

*My late contribution to the Color, Sound, Random Object Spander ficathon *tacklehugs 🧑🏻‍🔧[tabaqui](#) and snogs**

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*Preferred rating and genre (ie NC-17, H/C, schmoop, angst, etc):
any rating,*

any genre

Your Colour: verdigris green

Your Sound: train whistle

Your Random Object: one of those paper chinese finger traps

*Two things you'd like included: hair being brushed/combed by
someone else,*

candles

*Two things you don't want included: NO CHIP *don't care how,
just want it*

not there, not working, whatever, no
'whelp/fangless/blondie/droopy'*

Pairing: Spike/Xander

Rating: NC-17

Disclaimer: 🧑🏻‍🔧[tabaqui](#)'s, so don't fuck with her.

Feedback: Shag-a-delic, baby!

*Notes/Spoilers/Warnings: Super AU, set just after Becoming Pt.
I and II, character deaths.*

Vertigo

by
Beetle

1 Night Train

In the darkness, the sound of the train whistle is alarming, makes the boy shudder and shake himself out of a thin sleep. Stops the dreams by pitching him into a reality that has been encompassed by nightmares.

The lulling, rocking motion of the boxcar should soothe; like a child, being cradled in its mother's arms, safe and loved.

But the boy is neither - knows he's neither, and is trapped by the knowing in a sort of cage.

He hasn't eaten since LA and Spike just hasn't felt like *making* him eat. Can't be arsed to do much of anything since the big dust-up.

In the warm, purple-black atmosphere of their boxcar,

Spike and the boy huddle in opposite corners, no trashcan-fires to give them away to the watchful night. The boy shivers constantly and the clacking of his teeth grates on Spike's preternatural hearing like crazy castanets. Long after the boy's fallen asleep again, his teeth chatter on with cold and fright, possibly with madness. Spike's not sure anymore, doesn't particularly care.

"Willow," the boy murmurs, moans, whimpers like a child. Sometimes a strangled sob that sounds like "Jesse" is wrenched from tight, pursed lips.

Spike would sleep, but obviously there's no rest in sleep.

He should be grateful he's still numb, he supposes. The big hole in him that was once filled with *Sire* has swallowed Spike whole, sapped his energy, his bloodlust - everything but the instinct to survive.

When his blood knells the arrival of false dawn, he stands on legs that have remembered how to do so without his brain's interference. The boxcar rocks from side to side, gee and haw. Rocks him and rolls him to the boy, who's twitching and mumbling something.

Chasing dream rabbits. . . .

The phrase pops into his head from the past, from nowhere; disappears back into the numbness with no echo to show it'd ever been. Spike takes a short breath and frowns. The boy's getting ripe. Neither of them have bathed since Sunnyhole.

"We smell like a midden at midday. Especially you, yeah?"

The boy grunts in his sleep. It's a desperately unhappy sound and still the least unhappy sound either of them have made, to date.

It's a good enough answer, for Spike.

"Come on, up-n-at-em, Sonny-Jim." Kicks the kid's foot - not hard - with one of his dusty Docs. "Rise and shine, time to debark."

"Please," is the reply sent on a breathy exhale. The boy's eyes flutter, but do not open. His breathing doesn't change, nor does his heart rate; it hasn't slowed much since LA, pumping rabbit-fast even in sleep.

The boy's heart is scared in a way his flat, lifeless eyes aren't.

Will his heart just up and explode? Spike wonders. Not good for anything's heart to be beating that fast, is it?

Bugger. If he dies, he dies. Dunno how he's still alive, he's so bloody useless. . . .

“Hear that, y'crazy, little sod? You're bloody useless,” Spike whispers, frowning at the sleeping human he'd been stupid enough to take as a - pet? A mascot? There's a laugh.

Spike shakes his head, clearing it of extraneous thought. Doesn't need thought mucking around in his head like a rat, getting in the way of the tiger of his instinct.

False dawn isn't so false anymore. Time they were on the hoof, again.

He gathers the sleeping boy up in a fireman's carry. Boy hadn't weighed much, before; Spike can't tell how much weight he's lost since they've been on the move. The body in his arms is far from warm, despite the balmy night.

“Ready, boy?” A last effort to wake the kid.

“No, no, no.” The sleepy response is muffled in the leather of the duster. It’s all the kid ever says, besides the names of mates who are dead, now. Dead if they’re lucky.

Should snap his neck and have done; the Slayer’s boy is broken beyond repair. It’d be a mercy to end him. . . .

