

Older

by NautiBitz
www.nautibitz.com

ABOUT THIS STORY

Older is a novel-length story for mature readers based loosely on characters from the TV show *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Because of the looseness and lack of supernatural element, as fanfiction it's considered "Human AU" or "Fantasy AU" or "An Embarrassment to the Fandom", i.e., characters removed from *Buffy's* vampiric universe and transplanted in the real world. While the characterizations herein are vastly compromised for the sake of the story (*viva la smut!*), they're still fairly recognizable (they look and talk the same but their personalities, uh, may vary). Why did I use these characters only to change them? Because I adore them and enjoy imagining them in new scenarios that address what they might be like with different backstories, and how their "I shouldn't love you but I do" relationship could translate in the real world. Also, they're rilly pretty and like totally belong 2getha 4EVAH!!!!!!1.

As is customary in fanfiction, I skipped the physical descriptions. As is customary with me, I skipped most of the other descriptions too. (I just hate describing inanimate objects.) For familiarity's sake, just about every supporting character, save Spike's co-workers and some of Joyce's family, are borrowed from the Buffyverse as well and were chosen carefully for specific reasons that made perfect sense at the time. If you're not familiar with *Buffy*, all you need to know is this: Buffy is played by that 3-named chick from *The Grudge*, and Spike is cocky and English and ridiculously good-looking, like an '80s Billy Idol sans rubber pants. If you're not into them, feel free to come up with your own vision of the characters, find/change the names with "Muffy" and "Mike" or just shred this printout and use it as kitty litter; whatever floats your canoe.

To be sure, this story isn't for everyone. It depicts 36 year-old Spike (who is not and has never been a vampire) as a new stepfather to 16 year-old Buffy (who is not and never will be a vampire slayer). Buffy seduces Spike. They have a torrid, illicit affair behind Joyce (still Buffy's mother)'s back and fall madly in love. In the state of California, Spike's actions are illegal (because of her age). Let it be noted that I don't in reality advocate this behavior, and though I do think teenagers are much smarter and certainly less innocent than adults give them credit for, I didn't write this with the intention of making a statement or of shocking anyone or, for that matter, creating anything exceptional -- I wrote it because the opening scenario popped into my head one day and I thought it was hot, and therefore could not rest until it was realized on paper. (It's a thing.) It grew into much a larger story than I expected because I was encouraged to pad it with new scenes (see acknowledgements for details and credits) -- as a result, some of the original lines may not carry the same weight (see original version offered on my site), but I think the new interludes help the reader (and me) better understand the characters and their motivations. Plus, they were fun to write. Over the past year I've done several (thousand) revisions. This is the latest, the largest, and, let's hope for

the benefit of my sanity, the last -- it helps that it's the only one to feature the words "The End". If you've read most of this before, I strongly suggest you reread from the beginning for a more satisfying payoff.

Some people find this story offensive -- in some cases, too offensive and/or upsetting to continue. Some people wonder what the big deal is, and are disappointed that it isn't more outrageous. I, being the writer, Goldilocks somewhere in the middle, and I hope you will too, but if you can't, we're still cool. It's just a sex story, and as much as I'd like to show you a good time, our kinks can't always align. I will let you in on a little secret though: despite the taboo premise, the sex scenes are pretty darn vanilla, the angst is short-lived (except where gratifying to extend), Joyce turns out fine, and much like everything else I write about these two crazy kids, *Older* is at heart an idealistic romance. That's right, a sordid tale of forbidden love in which no one is punished, no one (important) dies, and everyone ends up happy! *Shhhh* baby, don't ask, don't tell, don't say another word -- just lie back, take off your clothes and let Nauti take you on a magical make-believe carpet ride to Never-Happen Land. Awwwww yeah.

I should add, while I'm here, that I clearly make no claim to the characters Buffy or Spike or anyone else in the Buffyverse. This is a not-for-profit endeavor -- my only compensation comes in the form of breathless post-orgasmic moans and pretty pictures. On the other hand, I do consider the bulk of the story original enough to call my own and it is copyright-protected as of its file's July 2003 creation date, just in case you woke up today with a burning desire to plagiarize something.

Lastly, but not leastly, due to the explicit sex, I strongly advise that this be read only by adults. While I can't stop kids from getting a hold of it, and I admittedly read loads of smut as a kid myself (but observe how I turned out), I do my best to enforce this policy. So by reading this, you hereby claim to be of legal age and you indemnify myself, the writer, of any liability or claim of corrupting your delicate mind. Enjoy!

-NautiBitz, October 2004

What does it matter how one comes by the truth so long as one pounces upon it and lives by it?

-Henry Miller, *Tropic of Capricorn*

Older

PART ONE

CHAPTER 1: *Slip*

Thursday, September 12th, 9:32pm

Spike felt her presence in the doorway. "Your mum's in the shower," he said, adjusting the sheet that exposed his naked hips. He tried to reread the last passage but it didn't make sense. Probably because she was still there.

"I know."

He looked up from his book.

Buffy took a hesitant step into the bedroom, hands interlocking behind her back. "She takes the longest showers."

She was wearing a little white slip-style negligee, at once sophisticated and wholesome; a far cry from her usual pajama set. "So I've learned."

Slowly but casually, she approached the bed. "Someday she may come out of there an actual prune. Are you prepared to deal with that consequence?"

He smiled. "Guess I'd better be."

She sat on the foot of the bed, gaze sliding over his bare, muscled chest and up to his eyes. "You really don't look thirty-six at all."

"And you don't look sixteen."

Coyly, she finessed a blonde strand behind her ear. "How old do I look?"

His answer changed every time. Last week it was thirty, two days ago it was twelve. Tonight's version? "Older."

Satisfied with that response, she lay back on her elbows and swung her feet off the edge of the bed, white satin riding up her tan thighs. "My friend Amy's totally in lust with you."

"In lust?" He tore his eyes away from her legs. *Book, look at your book: You find it much more fascinating.* "You don't say."

"Totally. Just thought you should know."

"You can tell her I'm taken. By a prune-to-be."

"Well, she *was* at the wedding. Saw the whole 'I do', 'til death do you part, blahbity blah whirlwind blah. Didn't faze her." Buffy kept her gaze on her fingers, smoothing the shiny fabric over her flat belly. "She has not stopped talking about you since that first night at the Bronze."

"Really?" He arched a brow. "Well."

I think Buffy's a little enamored with you, Joyce had told him on their wedding night.

"I mean, we all know it's never gonna happen," she said. "But she's Obsesso Girl. There's nothing I can do. It's kind of tragic, really."

"I think it's adorable."

She looked at the ceiling. "God, she'd die to hear that."

"Best not tell her then."

"I mean in a good way, ya mo."

He squinted at her and put *Tropic of Capricorn* aside. "What'd you just call me?"

"Mo," she smiled.

"What's that mean?"

She rolled onto her side to face him, cheek propped on her palm. "Something along the lines of 'not too quick to catch on'."

He mock-gasped. "Are you sayin' I'm stupid?"

"If you're just now figuring that out, then yeah."

"You want me to exercise some fatherly authority over you? I can now, you know."

Raising an eyebrow, she crawled up the bed, nestled her knees between his and placed a hand at either side of him. "You can try."

"I will." He reached up and tickled her ribs.

She squealed and rolled off of him, and he ran a feather-light touch under her arms as she quaked with laughter and tried to kick him away. "Oi! No kicking!" He shoved her onto her back, and, making sure the sheet was still covering his naked parts, he rose above her, tickling her neck, sides and hips while immobilizing her lower half with his thighs.

Heaving with the giggles, she tried to retaliate.

"Not ticklish," he called out with a wicked grin, watching her pretty face turn red as his fingers danced over her skin.

"No fair!" She pushed him on his side and billowed the sheet so she could get under too, get better access to him. "You must be ticklish somewhere!"

"I'm--" He gasped, and froze.

She was gripping his erection.

Her eyes met his, and a proud smile curled her lips. "Not even here?"

He swallowed, mouth quivering. An urgent whisper, "Buffy--"

It pulsed in her hand, and she watched his fear-tinged eyes as she slid her grip down, and up. Down, and up.

His breath was audible now. "Don't..."

Down, and up. Down... up. Down, up.

The sound of the shower echoed in his ears. But he couldn't stop her.

Down, up, down, up, down, up--

Her hand was so warm and, *fuck* -- soft...

She was moving closer and closer to him, both on their sides, facing each other.

Up, up, up, up, up--

Somehow, before he could even figure out what she was doing, she raised her hips, pressed her knees against his chest, and directed him in. *Inside of her.*

Incredulous, he grasped her hips, looked down and up and panted, "No! God!"

Keeping her eyes on his, she licked her lips and held onto his shoulders as she slid down to sheath his full length. Made a little sound like "Mnah..."

Push her off, push her off! screamed the voice in his head, but she was so wet, so warm, *so fucking tight*: "Fuck!" It was a slurred, secret whisper; all breath. With a smile, she began to move.

Had to stop her, had to stop this, but his double-crossing hands stayed exactly where they were, assisting her, fingers digging into her soft skin. Only thing that could stop this *right now* were his words. "We can't -- can't--"

"Shhh." She swiveled her hips, hot breath on his face. "I won't tell."

He shook his head compulsively, in time with his breathing, which got harder and heavier with each move she made. "Oh god! Buffy..."

"Ohh, Spike..." she groaned, low and womanly, and her slippery vaginal muscles spasmed, once, twice, thrice.

That's when he snapped: he pushed her onto her back, and rammed into her.

"Hunh!" She wrapped her limbs around him.

Nostrils flaring, teeth clenched, Spike shelved his conscience and gave in to a single-minded desire: *Want. Girl. Now.*

"Yeah!" Sweet, hoarse cries in his ear. "Spike!"

Her heated pleas further provoked him, further set him off. Hands coasting over her body, he pounded her into the bed, making it squeak and the headboard rattle. Loudly.

The shower was still running.

Nose at the crook of his neck, she inhaled: soap and cigarettes, aftershave and his own distinctive musk. She'd smelled this scent for the first time as he'd carried her out of that frat party, cursing her all the way to the car. Now he was above her, just as angry, but in a different way. In a good way.

This is happening, this is really happening.

The glide of muscles under his skin, the sweat beading on his forehead, the flexing and unhinging of his jaw, the husky stifled moans he made... Buffy committed it all to memory. If she was the only one who'd ever know about this, she needed to file away every detail.

Spike tried not to look at her face. This was the biggest mistake he'd ever made, by far, and he was still in the thick of it, no sign of stopping 'til he was *done*. If he looked at her he'd be reminded of how attracted he was to *her*, not just her youth or her enthusiasm or her willingness or the forbidden fruit; he'd be reminded of how beautiful and special she was, how angelic with those open, bee-stung lips... And her body, god, her *pussy*... so... bloody... exquisite...

Him inside her, surrounding her, it was like nothing she'd ever felt. The boys she'd been with, they were just... boys. He was, oh, hitting her at just the right angle, and his rock-hard abs were rubbing against her most sensitive spot...

She clamped her eyes shut and began to tremble like an earthquake.

Concerned, he lifted his head to regard her, and slowed down.

"Don't stop! Don't stop!" she begged him, one hand on his ass.

She was coming. Violently. Just from penetration. *Fuck*.

Fuck, fuck, fuck, I'm yours... He wrapped his arms around her back, thrusting faster as she sputtered and moaned through a cock-strangling orgasm.

Divorce, jail, Hell... bring it on. Right then Spike decided it'd all be worth it.

Hips still curving up to meet each slam of his pelvis, Buffy spasmed intermittently in aftershock, eyes widening with each rush.

Spike recalled something her mother had said about her being on the pill. Hoped she was still on it, because he was about to--

"Come inside me."

"*Fuck!*" World splintering into a million pieces, he roared through grit teeth and erupted -- inside of her, like she'd asked. He opened his eyes, opened his mouth, breath sawing out in uneven puffs as the final spurts subsided.

"Mmmn..."

Gasping for air, he searched her face. For what, he wasn't sure. Then he got fixated on that mouth.

He kissed it.

She smiled against him, teased his lips with her tongue.

They pulled apart, and kissed again in earnest, fingers threading through soft hair as he thought, What's another nail in the coffin?

The shower cut off.

He inhaled sharply, freeing his nibbling hold on her lower lip. She pushed him up and he pulled out of her.

The stall door rolled on its hinge.

Feeling a wet spot on the sheet beneath her, Buffy quickly reached for the box of Kleenex at his bedside table, ripped out a few sheets and handed him the box.

The sink faucet went on. She was brushing her teeth.

Buffy jumped to the floor and swabbed, legs wobbly and unstable.

Spike focused on quickly cleaning himself off and sopping up the stain on the bed. Couldn't look at her. *What the hell did I just do?*

After tossing her tissues into the garbage can, she paused at the bedside for a second, and whispered, "Night."

He nodded numbly, watching her hurry out.

Five minutes later, Joyce opened the bathroom door. Spike feigned sleep, the book splayed on his chest.

