can show me anything else you've learned, and then I'll fill any gaps left in your education." Spike's smile was seduction itself.

Xander replied, "It's a deal. And uh, as long as I'm sounding like a girl anyway... If there's going to be a definite 'us,' can we tell Dawn first? Like today?"

It wasn't often he got to see Spike struck speechless. When he gaped and didn't answer, Xander started babbling again.

"I don't want to keep this a secret from our friends. If you really don't want them to know, then I can try to keep quiet about it, but I have to warn you up front that it won't work. I'm a *terrible* liar. Willow and Dawn especially always see right through me..." Xander's back stiffened as he resolved to get all this awful 'talking about feelings' crap out of the way right now. "Besides, I'm not ashamed of this, or of you, or of the way I feel. I'm terrified, but I'm not ashamed. Hell, I'd rent a billboard if I could."

Spike was beaming at him now, with that adoring

look that tore his heart out every time. He looked so young and sweet when he did that, so human. Xander would say or do whatever it took in order to keep that look of joy on his lover's face. He used both hands to grasp Spike's hips tightly, pulling him impossibly closer. "In fact, I think I'm going to want to kiss you in public whenever I feel like it. And grope a bit. Maybe even pull you into the bushes from time to time. And that's so much easier to do when people already know we're an item. So... does that work for you?" He held his breath, his heart pounding like a big bass drum.

"That works for me very well, love. There's nothing I'd like more." Spike ran his hand through Xander's hair, reveling in the soft texture, the way it moved through his fingers. "You never cease to amaze me, Xan. I don't deserve you."

"Well, of course you don't." Xander grinned back. "But like it or not you're stuck with me now, so get used to it." He turned the vampire around and gave him a little push towards the bathroom. "Now go. Shower. I don't want Dawn wheedling it out of me

before you get out, and she's bound to know something's up. I doubt I could wipe the shit-eating grin off my face if I tried."

"Just be sure we both have industrial earplugs in place first, right? Don't know about you, but Bite Size has made my eardrums bleed more than once."

Spike was still in the bedroom getting dressed when Dawn arrived. Xander wasn't that surprised; Spike always stayed in the shower until all the hot water was gone. He didn't have a water heater at the crypt, and for all his big bad bravado, Xander knew the vampire secretly adored his creature comforts.

Xander played it cool as he answered the door and let Dawn in. He took her coat and let her babble about the latest gossip at school until she paused for breath long enough to get a decent look at him.

"Good God Xander, what on earth happened to

your neck?" She pulled aside his collar and pointed at him accusingly. "Those are *hickeys!* You have a *girlfriend!* *Ssqueeeeeee!* I knew it! Who is she? Do I know her? How long has this been going on, and why didn't you tell me before, huh? Does anyone else know yet?"

Where the hell was Spike? "Sit down Dawnie, and I promise to spill my guts. I wanted you to know first."

She sat down on the loveseat, bouncing like a human kangaroo with glee. "So spill already! Who is the lucky girl?"

Xander rubbed the back of his neck, stalling as long as he could. "Actually, it's a guy."

Dawn's eyes grew big as saucers. "Oh... Is that why you didn't marry Anya?"

"Oh! Geez, if it were only that simple! But no, it was nothing to do with that. Besides, I didn't suddenly turn gay overnight. I still like girls well enough. I

just... have a new appreciation for guys too. Well, one anyway. I guess I care more about the person inside than what kind of equipment they have on the outside. Not that I don't *really* like his... um, yeah." Damnit, Xander thought, why didn't he ever know when to shut up? He was going to kill Spike when he finally got out here.

"OK, then. So who's the lucky guy? Spill! I want all the details, from the very first time you two met."

"I, I've had a crush on him for a while now, but we knew each other for a long time before we ever became friends. In fact, you've been his friend a lot longer than I have. We didn't become more than friends until last night."

Just then, he heard Spike's bare feet padding up behind him. Oh, crap. Trust him to finally show up just as he confessed out loud that he'd had a crush on the stupid vamp.

Dawn was looking back and forth between the two of them, gaping like a prize trout. "You don't mean..."

No way!"

Spike sauntered over and casually sprawled next to Xander on the couch, nonchalantly throwing an arm across his boyfriend's shoulders.

Spike answered, "Yes way. The boy just couldn't keep his hot little hands off me. Isn't that right, Cuddles?"

Xander thought, *Cuddles?*

"AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!!!"

Dawn jumped up and down in a little celebration dance.

Xander flinched and covered his ears. "Damn, you were right. I thought you were joking."

Spike just looked mildly insulted and pointed to the earplugs he'd had the presence of mind to put in earlier. A hundred and fifteen pounds of squeeing, wriggling teenage girl launched herself at them. They parted to let her squirm in between them. She

settled in and started gleefully singing, "Spike and Xan-der sitting in a tree, K-I-S-S-I-N--"

As of one mind, the two men started tickling her mercilessly.

Part Fifteen

They tickled Dawn until she had spasms. Once she had cried uncle and gotten over her giggles, they all sprawled on the couch and watched Saturday afternoon cartoons together. After a full critique of the episode of *Mucha Lucha* that they'd just watched and a lengthy discussion of which masked wrestler each of them would most want to be and why, Spike called his two students to order and spent the next hour teaching them self-defense.

As Spike instructed them on how to read an

attacker's intentions, Xander noticed the way that Spike used a lot of positive reinforcement with Dawn and tailored the lesson for her so she wouldn't get discouraged. In fact, he did it for them both. The vampire was an excellent teacher. He also noticed the warm looks and possessive little touches Spike gave him whenever Dawn's attention was elsewhere. He'd definitely picked a winner. Then Dawn suggested another lesson at poker and counting cards. But the audible growl coming from Xander's stomach turned the discussion towards dinner.

Xander and Dawn ganged up on Spike and persuaded him to come along with them to the local bowling alley for dinner. It wasn't an easy task. Not even the pair of them hitting the vampire with the full big-eyed pouty-lip thing could budge him. Xander finally mentioned the six magic words: "Full bar, strong drinks, my treat." Spike gave in, but grumbled all the way there.

Spike cheered up considerably when they'd settled into the bar, and he saw a waitress walk by with what looked exactly like a deep-fried flowering onion. Xander had been right. The drinks were cheap, strong, and large to boot. He worried a bit about his pet, though. It seemed that the majority of Xander's childhood haunts served cheap strong drinks, which the boy never indulged in himself. It told Spike a lot about his boyfriend's childhood. Once again Spike's demon rose up, demanding to eviscerate those parents of his. They had long ago moved to the very top of the *Things I'm Killing Once The Fucking Chip Is Out* list.

And another thing, he mused; Xander certainly loved his barfood and it was better than the garbage they served at the DMP, but not by much. Spike's cooking and the training he was giving the lad was slowly melting away that layer of puppy fat he'd developed while he was living with Anya, but his eating habits still needed work. Spike decided to make sure Xander ate better in future. Maybe even

take him to a fancy restaurant, show him that high-brow food was good too. Realizing where his train of thought was going, he told himself that no, he was not completely Xander-whipped. He just wanted the boy healthy so he could keep shagging his brains out at every opportunity, that's all. He idly wondered if Xander liked oysters.

The bowling alley was old, and all the lanes were slightly warped, but Xander insisted that it had character. No amount of begging could get Spike to go out there and bowl with them, and considering it involved *renting bloody shoes* you'd think they'd know better than to even try, but from his seat at the bar overlooking the lanes he had a fine time betting on Xander and Dawn's game with the bartender. A couple of other bar patrons joined in enthusiastically. Xander held back but still beat Dawn two out of three, which meant Spike made a tidy profit off of the barflies he'd bet against. Then they escorted Dawn home.

Knowing that Dawn wouldn't be able to keep their secret for long, they told the rest of the household

that they were a couple as soon as they arrived. It became obvious that Willow and Tara knew already, and merely wondered what had taken the two men so long to figure it out themselves. Buffy was surprised at the news, but recovered quickly. She told them they were both great guys and she was happy for them both. She hugged them tightly and wished them well. And if either man noticed the sad, faraway look Buffy cast Spike's way when he threw his arm over Xander's shoulder, grinning like a little boy at Christmas, neither of them acknowledged it.

They didn't stay long. Buffy gave them the rest of the night off, wanting to do some slaying on the way to the Bronze with the girls, and see how well Dawn could concentrate on patrol when her "Vampire Yoda" wasn't there to coach her every minute. There were more awkward hugs all round when they said their goodbyes, and Willow made it clear that Xander owed her some juicy details when they got a chance to chat in private. Then the two men ambled out to the car, settling inside and starting to kiss sweetly when it hit them: they had

the rest of the evening all to themselves now.

Spike drove like a maniac, even more so than usual. The giddy anticipation between them grew each second they got closer to home, not daring to touch each other or they might not make it home without exploding all over the dashboard or crashing the car. Barely remembering to shut the engine off, they raced each other up the stairs from the garage, running full out. As soon as they got inside the apartment, they fell on each other, wordlessly groping and grabbing and pulling clothes off while moving in the general direction of the bedroom. Spike broke away and shoved Xander backwards onto the bed, and then crawled over him and leisurely snogged the boy until he was gasping for air and wriggling like an eel underneath him.