But Spike’s never been big on mercy, per say.

With one yearning thought for his beloved DeSoto, Spike jumps out of the rocking boxcar, into the fading night. He hits the ground running, the boy still asleep and undamaged in his arms.

2 Repossession

Just outside of Flagstaff, Arizona, the boy finally gets it into his head to run.

He's smart enough to wait till after dawn, but it doesn't do him any good, in the end. Spike catches up with them at a rest-stop, twenty miles east of Oxnard.

Spike approaches the van quickly. It's owner's scent is not only familiar, but Spike could probably track it all the way across the world. Barring that, he could track the scent of the van itself, a unique combination of pot-smoke/junk food/wet dog.

Not to mention the memorably hideous paint job, a shade Spike's - *William's* - mother might have called *verdigris green*.

He nearly rips the van door off it's hinges when the breathy moans and growls coming from inside reach a rage-making crescendo.

"Hullo, chums!" Spike's in gameface, his vision sharpened exponentially. His boy is covered in welts, sweat, a little blood and a lot of soon-to-be-dead pillock. Powerful scents wash over Spike in waves: blood, semen, despair, tears, fast food and -

Wolf.

“Spike -” the boy says, his face a pale circle glimpsed over the wolf’s paler shoulder. For the first time since Sunnyhell, all the fear within him shines out of his eyes, is directed at Spike. The rabbit’s-heart thuds and thrashes in his chest so loudly, it seems to make the world shake.

Spike laughs at the cartoonish look of fright on the boy’s face. “Shoulda stayed in Sunnyhell, Wolfling, and away from what’s mine.”

“Spike.” The wolf growls low in his throat, black leeching into his pale irises like ink. He looks pissed off and fantastically unimpressed. “Get. Out.”

“Still the talkative sort, I see.” Spike puts one booted foot up on the van’s running board and suddenly, the wolf *moves*, his small body rippling with rage and power and speed that, unfortunately for him, are no match for Spike’s.

In seconds, the wolf is twitching in the dirt at Spike’s feet, the hair and claws melting away as the life in his dark, feral eyes fades.

There's a moment of silence, punctuated only by the staccato beat of the boy's heart. Spike nudges the corpse with his foot, frowning.

Disappointing, really. Bit of a shame the wolf survived that last, desperate battle, only to get himself killed on some anonymous bit of highway. Life's a bitch, like that.

"Oz. . . oh. . . oh. . . ." the boy is sobbing, shaking, knees tucked up almost under his chin. His eyes are wide and glued to the wolf's cooling corpse.

"Your fault that had to happen, innit?" Spike asks, stepping into the van proper. When the boy's horrified eyes shift to him, Spike grins and shuts the door behind him.

"You ran, boy. Not supposed to run from me."

"Vampire!" An accusation.

"And your master," Spike agrees cheerily, though blood-lust is pounding through him; it's almost like having a pulse again. Speaking of, the boy's heart is racing faster than ever.

“How?”

“What? How’d I find you, love? The same way wolf-boy did.” Spike leans forward and kisses the tip of the boy’s nose before he has time to flinch away. “Scent. . . and don’t you smell interesting, just now?” Interesting, indeed, all pheromones, desire and wolf-scent. But there’s something just underneath it all, some musky, animal scent.

This under-scent - this *other*-scent - is darker, utterly primal. It hints at dark magics and even darker wildernesses that echo with feral, merciless laughter.

Suddenly the frightened brown eyes flash a baleful and eldritch color that has nothing of sable or verdigris in it. Spike’s not even sure he sees it before the boy is launching himself forward with an agonized howl. They tumble to the grungy floor of the van snarling and growling.

“Fucker -!” Spike pins the boy and dodges his snapping jaws. It’s a slightly tougher job than killing the wolf had been, but still relatively easy. He closes his hand on the corded, straining neck and the *wrings* until the demon-

green glow is fading from the boy's eyes.

“You don't fight me; you don't wait till I'm sleeping then sneak off like a bloody weasel, you understand? You. Don't. Run. From. Me.” Spike squeezes harder and the boy mewls and claws at the hand on his throat, desperate for air. His limbs flail around uselessly van floor, knocking over piles of clothes, even managing to hit lover-wolf's corpse once or twice.

The grey lips shape a plea, an apology.