"Oh, Spikey..." She crawled in beside him and threw his book over her shoulder. "Spike..."

He opened a sleepy eye. "Hm?"

"Are you down for the count?"

Shut it. "Mm."

Disappointed, she kissed his chest. "Mental note: take shorter showers."

He rolled away from her. *Mental note: Don't fuck your wife's daughter.*

Saturday, September 14th, Noon

Buffy bounded into the kitchen just as Spike was grabbing the car keys. "Where are you going?"

"To the store," he said, avoiding her gaze.

"Can I come?"

"No."

"Why not?"

He thought fast. "Cause I'll end up with twice the groceries on this list. I know how you teenagers work."

"I don't do that!" She turned to her mother for backup. "Do I, Mom."

"Oh, bring her along." Joyce waved a hand and pulled a box of mashed potato mix out of the cupboard. "Always good to have an extra pair of hands for the carrying."

He looked at his wife. *Had to mention her hands.*

"Yeah," Buffy nodded. "What she said."

"She can also stop you from buying cigarettes. Right, Buffy? You'll make sure he buys the patch instead?"

"I'm on it. Anti-cancer patrol."

Outvoted by the Summers women. "Fine. Be my bloody narc."

With a triumphant grin, she followed him out the door.

* * *

Before turning the key in the ignition, he sighed. "Buffy."

"Spike."

"Look." He stared at the garage door. "What happened the other night--"

"Can't ever happen again. You think I don't know that?"

She was so... peppy about it. *Blasted cheerleaders.* "Then why'd you insist on coming -- riding --" frustrated, he tried again, "--accompanying me to the store?"

Amused, she glanced at him, and shrugged. "Because I was dying to get out of the house. God, get over yourself."

He let out a breath. "Right then. Forget I said anything."

"Forgotten."

He backed the SUV out of the driveway.

* * *

"Oh Spike! Oh Spike! Unh Spike, yes!"

Eyes losing focus, he groaned, grip tightening on her ass as she rose and fell on his cock.

He wasn't quite sure how this happened. In exchange for allowing him two packs of cigarettes, she insisted on driving the way back. A detour was made into a secluded wooded area, and she parked between two trees as they squabbled about who should drive the rest of the way home. And then somehow her pants came off.

She smiled, head rolling sensually, forehead touching his. "Mmmnnn...."

Smiling, god, the way she smiled, the way she loved this...

And then she contracted her interior muscles, squeezing the hell out of him. He gasped, choked, "Fuck, Buffy -- gonna kill me!"

She panted, wrenching her hips up and down, "In a... good way?"

He let out a little squeak. "Fuck, yeah..."

She kissed him, then arched back to grind into him some more.

The car horn honked, startling them both.

He exhaled a chuckle. "Christ, don't do that."

"Sorry," she laughed, and picked up the pace, hands on his chest.

"Bloody hell..." He shut his eyes, hating himself. "God, I'm a fucking monster."

"No." She frowned, and pressed her lips against his ear. "Don't think about it, Spike. Just think about how it feels. How do I feel?"

Groaning incoherently, he pitched his pelvis up and held hers down as he shot his come inside of her.

"That's it, baby..." She kissed his neck.

He shook his head against her. *Can't be her baby... All wrong, god, what the hell have I done...*

"Shhh... just stay still for a minute. I need to come." She began to hump his semi-flaccid cock, and pulled her tank top down, exposing one of her pert little breasts to him for the first time. She directed his mouth to it.

He tongued her nipple, wrapped his lips around it and sucked.

"Oh. God!"

There was that throaty, grown-woman wail he'd heard the other night. *Shit*. Made him hard all over again.

Buffy felt him elongate inside of her. "Yes!"

Her orgasm just out of reach, so close, so close, she fucked him frantically for several minutes, and then...

"OHHHHHHHHH! Fuck! YEAH!"

He'd never heard her yell like that. Primal and uninhibited and God help him, he was gonna come inside her again.

Her juices pooled onto his shirt and his jeans as she rolled to and fro in his lap but he didn't care, not now anyway, just wanted to hold her one more time, one *last* time, clutching her honey-colored hair as he collided, blasted, exploded into her.

After a few moments filled only by heavy breathing, Buffy said, cheek pressed against his chest, "We better get back before the ice cream melts."

* * *

"What took you two so long?" Joyce relieved Buffy of some of her haul.

"Spike gave me a driving lesson."

"Oh honey. You didn't put him through that torture, did you?"

"I did." She grinned at Spike, who looked away. "But he was a surprisingly good sport."

"As long as my car's still in one piece..."

"Not even a little-bitty scratch," Buffy said proudly.

Spike moved behind the kitchen island to hide the stain on his pants. Putting down his bags, he glanced at Buffy.

"I'll get the rest of the groceries," Buffy volunteered, and went outside.

"Sorry about that," Joyce said.

"Bout..." He cleared his throat. "Bout what?"

"She can be a little persuasive."

He nodded. "Little."

"If she's too much trouble, I can talk to her--"

"No trouble at all, love. She's great."

"OHHHHHHHHH! Fuck! YEAH!"

Joyce smiled. "I'm so glad you're getting along."

Spike smiled back, wanting to be swallowed up by the linoleum floor.

* * *

Sunday, September 15th, 1:30am

He couldn't sleep.

He sat up in the dark room, glanced at Joyce, and dropped his feet to the floor. After slipping on his boxer briefs, he crept down the steps, got a beer out of the fridge, and headed to the family room in the basement.

He didn't turn on a light, just sat on the couch and stared at the big black screen of the TV.

Maybe marrying Joyce was the real mistake.

He did... love her. Had real feelings for her, anyway. She'd come along when he'd been looking to turn around; she made him feel needed and capable, jolted him out of an aimless, adolescent trust-fund existence and put him on the straight and narrow.

That is until he thanked her by banging the socks off her hot little daughter.

He sighed, rubbing a palm across his face.

He'd met Buffy first. She must've felt a proprietary claim on him -- that could explain her remarkable lack of guilt about the whole situation.

He sat back on the couch, beer bottle resting between his legs.

This was all his fault. No doubt about that.

He was bartending at the Bronze when he first saw her. They made lingering eye contact several times across that crowded room; he even flashed her his fail-proof panty-wetting smirk. When she approached him, she ordered a Seabreeze, and he realized she didn't have a tag on her wrist. "Virgin, you must mean." "Hardly," she'd replied. She tried to convince him she was 23. Much as he wanted to believe that, he couldn't, once she was up close. "Nineteen, I'd believe. Maybe." She and her friend Amy flirted, begged, and argued with him for nearly twenty minutes until he finally relented.

After the first drink, she kept coming back for more. He knew his job was at stake, but he didn't care. She was something else.

Then he found out she was sixteen.

That wasn't until closing time, when her mother marched in to give him a piece of her mind. Apparently, Buffy had come home past her curfew, shitfaced. Joyce threatened to haul his ass to jail for selling alcohol to a minor, oh she'd bring the whole club down with him, yes she would, it was hard enough being a single parent, yadda yadda, and he told himself, *You should be dating women like this. Yeah, it's time to act your age, stop thinking like a bloody teenager.* He asked in the midst of her tirade, "You free for dinner tomorrow night?"

Of course, he immediately suppressed any attraction he had for Buffy, who wasn't at all pleased when she discovered them making out in her kitchen. Later, he'd heard them arguing, Buffy saying, "Do you even know anything about this guy?" And Joyce giving her some single-mother line, to which Buffy stormed away and slammed a door.

That night, he and Joyce had sex for the first time.

In bed, Joyce needed a little coaxing. She needed to be completely comfortable, relaxed, reassured. Not like Buffy. Oh, no.

He shook his head. "Can't believe I'm comparing them."

"Comparing who?"

He spun around. Buffy was at the top of the stairs.

"No one. What are you doing up?"

"Couldn't sleep."

"Go back to your room."

"You're not the boss of me," she said, and padded down the stairs.

He sighed. *I'm not the boss of me either, apparently.*

She sat at his side. "Why are you sitting in the dark?"

"I like the dark." He took a swig of his beer.

She put her feet on the couch and wormed her toes toward him. "Me too."

He clicked on the TV.

She rolled her eyes.

Staring straight ahead, he went through the channels.

"Ooh, *Elimidate*."

"No." He moved on.

"What happened to you? You used to be cool."

"I used to be...? You knew me for all of one night."

"And you were cool that night."

"I was stupid."

"Now you're stupid." He surfed past *The Real World*, so she said, "Give me that."

"No!" He held the remote in the air. "I was here first."

"Gimme!" She reached up, but he stuffed it behind his back, leaving it on some Discovery Channel disaster show. She straddled his lap, stuck a hand behind his back, and pulled it out with a, "Ha."

The show was called "Worst Case Scenario". *Here's one: What do you do when your wife's daughter won't stop seducing you?*

She turned off the TV and flung the remote to the floor, then did a slow hip-grind.

He emitted a ragged breath. "Buffy..."

"Yeah?"

"Why do you keep doing this?"

She pressed her lips to his ear. "Why not?"

He pushed her backward. "Reasons why not could fill a book. I'm asking you *why*."

"Isn't it obvious? I like you."

"Yeah, I like you too, but..." His hands involuntarily swept up her arched back. "I'm twenty years older than you. I could be your father."

"But you're not."

"In the eyes of the law, I sort of am."

"Then the eyes of the law," she kissed one cheekbone, then the other, "need glasses."

He couldn't help but chuckle at that.

She pulled back. "You like me?" A slow grin. "I knew it."

"Buffy--"

She kissed him.

* * *

Panting helplessly, he grasped a fistful of her hair as she expertly sucked him off.

"Oh, fucking... hell!" His balls tightened in her hand, and he held her head down as she swallowed every little jet of his come.

"Mmm." She gave him one last leisurely suck and lifted her head, wiping her mouth with the back of her hand.

Seeing her beautiful smile in the moonlight, he was overcome with a yearning to taste her. *Just one taste, that's it. One time, that's all.* He pulled her negligee over her head and pushed her backward on the couch. Spread her thighs and nestled himself between them.

She quivered in anticipation.

He licked a line up one inner thigh, and down the other, avoiding the place he knew she wanted him most. Up each smooth juncture where her inner thighs met her pelvis.

She whimpered, but didn't press.

He licked the outline of her pussy, the soft downy hair that framed it.

And finally, he licked right up the middle. She cried out. He looked up. "Sorry," she said, her breathing heavy and erratic. "I've never..."

He frowned in puzzlement, and realized what she meant. "No one's ever done this to you?"

She shook her head.

The blow job pro's never gotten the favor returned? Who do these tossers think they are? He paused, not sure he should be her first. But then she whimpered again, so he descended, his mouth fully covering her wet, aching flesh.

"Oh god!"

He ran his tongue over her every fold and crevice, sucking in her juices and making her pant and shimmy against him. Tasted like fucking sweet tarts, she did, and smelled like baked pineapple. She was an orally-fixated man's fantasy come true.

She grabbed onto his ears, urging him to her clitoris. He smiled against her. *Learns fast, too.*

He pulled her skin taut, sucked that swollen nub into his mouth, and went to town. One finger inside, two... curled up and pressing against her spongey little g-spot.

She thrashed against him, squeezing his ears, biting her lip to stay quiet, but there was a scream sounding in her head.

At its crescendo, she yelped a strangled cry, upper body bucking forward and slumping back again. He pulled out his fingers and stuck his tongue inside of her, sucking up every gush of tangy fluid that corresponded with her convulsions.

She pressed a palm to her forehead. "Oh my god, oh my god, oh my god..."

He licked one last time, and folded his hands across her belly, resting his chin there.

"Oh my god..."

He smiled at her.

"That was..."

"Delicious," he said.

"Wow. Oh, wow." She breathed in, out, in, out. Had another involuntary spasm. "Need water."

He pulled off his nicotine patch and stuck it on the coffee table. "And I need a smoke."

They sat outside together, on the steps of the back porch. He took long thoughtful drags while she sipped at her second glass of water.

"I know we have to stop," she said suddenly.

He looked at her.

"I just don't ever want to."

He nodded, and flicked his cigarette across the yard. "Know how you feel."

"Do you?"

He turned to her, tilted his head. "Don't I?"

"Probably not," she said, looking away.

CHAPTER 2: *Creeping*

Wednesday, September 25th, 8:15am

"Are we okay?"

Spike stopped combing his hair, and caught her gaze in the vanity mirror. "What?"

Clasping an earring in her ear, Joyce repeated, "Are we okay?"

"What you mean?"

"I don't know, I... Something's been different with us. You don't..." She exhaled.

He frowned at her. He'd been good -- hadn't touched Buffy in over a week, not since that night in the basement. He'd been putting all of his energy into work; into being a responsible husband... and making sure he was never, ever alone with his stepdaughter.

It just now occurred to him that he hadn't touched Joyce either.

He turned around, put on a smirk and a cocky swagger. "I don't what?"