Kicking his pants off from around his ankles, Xander wrapped his limbs around his lover tightly and rubbed his whole body against him in a demanding, steady rhythm. Spike picked up the tempo, reveling in the delicious friction as their cocks jerked and slid along one another. Lips kissed and wandered,

tongues licked, and teeth nibbled delicately. Spike snaked a hand in between them and grasped both their erections, pulling at the sensitive flesh roughly as he arched his back and thrust his hips into the ones below him hard enough to make the headboard thump against the wall. Soon they were both climaxing fiercely, the sight of Spike's sudden shift into game face wringing every last drop from Xander's spasming body.

The smooth planes and ice-blue eyes returned as Spike rolled off his lover and lay on his side, stroking Xander's heaving chest with deceptive calm.

"Say Cuddles, now that we've taken the edge off, where's that book of yours?"

That night, they'd skimmed through the whole book together. Xander bravely showed Spike the section on using fingers and toys to get used to the

intrusion of anal sex and make the first time with another person less painful. When Spike realized the amount of thought that Xander had put into getting around his chip, he felt humbled. And even more horny, if that were possible. They wound up sixty-nining, lubed fingers teasing and probing Xander's hole until the boy was moaning around Spike's cock and erupting helplessly across the vampire's talented tongue. By the time Xander regained consciousness, Spike had retrieved their laptop from the living room and was busy surfing the internet. The vampire was propped up in bed next to him, chain smoking and browsing through a truly stunning and varied array of sex toys with a knowledge and familiarity that both excited and terrified the young man.

Over the next few days, Xander's life shifted into a wonderful new pattern. Wake up. Have screaming orgasm. Shower. Not always necessarily in that order. Then his shift at the construction site, hours of tedious grunt work made much more enjoyable because it left him alone with his thoughts. All he could think about was the gorgeous vampire he had

waiting for him at home. Then the end of the day would arrive and he could leave, swinging by to pick up blood or groceries or some laughably bad horror movie from the video rental store, and then head home. It had never felt like home before, not really; not with Anya or when he lived there alone. But with Spike he finally felt like he had a place that was his, that was safe, and that the outside world could never touch.

Spike would have dinner waiting for him when he got home. The vampire had gotten it into his head to feed Xander all sorts of exotic food, stuff he'd never even heard of before. But it all tasted wonderful, so Xander couldn't complain. Then they'd patrol a bit, maybe sweep the Bronze and stop for a game of pool and a beer. Afterwards they'd settle on the couch for a good bad movie, or just play Spike's old records and talk about anything and everything all night. Sooner or later, cuddling would always turn into tonsil hockey and dry humping, and then clothes would go flying. It was a rare thing when they made it all the way to the bed before they collapsed in a happy, sticky, exhausted

mess.

One day Xander came home from work and Spike had candles lit everywhere, and his favorite music playing. There was a dangerous leer on the vampire's face, and the living room had packing peanuts scattered everywhere. Xander knew what that meant: their mail order package had arrived.

Part Sixteen

Their eyes met, and Spike wiggled his eyebrows. With a grin and a little war whoop, Xander took off running through the apartment with Spike in hot pursuit. Vaulting over the couch and sailing around the dining table, faking left and going right, Xander stayed just out of reach until he'd sprinted into the bedroom. There Spike easily caught up and tackled him onto the bed, straddling his hips firmly. Xander bucked and squirmed, fighting valiantly until Spike had him pinned down with both wrists held above his head. Spike might even have thought Xander was genuinely fighting to get free, if it wasn't for all the giggling he was doing.

Xander grinned even wider. "Oh, woe is me!"

Xander lamented in a lilting voice. "You caught me fair and square, you *Big Bad Vampire!* Now that you have me in your evil clutches, whatever will you do with me?"

Spike's amused leer reached epic proportions. He chortled in a deep voice, "That depends on you, young man. I was going to eat you, but I could be persuaded to spare your life. For a price." Spike nibbled and sucked Xander's lower lip, using his free hand to fondle Xander through his jeans. "Will you submit of your own free will?"

"Oh! I submit! Please don't hurt me – I'll do *anything!!*" Xander bucked upward, rubbing his crotch against Spike's hand. "I am helpless to resist! One look at your compact yet well-muscled body and my poor virtue is defenseless against your lascivious desires!"

Spike broke down laughing and collapsed on top of his boy. "Now that's just too over the top, even for me. What brought this on, anyway?"

"Rocky & Bullwinkle was on cartoon network this morning."

Spike snorted. "So, you got all that. From Rocky & Bullwinkle."

"Dudley-Do-Right, actually. I mean, you really think Snidley Whiplash lusted after Nell, when he had Dudley flashing that tight little ass everywhere? All his tying damsels to the railroad tracks stuff was just a smokescreen to hide Snidley's forbidden lust for hot guys in Canadian Mounties uniforms!" Xander cupped Spike's ass with both hands and kissed him hard, then used the distraction to flip them both. He settled on top of Spike, crossing his arms over the vampire's chest and pillowing his head there. "Our package arrived today I take it?"

"Such a perceptive one you are, Cuddles." Spike carded his fingers affectionately through Xander's tumbled locks. Every time Xander brought up getting his hair cut, Spike had managed to... distract him. It had worked well so far.

"So do I finally get to see exactly what you decided to buy us, or are you still being all secretive guy?"

Spike arched an eyebrow and pointed over at the big old dresser they shared. Xander got up and wandered over for a closer look. Artfully arranged on the dresser top were several things that instantly had Xander panting and trembling with a major case of nerves. He hesitantly picked up one particularly large and showy toy, only to accidentally press the switch at the base. The instant it started vibrating in his hand, he gave a breathy shriek and instinctively flung it across the room as if it had burned him. Spike **laughed**, not unkindly, retrieved the vibrator and set it back down in its place on the dresser. He pressed his chest to Xander's back and wrapped his arms about him tightly, settling his chin on the boy's shoulder. The overwhelming smell of arousal Spike was picking up from Xander was becoming tinged with more than a little bit of fear.

Spike murmured, "We can take this as slow as you

like, luv. We don't even have to do this at all if you don't want."

"Oh, I want – I definitely want. It's just... OK, the "Anal Play Beginner's Kit" I can deal with. I think. But this?" Xander picked up the large, intimidating vibrator again. "This thing is just too damn big! It's never going to fit inside me!"

"You underestimate yourself, Cuddles. Besides, who said that one was for you?"

Xander looked shocked. Spike added "What? You thought I was going to let you have all the fun?"

"You like the idea of sticking that great big thing up your ass?"

"No, I like the idea of *you* sticking that great big thing up my ass... I'd be turned on by anything you'd want to do to me, Xan. But I don't want you doing something you aren't ready for yet. Are you sure about this?"

"Oh yeah, I'm sure. Pretty sure... I mean, yeah I'm scared it'll hurt, but the way your fingers have felt back there has been fucking incredible, and I've seen how much you like it when I... when I fuck you. I couldn't believe that the Big Bad would ever bottom for anyone. But you look so damn happy doing it that I figure it's got to feel a whole lot better than it looks. Cause it looks pretty painful."

"I'll make it feel so good for you, luv. I'd never hurt you, Xan, never. Besides - chipped, remember? Couldn't hurt you even if I wanted to." They both stared into the dresser mirror as Spike's hand slipped under Xander's shirt. In the mirror Xander stood alone, his clothes and hair moving as if being mussed by invisible hands. Invisible fingers unbuttoned Mirror-Xander's jeans, and gently pulled them down a bit, freeing his rapidly stiffening cock. Spike nibbled at his neck, then continued in a low soothing voice, "We have all the time in the world to experiment as much as we like..." He curled his fingers around the boy's returning erection, stroking and squeezing gently enough to feel it twitch and fill in his hand. "Now I need to go

check on dinner, and you should hop in the shower. Dinner won't be ready for a while yet, so take your time. I want you all warm and relaxed. Want you all limber and bendable when I seduce you with my lascivious attractions."

Spike backed away with a last little squeeze to his lover's shaft, leaving Xander groaning and leaning unsteadily, his jeans pulled halfway down. As the vampire headed for the kitchen, Xander called after him, "And Geez, Spike! Did you buy every single flavor of lube they had? Do you own stock in the *Wet!* Corporation or something?"

Xander swayed back and forth under the showerhead, letting the pulse feature work the knots out of his neck and shoulders while working shampoo through his hair. Then he turned around, and turned the cold water way up. His erection wasn't going away, and he wasn't about to do anything to relieve it in the shower when he had

Mister Sex God waiting outside for him. Grabbing the soap, he worked it into a lather, scrubbed his face roughly and then leaned into the spray of water, shampoo and soap suds winding their way down his body in long foamy trails. Suddenly he started in surprise as a pair of hands clasped his hips tightly.