“Not good enough, love. Not to fix this. Gonna make sure you don't try anything like this again.” Spike releases him, watches him gasp and squirm, then leans down till his lips brush the boy's earlobe. “Every vamp, were and demon in this world is gonna know whose claim you wear, love. Runnin' won't do you no good after tonight.”

“Help. . . ohhelpOzhelp. . . .” the boy whisper-chants as Spike nuzzles and scents. He's had teasers of this scent, this blood. Been tempted to sample for days on end. But he never has. He'd felt it best to wait for - something. . . he honestly can't imagine what.

The waiting is over, now.

“Oz can’t help you, pet.” Spike shifts so the boy can see the body of his little friend once more. “He had to go bye-bye.”

Oh, his boy’s eyes are murderous and lovely in the bright moonlight. The profanity that tumbles from the still-swollen lips dilutes Spike’s blood-lust with surprise and amusement. He’s laughing as he drags the boy back to the detritus strewn beanbag and pins his hands.

“No, no, no!” And it’s like being in the boxcar, all over again, each of them wrapped in their own nightmares, alone, scared and lost to the darkness. . . .

Alone.

“Yes. Because I say and because you’re *mine*. If you can come to terms with that you’ll live longer. And I could make that life so good for you, pet. . . or I could make it hell.” Spike lunges for the boy’s neck, zeroing in on the strong, fast pulse. Though his first instinct is to bite, he licks gently, lowering his body to rest on top of the boy’s. Spike is hard, has been since he spotted the van.

The pheromone-want scent is thicker than ever and

Spike's only responsible for half of it.

“Don't give me reason to doubt you, and I'll treat you like treasure, love. Pull a stunt like this again and you'll wish you hadn't.”

Spike fumbles with his belt and fly, shifts the boy's legs up and apart. Then he's pushing his way into tight, slick, clutching heat.

Oh, pet, if you don't make me have to kill you, I just might keep you. . . .

“Please. . . .” the boy's sobbing, hitching breath is hot in Spike's ear, his hands alternately flutter at and claw desperately into Spike's duster. The boy's every twitch and shudder rocks Spike to his core; the blood that fills his mouth is salty, sweet, spicy - *alive*. It rushes into Spike's mouth, his veins, his extremities, makes him harder, warmer, stronger.

After the boy's come and passed out, Spike is still drinking, thrusting, drawing out the claiming, the *having*.

It's an act to be savored, not rushed, in his opinion.

The boy is out until just before moonset. With no change in breathing, he's awake and opens dark, wary eyes that immediately seek out Spike's.

"You understand, now?"

The boy nods mutely.

"And anyone or anything that gets between us is gonna wind up like the wolf. You follow me?"

The boy shudders deeply, hiding his face in the crook of Spike's neck.

"I take it that's a yes." Spike grins, pulling the boy close, letting that rabbit's heartbeat lull and soothe. He feels. . . as if his world may turn out right, after all. Dru will *always* be an aching hole in his being, but this boy. . . .

This boy.

Neither of them look at the wolf's body, still laying where it fell, as they slip silently out into the predawn air. They walk a mile further west, where Spike'd left the Desoto, Jr. - it'd cost him just a spot of killing to get his hands on another - then head east, again.

They find a motel a few more miles down the road, just as the last of the night bleeds out of the sky. Spike checks them in, leering at the young woman behind the counter. Her eyes flick to the boy - who's bruised, subdued and studying his shoes - then back to Spike.

"Kid, you need the cops or something?"

"What he needs is a shower and a few hours rest with his loving man, isn't that right, sweetness?" Spike pulls the boy into his arms for a hug and a peck before snatching the key to their room from the nosy bint behind the desk. "But ta, muchly, for the concern, missus."

"Whatever, champ." Her pale, accusing eyes follow them out of the main office.

In the privacy of their room, Spike shrugs off his duster and sits on the bed, taking a long look at his boy. Grimy, dusty, slightly flushed. . . covered in as many marks of ownership as Spike could put on him.

Lovely.

"Over here, pet. At my feet."

The boy makes his way over to the bed and practically collapses at Spike's feet with a wince.

"Good lad. . . ." Spike murmurs, combing his fingers through the boy's hair. "Gonna let this grow out, to your shoulders. I fancy having something to run my fingers through. . . maybe tug on."

The boy shivers under Spike's ministrations, scooching backwards a few inches, till his back hits the bed and Spike's legs bracket him possessively.

"Spike," the boy sighs, rubbing his face against Spike's knee.