She smiled as he approached her. "Look at me like that so much anymore."

"Looking at you like this now."

"I have to go to work."

"Me too." He stepped up, fanned his eyelashes down and up. "Wanna be late?"

She touched his chest, and nodded.

Thursday, September 26th, 4:45pm

"Honey?"

"Yeah, babe?" Spike sat back in his office chair, phone pressed to his ear.

She sighed. "I need a really big favor."

"Anything for you."

He could almost hear her smile through the phone. "I'm stuck here late tonight, and Buffy's got this parent-teacher night thing..."

He sat up, eyes darting left to right.

"...Hello?"

"Yeah. I'm here."

"Do you think... I know it's a lot to ask, but..."

"You... want me to go be her parent."

"Yeah. Could you?"

Fuck. Fuckity fuck fuck. "She gonna be there?"

"Yep, she's in charge of refreshments."

"Right." He took a deep breath, let it out slow.

"I'm sorry. I shouldn't be asking you to--"

"I'll do it," he said, shutting his eyes and pressing a fist to his forehead. "Of course I'll do it."

"Really?" She exhaled, relieved. "*You* are the most wonderful man in the world. And I promise I'll make it up to you."

"No need, pet." *Really.*

* * *

Buffy frowned when she saw him. "What are *you* doing here?"

"Filling in for your mother." She was wearing a tiny little denim skirt. Spike trained his eyes on the buffet table -- *look, grapes* -- and rubbed the back of his neck. "She's doing inventory on a new shipment."

She laughed. "Wow. This is funny. You playing 'dad'."

He leaned forward. "Not funny, alright? And don't be giving these people any reason to think--"

"Are you Mr. Summers?"

Spike spun around to see a short balding man. "Huffman. I'm uh, Buffy's stepfather."

Buffy snorted a laugh.

"Principal Snyder," the man said, shaking Spike's hand and squinting at Buffy.

"She's only laughing because I'm sort of a recent addition to the family."

"I see. And Mrs. Huffman couldn't make it?"

"Summers. She kept her..." *Bloke doesn't care.* "Right. No. Gallery business."

"Uh huh. Want to come this way?"

Spike sent Buffy a quick glower, and she raised a saucy eyebrow.

* * *

"Alright, we need to talk."

"Punch?"

"No thanks." He pushed the ladle down. "You know that guy's got a rap sheet on you?"

"I don't know what you mean."

"You bloody well do. Playing hooky, talking back to teachers, coming and going as you please?"

"What the hell do you care?"

"I care," he said, and she looked up at him. "I care that your mother's gonna be right brassed off when she finds out."

She rolled her eyes and walked away.

"Where are you going?"

"I don't have to hear this from you. You're not my father."

A few teachers and parents glanced their way.

Spike followed her. "I may not be, but -- Hey!" He grasped her arm and yanked her close to face him.

"Don't touch me!" She pulled out of his grip.

"Buffy--"

"I hate you!"

"No you don't."

"Yes I do!" Her eyes watered. "Who do you think you are?"

"Look, don't cry, I just --" He sighed, stuck his hands in his suit pockets, glanced at the audience that was pretending not to watch, and nodded at an empty classroom behind her. "Can we... talk in here for a second?"

She looked behind her, and at their audience, then at the floor. "Yeah, okay."

He ushered her in and shut the door behind them.

"Talk," she said, arms folded, standing against the wall.

He paced for a moment, hands running through his hair. "I don't know how to do this right, okay?" He stopped pacing. "Your mum rings me out of the blue to play Pop-by-Proxy for a night, and I don't know what the hell to tell these people!" He approached her, voice dropping to a whisper, "He asked me if you've been having trouble at home, Buffy! About *our* relationship!"

Buffy rolled her eyes, keeping her gaze away from him.

He grabbed her bare shoulders to get her attention. "*You* know this is all bollocks to me! Principals and grades and attendance sheets and all that bloody rot -- last time I gave a rat's ass about any of these things, I was your age. And you..."

She looked up at him skeptically, brow furrowed. "What?"

"You drive me crazy." He tackled her mouth with his.

"Mmmph..." Her fingers threaded through the soft hair at the nape of his neck, and up.

He pushed up her miniskirt, hands moving to her ass as he lifted her up against the wall and ground into her. She wrapped a leg around his, giving him better access. He worshipped her neck, raining kisses up and down its length. "Want you so bad..."

"Take me." She pushed his suit jacket out of the way.

"Not here, not now," he said, not stopping.

"Here," she said, unzipping his pants. "Now."

"Buffy, this is insane."

She fondled his raging erection. "Stop thinking."

He pushed her thong aside and eased her down onto the tip of his cock, then rammed skyward, stars bursting behind his eyes.

"Unh!" She shivered against him.

He cupped a hand over her mouth and clenched his jaw as he pumped, up and down, faster and faster...

Trying desperately to restrain his -- and her -- heady moans, he fucked her wildly against a glossy poster that informed him *SEX HAS CONSEQUENCES*, in bold letters over her head. *Bloody health classes*. He shut his eyes, roved a hand between her legs and rubbed, promptly rewarded with still more slippery coating.

Bugger the consequences.

She bit into his palm as she came, as her vaginal walls rubber-banded around him, spurring on his own ferocious climax. He panted into her hair until he was spent.

As their breathing slowed, their eyes met, and he let her slide down the wall. Her heels touched the ground.

He cast a guilty glance at the door as he closed his pants.

"Wait, wait, lipstick," she said, wiping his mouth.

"Fuck. Imagine?"

She smoothed back his hair. "Do I have--?"

"Yeah, some--" He wiped her mouth with his thumb. She bit it, making him smile, then he raked a hand through her hair and straightened her blouse as she readjusted his tie and jacket.

They took a deep, steady breath.

"Ready?" he asked.

"Now or never."

He opened the door slowly. Noises, people milling about, nothing out of the ordinary. And no one was staring. Thank god.

He put on an all-business scowl. "Let's get you home. You and your mum have a lot to talk about."

"Yeah." Inner thighs sticky with mingled ejaculate, she followed him down the hall.

* * *

"How'd it go?" Joyce climbed into bed beside him.

He closed his book and smiled. "Swimmingly. I think I pulled off the role of concerned dad pretty well."

"Oh, you're such a godsend." She scooted toward him, draped her arm and leg over his. "And Buffy's teachers?"

"Nice people. A little gone in the head, some of 'em. But that's to be expected."

"So, everything's good with her? No complaints?"

"Oh yeah. No worries." He rubbed her shoulder and kissed the top of her head. "She's a smart girl."

"She is, isn't she?" She sighed. "Sometimes it scares me."

"What you mean?"

"She's so... wise beyond her years. Every now and then she'll say or do something that reminds me she's still a kid, but the rest of the time she's just barreling toward adulthood, passing go. I feel so powerless. It's like she's sixteen going on thirty-five, you know?"

He stared over her head at the bedroom door. "Yeah. I know."

* * *

When did he start listening for her footsteps padding down the hall at 2, 3am, checking Joyce's sleep-steady breathing, and slipping quietly out of bed to sneak down the stairs and find her there waiting for him?

When did he start letting her yank him into closets, bathrooms, her own frilly girly-girl bedroom to steal a few minutes, an hour, half a bloody day?

"Oh...god..."

He's crouched between her thighs, hands gripping her ass, tongue probing her swollen pussy. She's bent over the kitchen sink, holding onto whatever she can. The basin sides, the backsplash, the fixtures... In an overzealous moment, she turns on the faucet.

He pulls his head away from her, startled.

She shuts it off. "Oops."

Snickering quietly, he slaps her ass. She giggles, and turns around, pulling him up to her. They kiss against the counter, trying to keep their bubbling laughter low.

And when did she start creeping into his heart?

* * *

Tuesday, October 22nd, 7pm

Spike had never had a thing for cheerleading uniforms.

He could appreciate the aesthetic; appreciate the nubile flesh and frenetic energy that they encapsulated, but he never understood the appeal of the outfit itself.

All that changed when he saw *her* wrapped up in one, for the first time in the kitchen that night. Golden hair piled atop her head, ringlets bouncing in time with some inane beat in her ear; tight criss-cross halter top, toned, sun-kissed midriff exposed, pleated yellow skirt that showed a flash of maroon every time she shimmied...

For a full five seconds he was struck motionless as every blood cell in his body rushed to one central location.

Rah bloody rah.

And she knew, right away, exactly what it did to him. As nonchalant as he tried to come across once he'd been able to speak again, she could read it all over his face, his rigid body language. Hell, she probably knew before he did.

Of course she knew. She'd insisted they come to the pep rally. *All the other parents are going*, she'd said. *C'mon, it'll be fun. I promise.*

Joyce was touched that she cared, that she wanted them there to support her; that she was including her mother in her life again. But the moment he sat down to watch her, Spike knew she invited them for one reason, and one reason only.

To torture him.

Watching her tumble and jump and wiggle and flash her panties and cheer provocatively to the bleachers; seeking him out and smiling just for him while she knew her mother was sitting right beside him.... It was torture. Absolute, unspeakable torture.

Oh, she was gonna get it tonight.

In unison, the cheerleaders began calling for the football players as they ran to the center of the gym. "Dixon, Dixon, he's our man! If he can't do it, no one can!" Buffy winked up at him.

Spike leaned toward Joyce. "When's this thing over?"

"I think this is the big finish. I'm sorry, you must be bored out of your mind."

Not exactly. He narrowed his eyes at the brown-haired jock who was suddenly carrying a laughing Buffy on his shoulders. "Who's that?"

"Oh, um, that's Angel, Angel Tighe. He came by the house a few times over the summer. Maybe they're dating, who knows? She tells me nothing."

"Dating?" He sat forward, knuckles whitening as he gripped the bench they sat on. "He's got his grubby paws all over her."

"Spike," she laughed, touching his arm. "You're acting like her father."

Angel put her down, and chucked her chin. Buffy smiled and ran off.

Spike shook himself out of it. "Yeah, sorry. Not my place, is it?"

"I think it's very sweet, you being so protective."

Buffy disappeared through some swinging doors along with the rest of the squad.

"Oh right, I forgot about the marching band," Joyce said as the band filed into the center of the gym. "If it's the same as last year, it's over after this. Is that me?" She searched through her purse and found the ringing phone. "Hello?"

Spike stared at his broad-shouldered rival laughing with the rest of the football team, until some girl jumped down the bleachers and into Angel's arms, kissing him.

He exhaled in relief. *One down. A hundred other drooling sprogs to go.*

"What?!" Joyce was covering one ear. "I can't hear you--hold on--" She looked at him. "I need to take this outside. Meet me there with Buffy, will you?"

"Uh... yeah. Sure."

* * *

It was like a maze back there, but he finally found it: Girls' Locker Room. He paced outside of it, talking his dick into behaving, until two girls emerged in street clothes.

"Hey. Buffy still in there?"

"Yeah, she's looking for her bracelet or something," one said, wagging a finger at him in recognition. "Aren't you that bartender from the Bronze?"

"I was. Know how long she'll be?"

The other one opened the door. "Hey, Summers! Choice score with the hot bartender!"

"Whoo girl!" said the first one. "Better get your sweet rump out here now, he wants you bad!"

Laughing, they gave him one last glance and ran off.

He frowned slightly, shaking his head. Then his phone rang.

Crap, had to be Joyce, wondering where the hell they were. And they weren't even--

It was Buffy.

Cautiously, he brought the phone to his ear. "Yeah?"

"Would you be the hot bartender in question?"

"Look, your mum's outside, so hurry it--"

"Come in."

"What?"

"I can't find my bracelet."

"I'm not gonna--"

"It's totally empty. C'mon. I dare you."

She hung up.

He sighed. Tentatively, he pushed open the swinging door, and stepped inside. "Buffy?" No answer. She was playing hide and seek, was she? He walked down a row of open lockers, cocked his head, put his hunt on. No sound, no clues. "Buffy... Here, kitty kit--"

She ambushed him as he turned the far corner, pushed him up against the metal locker divider with a *bang*.

He grinned. "Now, kitten, you know we don't have time for --"

She kissed him quiet, forced his hands on her ass and pressed her bare belly against him. "You have the biggest hard-on for me right now, don't you?"

Jaw clenched, he involuntarily squeezed her ass. "That's beside the--" He hissed as she fondled his erection through a layer of denim.

"I knew it." She worked a hand into his pocket, rubbed closer. "Pervert."

He swept his hands up her back, gripped her shoulders, pushed her to arm's length. Closed his eyes and opened them, breath ragged. "Buffy, much as I-- want to..."

She took his hand and stuck it into her underwear.

Slippery wet, and god, that fucking *outfit*... "Fuck..."

"Me."

With a growl, he dragged her to the aisle, bent her over a bench and yanked down her yellow uniform panties.

She held onto the bench and cried out when he shoved his way in.

Sneering, nostrils flared, he pulled her upright by her blonde ringlets and cupped a hand over her mouth. "Keep quiet or I'll spank you."