A deep sexy voice murmured low in his ear, "Thought you might need some help scrubbing your – *Holy Bugging Christ!!!*" Spike shrieked like a little girl and scrambled to the far side of the shower. "What the fuck are you trying to do, kill us both?"

Xander quickly turned the cold water way down, forcing down the laugh that threatened to escape at the look on the vampire's face. "Sorry! Sorry, just trying to get rid of the painful case of blue balls you gave me. Didn't know I'd have company in here." He tested the spray from the showerhead, then opened his arms. "It's OK, it's getting nice and warm now."

"It damn well better be." Spike grumbled, but flew into Xander's arms and cuddled him fiercely. "I was planning to take care of that problem for you." Spike trailed his fingers down over Xander's chest, and teased the trail of fine hair leading down to his lover's cock. "Suppose we should get you squeaky clean first." Spike took the soap and worked up a good lather. He started washing his lover meticulously, working from his head down to his toes, kneading and stroking every inch, but studiously avoiding the now rampant dick swaying and bobbing in front of him.

Turning Xander in his arms, Spike lathered up again and scrubbed down his back, kneading out every little knot and twinge until every single one of Xander's muscles except one felt like a limp noodle. Nudging the boy's legs apart a little, Spike got Xander to lean forward and place his hands on the shower wall, looking for all the world like he was waiting to be frisked. The vampire got on his knees and washed the backs of Xander's thighs and calves, then began thoroughly washing his butt in smooth, slow circles.

Xander inhaled sharply as he felt his cheeks being spread, then cried out when Spike ran his tongue from just behind his balls all the way up to his trembling hole in a long, wet lick. Xander moaned loud as Spike circled his hole with his agile tongue, switching from slow soft licks to tiny nibbles to little stabs with a firm tongue that teased his entrance open and made Xander plead and babble as his entire body shook violently with need.

Suddenly the stabbing tongue stopped its exquisite torture and was replaced by a slippery wet finger. Xander whimpered as the finger found his prostate and wriggled against it. He could hear a low steady growly-purr coming from Spike. Xander panted and whined as the finger was replaced by Spike's questing tongue again. When Spike moaned, Xander could feel it ricochet through his entire body, and at times the vamp's arms were the only thing still holding him up. He could feel his orgasm building, and his cock hadn't even been touched.

Then the finger came back, and brought one of its

friends along with. The slick fingers scissored inside him slightly, and he felt a twinge of pain. He froze, afraid he might set off the chip. He decided that if there was any chance of pain, he'd better be the one to initiate it. Trying to relax and open himself, he pushed back onto Spike's fingers roughly, forcing them all the way in and jabbing them against his happy spot. He realized that the growling noise coming from Spike sometimes formed words. "You look so fucking hot like this... *Fuck!* So tight... Yes, oh, yes, just like that... My beautiful darling boy... *Mine*, and no one else's! ...So fucking sexy!"

Xander panted and fucked himself on Spike's hand until he was only moments from exploding, when his balls were suddenly tugged down and he felt Spike's hand tighten around the base of his cock. Xander yelled and swore, the delayed orgasm rocketing through every nerve painfully. Spike crooned wordlessly and soothed him oh so gently, but didn't let go and let him come.

Once Xander was somewhat in control of himself again, Spike got up off his knees and grabbed

something from beyond the shower curtain. When the vamp slipped it over Xander's cock and balls, he realized it was a cock ring. He tried to object but was stopped by a warm wet kiss. Spike's fingers returned to stretching Xander's hole, and his protests changed to steady moans and gasps. Just when Xander was ready to sob in frustration, Spike removed his fingers and pulled Xander back to lean against him, then carefully maneuvered him so Xander was facing him with his back up against the shower wall. Strong arms lifted Xander forward and held him tight, and then started easing him back until something big and smooth nudged his hole. He glanced over one shoulder and down, and spied something suction cupped to the shower wall... Oh!

"This is the hard part, Cuddles. You're going to have to push back until it's inside you and getting it in might hurt a bit at first. If you go slow, it won't be so bad. It's no bigger around than my two fingers, and you liked having those up there, didn't you?" Xander nodded dumbly. He was so desperate to come he could barely see, much less answer questions coherently. "Good. Go slow, and try to

make your muscles relax and let it in. I promise, once we get past this part, it'll feel so good."

Xander tried to relax and pushed back onto the dildo that Spike had stuck firmly to the shower wall. The vampire whispered broken encouragements while stroking Xander's back, arms and thighs soothingly. Inch by inch he sank slowly down onto the toy. Spike toyed with his nipples, licking and nibbling everywhere he could reach. Xander trembled violently when he felt the cold tiles of the wall and realized he'd taken the whole thing deep inside. He looked up into Spike's face and the vampire kissed him almost reverently. Xander felt himself slowly pulled forward until the toy was almost completely out, then pushed roughly back until it was fully seated inside him again. Then he did it again. And again, only a little faster.

"Soon that'll be my cock, buried deep inside you... Feeling you tighten around me, filling you, fucking you, claiming you for mine." Spike shifted Xander slightly from side to side, until the panting boy bellowed and scored lines down the vampires back

with his nails when the toy made contact with his happy spot. He saw shooting stars and felt dizzy with the desperate need for release. Spike started up a rhythm of slow pulls forward and firm steady pushes back that had the dildo rubbing back and forward across his prostate with every move.

Xander yelled obscenities between frantic gulps of air and begged to be allowed to come. Finally Spike got to the point where he wasn't sure he could hold back his own orgasm any longer.

"Are you ready, my precious? Ready to come for me?"

Xander screamed "Yes! *For fuck's sake, YES!*"

Four things happened in rapid succession: Spike fell to his knees before Xander, pushed the button on the remote control hanging from his wrist, yanked off the cock ring, and swallowed Xander's leaking prick down to the root.

Xander felt the deep throbbing vibrations in his ass the same instant that he felt the cock ring come off.

Spike sucked down his cock until it hit the back of his throat, and swallowed around it. Xander's body convulsed in huge violent spasms and he screamed as he thrust mindlessly and shot almost painful bursts of come down Spike's throat.

Xander came out of his orgasm-induced coma lying on their bed, Spike spooning behind him, purring loudly and stroking him all over as if he were a very big cat. He moaned hoarsely and arched back into the vampire. "I'm dead, aren't I? You're killing me. I see it all now. You can't bite me, so your cunning plan is to fuck me to death... Not complaining, though."

"So you liked?"

"Liked? *Liked?* Like is for Twinkies and nachos. This was *indescribable*. Visceral. Mind-blowing." He opened his clenched fists and looked down. His

hands were clutching tufts of blond hair. "Wow. I've had some really incredible sex in the last few weeks, but this is the first time I've ever yanked out handfuls of my lover's hair and not even noticed I was doing it."

Spike nibbled Xander's neck, wound his limbs around his boy even tighter and admitted in a dazed voice, "I've seen many things in my time, pet. Sometimes Dru and I would pay people to tie each other up and have sex in front of us. Then we'd join in, take our pleasure, and eat them all afterwards. I've seen Darla flogging Dru raw while she sucked off Angelus. Hell, I've seen Darla give my sire a sound flogging, then pound into him with a strap-on till he screamed and begged like a little girl. But I have *never* seen anything to compare with you tonight. The way you move, the way you moan for me. The fervent way you respond, giving me everything you've got. You're the hottest **kiss** sexiest **lick** most incredible thing I have ever seen. I can't wait to make you mine. I want to be inside you so badly, precious, it's like torture having to wait. Tonight was just the pre-show, just wait until

we get to the main event."

Xander groaned with a little smile. "I'm not sure I can take much more. You keep fucking me halfway into a coma. If the sex gets any better you might cripple me."

Spike attacked Xander's neck with hot sucking kisses. "*God*, I can't wait to be inside you, sweetheart, show you how good it feels... Mmm, want to feel that tight heat around me. Wanna make you moan. Wanna fill you up. It's gonna be so good... Wish I could bite you, then it'd be perfect."

Xander looked curiously at his lover. "Come again?"

"Just a nibble." Spike demonstrated on Xander's pulse point. "Wouldn't hurt you. Not like it'll ever happen anyway." Spike gathered Xander to his chest with a sigh, clutching him like a giant teddy bear. "If I only could, I'd claim you properly, fuck you slow and deep while I drink from you." Spike's eyes abruptly changed to gold. "Not much. Just enough to claim you as my mate and place my mark

on you, so that every single demon you met would know that *you're mine!* - and if they don't show you the proper respect I'll fucking *maim* them."

"You do that now."

"Well, yeah." Spike shrugged, eyes shifting back to blue, and tried for noncommittal. "But then even Peaches would have to be nice to you. And Dru and Darla, too. We'd be bonded, sort of permanent-like. So you'd be like a member of the family."

"I see." Xander yawned and thought it over for a minute, then smiled. "I wouldn't have to attend any family reunions, would I? Because the Harris family gatherings were enough to scar me for life."