"Such a good lad, you can be." Spike smiles fondly, letting his fingers brush softly down the boy's nape and neck, to the t-shirt he wants to rip off -

"Bugger," Spike hisses. "Close the drapes, love. Not in the mood to catch a tan, today."

The boy stands up shakily, carefully, gracelessly lurching to first the window parallel to the bed and the window next to the door. Between the wolf and himself, Spike

supposes the boy's had a rough night of it, indeed, yet it obviously isn't occurring to him to disobey orders.

After the curtains are tightly drawn, the boy looks to Spike for further instruction.

So very trainable. . . .

"Come on, then." Spike pats his leg expectantly. The boy settles in his lap, immediately baring his throat. Spike holds him close and licks at the punctures until they open, again, letting out a sluggish trickle of blood that tingles on Spike's tongue.

Soon, the boy's breathing has picked up and he's squirming around on Spike's lap. Those tiny whimpers are pleas to be touched, to be reassured.

Spike obliges.

"You can come, now, pet," he whispers against the punctures, when the boy's fought it for nearly five minutes.

And the boy does, instantly, shivering soundlessly, his head flung back, eyes closed tight. Even dirty, bedraggled

and reeking of wolf effluvia, he's gorgeous. It's an exercise in control not to let himself go, too.

The boy's shivers turn into shakes, his gasps into weeping. His scent is both bitter and sated.

Spike merely holds him, let's the boy sort himself out, before reinforcing his earlier point. "Xander."

He can feel the boy's surprise at hearing his name. The pretty dark eyes are shuttered by thick lashes but Spike can read them, just the same.

"Last night is forgotten. It never happened, understand? You're to put it out of your mind."

A frantic nod and relieved sigh.

"And whose are you, pet?"

"Yours," is whispered in Spike's ear, almost inaudibly.

"Yes, mine. . . ." Spike whispers in turn, pulling away to look into the boy's horny, confused eyes. "Now go have a wash, love. If I pick up even a hint of canine on you or in you, I'll scrub you bloody. Get."

The boy ducks his head and stands up. He risks a glance back at Spike, who quirks up an eyebrow before smacking the boy's arse just soundly enough to make him wince again.

"*Get*, I said. Go on, now." A hint of steel in his voice is enough to make the boy hop. "You're not to wear those togs again, I'll get you new!" Spike calls after him. In seconds, the bathroom door shuts and the shower starts to run.

Spike means to join the boy, wash the wolf-scent off of *himself*, as well, but he lays down for a few minutes, is asleep in a few minutes.

When Spike wakes briefly just after noon, the boy is curled up against his side, snoring softly. He smells of nothing but cheap motel soap and himself.

3 A Night Out

“For the last time, mate, she’s dead.”

“No.”

“Yes. Eat your slop, ‘fore it gets - colder.”

“No.”

Spike reaches out and smacks the boy’s cheek, light and lightening quick. By the time the bored counter-girl looks their way, there’s no evidence Spike’s even moved, but for the reddening palm print on the boy’s face.

“You’ll eat when I say to. ‘S all there is to it, love.” Spike takes a drag off his cigarette and watches the boy across the diner table. Empty, unafraid eyes regard Spike just as steadily.

“No.”

“Callin’ my bluff, then?”

The boy’s blinks, his eyes immediately losing focus, his jaw dropping slightly.

This is his way of dismissing Spike and the world.

At least he's not drooling. . . this time, Spike thinks and is reminded not-so fleetingly of his Dru, refusing to eat, playing some game only she knew the rules to. Toying with victims, leaving them to cry and stink up the lair with fear, sweat and mortality. . . till Spike got sick of the stench and the despair and put them out of everyone's misery. . . .

Good times, good times.

"Buffy?" The boy smiles slyly, as if he's found his way around some particularly perplexing puzzle of logic. His long, drawn face is covered in stubble and scratches. When he sleeps, Spike has to tie his hands or he'll claw himself bloody.

"Told you, mate, the Slayer's dead." Spike grins, blows smoke in the boy's face and, as usual, the boy merely blinks, as if he doesn't know he should be coughing and snarking. As if he, of all people, can't comprehend how very dead the Slayer is. Spike takes pity on him. "Bitch didn't deserve a quick death. . . but she got one, anyway. So did all the others."

“Oh.” The wide brown eyes are confused, but not quite the lovely, acquiescent gaze that means Spike can get the boy to do anything. Even eat.

“Oz?”

Spike rolls his eyes but doesn't sigh.