He felt her smile against his palm.

* * *

"I think you gave me welts." Buffy gingerly rubbed her ass.

"I did not." Spike opened the door that led to the parking lot, let her go first. "I think I showed extraordinary restraint."

"Yeah, tell that to my butt."

He spotted the approaching SUV and asided quietly, "I'd love to."

"Perv."

"There you are!" Joyce said, pulling up beside them. "What happened? I've been circling around here for--"

"Somebody stole my bracelet!" Buffy said, the very picture of astonishment.

Wishing for a cigarette and a nap, Spike focused on the crescent moon and dug his hands into his empty pockets.

"Your bracelet? Are you sure?"

Or, not so empty. *What the hell is...?*

"Yes! We looked everywhere. It better not be Alison Dobbs, that little klepto freak."

He almost pulled it out of his pocket for inspection until he felt the distinct outline of a small, flat heart; one that had pressed so hard into his skin one night there was still an imprint on him the next day.

"Oh, honey. I'm sorry. Maybe it'll turn up tomorrow."

Buffy's bracelet.

She must've slipped it in while she was feeling him up...

"Yeah, maybe."

He glanced at her, and she flashed him a wink before hopping into the back seat. Shaking his head, he walked around to the passenger side.

Somebody needs another spanking.

* * *

Sunday, October 27th, 10:30am

"Be right back," Joyce said, opening the kitchen door.

"See you in a bit, pet." Spike scanned the Sunday paper.

"Later, mom." Buffy swallowed her mouthful of Smart Start and turned a page in her magazine.

The door closed. Footsteps to the car, and their eyes met. The engine started, and they pushed their chairs back. When gravel sprinkled on the driveway, Buffy beamed and ran for the stairs.

Tossing his newspaper aside, he gave chase.

* * *

"Shit," Buffy said, turning her head toward the window. "Already?"

Joyce had just pulled into the driveway.

Spike shut his eyes and pumped faster as he listened for the car door. Blinded with the need to finish what was started, he brought her hands to his nipples.

Oh really? she thought, and pinched them, hard.

"Uhhhh!" He surged into her, sliding her naked backside along her pink bedroom rug.

She unhooked her ankles, slid her feet down his legs as he shuddered in orgasm.

Raspy-voiced, he promised, "I'll get you later."

"You better."

The kitchen door opened. "Go," she said.

He kissed her lips and grabbed his discarded clothes, hopped into his sweatshorts.

"Honey?"

He crept out to the hallway and closed her door quietly. "Upstairs, love! 'Bout to hop in the shower!"

Buffy climbed onto her bed, smiling.

CHAPTER 3: *Huntsman*

Thursday, October 31st, 7:15pm

"**Doorbell's ringing!**" Spike yelled. "What should I do?"

"Get it?" Joyce called from upstairs. "The candy's by the door."

"Bloody Halloween," he mumbled, picking up the bowl of candy and unlocking the front door. "Stupid bloody holiday. Buggery little brats begging for bloody toothaches--"

Amy was standing there in a leopardskin leotard and ears.

He frowned at her, perplexed.

"Aren't you gonna let me in?"

"Yeah." Uneasy, he stepped back. "Want some candy?"

"Are you kidding? My mom would eviscerate me."

"Right then. No candy. Buffy!" Amy winced at his shout.

Buffy's door opened upstairs. "Yeah?"

"Catperson to see you!" He put down the bowl and walked away.

"Amy? Come up and help me with this!"

Spike smirked, pretty images flitting through his head.

Closing the door on another set of Cartoon Network advertisements, Spike shouted up the stairs, "Hey, wanna tell me why I'm doing this?" Silence. "I hate kids!"

His only answer came from the whistling pipes: Joyce was in the shower. And Buffy was doing god-only-knew with her friend.

Well, gave him time for a smoke.

Rustling through the coats in the closet, he reached into his duster pocket and fished out a pack, then stepped outside and leaned against the wall. A large group began a procession up the walk. "We're all out," he told them as he flipped open his Zippo. Mercifully, they turned away.

Ah, sweet nicotine. Deep inhale... hold... exhale.

The door burst open beside him, and Amy came through it, followed by Buffy, who pointed a finger and said, "Don't laugh."

He tilted his head, looked her up and down. Heidi braids, short gingham number with apron, picnic basket. "What the hell are you supposed to be?"

When she dropped her red hood in place, the picture was complete. He spurted a laugh through his nose and she said, "This was all they had left!"

"I like the red socks. Nice touch." He took another drag.

"C'mon, Buff, let's go," Amy said.

"Oi. Where are you off to?"

"Grandmother's house," Buffy said mock-sweetly. "Halloween party? Hello?"

"Wait." He pushed off the wall with an impulsive, "No."

"Excuse me?"

He cast a glance at Amy and addressed Buffy. "Your mum say it was okay?"

"Yes! Go ahead and ask her."

He wasn't convinced. "Where is this party?"

"At my friend Sarah's. Do you need references?" She shot him a look that suggested they shouldn't be having this conversation in Amy's presence.

She was right, of course, so he tried to sound paternal when he said, "How 'bout I just drive you instead?"

She sighed and looked at Amy, who shrugged and said unenthusiastically, "Sure, why not?"

* * *

Amy got out of the car, and Spike caught Buffy's arm before she opened her door. "Why didn't you tell me about this?"

"I did, three days ago. I told you and mom, at dinner."

He had no recollection of this.

She jogged his memory. "You fingered me in the pantry right before?"

"Oh. Right." He frowned at his hand on the steering wheel. "Guess I was preoccupied."

"I'm shocked." She ducked her head to catch his eye. "It's just a party. I'm here to hang with my friends, nothing more. I swear."

He blew out an exhale. Couldn't stop her from having a social life... no matter how much he wanted to. "You swear?"

She smiled, and caressed his thigh. "I totally swear. I'm all yours after."

He placed his hand over hers. "Then I'm picking you up in two hours."

"Two hours? Are you--"

"Alright, three. You're not out here at eleven, I come in and drag you out. And if I smell the slightest whiff of alcohol on your breath, I'm telling your--"

"Whatever, yeah, I get it. No drinking, no orgies, out by eleven. I'll be the lamest partier in the history of partying."

"Damn right you will." He frowned. "Orgies? Who said--"

"Goodbye, Spike. I'll see you at eleven." She kissed his cheek, and grabbed her basket.

He sighed as he watched her flounce up to the house, and it occurred to him: *She's just a girl.*

* * *

"Why don't you pick her up a little later?" Joyce tugged on his pantleg as he stood from the couch.

If he knew what was good for him, he'd relent, peel off his wife's silk kimono and give her what she was not-so-subtly asking for.

But he couldn't focus on anything other than what Buffy might be doing. Or who she might be doing it with. He hated himself like this, hated that he couldn't just let her be, but he couldn't exactly help it. "I made her promise to be outside at eleven."

"You have to rush out now?"

"It's over twenty minutes away," he lied. It was more like ten.

She sighed and let go of him. "I'll see you tomorrow, I guess."

Flipping on the Damage Control, he turned to her and teased, "Now, pet. Don't get snippy."

"I'm not getting snippy."

"You are," he drawled, and strolled over to her, bent down and kissed her, fingertips dancing down her collar. "I'll see you *before* tomorrow, alright? I'll wake you if I have to."

She smiled. "Okay."

He touched her hair, and went for the door. When he opened it, he noticed bits of white and slimy yellow oozing down the exterior side. "Is this egg?"

Joyce said dismissively, "They do that every year."

"Bloody fucking Halloween." He slammed the door behind him.

* * *

Music and laughter wafted from the dimly-lit house, and somewhere inside, Buffy was doing the things that girls her age were supposed to do. Whatever that entailed, he hoped it bore no similarity to what almost happened at that frat party, or he'd have to go in and kill everyone with his bare hands.

She still had ten minutes, and as tempted as he was to go peeping around the windows, he settled for waiting in the car. If she wasn't out by eleven... *I trust her. I trust her. I trust--*

In his periphery, he glimpsed a silhouette of someone pacing in the garden, all alone: short cloak and little picnic basket. "Buffy?" What was she doing all the way over there? He jumped out of the car and hiked to the garden's archway, whispering her name.

She spun around. "Finally."

"I'm early."

"I know. I'm just glad you're here."

Oh god, he thought, it happened. It happened and he wasn't there to save her. "What? What is it?"

"Nothing." She sat down on a bench. "Amy and me got into a fight."

"Oh." He breathed an audible sigh of relief. "Why?"

"She doesn't get why I won't hook up with this guy. I don't want to hook up with him! And why should I just 'cause she wants to do his friend?"

He watched her adoringly as she ranted and gesticulated.

"... So go do his friend! You know? Why is it a two-for-one-special? Why should *I* do him?"

"Preaching to the choir, love."

She looked up at him, plaintive. "Spike, what are we?"

Thrown offguard, he stalled, "...What?"

"Nothing," she sighed. "Nothing. Forget I said anything."

She was so endearing in that costume, so defenseless and exposed... and it came to him. He pulled at his pantlegs and squatted before her. "Want to know what we are?"

"No. I said forget it."

He turned her chin toward him. "We're a fairy tale, you and I."

Hesitantly, she eyed him.

He traced the hem of her checkered skirt. "You're Little Red Riding Hood... and I'm the Big Bad Wolf."

Chortling, she rolled her eyes. "Right. Okay."

"Seriously, think about it. The similarities are uncanny."

"Well, you're a little less hairy."

"Granted..."

"And you don't cross-dress. That I know of."

"Oh, kitten," he said. "Someone's been telling you the wrong story."

"They have?"

"Oh yeah. Doesn't go like that at all."

She stood up and dusted off her skirt, walked away. "It doesn't."

He followed her. "Not at all."

Casually, she strolled to the darkest garden wall, turned to face him, and prompted quietly, "How does it go?"

"Well you see," he began, voice low and honeyed, "Little Red Riding Hood lived in Torrance with her mum."

She smiled. "This is the real story?"

He nodded. "One day, she filled her purse with Vicodin to bring to her gran in Northridge."

"Uh huh," she chuckled.

He continued in a teasing lilt, "But just as she was out the door, her mum said, 'Little Red, you can't go to gran's now. It's getting late, and if you're on the 405 after dark, the Big Bad Wolf will catch you. And you know what happens if he catches you...'"

Slowly, Buffy shook her head.

Spike closed the gap between them. "He'll throw you in his black Caddy, tear off your little red dress, yank down your little red panties..." He put his hands on the wall on either side of her, looked down, "...and fuck your little red socks off."

His eyes met hers. She shivered involuntarily.

He fondled one of her braids. "But Little Red just flashed her pearly whites and said, 'Don't worry mum. It's not so late, and Northridge isn't far. That Wolf won't catch me, and even so I bet he's not as big and bad as you say.' So she skipped on down the highway, not a care in the world. Until..." His tone dropped into seductive territory again. "...the sun went down, and Little Red felt a chill alllll up her spine." He slid his fingers up her back and pressed his body to hers.

Her breath warmed his neck.

"Suddenly," he said, "a black Caddy pulled up beside her, and as the window rolled down, Little Red quivered down to her little red socks, knowing it could only be the Big Bad Wolf come to get her. She was surprised to find that he wasn't nearly as hairy as she was led to believe..."

That got him a giggle.

"In fact, he was downright handsome. Devilishly so. Quite a bit older than her, but she liked that, Little Red did. See, Little Red wasn't like the other little girls. She held her ground, and didn't show a lick of fear when the Big Bad Wolf said, 'What are you doing out on the highway so late, little one? Didn't anyone warn you about me?'"

Buffy licked her lips.

He tugged her close at the waist. "Well, now you've done it. I'm gonna have to throw you in my black Caddy, tear off that little red dress, yank down your little red panties... and fuck your little red socks off."

Her eyes fell closed.

He pulled back a bit. "But then, Little Red did something right curious. She yanked down her little red panties, jumped into his car, took a loaded gun out her purse, pointed it at him and said--"

"I don't think so, Big Bad," Buffy interrupted, moonlight reflected in her smile. "You're gonna eat me like the book says."

"Hey. Thought you hadn't heard this."

"I like the way you tell it."

"I can do more than tell it, Little Red." He growled at her neck, making her squeal and shiver, then nipped at her collarbone and breasts and stomach until he was on his knees. He lifted her skirt, and lo and behold, little red panties. Seeping with wet.

"This beats, man. Not enough pretty girls."

"And most importantly, no fucking bud."

"We should hit Jackson's."

"Yeah, Jackson's got the kind b--"

"Dude -- check it out."

The partygoers stopped in their tracks and peered through the garden gates. A girl with braids, bouncing on someone they couldn't see. A fevered whisper: "You're the big... bad... unh..."

Cracking up, they high-fived. "Least somebody got spank tonight."

"More power to you, bro." They headed to their car.

Buffy and Spike were in their own world, blissfully oblivious.

* * *

When he started the car some time later, Spike asked brightly, "So, who we gonna be next year?"