"Nah pet, haven't had a meeting of clans since the Master was up and about. Rat-faced little git."

A buzzer sounded from the kitchen. Spike reluctantly unwound his limbs from around his Xan-pet and sat up.

"Hungry, pet? I could bring a tray in here for you, if you're too knackered to move."

"What's for dinner?"

"Wild Salmon stuffed with crab, gorgonzola and shredded root vegetables in a citrus vinaigrette marinade."

Xander stared blankly.

Spike heaved a long-suffering sigh. "That baked fish thing you like so much. With the stinky cheese inside."

"Oh! Nummy!"

Xander sprang up and scurried naked into the kitchen. Spike followed in hot pursuit.

Part Seventeen

Spike was pissed. Today was Xander's birthday, and he wanted it to be special. He'd even wanted to throw him a party, but it looked like none of his Scooby friends could be bothered to show up. Oh, they all had good excuses: Buffy and Dawn were in L.A. with their Dad for summer break, and the Wicca Lovers had gone off to some annual gathering of hippy new-age types. Evidently it was like this every year. No wonder Xander had never had a decent Birthday party before.

Well, this year was going to be different. Spike was going to make up for every other birthday his Xan-pet had ever had.

**

Xander was determined. Today was his birthday, and he *hated* his birthday. His childhood birthdays sucked beyond the telling of it, and each new birthday just seemed to reach a new low. He'd thought that once he was out of his parent's house, he could throw himself a big party and finally enjoy his birthday. But every year all his friends would be out of town, and he'd wind up celebrating all alone. Willow always made it up to him when she got back from her yearly Wicca retreat thingy, but it just wasn't the same.

Last year with Anya was no picnic either. Never one for selfless gift-giving, she'd taken it upon herself to use his birthday to "fix" everything about him that she didn't like, especially his wardrobe. Not that she didn't have good taste in clothes, but he'd spent his entire life getting clothes each birthday and Christmas when all the other kids got toys and games. If he never got another gift piece of clothing as long as he lived, it would still be too soon.

Well, this year was going to be different. Xander didn't want a big party anymore. He wanted to

spend the whole weekend alone with Spike. What he *really* wanted was to take Spike somewhere far away from the hellmouth, somewhere with a big hot-tub and a balcony overlooking a tropical beach and lock themselves in their room for a month. Never put on clothes, or even get out of bed except to use the hot-tub or go have sex in the moonlit surf.

Unfortunately he couldn't quite afford to fly them to Tahiti this year. He'd done a lot of thinking about it though, and had come up with a plan that he was hopeful would knock Spike's socks off.

**

A week-long heat wave had hit Sunnydale, and Xander was so glad that his birthday fell on a Friday this year. He'd arranged a little time off, and once his workday was over he'd have the next five days

free to spend with Spike in air-conditioned bliss. He couldn't wait to spring his little surprise. Once Xander got home from work, he got pinned to the wall by the horny vampire and kissed until he saw stars. In other words, his usual welcome home. Then he was ushered directly to the shower, where Spike gave him his first birthday present of the day. They fucked and frolicked like playful otters until all the hot water ran out.

The doorbell rang while they were drying themselves off. The way Spike threw jeans on and hastily told Xander he'd see who was at the door simply screamed that Spike was hiding something. When Xander finished getting dressed and went in search of his vampire he found him in the dining room, unpacking enough Indian take-away for a small army. "Ah, Spike? What's with all the food? I'm mighty hungry, but I'm not *that* hungry."

"That's food for the guests."

Xander's eyebrows shot up. "Guests?"

"Yeah. Guests. At the Birthday party. Ah, surprise!"

"Oh, Spike. That's so sweet." Xander gave him a tight squeeze and grinned at the grimace he got for calling Spike *sweet* to his face. "You shouldn't have. Seriously. I just want to be alone with you tonight. I wanted to get an early night, you know?" With a naughty grin, Xander waggled his eyebrows like Groucho Marx, slipped his hands into the Spike's back pockets and squeezed. "Besides, no one's going to show up anyway."

Spike growled, "Yes they will, or I'll strangle them with their own entrails."

Xander chuckled ruefully. "Buffy and Dawn are in L.A., Willow & Tara are off in the Catskills, who else is there to invite?"

Just then the doorbell rang.

"See Cuddles, you underestimate yourself. You have plenty of friends besides the scoobies."

Spike opened the door and ushered the first guest in.

"Xander! You're looking well. Gay sex obviously agrees with you."

"Anya?!"

"It's Anyanka, now. Happy Birthday!" A flat box haphazardly wrapped in paper so gaudy it hurt the eye was shoved at him. "So, how did you two decide to hook up? You do realize that in some cultures, I'd have the right to demand a farewell threesome, you know – Ooh! Tandoori chicken wings!"

Before either man could reply the doorbell rang again. Xander answered the door, and recognized Clem behind the stack of boxes the floppy-eared demon was carrying. "Hey, Xander! Many Happy Returns of the day! I bought frozen treats for the party – where's your freezer?"

As they put away the rapidly melting Popsicles,

Fudgesicles, Bomb-Pops and Ice Cream Sandwiches, Clem explained that his newest job involved driving an Ice Cream Truck; coincidentally for the same company that Xander had driven for a couple of years back. Clem was using his route to double-up as a courier for some of the local demon businesses for some extra cash, instead of selling drugs out of the truck the way most of the other drivers supplemented their meager incomes. Xander was stunned to hear that, but figured it sure explained an awful lot. The employee discount on ice cream sure had been sweet, though. But in the end, he explained, it was having to listen to "Frosty the Snowman" on continuous repeat for thirty-five hours a week that had made Xander quit that horrible job.

Unwrapping a Grape Popcicle, Xander decided that since he still owed his Blondie Bear for springing the surprise party on him, he wasn't above teasing his lover a bit. Besides, Spike had sucked most of his brains out through his cock in the shower earlier, and then was in too much of a hurry to let Xander return the favor. Now he knew why. He deserved a

little torture for that.

With as innocent an expression as he could muster, he started sucking and licking on his Popsicle exactly like he'd wanted to suck on something else earlier that evening. The look on Spike's face and the way he froze while lighting his cigarette and almost set his hair on fire was totally worth it. After that, Xander shamelessly fellated his Popsicle whenever Spike glanced his way, showing him tantalizing glimpses of his agile, purple-dyed tongue. The poor flustered vampire tried and failed to avoid staring at him. As he watched Spike adjusting himself when he thought no one else was looking, Xander could tell that he was going to pay dearly for this later. In fact, he thought with a smirk, he was counting on it! He just hoped he wasn't going too far with the teasing, or he just might end up with a Popsicle shoved somewhere painful.

As more guests arrived, Xander decided to go easy on the poor vamp. On the one hand, all he wanted to do was grab Spike, drag him into the broom closet and have his wicked way with him, but on the

other hand he was touched by all the trouble Spike had gone to. The spicy appetizers were quickly being demolished by humans and demons alike. Anya had started a multilingual game of Pictionary in the living room. Spike himself was busy swearing a blue streak and fighting to get the beer tap into the first keg of the night.

A couple of antique dealers they knew from upstate arrived, right behind a few of their more pleasant poker buddies and, to Xander's surprise, Jonathon. The ongoing conversation drifted from the advantages and perils of spellcasting on the Hellmouth to the sci-fi collectables convention in Sacramento later that month. Xander noted that Jonathon quickly fit in like he'd known everyone there for years. Then Willow and Tara called long-distance to wish him a Happy Birthday, and he was on the phone with them for twenty minutes. By the time he hung up the party was in full swing; and the humans and demons were all getting along swell, if not necessarily behaving themselves.

**

An hour later, and Xander was incredibly glad that none of the scoobies had been able to make his party. He wouldn't know quite how to explain the spectacle unfolding at his kitchen table at the moment. Besides, Spike had clearly decided to retaliate in kind, and the obscene popsicle-sucking contest had begun in earnest. The sight of that (radioactive blue) tongue, knowing exactly what it was capable of, was driving him crazy.

"Three Kings." Anya fanned out her cards on the table and returned to sucking her Blow-pop and flirting with Jonathon.

"Full House, Aces over Tens." Garthog the Destroyer displayed his hand proudly.

"Well, that's fucked me right enough." Spike said as he threw his hand in.

"I knew you were bluffing, vampire. You should know better by now than to bluff Garthog the Destroyer!" Garthog started stacking up the huge pile of chips as Spike began to gather up the cards.

Xander cleared his throat and tried to sound helpless and feeble as he laid out his hand. "Umm, I have Four Jacks."

Every eye in the room froze and stared at Xander, even the ones on stalks. To cover, he returned to single-mindedly slurping his Cherry Popsicle.

Spike snarked proudly at the room in general, "I told ya, it's the quiet ones ya gotta watch out for." As he spoke, two girlish figures appeared in the kitchen doorway.

"Is this a private party, or can anyone join in?"