“The wolf's dead, too. The Slayer's dead. The redheaded chit is dead. That tea-swilling Watcher-ponce is dead and that bastard, Angelus -” For a second, Spike's in game-face, then he's shrugging it off. Bloody Angelus.

It's annoying, sometimes, that the kid has to ask and be told over and over that all his mates are dead; has to be cajoled into taking the smallest bites of food.

But Spike is patient. That's the only way to handle someone this badly broken; with patience or maybe with death.

Why the boy's still breathing is a mystery to them both, no doubt.

It does wrench him when those brown eyes, so keenly

reminiscent of Dru during one of her spells, fill with tears. It's as if the boy's mates have up and died on him, all over again. Changes the bitter-copper scent of his misery-laden blood to something richer, something nearly irresistible. Spike shifts in the uncomfortable booth seat, already half hard. He stubs out his cigarette on the cheap plastic table, then slides over to the broken boy's side and takes his hand.

"Your mates're dead; you're not. For now." Spike looks the boy over critically, listens to that rabbit's-heart race, as if it's running from the devil. He pulls the cold, shaking hand into his lap. When the boy automatically strokes, Spike and smiles, leaning over to nuzzle his throat. "Eat up, lovely, and we'll head back to the room, yeah?"

The boy raises his other hand, stares at it like he's never seen it before, before bringing it to his own face. He touches his cheek, ignoring scabs, dried tears and grime, then his hand drifts down to his neck and hovers over two neat punctures.

"Ah-ah," Spike tsks, just before the gnawed, shaking fingers can reopen the wounds. The boy turns his big, doe-eyes to Spike and for that moment, he looks sharp, like his old self.

Like he's about to ask how the hell he's sitting in a diner just outside of Gary, after midnight, with two holes in his neck. Stroking off a vampire.

Spike stills the boy's hand then puts it on the table next to his silverware. "Eat your food, love and don't ask questions you don't want the answers to."

In the boy's dark eyes the last, brief light of reason gutters out, like a match in a dark and airless room. He picks up his spoon and dips it into his chili.

Spike smokes, alternating between watching his pet and watching the night bloom just outside the diner windows.

And that, it would seem, is that.

4 Letting

It starts - the silence, the weeping, the blood swirling down the rusty motel drain - with a Chinese finger puzzle.

Dru had been battier than a bucketful of orange peels and she'd loved the silly things, even collected them for awhile. Until that unfortunate incident in Prague had forced them to leave her treasured collection behind.

So, it stood to reason that his boy - also battier than bucketful of orange peels - would love them, as well. Spike meant to tease him out of his vapid, eager-to-please insanity with a bit of charm and whimsy.

Watching the boy stare dejectedly at the brightly-colored piece of cylindrical paper for nights on end, Spike knows he's bollocks'ing *that* up nicely.

How was I to know it'd remind him of giving one just like it to his little, redheaded girlfriend? Is it my fault his frolics down memory lane are more like slogging through quicksand?

"Come on, pet. . . put that away and I'll take you to a movie, yeah?" Spike finally says, pulling the morose boy out of bed and into his arms. He knows better than to remove the damn puzzle himself, the boy would weep silently - heart-wrenchingly - till he got it back.

But Spike has to do *something* to halt the quiet unreason that's swallowing his pet's brain in not-so-small gulps.

"We'll see something with muppets or aliens in it - you like muppets and aliens, right? And I'll get you the cheesiest nachos your arteries can handle." Spike kisses the slightly chapped lips. "We'll make a night of it, cheer you up, right proper."

The boy is staring at his right hand, where it rests on Spike's shoulder. He wiggles his index finger, which is encased in the damn puzzle. "No."

And we're back to that. . . .

"Thought we straightened that out awhile ago, pet. I say 'jump', you say 'how high', I say 'movie', 'you say what time', remember? Now get your kit on and I'll bring the DeSoto 'round."

The boy looks up into Spike's eyes, blinking dozily. Lord knows, Spike likes 'em dotty, but the boy is spending more time in his head than Drusilla ever did and it scares him. He's gotten used to the squirrely, little nutter who mumbles to himself and laughs at things only he can see.

. . .

He even misses the soft, lonely sound of the boy singing himself to sleep every morning.

Yes. Spike has grown accustomed to these things. They are part of his world and he will not suffer them to be taken away. If it means the boy'll go back to the way he was - a squirrely, little nutter, but basically happy - Spike will be a bastard. He'll be the biggest bastard ever, and not for the first time.