She pulled her seatbelt down. "I thought you hated all things Halloween."

"A man's got a right to change his mind." He palmed the wheel, merged onto the road.

"How 'bout I be Snow White... and you be Happy?"

"Oi! Happy? You want me to be a blasted dwarf?"

"At least I didn't make you Dopey. Or oh, Bashful."

"None of the above, all right?" Eyes on the road, shouldercuff rolling, he said, "I'll be the huntsman who falls in love with you."

She blinked, and looked at him. Swallowed. "The what?"

"Huntsman." He glanced at her. "Well I'm not gonna be the poncy prince."

It was something they didn't talk about. *Shouldn't* talk about. She focused on a red light turning green and snorted. "Mom can be the Evil Queen."

"Now, now." With that, Spike remembered his promise to Joyce. He wouldn't be waking her up tonight after all, would he? Like most nights as of late, he'd spent himself on Buffy.

* * *

Thursday, November 7th, 8:30pm

Bloody hell.

The moment he saw Buffy saunter out of the house in that figure-hugging just-above-knee-length satin black number and those tall, tall black heels, Spike was done for.

He suddenly regretted his choice to work so late. Fucking job. Made him miss watching her put that dress on; made him miss his chance to peel it off and watch her put it on all over again...

As the streetlight illuminated her face, he noticed she looked...different. Older. Downright stunning.

Must've been to the salon earlier that day -- her hair was straightened, blonder, piecey. Her eyes were lined in smokey black. Her lips were coated in clear gloss. And that dress... its V-neck plunged so low it gathered at her navel, punctuated by a thin single-strip silver tie necklace that might as well have been an arrow pointing to his favorite place on earth.

But god, she seemed almost unattainable. He couldn't believe this... vision gave herself to him freely, night after night.

She smiled shyly as she approached the car and saw his strangely unreadable expression. "You like?"

Nodding slowly, he said in a raspy voice, "I love."

"Good. I... wasn't sure you'd..." She shrugged. "I mean I know you like the girlie stuff..."

"I like the woman stuff too. And your hair... Buffy, you look... amazing."

Her shy smile became a full-on grin, and she made her way to the passenger side, gracefully climbed in, checked him out in his black Armani suit. "You don't look so unamazing yourself."

"Not worthy of you, pet."

"Oh, stop. You are the hottest guy on the planet."

"Is that what you think?"

"It's what I know."

"Then I guess we're a perfect match."

She was incredibly content with that assessment.

He couldn't stop staring; couldn't focus on anything else. "How do you expect me to behave myself tonight, you looking like that?"

"Boy who behaves gets to play with toy surprise all night." She'd taken his hand and rested it on her bare knee.

He softly ran his fingers up her thigh. "Boy wants toy surprise now."

She giggled, shooed his hand away. "Drive, boy, drive."

* * *

Elbow on the wall, hand in his hair, Spike pressed the elevator button, leering hungrily at her all the while.

"Stop looking at me like that."

This uncharacteristic display of shyness only served to further intrigue him. "Can't, won't."

"My mother is waiting for us upstairs."

"Never stopped you before." He reached out to her waist, but snapped it back when three people entered the lobby. The elevator arrived. Spike attempted to close out the newcomers, but she held the door open.

Standing in the back of the elevator, exchanging sidelong glances, he reached behind her and caressed the lower curve of her ass. Her eyes widened, and she mouthed, *Bad!*

Before following the crowd out of the elevator, he wiggled his tongue at her.

* * *

The gallery was packed. They finally found Joyce in the second room, deep in conversation with a slender brunette in Prada.

"Spike! Oh, I'm so glad you could make it."

"Of course, love." He casually kissed her on the lips. "Wouldn't miss it for the world."

It was just a little kiss, but Buffy hated it anyway. She focused on an ugly painting on the far wall.

"And Buffy! You look fabulous! So... sophisticated!"

"Thanks, mom."

"This is your daughter?" Prada Lady asked with a smirk. "For a second I thought your husband brought a date."

Spike and Buffy exchanged a furtive, nervous glance while Joyce laughed. "No, we're strictly monogamous. Buffy and Spike, uh... William, this is Lilah Morgan, my boss."

"Nice to meet you," Buffy said.

"Aren't you supposed to be sixteen?" Lilah asked her.

"Supposed to, and am."

"You could pass for about twice that, honey." She turned to Spike. "And you could pass for about twenty-five."

"Yeah, well. I moisturize." Spike returned Lilah's handshake. "So you're the famous Lilah."

"Am I famous?"

"Household name, in our house anyway. All good things, of course."

She smiled. "I don't believe that for a second. You're pretty famous around here, too. I hear you're pushing PR pencils at my father's sweatshop."

He nodded. "Heard you had a little something to do with that."

"Joyce gave you such a glowing review, how could I not?" She tilted her head. "Now about that nickname. Spike. Joyce won't tell us where it came from."

"It's nothing, really. Had it since I was a kid."

"And I'd love to hear the story behind that..."

Two other women had somehow appeared, eager to listen in.

And the vultures descend, Buffy thought, as a man with a tray of champagne flutes walked by. She swiped one.

"Buffy?"

She turned to her mother, who was giving her a look. "But. Sophisticated..."

Joyce pursed her lips. "All right. But just one. No more."

"Uh huh. I'm gonna go look at all the art."

"Okay, honey."

Spike didn't even look her way, he was too busy charming the swarm while Joyce latched herself to his bicep, staking her claim as Lucky Owner.

Eyes rolling, Buffy took off.

* * *

Half an hour later, Spike stepped up to Buffy at the buffet table, looked ahead as he asked quietly, "That your second or third?"

She hadn't noticed him there. "Huh?"

"Glass of champagne."

"Third. But these glasses are tiny. And why am I justifying myself to you?"

"Don't have to. I just don't want you to get drunk."

"Why, because your precious wife will get mad?"

"No," he crunched into a baby carrot, and turned to her, chewing. "Because my toy surprise'll be passed out before midnight."

"Oh." She smiled, shy again. "I'm not the surprise."

"You're not? Who is then?"

"No, no. It's *on* me. Well, not so much *on* as... Anyway, it's surprising. But the surprise is... not just me."

He arched a brow. "I'm getting the urge to know about this right now."

"You will. Later."

He shook his head. "Now."

"I can't just tell you. I have to show you."

"So show me." He stepped into her personal space. "Now."

Her eyes slid from left to right. "It requires a little more privacy than a roomful of people."

"Alright. Come with me." He started walking.

She followed. "Where are we...?"

"Don't question me."

She smiled, feeling a little giddy. And a little buzzed.

He found Joyce. "Buffy left something in the car. I'm going with her to get it."

"Okay," she said, more interested in the art dealer she was chatting up.

"I can't believe you just did that," Buffy awed as they walked out of the main room.

"Boy wants toy surprise now."

"Girl can see that."

He hit the elevator button, looked up at the numbers. "Twelve."

"What?"

"Goes up to twelve."

She wasn't getting his drift. "Uh huh..."

The door opened. He waited for her to get in, then he hit 12.

The second the door closed, he pushed her up against the wall. "God, I've been waiting to do this to you all bloody night..."

"Spike..." She gripped his triceps. "What if there are cameras?"

"Then the security bloke gets a show."

She tried to focus on the changing digital floor numbers. "But-- mom's building..."

"Don't care." He kissed her collarbone.

"Twelve," she said, announcing their arrival.

He slung back and pressed 11, waited for the doors to close, then pulled the emergency stop button between floors.

He pinned her wrists to the wall. "Show me."

"But... what if you hate it?"

"There will never..." he was lifting her skirt ever so slowly, proclaiming between kisses, "be anything..." hands up her thighs, "about you..." up to the strap of her thong, "that I hate."

She swallowed. "Okay, okay. Take them off."

He frowned.

"I said, take panties off. Surprise inside."

Mind full of possibilities from the ridiculous to the mundane, he kneeled in front of her, and slowly peeled her black thong down.

This, he wasn't prepared for.

Neither was she: she was covering her eyes, waiting for his reaction.

"How did you...?"

She said in a tiny voice, "Got waxed?"

"Waxed..."

"You hate it!"

He didn't answer, so she looked down. He was staring at it, enthralled, rubbing the newly-smooth skin softly with his thumb.

Then he clasped his mouth over it; and her knees buckled.

He didn't hate it. Not even one little bit.

When she came on his face and he'd sucked her clean, he stood up, wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, and grinned. "Best toy surprise a boy could ever find."

She laughed, and then he pinned her up against the wall, cock thrust deep inside her.

"You are so hot, Buffy... so fucking hot," he said into her ear, and lifted her legs up around him. "Can't stand it... can't get enough of you... can't, unh, get enough..."

"Don't ever," she said, closing her eyes, loving his words.

"Won't. Can't," he said, breath fraught and labored. "Never."

She grasped his shoulders.

He accelerated his pace. "Feel so good... god, *look* so good. Such a beautiful... gorgeous, so grown up..." he rested his forehead against hers, "woman!"

"Hunh!"

He kissed her, and slammed her into the wall as he came.

At his last shudder, he touched her foot, ran a finger over her new rhinestone toe ring. Between breaths, he said, "Damn. And I didn't even *see* this."

She chuckled, fingers on the nape of his neck. "Next time."

"Later tonight," he corrected. "You are not to take one item of this ensemble off 'til I'm good and done with you, is that clear?"

"Yes, master!"

He smirked at her. "And save that for later too."

CHAPTER 4: *Fever*

Friday, November 8th, 5:45pm

Spike hung up his jacket. "Kitten? You here?"

He heard a series of sneezes upstairs, and followed the noise to Buffy's room.

"Ugh," she said, lying on the bed, surrounded by wadded tissues.

He loosened his tie as he approached her. "What happened to you?"

She shut off the TV, sniffled and answered in a husky voice, "There's a little bug going around school. Guess it bit me."

He sat at her bedside and pressed a hand to her forehead. "Yeah it did. What a shame. Mum's working late tonight."

"I didn't say I couldn't have crazy sex with you."

"I think it's best you get some rest."

"I don't wanna rest." She stuck her arms out, and he climbed up the bed to meet her embrace. "I wanna get my germies all over you. Besides, I hear it's a great cure for a headache."

"Germies?"

"Nah, squirmies." She moved her hips.

He grinned. "I like squirmies."

"I know. So take off your pants." She was already unbuttoning his shirt. "I don't care how disgusting I look. I won't take no for an answer."

"You always look gorgeous, pet." He whipped off his tie, and unbuckled his belt. "Even with your nose runny and your eyes all red and watery..." He stopped what he was doing. "Come to think of it, you are pretty revolting."

"Shut up," she laughed, and covered her mouth to cough. "You know you wanna kiss me."

"Don't want your cooties," he teased.

She traced a circle on his naked chest. "Circle circle, dot dot, now you have your cootie shot."

"Good enough for me." He kissed her, cooties and all.

* * *

Sunday, November 10th, 10:30pm

"You're both exactly the same," Joyce said, squinting at the thermometer. "A hundred and one."

"Waah." Buffy kicked her legs out, foot grazing Spike's shin.

"Oi. Stop the kicking."

"Stop taking up so much room and I will."

"Stop hogging the covers and I will." He yanked at the throw that covered them both as they lay end-to-end on the family room couch.

"Okay, age check," Joyce said. "Yes I do believe you're both over twelve. Why don't I get you your own blanket, Buffy?"

"Look," she held up her hands, "not hogging. I'm too hot, anyway. And my throat hurts. Can I get a icepop?"

"Ooh, me too?"

Joyce sighed, and went up the steps. "How is it that you're both sick and I'm not?"

Buffy and Spike exchanged a look. "Going 'round her school," he called out in a scratchy voice. "Must've got it at the parent-teacher meet."

"But that was so long ago. What flavor icepops?"

"Red," they said in unison.

He grinned at her, and snaked a foot between her legs. She held it tight and pushed into it in response.

"Bad girl," he whispered.

"Me bad?"

"Yeah, you." He pressed his toes forward, feeling her heat through the cotton of her pajama bottoms.

"You started it." Undetectable to the above-cover eye, she tipped her pelvis slowly up and down, up and down, making his lips part in interest.

"Two icepops," Joyce announced as she came down the steps, "with that authentic red flavor."

Buffy stopped moving, but wouldn't let go of his foot. "Thanks, mom."

"Thanks, love."

She handed them out. "Anything else?"

Spike turned his head toward her. "Yeah, can you hand me the clicker? It's on top of the telly."

Joyce walked over to the TV. "Isn't putting it *on* the TV a little counterproductive?"

"Buffy did it."

"I did not!"

"Did." He took the remote control. "Ta, pet."

Joyce sat on the arm of the couch, ruffled Spike's hair and pulled up his side of the blanket. "Am I done playing nursemaid now?"

The blanket suddenly made a very nice outline of where his foot was.

He met his wife's eyes and twitched a brow at her. "For now." He tried to discreetly extricate his foot, but Buffy was holding fast.