"The Slayer!" A couple of the demons from Willy's jumped up from their chairs, and backed away slowly, casing the room for other exits.

"Way cool! Can I play?" Dawn asked, bouncing and rubbing her hands together.

"Buffy! Dawnie!" Xander jumped up and grabbed both girls in a huge bearhug, coincidentally placing himself between the Slayer and his non-human poker buddies. He grinned from ear to ear. "I didn't think you could make it!"

"And miss the Xan-man's big birthday bash? No way! – Hey, Hiya Clem!" Buffy and Clem waved at each other from across the table. "Ah, Xander? Please tell me you're not playing for kittens."

Xander pretended to be affronted. "Would I do that? We're only playing for money and the occasional bit of jewelry. So please don't beat up the other guests, OK? They're all my friends."

Buffy waved her hand dismissively. "Hey – I'm still on vacation. As long as none of the guests eats any of the other guests, I'm cool. Deal me in?"

"Me too! Spike taught me how to play!" Dawn chortled, pulling up a chair.

At that remark, a chorus of both human and demonic groans filled the kitchen.

**

A couple of hands later, Spike and Xander both bowed out of the game. As Xander finished off his latest Popsicle and passed the hall closet, strong familiar arms suddenly grabbed him from behind and shoved them both inside, shutting the closet door behind them. "*Finally!*" thought Xander.

He was bodily picked up and pinned with his back against the door as a cool tongue delved deep inside his mouth and counted his back teeth. Xander gave as good as he got, joining in enthusiastically and only pulling away when he'd

had to gasp for air to keep from passing out. He traced the shell of Spike's ear with his tongue, and nuzzling along his lover's neck until he found the perfect spot, he bit down *hard*. Spike bellowed and swore like a sailor until Xander let go and returned to kissing him, sharing the faint coppery taste of Spike's own blood with the dazed vampire.

Two sets of hands frantically roamed and explored as they ground their hips together and moaned into each other's mouths. Spike whimpered as Xander's hand unzipped his pants and reached inside, wrapping around the vampire's iron-hard length and stroking firmly. Xander abruptly switched their positions and dropped to his knees. A warm, wet tongue stroked quickly up the underside of Spike's erection, swirled along inside the foreskin around the leaking head, and then Xander wrapped his lips tightly around his prize and sucked the crown of Spike's prick hard, his tongue flicking and teasing. Spike howled, banging his head hard against the door behind him. Xander slurped and licked as if Spike's cock was the best Popsicle he'd ever had, while one hand fondled and rolled the vamp's balls

in their soft, fuzzy sac and tickled the little patch of flesh behind them. Spike fisted one hand in his lover's hair, the other flailing out blindly to find the pullcord for the light. His eyes adjusted to the sudden glare and he looked down. Xander's dilated brown eyes locked with his as he hungrily swallowed around Spike's cock while pulling roughly on his own. He slowly pulled back the length of Spike's cock to the very tip, and then took him back in until his nose met the crisp hairs at the base, doing his best to give his lover a good show. The sight quickly pushed Spike over the edge and he screamed Xander's name, trembling as the young man lovingly milked him dry.

Spike pulled Xander back up, and kissed him thoroughly, chasing down every last trace of himself inside his lover's mouth. Spike decided that there was nothing better in this world than the taste of his own spunk on Xander's tongue, second only to his lovely boy's spunk, or his rich warm blood. Spike smirked at how tousled and debauched Xander looked: hair askew and soft eyes, lips just slightly bruised and swollen from kissing.

"Now, let that be a lesson to ya, you brazen hussy." Spike tried to sound stern, but his voice was still wobbly and a little hoarse. Zipping them both up and straightening their clothes, he swooped in for one last tongue-tangling smooch as he opened the closet door.

Half a dozen party guests stood in the hall, suddenly looking anywhere but at their hosts and picking back up half-finished conversations while hiding their knowing smirks with varying degrees of success.

With the trademark straight-forwardness that Xander both loved and hated, Anya piped up, "If you're done having sex for the moment, several people want to know when you're going to open up your OTHER presents."

**

Xander sat there, stunned and rather at a loss for words. He'd never made anywhere near this kind of haul before. He sat on the couch, surrounded by tattered heaps of wrapping paper. Buffy and Dawn had gotten him Amazon Gift Certificates and a *ten-pound* container of peanut M&Ms, which were rapidly disappearing as the guests helped themselves. Xander was grateful, because it meant he could hide away the enormous box of Lady Godiva Chocolates that Willow had gifted him to eat later. Willow's bag of presents also contained a small box wrapped in Sunday comics and labeled "Hippo Birdie dude! From Oz and Devon." He was pretty sure what was in that box, and if it was anything like last year's gift, that one was going to be opened in private. Tara had made him a pair of protection amulets, a big jar of healing salve and some homemade fudge. He was rapidly going to have enough chocolate to give an entire herd of elephants a major sugar buzz. He couldn't be happier - this was so much better than clothes! He'd also received a box of old 45's and several tattered monster movie posters from his antique trader buddies. Next, Jonathon handed him a rare and

precious Darth Vader Pez Dispenser, blushing and mumbling, "Thanks for inviting me, I really appreciate it. I don't get invited to parties much. You wouldn't believe the two losers I've been spending my weekends with lately. There's only so much Dungeons and Dragons a guy can take before he goes completely batshit insane, you know?"

Inside Anya's long flat box was a little envelope with a fancy certificate granting him one wish. She explained that unlike vengeance wishes, this one came with no nasty strings attached. But as a result it was only a very small wish that wasn't capable of altering any living being; but he could use the wish to alter any small stone or metal object in almost any way he liked. She assured him that when the time was right, he'd know exactly what small object to transmutate. Xander tried to puzzle that out, but Anya distracted him by asking what Spike was like in bed, and then someone shoved more presents at him. Xander felt like Jimmy Stewart in "It's a Wonderful Life," stunned that he had this many friends. The pile of loot just kept growing.

Spike alone had given him more presents than he usually got in total for his birthday. His first gift had been an incredible set of throwing knives, each perfectly balanced and made to fit his hand. The next box, which had obviously contained clothes, had made him hesitate for a moment; but he really couldn't fault Spike. The buttery-soft black leather pants looked so tight he wasn't sure he could even fit into them without slathering himself in butter first. Spike quickly volunteered to help out with that when the time came. Several CD's, DVD's, books, and a gift certificate for a tattoo later, and he still hadn't opened everything Spike had wrapped up for him. He enthusiastically shredded the sleek black wrapping paper off of the latest gift from his adorable, marvelous, *potent* vampire lover.

"The Pop-Up Kama Sutra!! Aw gee, thanks Spike!"

Spike leered gleefully. "You know what they say, pet: It's the gift that keeps on giving."

"Goodnight! Thanks for coming!"

Xander shut & locked the door, barely able to stumble to the couch before collapsing next to the sleepy vampire.

"Thanks, Spike. I can honestly say that was the best Birthday I've ever had." Xander snuggled next to his nearly comatose lover. Leaning over, he licked the rapidly fading toothmarks he'd left earlier, and smirked happily at the involuntary purr that resulted. "Oh Lord, that was fun... I thought they'd never leave. Speaking of which, did you see Anya and Jonathon going home together? That poor guy is so doomed." Xander yawned almost hard enough to dislocate his own jaw. "Let's go to bed, huh? We can clean up the place in the morning before we leave."

Spike rose and stretched like a big cat. "It is morning... Wait a minute, what do you mean, leave?"

"Oh, yeah, I almost forgot about that. I got distracted by that party you threw me, you great big softy." It was a testament to Spike's exhaustion that that remark only received a little growl. "You're free for the next few days, aren't you? Because I thought we could use a break, just a few days away from the hellmouth to relax, you know? And I wanted it to be a surprise. So, umm, surprise!"

"What are you up to now, kitten? You know I'm always up for anything you have in mind." *That thing he does with his tongue gets more obscene every time he does it,* thought Xander.

"Oh, no. I've kept it a secret this long, now you'll just have to wait a little longer. Ill explain in the morning, I'm too tired to do this now." With that, Xander dragged himself to his feet and lumbered blindly into the bedroom, shedding clothes as he walked. He collapsed like a sack of flour onto their bed.

Spike followed, rolling Xander over and pulling the covers over them both. "I don't wanna wait. Tell me

now."

"In the morning." Xander yawned.

Spike elbowed Xander in the ribs. "C'mon, you can't tease me like that. At least give me a hint."

"In the morning."

"But-"

"In the morning, Blue Eyes." Xander covered Spike's body like a human blanket, wrapping his limbs around his lover in a death-grip. He licked his mark one more time, and tucked his head under Spike's chin. In the space of a heartbeat, he was fast asleep.

Spike wanted to lie awake for a while, feeling offended that Xander wouldn't even give him one little hint, and worried that Xander had been able to keep a secret from him the way he had; but the young man made a *wonderful* bedwarmer, and he was so damn tired....