So fast the boy probably doesn't even register the movement, Spike snatches off the finger puzzle and crumples it into a ball.

"No! Please -!" the boy begs hoarsely, his eyes filling with tears as they lock on Spike's hand. Spike crams the ruined puzzle in his pocket and tips his pet's face up until their eyes meet. "*Please.*"

"Please *what*, love? Tell me what you need and I'll get it for you. Anything, I swear."

"The puzzle -"

"Except that."

The tears finally fall and even Spike's fingers aren't fast enough to catch them all. "Willow -"

Something sharp and painful coils around Spike's heart. "Except her. Can't resurrect the dead, can I?" *Though I know a bloke who knows a bloke who knows a Grethnak demon who can.* "Anyway, you're mine, pet, don't need anyone but me, isn't that right?"

The boy sniffs and nods and that, as always, is that, though Spike thinks it best to scrap the movies and put them both to bed.

As ever, his boy is pliant and warm in his arms; it really doesn't take more than that to make Spike happy, but he doubts the shagging will solve this latest problem.

The next evening, the boy is worse, silent and blank, slow to respond to comments or touches. The night after that, he doesn't respond to Spike at all, just curls into a ball on their bed and stares into space.

On the third evening, Spike goes out for the express purpose of getting blind, staggering drunk. He knows it isn't the best idea to leave the boy alone in his state but.

...

Just but.

By the time midnight rolls around, Spike's anxious to get back to the motel. The hooch isn't working its magic fast enough and a cold, greasy feeling is ice-dancing down his spine too intensely to be ignored.

He pulls into the motel parking lot and before he steps foot out of the DeSoto, they reach him: the scent of blood and the thready beat of a heart that's no longer rabbit-fast or rabbit-scared.

5 Death. . . and Life

"Bloody hell, does *everyone* around here taste like fast food and cheap pilsner?"

Spike unlocks the room door, grousing to himself. Not

even Jim Beam'd wash the pungent taste of motel-skank out of his mouth.

Fine enough, going down, but it leaves a greasy residue that gunks up the fangs and clings to the back of the throat. Not to mention the unpleasant heartburn.

"It's not me, please stop, please don't -" drifts out of the absolute darkness of the room.

Spike slips into gameface and the darkness is no longer dark, even when he's locked the door behind him. He slowly approaches the bed, leaving a trail of shed clothing. The boy doesn't wake when Spike lays down next to him

"Wake up, lovely. It's just a nightmare. It's just dying." Spike pulls the cold, trembling body into his arms, buries his face in hair that still smells of soap, sweat and humanity. He rocks their bodies together, crooning the same, comforting brand of nonsense he's crooned for over a century. Only when's he's very drunk or very high is he willing to admit to himself that he thrives on the crooning, the comforting, the taking-care-of.

It makes him feel - whole.

“My sweet boy, only a dream, only a nightmare, I’m here, I’ll never leave you. . . .”

The boy is sobbing one moment and silent the next.
Breathing one moment, breathless, the next.

Asleep, one moment, awake the next.

“Spike.”

“Was beginning to think you’d never Rise.” Spike’s voice quavers, but it’s only the booze and the anticipation.

The boy holds up one pale, unmarred wrist. “I should be dead.”

Spike snorts. “You *are* dead, love.”

They’re both silent for several minutes. Spike can feel the bond between them thrumming; powerful, strong and so very fragile, in it’s newness, but pulsing as if it’s alive. Now, Spike is intoxicated in a completely different way. Hard and soft, needy and desiring. . . ravenous and completely unaware he’s purring.

“Why’d you turn me?”

“Remember what I said about asking questions, pet.” Spike is wrapped around his Childe, yet wrapped up in the lingering scent of humanity. It’s a heady feeling.

“I want to know.” His Childe’s voice is calm, melodic. . . so quietly *resonant*. Quite unlike his consort’s rabbit-timid whispers.

That makes it a surprisingly hard voice to ignore.

“Why’d I turn you?” Spike mouths jaw and neck, unconsciously searching for the trip-hammering pulse that had stilled not three nights ago.

The boy nods once. Spike holds him tighter, closer, lips pressed to his nape.

“Angelus gave you to me, figured it was time to claim what was mine before the excrement hit the rotating blades, yet again. And after what the Slayer did to Dru, she owed me. Whoever says you can’t collect from the dead obviously hasn’t tried.”

“So, turning me was vengeance?”