Joyce blushed. "That's a different kind of nursemaid, I think."

Buffy was incredulous. "Ew!" She let go of his foot.

"Same kind, different outfit," he said to Joyce, bringing his knee to his chest.

"Ew!" Buffy kicked his shin.

"Ow! Kicker!" He made a face.

Buffy gestured at Spike and her mother with her popsicle. "You guys are gross!"

"Who you calling gross?" He winked at her.

"You!" She threw a wadded tissue at him.

"Now *this* -- this is gross," he said, picking it up and tossing it back.

Joyce threw up her hands and sighed. "I didn't gain a husband, I gained a son. I officially have two kids." She walked to the stairs. "Goodnight. And Buffy, I want you back in your room before midnight. Got it?"

"Uh huh," she said, glaring at Spike.

"Night, babe." He bit into his popsicle and stared at Buffy as he crunched.

Buffy waited until she couldn't hear her mother's footsteps anymore. "You're a dick."

He took her foot and placed it over his hard-on. "You are what you eat."

"Then you're a pussy." She pulled her foot away.

"What'd I do?"

"What did you do?" Her voice dropped to a hiss. "You flirted with her right in front of me!"

"Because she was just about to notice exactly where my foot was."

She considered this. "Oh."

"Yeah, oh." He bit the last chunk off of his popsicle stick and threw it on the coffee table.

She sucked on her icepop. "I forgive you."

"Good. Now c'mere and suck on my pop."

"Not a chance, Sick Boy." She stuck her tongue out, food-coloring red.

He stuck his red tongue out and wiggled the tip.

She smiled. "You have the longest tongue."

"Most talented too." He picked up her foot, yanked her toward him, and sucked on her big toe.

"Mmm..." His mouth was soft and wet and fever-hot.

"You need to feel this." She sat up and gave him her icepop to hold, then moved under the covers, pulled down his sweatshorts and enveloped the tip of his cock with her 101-degree mouth.

"Ah!"

"Mmm..." She made her way down.

He was sheathed in hot, heavenly bliss. "Oh...bloody...ha-ah..." Icepop threatening to stain the blanket, he got an idea. "Spin 'round."

She let his cock slip out of her mouth. "Huh?"

He lifted the covers to whisper, "Six-nine."

"Oh." She pulled her pajama bottoms off and maneuvered herself over his face, then got back to sucking. Until she felt something icy on her clitoris. "What are you--"

"Shhh..." He slid it up, right up her slit, and back down again, making her shiver and squeal. Cool red liquid dripped onto his face.

Relaxing, she sucked him in again.

He inhaled sharply, and pressed the cherry-red tip through her threshold.

"Mm!" Her eyes widened.

Careful not to break it, he pumped it in and out slowly, spreading her lips to lap at her clit.

She went wild. Forgot about his needs for a minute. Freezing cold coldness inside, his hot tongue outside, oh god, oh god... She bucked back and fucked that popsicle stick, cooing and shaking and burying her face in the couch cushions to wail, "HUNHHHH!"

A heady combination of come and confection flowing out of her and into his mouth, he withdrew the half-melted stick and flung it aside, licking her all up. She took him in again, bobbing her head mercilessly. Her delectable pussy in his face, his hands on her perfect ass, her hot mouth on his cock, it was all too good to be true -- he thrashed around, holding in an orgasmic shout.

She laughed at him when she finally turned around, "You have fruit punch mouth."

"You know you wanna kiss me," he teased.

"No way!" She lifted his t-shirt and tenderly wiped it away. "Look at you, you're a mess."

He was moved to caress her cheek. "A happy mess."

"Mmm..." she kissed him.

He felt her trickle onto his shorts. "Might want to clean yourself up too."

She straddled his chest and wiped herself on his grey t-shirt.

"With a tissue!"

She chuckled. "This looks so bad."

"You think?"

"I'd love to hear you explaining this to mom."

"Oh, would you now?" He poked her belly. "I'll just say it's your fault."

"Meanie."

He arched a brow. "What are big brothers for?"

Her jaw dropped. "Dirty!"

A wicked grin spread across his features. "C'mere sis. I got something to show you."

"You are so, so bad."

He curled his tongue against his teeth. "Makes you hot, though, doesn't it?"

"Maybe."

He smoldered at her and slid his hand down her side, then ran it up her thigh. "My sexy little sister."

"Oh god..." Her eyes rolled up. "Stop it..."

The floorboards creaked above them. They quickly tore apart and returned to their previous positions.

Spike flipped the channel on the TV, and turned the volume up slightly.

A clinking noise: Joyce was at the fridge.

Buffy remembered her pajama bottoms and grabbed them off the floor, quickly pulling them on.

"Still alive down there?"

"He won't let me watch *Street Smarts!*" Buffy called out, shrugging at Spike.

He smiled at her.

"Then you go up to your room and watch it there."

"But this is bigger," she pouted.

"Too bad," Joyce said, and walked away. "Midnight, Buffy! Don't forget."

"Won't!"

Eyes rolling, they exhaled.

* * *

Monday, November 11th, 8am

"Buffy!"

She blinked awake. Her mother was standing over her.

"What did I tell you last night?"

"Huh?"

"Sorry, love," Spike said, sitting up on the opposite side of the couch and rubbing the sleep from his eyes. "My fault. She fell asleep and I didn't want to wake her." He made sure the blanket covered his shirt.

Joyce sighed. "How are you feeling?"

"Better," he said, cricking his sore neck. "I'll off to the saltmines."

She touched his forehead and tsked. "You're still burning up. Sorry honey, but you're staying home. I'll call the office." She moved over to Buffy. "Yep, you too. Now I want you both to drink lots of fluids, and get lots of -- Oh, honestly." Something on the floor had caught her eye.

She bent down to peel the popsicle stick off the beige Berber carpet.

Buffy's eyes widened.

She wagged it at Spike. "And try not to ruin my rug?"

"Yeah," he said slowly. "Sorry. I'll clean it up."

She took a deep breath, and threw the stick on the coffee table. "Good."

Repulsed, Buffy couldn't help but grimace.

"I'll see you at six." She kissed them both on their heads and made for the stairs.

When Joyce was finally out of earshot, laughter burst through Buffy's nose.

"Thought I'd have a bloody heart attack," he said.

She laughed out loud, and started coughing. As he moved up to rub her back he chuckled at her, and was consumed by a coughing fit too.

"We're so attractive," Buffy said.

* * *

They were intertwined in his bed, undulating beneath the sheets.

"I feel better already," she panted, feet skimming down his calves.

"What's that old saying?" He straightened his arms to look at her as he pumped; touched her damp hair. A drop of his sweat fell onto her lips. "Fuck a fever?"

She licked her lips and palmed his flexing pectoral muscles. "Fuck a fever, lick a cold?"

He nodded. "That's the one. See it's... all part of... the healing process."

"Mmm." She smiled. "Fuck my fever, Spike. Fuck it."

God, even hotter when her voice was all hoarse like that. Gritting his teeth, he slid his hands under her ass and accelerated his thrusts.

"Unh! Fuck it, Spike... Fuck it harder! Yeah!"

"Bloody... "

The bed quaked.

"...HELL!"

* * *

Sunday, November 17th, 4pm

"What's all this?" Spike was looking in her dresser mirror, smoothing down his hair with his palms.

She yawned, stretched. "What's what?"

"These photos." He pulled one down: a magazine clipping of a pair of stiletto shoes.

Buffy shrugged. "Pretty things I want."

"*You* should have all the pretty things you want." He stuck it back up.

"I would if I could afford them."

He tucked in his shirt. "Your mum should up your allowance."

"Mmm, to eighty thou a year."

"This is nice." A ruby-diamond choker.

She propped herself up on an elbow. "That's why it's there."

"It'd look right stunning on you." He sat at her bedside and held it up to her neck.

She crumpled it in his hand. "Yeah, well, it should. It's seven thousand dollars."

"This little thing?" He uncrumpled it. "Impossible."

"Read the fine print."

He squinted at it. "Bloody hell. My girl's got expensive taste."

She smiled. *My girl.*

He touched the curve of her peach-soft ass and kissed her shoulder. She tugged him down on top of her.

"Hey, just fixed up. Now I gotta start all over again."

Wrapping her legs around him, she giggled, and pulled out his shirt tails.

"Oh, now you're gonna get it." He pinned her wrists to the mattress.

"Yes, please," she said.

"Well, not if you want it..."

"No, please no?"

He smirked, hand sliding down her inner arm. "Your mum'll be back soon."

"I know..." Her heels lightly drummed his thighs. "Just a few more minutes..."

"One." He kissed her neck. "One minute."

"Make me come again..."

"Buffy..."

She pressed his hand to her pussy. "I'll be fast. I promise."

His eyes rolled back as he dipped two fingers inside her. So fucking wet, all the time...
"Can't say no to you..."

"Yes..."

He rubbed her clit with his thumb, suckled her nipple, and in three minutes, she was spasming into his hand and screaming so loud he thought her mirror might shatter.

And then she begged him to do it again.

* * *

Thursday, November 22nd, After midnight

Buffy opened her door and walked across the hallway to the bathroom.

She heard her mother moan, and froze.

"Spike..."

She made a face. They were having sex.

She knew he had to do it every now and then. She just didn't ever want to know about it.
Ever.

So, she tiptoed quietly to their door. Heard him breathing. The bed squeaking.

She felt sick to her stomach, but she had to know. She had to hear it.

"Oh..."

Ew. She didn't want to hear *her*.

He breathed, and breathed, and breathed.

Didn't say her name, didn't tell her he loved her, didn't say "bloody hell" or anything at all, just breathed, and held his breath, made a strangled little noise, and then the bed stopped squeaking.

Buffy lifted her chin, triumphant. *So there.*

* * *

Sunday, November 24th, 3:30pm

"Buffy? Are you ready yet?"

Spike and Joyce were standing by the door.

"Coming!"

She hurried down the staircase wearing a short taupe shift that swished around her curves like mercury. Suppressing an impulse to bend her over the banister, Spike said, "How long's it bloody take to put your face on? At this rate, we'll miss the show."

"Shut up."

"Buffy, don't talk to him that way."

"He doesn't mind." She brushed past them and out the door.

Joyce shook her head, and sighed.

Spike smiled at her. "It's alright."

* * *

At the theater, Spike sat between his two lovers, feeling an incredible magnetic pull toward Buffy. He kept turning to her without realizing it. Kept checking out her supple, naked thighs. When he had a comment, he felt the urge to whisper it to Buffy's ear, not Joyce's. He chose to say nothing at all.

* * *

"You really should order something a little more substantial," Joyce said to Buffy. "You're getting a little thin. Don't you think so, Spike?"

"Uh..." He glanced at Buffy, and back at Joyce. "Think I'll stay out of this one."

"Smart move," Buffy said, eyes on her menu.

"Although the Filet of Sole here? Bloody magnificent."

She eyeballed him. "Fine. I'll get that." She closed her menu.

Joyce blinked at Spike. "How did you do that?"

He grinned and shrugged.

* * *

"Mmm," Buffy said, spooning into his creme brulée. "This is so, so good."

"Innit?" He watched her tongue glide up his spoon. *Fucking hell.*

"Mhmm." As she dipped into his dish again, she squeezed his thigh under the table. *Oh no. No no no.* He tried to pry her hand off. It wouldn't budge.

Her foot was wrapped around his ankle, her toes roving up and down his pantleg.

Tone measured and matter-of-fact, her mother asked from the opposite side of the table, "Why don't you order your own, Buffy?"

Buffy pulled the spoon out of her mouth. "I like his."

The waiter walked by and Joyce lifted a finger. "Can we get the check please? Thanks." She turned to Buffy and said irately, "So, Buffy. How's school been?"

"Fine," she said, eyes on the dish, palm on Spike's hard-on.

God help me.

"That's it? Just fine? I imagine the eleventh grade isn't always fine." She emphasized the *eleventh grade*.

Spike cleared his throat. "Pay attention to your mother, Buffy."

She gave him a hard squeeze, and removed her hand, put her elbows on the table. "Everything's great, mom. My teachers, my friends, cheerleading practice. Life is perfect."

"What about boys?"

A brief pause. "What about them?"

"Are you seeing anyone?"

She slid her eyes to the side, got shy. "There is someone."

Terrified, Spike held his breath.

"Really? What's his name?"

"Xander Harris. You remember Xander, don't you?"

Spike glanced at Buffy.

"Sure, I remember Xander," Joyce said skeptically.

"Well, he *finally* got up the nerve to ask me out last week, and I said yes." She gazed upward dreamily. "He's so incredibly sweet and funny, and... that's all I'm gonna say. I don't wanna jinx it."

Joyce smiled, relieved. "That's great, Buffy. I'm glad to hear it."

The bill was placed on the table.

"Let me get this," Spike said.

"Not here for that," he said, pushing her away.

"What else is there to be here for?"

They kept their voices down in the dark basement.