Part Eighteen

Xander woke up brimming with the kind of energy that only a massive amount of sugar the night before can provide. He let Spike sleep late, tidying up the party mess, taking out the garbage and packing his suitcase before heating up the vamp's morning blood. He watched the bleary-eyed vampire shuffle to the table and digest his breakfast for a while. Biting his tongue, he pretended to read the morning paper, knowing the silence wouldn't last long. Right on cue, Spike's neurons started firing up again.

"Oi! Gimme my pressie, Wanker!"

Suppressing a smirk, Xander slid an envelope across the table. Spike attacked it like a five-year-old on Christmas morning; then sat staring, bemused at

the slips of paper in his hands.

"The Damned... You got us tickets to see *the Damned*."

Xander shrugged. "You took me to see Alison Krauss last month; I thought I should return the favor. I remember you'd said that they were one of the best punk rock bands ever, so I know you like them."

Spike looked very pleased. "But Xan, these are tickets to see the Damned *at the Hard Rock in Las Vegas*."

Xander grinned like a cheshire cat. "And what's more, I got us reservations for a kickass suite at the Luxor. With blackout curtains and our own private Jacuzzi." Xander blushed, but met Spike's gleeful leer with one of his own. "We've only got an hour until we have to leave for the airport. How quickly do you think you can pack?"

"Pfft. I can be ready in two minutes."

"Good." Xander stood up and tugged on Spike's hand urgently. "That leaves us fifty-seven minutes for a quickie in the shower."

*

Xander dropped his suitcases and collapsed on the bed with an exaggerated bounce, testing the springs with a giggle of delight. Spike casually flung off his duster and sauntered to the windows, checking out the room while trying not to look like he was checking out the room.

The flight had been uneventful, a weekly charter by an airline used to "sun-sensitive" patrons flying in and out of Sunnydale. The attendants checked his cooler of blood through the baggage claim with a minimum of fuss. The plane had been a little forty-seater "puddle-jumper." And Xander's delight at flying for the first time had been infectious.

Xander leaned back on his elbows. "We made good time, showtime isn't for three hours yet. So, what do you think Blondie? Shall we head down to the casino for a little poker before the concert? Or we could go watch the big volcano at the Mirage, it's supposed to spew lava once every hour."

Down on the strip, the eruption was already at its height. Spike's eyes swept from the beautiful but almost surreal view out the window to his lover, splayed artlessly across the comforter. Spike prowled his way to the bed, looming over Xander. He took in the tousled hair, blue jeans and painfully bright Hawaiian shirt over a too-large black Tee.

"Right then. Those clothes simply have to go." Spike roughly yanked Xander's arms out of his shirt and shucked his shoes off.

"Hey, *hey!* Getting a little too grabby there Mister! Don't I get dinner and a movie first?" Xander reached down and stilled the hands that were unbuckling his belt.

Spike stopped manhandling Xander with a sigh.
"Look Cuddles, if you want to get through the night without half the skinheads in Nevada trying to kick the everlovin' shit out of you, you *can't* wear that. Wear the leather pants I bought you."

"I didn't pack the leather pants."

Spike gave him a triumphantly smug look. "Good thing I went through your suitcase and repacked for you then, eh?"

"You – you repacked my – where the *hell* do you get off?" Xander sputtered, indignant.

Spike leaned down and captured Xander's upper lip, sucking at it sharply; and then kissed him until he saw stars, his anger evaporating into thin air.

"You're in Vegas, Xander. You don't want to dress like some regular Joe from southern California. You can do that at home. It's like Halloween; you're supposed to stop being normal and let yourself go wild." Spike's smile turned dangerously feral.

"Haven't you heard? What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas."

Spike pulled back and surveyed his handiwork. Satisfied, he set down the eyeliner. Xander let out a breath he hadn't realized he was holding.

"Can I look now?"

"Give me a minute! Rome wasn't built in a day." Spike ran hairgel-slicked fingers through Xander's hair with enthusiasm.

"You've been saying that for the last half an hour. We ain't got all night, you know."

Spike chuckled. "Bitch, bitch, bitch. Christ, you're worse than Dru sometimes."

"I didn't ask for this, asshole! You were the one-"

"All done!" Spike grabbed Xander's hand and pulled him up, spinning him around so he faced the mirror.

"...Oh, Dear God."

"Brilliant, isn't it? I think I've outdone myself this time. Bloody masterpiece, you are."

Xander took in his reflection in the mirror as his equally punked-out invisible mentor tweaked and preened him one last time. He almost didn't recognize himself. Artfully tousled hair, thick mascara and eyeliner; tight black T-shirt that proclaimed "*The Suicide Commandos! Live!*", and showed every play of muscle clearly; even tighter leather pants showing off everything he was born with. Xander started panicking.

"I can't go out like this! I look like a *raccoon!* A *slutty* raccoon! These pants are obscene! God help me if I need to bend over or something."

Spike was having none of it. "You look gorgeous and

completely fuckable, and there won't be a single being there that won't envy me for having such a hottie for a lover."

"I'm not a – really??" Xander looked at him in surprise.

"Really. But they'll just have to go home disappointed because you're mine, and I don't share." As Spike kissed him again and dragged him away from the mirror, Xander knew he'd just lost the argument.

When they first arrived at the concert, Spike had been dismayed at the crowd of - quote - "geriatric bloody punks reliving their glory days." Xander tactfully didn't point out that it was the first time

he'd ever seen Spike wearing his Sex Pistols shirt and safety pins everywhere. The pin piercing Spike's eyebrow was attracting fascinated stares.

But then the warmup band ended their set and the headliners came on, and Spike's mood perked up immensely. He declared that the band "were still the shit, by Christ." Xander had to admit, they were skilled musicians who played with the tight sound that only comes with twenty years of touring on the road together. After ten more minutes of hyper-Spike bouncing to the hard fast music, Xander convinced him to go on and brave the mosh pit without him.

After another twenty minutes or so of sitting at the bar across from the stage and watching Spike pogo around the dance floor like a leaping porpoise in a stormy sea, Xander suddenly felt like he was being watched. Turning, he met the amused gaze of a curvaceous Goth girl in a black lacy dress that showed both her cleavage and her tattoos to impressive advantage. He smiled politely, and she smiled back and winked at him. He quickly turned

his gaze back to the dance floor just as Spike bounded his way over and crushed him in a sweaty, giddy embrace. The vampire's tongue thrust possessively while he ground up against him, then Spike turned and hissed loudly at the girl who'd been flirting with Xander, flashing fangs in her face. To Xander's surprise, her eyes flashed yellow in response and she scurried off quicker than anyone in heels that high should be able to.

"Fucking demon magnet, you are. Can't turn my back for a bleedin' minute." Spike grabbed the glass out of Xander's hand and downed the contents with a flinch. "Urgh! Call that beer? More like piss-water." Spike was vibrating with energy, his feet barely touching the ground. He leaned in and nuzzled Xander's neck in a near-headbutt, sniffing deeply, then pulled him up off his barstool. "C'mon, I ran into a couple of old friends I want you to meet."

**

After the final encore and a round of Jagermeister, they all migrated from the *Hard Rock* to the walk-in cooler of a very chic and exclusive Russian restaurant called *Red Square*. The waiter handed out full-length sable wraps to the party of four, they seated themselves at the ice-covered bar and perused the vodka and caviar menus. Xander balked at eating caviar, but thought the house drink - a mix of vodka, dark rum, cane syrup and lime juice called a "Cuban Missile Crisis" - was very tasty indeed.

Fyodor and Svetlana were Danish and vaguely Elvish. With ice-blond hair, sharp high cheekbones, whipcord thin and dressed in full-length black leather overcoats, they both looked like they could have been relations of Spike's. Or possibly characters from *The Matrix*. The Danish pair had a wicked sense of humor, and delighted in making Spike's "pet human" laugh. They were also more than able to hold their liquor against a lightweight college kid and a vampire with a hollow leg. Xander could see why they got along so well with Spike.

Between shots of vodka and various dollops of fish eggs and smoked salmon on little crackers, the three took turns enthralling Xander with several of their less gory tales of the "good old days." At one point Svetlana told them an ancient and rather dirty Elven folk tale, making Xander choke painfully on his pepper vodka. That lead to Spike and Fyodor competing to see who could remember the most naughty Victorian Pub Songs. And *that* got them kicked out of the Russian bar.

The last thing Xander remembered, they'd all watched the volcano erupting outside the Mirage; both couples snuggling as the cheesy effect lit up the night sky. Afterwards, they were all going to some Italian restaurant inside the Rio for what the Danes had promised him was the best Pizza in the whole Southwest. After that, it all got kind of fuzzy.

Xander woke up laying crosswise on the bed, curved against Spike's back in a familiar embrace. As he slowly reached conciousness, he took stock of his condition. His brain throbbbed like his skull had shrunk two sizes during the night. His tongue had shag carpeting installed. His crotch was sticky. And when he moved, his chest *hurt*, like he'd been stung by bees. Turning and sitting up very slowly, he carefully looked himself over for damage.