“Not entirely, love” Spike murmurs, pushing his erection against the boy’s arse. The breathless moan occasioned by the grinding is music to Spike’s ears. “Not entirely.”

“I should’ve died with my friends. . . I should have died three nights ago. Why am I still here?”

Spike sighs. “In the cosmic sense? Dunno. Why am I still here? Just am. In the why-you sense -?” Another snort. “Couldn’t be arsed to find and turn the cheerleader, I suppose. . . or maybe it’s because you’re pretty *and* insane. Always was my Achilles Heel.”

“We all have our flaws,” the boy says softly. “*Sire.*”

“Fuck.” Now Spike knows why Angelus sired so many childer. That dark, beautiful voice calling him *Sire*, goes straight to his cock with no stopovers.

Spike shreds the boy’s sweatpants, is on him and in him in seconds, the clench and press of strong, tight muscles wringing a surprised moan from him.

“Why? Why?” The boy is still asking, even as his demon growls and groans its need, pushes back against Spike.

Neither of them knows the question anymore, if they ever had, but Spike's answer is as it has been and always will be:

“Because you're mine, boy. . . because I could and because you're mine.”

6 Patience and Promises

“Spike, I'm hungry.”

Spike doesn't look up from the scrambled and muted footie match he's trying to follow. “Feeling lively tonight, are we?”

“Feeling. . . weak and confused. *Tired.*”

Spike looks over at his naked, pale and gantry thin boy, stranded in the rumped nest of their bed. The light thrown by the stubby candles placed around the room

has rendered the boy alive, warm. Human.

He's clutching Spike's duster to himself, shivering, peering at Spike through dark, shaggy lashes and even darker, shaggier hair.

"Everything is still so sharp and loud. It hurts." The soft voice needles the place where Spike's soul used to be. The boy's been fragile since Spike turned him, but lately. . . lately, it's gotten worse.

He wonders if this malady, this. . . *unsoundness* is a hallmark of the Aurelius line; a demonic infirmity passed down by tainted blood, skipping every other generation.

"If I get rid of the candles, love, you won't be able to see very well. You know your vision gets a bit dodgy in the dark," Spike murmurs. These days, anything louder than the merest murmur makes his lovely boy cringe and cover his ears.

"Please, Spike. . . ." the boy pinches the bridge of his nose as if warding off a migraine. Spike gets up and turns off the telly, blows out each and every candle in their motel room then pads over to their bed.

“Better, pet?”

“Mmm, much. Don’t need candles, anyway. You shine in the darkness, like spun glass and liquid light.”

If the boy starts spouting prophecy and talking to the stars, Spike may just have to believe in reincarnation.

“Good, that’s - good, I suppose. You haven’t been feeding like you should. . .” *Or at all.* “Think you’re well enough to eat tonight, if I get you someone?”

A ghost of a smile curves the ashen lips. “Probably not, but I’ll try, if you want me to.”

Spike nods once, pushes his duster aside. The boy doesn’t try to stop him, only worships him with those mad, fever-bright eyes.

“Like *moonlight*,” he laughs delightedly. “Like quicksilver. Even when you’re perfectly still you move and pulse and - Sire?” The boy tilts his head as if listening to the echo of the word. “Sire, can I have a redhead?”

Spike caresses his boy’s cold, dead face just to hear him purr. “You know, love, you might be perfectly capable of

hunting for redheads yourself, if you actually *ate* one of them, instead of playing with them.”

His boy’s smile is sweet and oddly innocent. He holds out cold, dead arms expectantly and Spike kneels on the bed, pulling him close. Their combined scents permeate the sheets - old metal, fresh earth and something like cloves or nutmeg.

The boy’s lips are cool and dry on Spike’s throat. “My Spike. . . my Sire.” Mad, gentle singing on the wings of cold, dead breath.

“Shh, love.” Spike puts his hand on the back of his boy’s head, sucking in a hissing, unnecessary breath when fangs like burning ice-picks sink into his throat. He strokes the soft, thick hair as still-warm human blood rushes through his veins and into his Childe’s greedy mouth.

“Gonna make you well, pet, make you *strong*. . . then we’ll leave this squalid hole, and I’ll show you the world.”

This declaration is met, as always, with an acquiescent hum against Spike’s throat. The boy undoes Spike’s jeans and strokes with cold, precise fingers. Spike lays them

both down.

The boy is murmuring, shaking, gasping, weeping as his fangs pull out of Spike's throat in a sharp riptide of pain. "So bright, all I can see is you. So bright. . . ."