"Buffy, you've got to stop doing that in front of your mother."

"Doing what?"

"You know what."

"Feeling you up?" Her hands slid up his chest. "She didn't see."

He stopped her devilish hands in their tracks. "It's what she saw *above* the table. You were making love to my dessert! Had me drooling all over you."

Playful, she asked, "You were drooling?"

"Buffy."

"Relax. She doesn't suspect you. She just thinks *I'm* being inappropriate."

"Well, you are! Rubbing up against me and fellating my spoon like that and who the *hell* is Xander Harris?"

Jaw dropping, she scoffed. "Are you jealous?"

He returned simply, "Are you fucking him?"

"No!" she chuckled. "He's *just* a friend. Yeah, he did ask me out last week, but I said no." She turned his chin toward her. "I'm an incredibly good liar, Spike. Haven't you figured that out yet?"

His eyes narrowed. "How do I know you're not lying now?"

"Because I don't lie to you." She kissed his lips. "Believe me when I say..." she kissed his neck and ran her hand up his thigh, "All I want is you."

His eyes rolled back, and he pinned her to the wall to kiss her possessively.

CHAPTER 5: *Winter*

Wednesday, November 27

"I'll never get used to this."

She rubbed her cheek against his, watching a breeze shake the backyard palm trees.

"What?"

"The way it doesn't get cold in Winter."

It was 3am and they were whispering on the steps of the back porch. She sat between his legs, back against his front, his arms wrapped tightly around her.

"What are you talking about? It's freezing." She shivered for emphasis.

He held her closer. "Minute it goes under 72, you lot think it's subzero. Got no idea."

"Please. Like England is Antarctica."

"Maybe not, but at least we get snow."

"Mmm..." She clasped her hands over his bare forearms. "I like snow."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah. It's pretty."

"Ever seen it up close?"

"Couple times, up in the mountains."

"Pfft. That's cheating. I should take you someplace with real snow. Ground level snow."

She smiled. "Like where?"

"I don't know..." He shook her slightly, affectionately. "New York."

"Didn't you live there once?"

He nodded. "Two and a half years. Nice place, New York. You'd like it. Lots of shopping."

"Okay. When do we leave?"

He kissed her cheek, whispered in her ear, "Tomorrow?"

"Tomorrow's Thanksgiving."

He chortled, and looked out into the dark. "Never get used to that either."

* * *

Thanksgiving Day - 1pm

"Look how grown up she looks!"

Buffy gave her aunt a perfunctory smile.

"You look more and more like your mother every time I see you."

At Buffy's cringe, Joyce said, "You know daughters don't like to hear that, Gayle."

"Yeah, really, mom. God." Cordelia walked in and sized up her cousin. "Hey, Buffy."

"Hey, Cordy." They air-kissed. "How are you?"

"Waiting for this day to end," she said with a bright smile. "How 'bout you?"

"Right there with ya."

"Buffy!" Joyce admonished. Her daughter shrugged, and she sighed. "Why don't you take care of the coats. Gayle, want to help me in the kitchen?"

"Sure! Where's that gorgeous new husband of yours?"

"He just got back in from his run. He'll be down soon."

"Ooh. Will there be sweat?"

"I don't think so," Joyce laughed. "He's showering."

"Will there be a towel?"

"Ugh." Cordelia took off her coat and handed it to Buffy. "Remind me to never get that old."

"Yeah," Buffy said, as if she meant it. She raised her armful of coats. "I'll put this in my room."

"Hey, can I check my email? My guy has major separation anxiety. He's like a dog."

Buffy blinked at her. "Sure. C'mon up."

* * *

"Honey?" he heard Joyce yell from downstairs. "I need you to run to the store!"

"Just a minute, pet!" He shook yesterday's pants, put them down and scanned the bureau top, then the drawers, his sidetable, the floor. *Must be in her room.*

Holding his towel closed with one hand, he peered down the hallway. Her door ajar, he could see her legs hanging off her bed. When he got to the doorframe he asked sotto voce, "I leave my wallet in here, baby?"

Eyes widening, Buffy shook her head and looked to her right. He frowned in puzzlement, and pushed the door all the way open to reveal her cousin sitting at her desk.

"Cordelia!" *Not. Good.*

"Hello, Spike." She looked a little confused.

"You... changed your hair."

She touched her head. "Yeah."

While Cordelia was diverted, Buffy searched under the covers.

"Looks fantastic." He saw Buffy put it on her sidetable in his peripheral. "Just right for your face. And the highlights are perfect."

"Thanks!" she beamed.

He glanced at Buffy, telepathically begging her to make something up on the spot.

As usual, she delivered. "Right, your wallet," Buffy said, snapping her fingers, as if it was all coming back to her. "Cause you ordered that thing for Mom online last night."

Buffy to the rescue. He asided to Cordelia, "It's a surprise."

She smiled. "Of course it is."

"Oh! Here." Buffy 'found' it on the sidetable, and flung it his way.

He caught it. "Thanks, kid."

Shaken by his carelessness, Spike spent the rest of the day attempting to prove how devoted he was to Joyce. Telling her how beautiful she was, how lucky he was to have found her. Dazzling her family with his shining example of husbandhood through word and action... and treating his secret lover like a moronic stepchild.

He put on such a good show, in fact, that even Buffy fell for it.

Friday, November 29th, 7pm

"Pssst."

She ignored him.

"Need some help with that?"

"Nope." Feeling his eyes on her, Buffy poured the topful of detergent into the washing machine, closed it, turned and pulled the knob, and without meeting his gaze, moved to leave the laundry room.

He blocked her exit at the door.

"Can I get through please?"

Arm outstretched, he shook his head. "Pay the toll first."

"The toll?" She finally looked at him. "How sixth grade are you?"

Spike raised a brow.

She gave up. "What's the toll?"

He puckered his lips.

"I don't want to kiss you."

"Alright then, suck my dick."

"Uch! Who do you think you--"

"I'm kidding, kitten!" He pouted and reached out to touch her face. "What's the matter baby, huh?"

She swatted his hand away. "Don't fucking patronize me."

He got serious -- in a flash, he pushed her further in and closed the door, pressed her against it. "I'm sorry about yesterday, alright? I didn't know what else to do. God knows what your bloody cousin thought--"

"She *thought* you were gay."

He paused. "She what?"

"The hair comment? She's convinced you're latent. And I told her you call everyone 'baby', so she figures you're overcompensating."

Laughter radiated from his chest. "She thinks I'm gay?"

"Yeah. You could've asked me. Instead you ignore me and treat me like, like nothing--"

"I thought the cat was out, Buffy--"

"So you had to make out with her in front of all of us? In front of me?"

"Yes! She's my bloody wife!" Didn't she get it? Didn't she understand? "If she finds out, this whole thing is over. Can't you see? I do what I have to do."

"Well, if it's so hard for you, then maybe it *should* be over."

"No... Buffy... come on, love. That's not what I--"

"Spike?" Joyce's voice drifted down from the first floor.

They sighed. He shut his eyes and stepped back. Buffy willed her face expressionless. "Go do what you have to do."

This was maddening. If he could just make her see...

"Spike? Are you down there?"

Buffy opened the door for him, put her hand on her hip, and he left.

* * *

Friday, December 6th, 7:30pm

"I offered to host Christmas Eve this year," Joyce said, cutting into her steak. "Gayle's still renovating, and Mom's apartment won't hold all of us. Everyone else is so far away."

"Fine by me," Spike said.

"Do I have to be here?" Buffy asked.

Joyce gave her a stern look. "Yes, you do. You have other plans?"

"Maybe," Buffy said, pushing her potatoes around.

"Then cancel them." Joyce took a deep breath. "Anyway, I figure we could make a big bash out of it. Invite friends and neighbors. Buffy, you could invite Amy, if she's free. And anyone else you want. Like Xander."

Spike dropped his fork.

Buffy waited for him to pick it up, and smiled at her mother. "Okay. I'll invite Xander."

* * *

Saturday, December 7th, 1am

"Oh Spike... I love you so much..."

"Yeah... yeah... I love you too... Joyce..."

Buffy sat in the hallway, back against their closed door, a tear sliding down her cheek.

* * *

Saturday, December 13th, 12pm

"It's from your father."

Spike looked up from his newspaper to see Buffy rip the envelope open. Brow knit, she stared at the card for a moment, and stuffed it back in the envelope.

"What's it say?" Joyce asked.

"Nothing." She tossed it in the trash and made for the back door.

Joyce retrieved the envelope. "There's a check in here."

"I don't want it." The door slammed.

Reading the card, Joyce sighed. "Bastard can't even write his own Christmas card." She threw it on the kitchen counter and went after Buffy.

Spike looked at it. A picture of her father's new family, and a note in a woman's scrawl: *Lotsa love, Hank, Suzi and Baby Jeffrey!*

"Berk," Spike muttered. He wished he could talk to her, comfort her -- but maybe she really needed her mother at a time like this.

"Hey!" Joyce shouted outside. "I'm not the one who ran off with the secretary!"

"Ran off?" Buffy matched her volume. "Try driven away!"

Spike shut his eyes, headache suddenly pounding. *Or not.*

"How dare you! You take that back!"

"Why should I? It's true. Why do you think he never comes down here? Because he can't stand to be around you!"

"Buffy, get inside."

"Spike will leave you one day, too, don't you get it? It's not them, mom. It's YOU."

Spike froze.

"Get inside. NOW!"

"Fuck you!"

"What did you say to me?"

"I said--"

In a daze, Spike left the kitchen, walked through the dining room and up the stairs. In the master bath, he stripped and turned the shower knob to hot before getting in.

One morning, over a month ago, she'd slipped into his shower while Joyce was downstairs talking long-distance. He'd tried to convince her to leave, it was too risky; but she ignored him, and with a minxy smile, started lathering herself up -- going through her regular shower routine. He watched her, entranced... and erect.

When she spread her ass cheeks under the stream of water, soap gliding down her inner thighs, he gave in and spun her around.

Spike lathered his hard-on, remembering the way she felt then. Even hotter and softer than the water pelting them, steaming up around them. Would he ever get to feel that again? Would she ever speak to him again? Would she keep avoiding him, and was he trapped here forever?

Spike will leave you one day, too, don't you get it?

A panic gripped him. He shut his eyes, tugged at his cock; images of Buffy going off to college, getting married, leaving him here alone. With Joyce. Him staying with his wife out of guilt, obligation. Because he didn't want to be *that guy*.

One palm on the wall to steady himself. *Who the hell am I kidding?*

I am that guy.

Buffy, on her knees, tongue spiraling. Him sneering, *Suck it.*

Two days later, treating her like shit to save his own ass.

I'm worse than that guy.

His cock pulsed in his hand, needing her, needing her. Her tongue, her lips, her voice, her smile, her eyes... oh, those tits... that *ass*... that tiny little pussy, stretching to fit him like a glove...

"Fuck, Buffy..." His arm moved faster, faster. "Ohhh... yeah... yeah..."

Miss her so fucking much, pathetic. I'm pathetic.

Helpless, lost, alone, he came, his stepdaughter's name on his lips.

* * *

Thursday, December 19th, 11:30pm

"Can't sleep?"

She started at his voice, glanced at him, and away. "I didn't see you there."

Watching her warily, he sucked on his cigarette. "How are you?"

"Fine." She rubbed her arms, although there was no chill.

Tentatively, he moved closer. "Look -- Buffy --"

"Can we not?"

Confounded and powerless, he chucked his cigarette across the lawn. "One thing I want to know."

She waited.

"This about me, or your father?"

Shocked, she gaped at him. "If that's what you think, you--" Her lips quivered.

He frowned as her eyes welled with tears, and bridged the gap between them, wishing he could take it all back.

"You can go to hell." She rushed back into the house.

Spike hung his head.

* * *

He wanted nothing more than to climb into bed with her. Clasp his arms around her; kiss it all better. Show her that he didn't mean any of it.

Instead, he kissed her cheek, whispered, "Forgive me," and wrapped her fingers around the stem of a yellow tulip, a note written on its petals.

When he left the room, she opened her eyes.

* * *

Friday, December 20th, 12:30pm

Spike tightened his tie. He'd just gotten back from his smoke break, and it was sweltering outside. *Fucking California*. Heatwaves at Christmas.

His cell phone rang. The house? "Hello?"

"Come home," Buffy said. "It's an emergency."

He sat up. "Buffy?"

"Ye-es," she answered languidly, "this is Buffy..."

Slowly, his mouth widened to a grin. *She's back. I got her back*. Determined to keep his cool, he picked up a pen, wiggled it between his thumb and forefinger, and sat back in his chair. "What kind of emergency?"

"Oh. The kind that's very, very urgent."

Lowering his voice, he asked, "Why aren't you at school?"

"Winter break, dumbass."

"You know, insults won't get me there any faster."

"I'm sorry... Get here faster. Please?"

She was using the dreamy, erotic tone usually reserved for foreplay, and it was driving him mad. Sliding the pincap over his lower lip, envisioning her shiny mouth, he said, "What's this so-called emergency?"