"...Spike? When exactly did I get my nipples pierced?"

Xander turned and looked over at his comatose lover. And flung himself out of bed with a little shriek.

Spike burrowed deeper into his pillow and groaned. "The hotel better be *on fire*, Harris."

Xander pointed at Spike, shouting "*What in God's name have you done to your hair!?!"*

They both winced in pain and clutched their heads. Spike froze, then sat up and began frantically feeling his skull. "What the fuck did I do last night, lose a bet?" he grouched, running his fingers over the fuzzy, dark honey-blond stubble. "Bloody Bugging Christ. This'll take *years* to grow back."

Part Nineteen

Xander stumbled to the bathroom, craving Aspirin desperately. As he downed the pills, he got a good look at himself in the bathroom mirror. He carefully fingered around the new piercings on his chest, trying hard to remember how he got them.

As he brushed his teeth, he noticed something on the floor. Hair. Clumps of bright blue hair scattered on the floor by one end of the hot tub. They suddenly triggered a few fleeting flashes of

memory...

10 Hours Earlier...

"No. Don't wanna."

"For me, luv." Spike tried his best to look earnest.

"No! I may be drunk, but I'm not *that* drunk."

"Just try it once, and if you don't like it, we can stop."

"Not a chance in hell."

Spike ran a frustrated hand through his hair. "For

Christstakes, pet - after all I've done for you, you won't do this one tiny little thing for me?"

"No! ...And you can put that big honkin' pout right back where it came from, because I am *not* getting my nipples, my belly button, or *anything else* pierced."

"I'll do it if you do. I double-dog dare ya!"

Xander looked indignant. "Spike, earlier tonight I watched you pierce your own eyebrow with a huge-ass safety pin! It's just not the same for you! You'd have to come up with something that's as big a deal to you as multiple piercings are to me."

Xander watched as Spike unconsciously ran his hand through his spiked-up hair, making sure it still stood up properly. It was the fifth time he'd done it since they'd entered the hair salon/tattoo/piercing parlor five minutes earlier. It gave Xander an inspiration. "Now if you were willing to, oh, say... Dye your hair bright blue, now *that* would be almost on the same scale as me piercing my nipples."

Xander expected a sputtering, indignant denial. To his astonishment, the vampire nodded his head decisively. "Done and done." Spike turned to their piercing artist, Sheila, and handed her Xander's digital camera from his pocket. "Get us a "before" pic, would you luv?" Spike wrapped his arms around his flabbergasted lover, practically climbing into Xander's lap and smiling into the camera.

"No-no-no! I haven't agreed to anything!" Xander was caught in the camera flash like a frightened gopher.

Sheila tutted at him. "But you're going to give in eventually, aren't you dear? If the charming devil's only going to wear you down and get his own way anyway, why bother fightin' it?"

After taking another shot, Sheila handed the camera back to Spike and looked over Xander like a predator sizing up its prey. "Now, Maggie here will give your friend a first class dye job. You -" Sheila crooked her finger at Xander. "Follow me." She

marched off, not glancing back to see if he followed. With her black bustier, thigh-high leather boots and imperious manner, all she was missing was a big whip and the picture would be complete.

"But –"

"I wouldn't argue with her if I were you, luv; she sounds like she means business. You don't want to get on her bad side."

Maggie manhandled Spike into her salon chair.

"He's right. They don't call her *The Scaredresser* for nothing, ya know."

Xander quickly ran to catch up with "The Scaredresser."

The next morning...

One quick, cold shower later, Xander emerged and settled into an overstuffed armchair. Spike had gone back to sleep, and was snoring away quietly. Xander fiddled with his digital camera, hoping for a few more clues to jog his memory.

He powered up the LCD screen and started going through the photos they'd taken. First, photos of each of them all punked out; followed by a couple of shots that Spike had snuck of the band rocking out onstage. Then several more taken at the Russian bar, with Fyodor and Svetlana looking sleek, chic and highly amused. Then a shot of Fyodor & Svetlana embracing in front of the erupting volcano, followed by one of Spike and himself, too engrossed in kissing each other to notice either the volcano or the camera.

Next were two shots of Spike coiled around a panicked Xander like a sexy Boa Constrictor,

followed by a shot of Spike in a salon chair with two dozen or more folded pieces of tin foil in his hair. Then several more shots of Spike with blazing bright blue hair all spiked up again; from the front, side, and back, and one of the vampire snuggling up next to Xander, who was defiantly displaying a pair of little hoops through his nips.

That bastard, Xander thought. He dyed his hair without a squeak of protest, because he fully intended to shave his head afterwards! Did he honestly think he could get away with it? I am so gonna get me some payback for that! First chance I get, I'm going to email those blue-haired photos to Willow and Dawn. And Deadboy too! Just not that last one, with me in it. Heh, heh. That'll teach him.

Then he saw the last few photos saved in the camera's memory, all taken after they'd gotten back to the hotel.

Blue-haired Spike, shirt off, with a cigarette and a beer bottle in his hand and a lecherous look on his face.

Spike completely naked, stretched out on his stomach on the bed, gazing at the camera with an even more lecherous leer on his face.

Xander, lounging naked in the Jacuzzi, his own "come hither" look in his eyes and one hand lazily stroking the erection rising up out of the water.

Spike in a much closer shot, kneeling down in the water; his riotous blue hair framed by Xander's splayed thighs, an amused twinkle in his upturned eyes and Xander's dick in his mouth.

A downward shot of two slightly blurred hands, one pale and one tanned brown, wrapped together around a pair of stiff cocks. A single line of come had been captured in mid-air, shooting upwards.

Spike lying back in the tub with his eyes closed and a languid look of total satisfaction on his face, the very picture of boneless contentment.

Spike, still asleep in the tub, with half his head blue

and the other half shaved down to a thin layer of dark honey-blond fuzz. Xander's naked and insanely giggling reflection stood in the mirrored wall behind the jacuzzi, one hand holding the camera up to his eye and the other holding a four-in-one hair and beard trimmer...

The End

Never Trust a Man Whose Eyebrows Meet in the Middle

"Spike! Stop eating all the candy! That's supposed to be for the trick-or-treaters! At least save *me* some!" Xander pulled the bowl of fun-size chocolate bars away from the gluttonous vampire.

"It's dark out. Not like we're going to get any more kids at this hour pet." Spike grumbled and sucked the melted chocolate off his fingers.

"Shh! This is my favorite part!" Xander leaned

forward, just a little closer to the television and the classic movie being shown in all its black and white glory. On the screen a wrinkled old gypsy woman got down from her cart and knelt by the fallen werewolf. Xander was enthralled, and mouthed the words along with the old gypsy woman on the screen.

"The way you walk is thorny, through no fault of your own.

But as the rain enters the soil, so the river enters the sea;

So tears run to their pre-destined end.

Have peace for eternity, my son."

"I can't believe you know all that by heart. How many times have you seen this movie, anyway?" Spike teased.

"Oh, I dunno. Twenty? Twenty-five?"

Spike just shook his head sadly and made little tisking noises.

"Hey! The Wolf Man is a horror *classic!* Lon Chaney

Jr's da man! And after this movie they're showing *Frankenstein vs. the Wolf Man*, and I've only seen that seven or eight times. And the one after that is *Werewolves of London*, and I've hardly ever seen that one. You ought to like that one, being British and all."

The microwave dinged and Xander ran to the kitchen. He returned with a huge bowl of popcorn, the smell of artificial butter almost gut-churning. "What'd I miss?"

Spike grabbed a handful of **greasy** popcorn. "Eh, nothing much. He's hitting on the dumb blonde, now. She's trying to sell him a cane with a silver wolf's head on the end. Yeah, like *that's* going to end well."

*"Even a man who is pure in heart, and who says his **prayers** by night; may become a wolf when the wolfsbane blooms, and the autumn moon is bright."*

Per their prior agreement, they both downed a straight shot of whisky and refilled their glasses for

the next time someone in the film recited that little poem. Xander had dubbed it the "*Werewolf Movie Night Drinking Game*."

When Xander reached for more popcorn, Spike noticed the new bling on Xander's hand. "Hey, nice ring. What did you do, **mug** a Hell's Angel?"

"I picked it up just today, at the Halloween sale at the Magic Box. It grabbed my eye and fit my hand perfectly, and it was eighty percent off, so I got it." The ring was a well-sculpted silver wolf's head with ruby eyes, and Xander had really liked it from the moment he'd first saw it.

Spike grabbed his hand and looked it over appreciatively. "Good craftsmanship. Nice shape, it'll do some good damage in a fight. Doesn't look like real silver, though. Or white gold. Not cheap, though. Platinum, maybe? ...You sure it's not got some nasty mojo attached to it?"

Xander had never even considered that when he'd put it on, but he wasn't about to admit it. He

shrugged. "It was out on the sale table. All the *magical* magic stuff is kept locked up behind the counter, so I'm sure it's fine." He tugged his hand from Spike's grasp, finished off the dregs of his beer and started on a mini-pack of M&M's.