Spike doesn't stop thrusting and his boy doesn't stop stroking. Panic attacks are nothing they haven't shagged through, before.

"They all left me, but you stayed."

"That's right, love. I keep what's mine." Spike kisses his boy's face, neck and throat; his own throat aches for blood like copper and sugar. It's simplicity to break the soft, fragile skin; it's heaven when cool, rich blood fills his mouth, the taste exploding on his tongue.

"They left me and I was lost in the dark. . . but there's no darkness when you're with me." The sharp, stuttery movement of his boy's hand has calmed into a rhythm Spike's body automatically matches. The human blood that has temporarily warmed him should make the boy's hand feel clammy-cold, but the contrast only makes Spike thrust harder and faster.

He does occasionally miss the warmth, of course. Misses the taste of despair and satiation in his human's warm blood.

Misses the flutter of that rabbit's-heart, trying to escape it's cage and outrun the devil.

But moments like this one have gone a long way toward easing those pangs.

“A pretty redhead. . . she'll be so pure and sweet on my lips, like fresh snow and cotton candy.” The boy rolls them over and straddles Spike's legs without breaking rhythm. “She'll melt on my tongue and be a part of me forever.”

His boy is in gameface and grinning. He darts down and icy-hot fangs close painfully on Spike's earlobe and he comes with one last thrust. For a moment, the room is a negative of itself, silvery objects lit with ebony light. His boy's eyes glow an eerie white in a face like shadows.

Then there's only a soft, cold darkness, like frozen smoke, catching him up and keeping him for an indefinite span.

Returning to himself is an arduous process, with a soundtrack like some beach-blanket movie from hell.

Jan and Dean. . . I would sire the only vampire who'd be caught undead singing Jan and Dean. . . .

The boy is half draped over him, his body feather-light and cold enough, now, to make a vampire shiver. One delicate finger traces patterns in the drying spatters on Spike's stomach and chest.

Spike shifts the dead weight of their bodies ever so slightly. The singing stops and is immediately replaced by tiny, playful growls and cuddling. His Childe does a more-than-passable imitation of a contented feline.

"Get her for me, Spike?"

Piss poor excuse for a Sire, I am. . . catering to his every, ridiculous whim. But if it means he'll eat, it's redheads he'll get, even if I have to slaughter all of Cleveland to find one.

"Alright," Spike promises, tangling his fingers in long, dark hair. One sharp yank and he's looking into the dreamy, crazy eyes he loves. "But you can't toy with your

food, this time, you have to *eat* it. That last girl nearly made it to the cops before I caught up to her.” It’s a pathetic attempt to scold, but as he’d learned with Dru, threats and beatings don’t work when the vamp-in-question is completely bug-fuck.

Only patience works and Spike reckons he’s learned plenty of that.

“Redheads are fast. . . .” the boy sleepily singsongs as he brings his fingers to Spike’s mouth to be licked clean. He giggles when Spike purposely tickles his palm. “But Spike is faster.”

The hunger in that wicked, dark voice does Spike’s dead heart a world of good.

“Goddamn right I am, pet. . . now lie down for a bit and I’ll be back with your redhead.” Spike eases out of bed and arranges the coverlet and duster over his Childe again. This action earns him an utterly trusting, utterly mad, utterly beautiful smile.

“You’ll always keep the darkness away, right? You won’t ever leave me?”

“Never.” Spike leans down to whisper onto lips that are salty and sugary-sweet. “Get some rest and I’ll be back in a trice, yeah?”

“Okay.” Soft, chaste kisses that nevertheless make Spike hard, again. He’s never regretted turning his boy. Not once.

“Promise you’ll try to eat, love. A vamp cannot live by Sire’s blood alone.” Spike tucks himself away and rebuttons his jeans. His eyes never leave his boy’s. “Try and get *better*. For me?”

“I promise.” The guilelessness in those eyes, in that pale, pretty face, never fails to surprise Spike. Of course the boy *means* to try, he couldn’t lie his way out of a paper sack.

But blood-lust, love of the hunt, of the *kill*, however deeply those run in the average vampire, in Spike’s boy, earnesty, innocence and *decency* run deeper.

Spike figures it’s only a matter of time before those qualities are corrupted, warped out of true. When they are, when his boy can drink down a redhead like a can of Coke, he’ll be a force to be reckoned with.

Patience. Works like a charm, if you have the patience for it.

Spike reckons he has plenty.

The End