Spike put the T.V. on mute and looked at Xander skeptically. "Yeah, right. Until we go out in the moonlight and you start barking and howling. It's not every year the full moon falls on Halloween. Makes both humans and demons go completely starkers. Seriously luv, it's not worth the risk."

Xander replied scornfully, "Oh, please! Like this old thing is gonna do what, turn me into a werewolf? Get real, bloodbreath. I may be a little naive, but even *I'm* not that gullible." Xander quickly scarfed down his M&M's, hoping Spike would drop the subject.

The vampire gaped in disbelief. Didn't the idiot know better then to tempt the fates with a statement like that? Even if the ring were completely safe before, Murphy's law said all bets

were off now. Spike reined in his temper with an effort, and tried using the placating voice that had always worked whenever Dru got it into her head to go dance in the sunshine. "Xan, you live on a hellmouth. You can *never* be too careful. Take it off for now. We can always have the Wicca lovers look it over tomorrow, yeah? Once they give the go-ahead, you can wear it as much as you like."

"Geez Spike! Paranoid much? There is nothing magical about this ring! Look—" Xander got up and walked out onto the balcony, stretching in the bright moonlight. "See? Nothing! No hair growing out of my palms, no strange gypsy women spouting poetry at me, nothing."

Spike huffed, and grumbled in an offended tone, "Well, it *could* have been something... What the hell do I know anyway, I'm just a fucking one-hundred twenty year old vampire is all. Not like I've seen any magicked-up pieces of bloody jewelry in my time or anything."

There was silence, except for a scuffling noise on

the balcony.

"Uh, Xan?"

A frightened whimper came from outside. Spike jumped up off the couch and froze, dumbstruck at the sight of Xander in the balcony doorway.

The big shaggy dog there took one look at Spike and let out a plaintive howl that was quickly answered by every canine within ten miles. Then Xander buried his head beneath his huge paws, wondering how he *always* managed to let his big mouth get him into trouble this way...

After further examination, Spike found that the ring was still on Xander's left front paw, only it had gotten big enough to encircle his whole leg just above the ankle. He also discovered that if he

scratched in *exactly* the right spot, he could get Xander's hind leg going like a furry little piston engine.

"See here? That's not a pattern along the band, that's Cyrillian lettering etched along there. If I know my cursed baubles, we get you out of the moonlight, pull this off, and Bob's your uncle – you'll be right back to normal."

Xander yipped, and licked Spike's face excitedly.

"Eww, Xan!" Spike wiped the slobber off his cheeks with mild disgust, then looked over his shaggy lover thoughtfully. "You don't look so much like a werewolf, just a big Irish Wolfhound. You sure you want the ring off right now? It's not every day you get to feel what it's like to be another species, you know." Xander whined softly, and Spike absently started scratching behind his ears. "We could go for a nice, long run through the woods first. Best thing for clearing your head out. I do it all the time. Bet you'd like it." Xander rolled over as Spike's scratching moved to his belly, and his tail started

wagging, making loud thumping noises as it hit the floor.

"So, whatta ya say, Cuddles? Shall we go Walkies?"

After an exhilarated run through autumn woods and across the moonlit fields, Spike and Xander slipped into the cemetery and loped gently through the rows of gravestones, wind whipping through their hair. Xander was having a great time, as long as you didn't count the part at the beginning where Xander's stomach heaved up all the garbage he'd eaten earlier. The mix of cheap beer, Jack Daniels, chocolate, candy corn and extra-buttered popcorn coming back up tasted even worse to a dog than it would have to a human.

He was also still a little pissed off about the part of the evening where Spike got him to fetch-the-stick

two or three times, before he realized what he'd been doing and tried to bite through the vampire's ankles. But, he'd gotten his own back in the end: he'd led Spike a merry dance when he chased Mrs. Gunderson's cat for more than twenty city blocks. Nearly caught her, too! If only the vicious little hairball hadn't made it up that tree....

As they got nearer the cemetery's entrance, the pair could hear the sounds of battle. The slayer had suckered a gang of three fledges into attacking her, and now she was effortlessly pounding the snot out of them and giving them a good tongue-lashing on top of it.

"...I could be home right now, curled up with a hot apple cider and a big bag of little Snickers Bars. But *no*, I have to be out here, protecting frat boys in bad costumes from getting chomped on. It's *Halloween*, damnit! Don't you idiots know you're supposed to take the night off?" With a sudden twist, Buffy took out two vampires at once. As the third fledge realized his predicament, he turned to run, but was nailed by a flying stake to the back. "Amateurs!"

Buffy scoffed.

"The average fledge is completely brainless, luv. What did you expect?" Spike plucked his lighter from an inside pocket and lit a cigarette.

"Hey Spike." She walked over to him, dusting herself off with a little chuckle. "I can't believe how pathetic the vamps around here have been lately. Three against one, and I didn't even work up a sweat." Buffy shook her head sadly. "Don't tell anyone I said this, but I kind of miss the good old days when you were the Big Bad. At least *you* gave me a decent run for my money. Dusting fledges as dumb as these three were is so... boring."

Upon hearing a hastily stifled growl, Buffy finally noticed Spike's new companion. "Where'd you get the dog, Spike? You never seemed like the type to keep pets. Except for Dru, of course." Buffy kneeled and reached out to the dog, trying to make friends. The dog shied away with a little yip of alarm, curling itself around Spike's legs.

"Er, just taking care of the mutt for Clem. It's only for a day or two..." Buffy stretched out her open hand to try to get the dog to sniff her, but the dog just backed away again.

Spike quickly warned, "He's not that fond of humans, Slayer. You're making him nervous. Give him a chance to get used to you first."

Buffy backed off reluctantly, disappointed that she hadn't been able to win the animal over.

"Why doesn't he like humans?"

"When Clem got him from the rescue shelter, he'd been an abused puppy." *Never let it be said that Spike couldn't think on his feet, or lie like a rug,* thought Xander.

"Awwwww, that's so sad! How could anyone be mean to an adorable face like that? And those beautiful big doggy eyes. They seem... strangely familiar." Buffy tried to make eye contact again, but the dog avoided looking at her and tried to hide his

massive bulk behind Spike's legs. "What's his name?"

Spike's mind cast out the first thing it could find. "Snoopy."

"Awwwwwww!!! That's sooo CUTE!" Buffy giggled. Xander looked at Spike like he was insane.

Spike dropped his cigarette and stamped it out. "Well, gotta be on my way, Xan's waiting at home for me... You can come with if you like, slayer; you know Xander would love to see you. You might even get him to share some of his chocolate."

"Thanks, but Dawn's back at home waiting for me, or at least she'd *better* be. I should finish patrol and get back... But tell Xander I said hi and I'll see him tomorrow, OK?" She grinned suddenly. "If you don't hurry home, there won't be any candy left, you know. He'll be bouncing off the walls from the sugar high. And Xander on a sugar high is an unstoppable force of nature. Trust me, you don't wanna go there."

As soon as Spike shut the front door, Xander started whining urgently and nudging him behind his knees. Spike flung off his coat and headed for the couch. The second he sat down, the dog was in his lap, pawing at his chest determinedly.

"Oh, did you want something, Cuddles?"

Cuddles growled low in his throat, then licked the length of Spike's neck with a little whimper and started frantically humping the vampire's leg.

Spike jumped off the couch and tripped over the coffee table, banging his knee and falling to the floor. "Okay, okay!" Turning onto his knees, he reached for Xander's paw and started stroking and feeling it carefully. After a moment, the silver ring somehow shifted and easily pulled off into Spike's hand. In the blink of an eye, the ring shrank to

finger-size, and the dog in his lap became a sweaty, shivering human man.

Spike grabbed the throw blanket from the back of the couch and wrapped it around Xander, hugging him fiercely.

"You OK, precious? I didn't run you too hard?"

"Rrrrrr, ruff! Woof-woof!"

Spike froze in numb shock. "Come again? Listen Xan, if you're trying to pull my leg, I will *make* you regret it."

"AaaooooooooOOOOOOOOOOooooo!!!" Xander threw back his head and howled.

Spike grabbed Xander's head in both hands and searched his lover's face desperately. "Oh, dear Lord. Xander? Are you still in there?" Spike started to panic.

Xander looked up at him with a grin. "Only joking."

Spike shoved him away, affronted. "You rotten little tosser! You scared the bleedin' hell out of me!" Beneath the show of anger, Spike was impressed. He must have been rubbing off on the lad.

"Yeah, well you know what they say. *Never* trust a man whose eyebrows meet in the middle." Xander pointed to the bridge of his nose. "Because his hairy coat's hidden on the inside, and when you least expect it he'll turn into a werewolf and *bite ya!*" Xander lunged for Spike's neck, knocking him over again and tickling the vampire until he was gasping for air and hiccuping, his anger forgotten. Xander sat up, straddling his vampire, and scratched at his own chest absently. "Besides, if it makes you feel any better? I think Mrs. Gunderson's cat gave me fleas."

The End