She paused. "Fire."

He smirked, and matched her tone. "What's on fire?"

"Me."

"You don't say."

"Uh huh."

"I believe there's a fire extinguisher in the kitchen..."

"That won't work. This requires a special kind of... hose."

He laughed, and stopped abruptly as a coworker walked by.

"Can you take a couple hours for lunch?" she asked.

"An hour, tops."

"Well hurry it up before I spontaneously combust."

He flung the pen onto his desk. "Here I come to save the day."

* * *

When he walked in the door, he was immediately enveloped in her hot, naked body.

Inhaling sharply, he ran one hand up her back, the other down her ass. Lifted her off her feet. "Oh, baby. You weren't kidding..."

She hastily untied his tie and unbuttoned his shirt as he carried her to the couch. "Dying without you."

He smiled. "Now where'd you hear that?"

She shrugged. "I read it. On a flower petal or something lame like that."

"Yeah, that is lame." He lay her on her back, kissed her, searched her eyes. "This mean I'm forgiven?"

She reached up and spanned her hands across his bare chest, shook her head. "Nope."

He helped her unfasten his pants. "Not even a little bit?"

She took hold of his rigid cock and smiled as he hissed. "What do you think?"

"Think I'll stop asking questions."

Time stopped as he pressed forward, into her.

"God, Buffy..." he whispered, and she silenced him with a torrid kiss.

* * *

Two and a half hours later, he returned to the office in slightly wrinkled clothes.

"Long lunch, Will?" a woman at the water cooler asked with a raised brow.

"Looks to me like a booty call with the Mrs." The man beside her shook his head. "Just couldn't wait 'til later, huh?"

Spike just smiled and walked on.

CHAPTER 6: *Yours*

Saturday, December 21st, 8pm

"**What about this one?**" Joyce asked.

Spike touched the white fir and shook his head. "Needles are too long and bushy."

"You like other kind? With the smaller ones."

"Yeah. Like these. These are good." He sniffed a branch of the spruce beside him.

"These are so skinny," Buffy said.

"I like 'em skinny." He glanced at her.

Smiling to herself, she wandered to the next row of trees.

"All right," said Joyce. "Let's find one you like."

Together, they walked down one row. Joyce ambled ahead of him, pointing out anything he might approve of, but Spike found something wrong with each tree.

Halfway down one row, he was tapped on the shoulder. Buffy grinned at him from between two tall balsam firs and pulled him in.

He laughed as her tongue invaded his mouth.

Joyce noticed he was missing. "Spike?"

Hands on Buffy's waist, he called out, "Found one I like!"

* * *

Christmas Eve, 8pm

The house was bursting with holiday cheer. Laughing people filled every nook, Christmas lights warmed every room. Joyce was getting drunker by the minute, Spike felt fantastic, and Buffy looked sensational, in a filmy red top and tight black pants. He couldn't wait to get her alone.

The doorbell rang.

"I'll get it!" Spike said, and rubbed past a few chattering in-laws to open it. "Happy--" It was a boy he'd never seen before. Swarthy, earnest, young. "--Christmas..."

"Hi," the boy said. "I'm uh, I'm Xander. Buffy's friend?"

Spike glanced at the small gift-wrapped box the boy was holding. "You're Xander."

"Uh, yeah. Is she...?"

"Xander!" Buffy had materialized beside him. "Merry Christmas, come inside!" She took his hand and shrugged apologetically at Spike as she brought him in.

Xander held up the present. "For you... just a little thing..."

"Aw, you shouldn't have, thanks!" She took it from him. "I'll open it later."

Xander looked backward and whispered, "Who's Lurch?"

"Who?"

"The guy who answered the door."

"Oh. That's Spike. My -- my stepdad." It had become especially difficult to say that aloud.

"Your stepdad's name is Spike?"

"Uh huh! C'mon and say hi to my mom. She hasn't seen you since like, eighth grade..."

* * *

"This is some quality nog," Xander said, holding up his glass. He noticed Spike staring him down again. "Is he always like this?"

"Who?"

"Uh... Your stepdad."

"Oh. You know. He's just a little overprotective. More nog?"

"Sure. Why not."

"I'll be right back." Buffy brushed past Spike on the way to the dining room and whispered, "Stop it."

He followed her. "Stop what?"

"You're making him nervous."

"Yeah. That's the plan."

"Will you just-- Hi, mom."

"Hi sweetie!" Swaying to the holiday music, Joyce smiled and put an arm around her daughter. "Are you having a good time?"

"Uh huh!"

"That Xander is *such* a sweetheart! And he got so *handsome*! You two make the most adorable couple."

She broadened her fake smile. "Don't we though?"

Spike grumbled incoherently as he lumbered ahead to the kitchen, nearly tripping over a fallen line of holly in the doorway.

"Oh, yeah." Joyce went after him. "That fell down."

Sighing, he picked it up. "Needs more tape."

"Oh, here's some."

Buffy passed through the doorway and opened the fridge. "Where's the eggnog?"

"Should be right there," Joyce said, watching Spike reattach the decoration. "Here, I'll get this side."

"I got it."

"No really." Her side fell down and she laughed. "Whoops!"

Buffy found the eggnog pitcher, and sniffed it. "Who made this? It's like a hundred proof."

"Oh, what do you know," Joyce said to Spike, and pointed above them. "Mistletoe."

"What do you know," he said, powerless to stop the inevitable consequence.

Buffy looked up, just in time to see them kissing. With *tongue*.

The music and din from the other rooms disappeared, and all she could hear was their lips, smacking. After what seemed like forever, Spike broke it off, and they turned to her, cheek-to-cheek. Joyce looked ecstatic. Spike looked anxious. Buffy looked livid.

"Excuse me," she said. "I have to go bring this to my boyfriend."

She nearly knocked Spike over in her hurry.

* * *

"Oh, Xander, I love it!" She showed off the gold bracelet to her mother. "Isn't it pretty?"

"Oh, that's beautiful."

"Ah, it's nothin'."

Spike scowled as he watched the display from the ottoman. *Bloody right it's nothing. My present. Now that's something.*

"No, really! You are so so sweet." She put her hand on his thigh and kissed his cheek.

While slightly stunned, Xander wasn't complaining.

Spike got up and left the room.

* * *

"Spike?" Joyce waltzed through the dining room. "Where's Spike?"

Buffy shrugged as she dipped her celery. "He's probably smoking on the back porch."

"Smoking? When did he start smoking again?"

"Mom, he never stopped. How clueless can you be? Can't you smell it on him?" The far reaches of her conscience told her she may have crossed a line, but she wasn't in the mood to care. *Let her figure it out.*

Joyce frowned, and touched her temple. "I need another drink."

"Brandy's in the kitchen."

"I know where it is, Buffy."

"Just trying to help."

"Well, I don't need your help."

Searching for a tension-breaker, Xander found it: "Hey, Amy's here."

Buffy turned around, "Amy! Hey!"

"Hi," she said, glancing suspiciously from one to the other. "Did you two hook up?"

"Who, us?" Buffy said, and pshawed. "We're just friends, you know that."

"Yeah, friendly," Xander said, touching Buffy's shoulder, and reconsidering when she jerked away. "Like friends who are... just friends."

"When your mom let me in she called him your 'boyfriend'."

"She does that with everyone. Want something to drink?"

"I recommend the nog," Xander said.

Amy made a face. "Do you have any idea how fattening that is? I'll have a lite beer."

When they got to the kitchen, Spike was just coming in from the backyard, and Joyce was waiting for him, arms folded. "Were you smoking?"

"Me?" He looked behind him for a lie, but let it go. "Yeah."

"You know, it'd be nice if you kept me informed. Just because I don't approve doesn't mean you have to do it behind my back."

"I'm sorry, love." He walked up to Joyce and caressed the small of her back. "Should've told you..."

They murmured softly to each other.

"Wow," Amy said, not particularly moved. "Drama."

Joyce looked up, realizing they weren't alone. "I'm sorry. It's Christmas. I should be merry."

"We should all be merry," Xander agreed. "I'm feeling pretty merry right now."

Buffy opened the refrigerator, and took out a bottle of Amstel Light.

Joyce noticed. "Now *you're* drinking beer? Spike's smoking and now you're drinking? We had an agreement, Buffy--"

"Chill, mom. It's not for me, it's for Amy."

"Well she can't drink it either. She's only sixteen."

"Actually, I'm seventeen."

"Mom. You've been letting tiny children drink your rumtastic eggnog all night long."

"That's different." She threw her hands up, relenting. "Okay, one beer."

Buffy handed the beer over.

"Studly army cousin?" Amy asked.

"In the den," Buffy said.

Amy smiled. "I'll be in the den."

"He's engaged," she called out.

"Your point?" Amy left the room, patting Xander on the chest on her way out.

Buffy ventured a look at Spike, who was scrutinizing Xander again. "You want one, Xand?"

"No, no thanks. I'm driving." He glanced at Joyce, and straightened. "And I'm also under 21, which means I shouldn't have one any...way..."

Buffy had strolled up to him and pressed her body up against his, hands locked behind her back. "Hey look. Mistletoe."

Xander swallowed. "Uh, yeah. Hey."

Spike watched, wound up tight.

"Are you just gonna stand there or are you gonna kiss me?"

"I--"

Buffy's mouth covered his before he could figure out what to say.

Spike grit his teeth. His breathing sped up, his nostrils flared. She was kissing someone else. With *tongue*.

Joyce poured herself a drink.

Buffy pulled back. Xander cleared his throat, slightly embarrassed and fully aroused.

She smiled at him, her mother, and finally Spike. Then she walked away.

* * *

Xander hesitated on the front porch, hands in his pockets. "So, hey... that was some mistletoe, huh?"

Buffy emitted a short, uncomfortable chuckle.

He shuffled his shoes. "So... are you... are we...?" He beseeched the porch ceiling. "Can I *be* less coherent?"

"Xander... About that... I just. I don't know right now. I mean, the mistletoe was... it was nice, but..."

"Oh." He nodded. "Okay. Well... can I call you?"

Buffy took a deep breath, averting her gaze.

"Alright." He put up his hands. "No pressure. But if you ever change your mind, or you wanna use me to rile up your mom again, you can always call me. I mean, unless Lucy Liu calls first, in which case you're fresh outta luck."

She smiled. "Thanks. I'll remember that."

When she walked back inside, her mother was stumbling on Spike's arm. "Oh.... I think I need to lie down."

"That's where I'm taking you, love." He locked eyes with Buffy briefly. "No worries."

Buffy sighed. "Let me help."

"I got her. You go kiss your boyfriend goodbye."

"I already did."

His jaw flexed.

She took her mother's free arm and they helped Joyce up the stairs. He lay her on the bed. As soon as she hit the pillow, she was snoring.

Buffy looked at him sullenly.

He looked at her. "Time to end this bloody party."

* * *

"Take care, Merry Christmas," Buffy said, closing the door on the last guest. Spike stood at the foot of the staircase, glaring at her. "What?"

He didn't speak, so she went about straightening up. She turned off the foyer and living room lights, leaving the Christmas lights on. She picked up a tray of half-empty cups and glasses and strolled past him toward the kitchen.

He stalked her. When she reached the doorway, he advanced quickly and caught her, making her tray and everything on it clatter to the floor.

Ignoring her resistance, he pulled her close and kissed her roughly, ripping down the holly decoration and holding it to her solar plexus. She wrapped her hand tightly around his, and grew pliant in his arms.

With a grunt, he carried her to the living room, shedding her boots along the way.

Near the tree, he fell to his knees. Her back hit the rug. The holly crushed between them. Kissing her mouth and neck, he shoved a hand up her blouse, cupping her breast, squeezing hard.

"Only I do this," he said, consumed by blind jealousy.

Gaspng, she nodded compulsively.

He shook her twice. "Only. Me."

"Only you," she promised. "Only you..."

He tore at her clothes, whipped off his belt, lost buttons as he opened his shirt. Damn her and her fucking provocations, making him wonder how low she'd go to get even with him. Hand on her throat, he said, "You're mine. Say it."

"Yours. I'm yours; God, Spike, I'm yours... You know I am."

A single tear escaped from the corner of her eye, and as she lay there naked, trembling, offering herself wholly when he couldn't reciprocate, Spike was stricken with shame. His firm hold on her loosened, his ire evaporated, and contrite, he began to arrange the line of holly along the curves of her torso.

Sensing his mood change, she looped one end of the decoration around his neck to reel him in. Another fight was over, and it was time to make up. She plucked off the centerpiece and said, "Look, mistletoe."

Intensely relieved, he said, "What do you know."

Their lips met, teasingly.

He stretched his arms, took the mistletoe from her grasp and held it over one of her nipples. "Guess I have to kiss this."

"Mmhmm."

He gave it a soft kiss, then clasped his mouth over it and sucked, eliciting a squeal.

After a brief fight for dominance, she rolled him onto his back. Poised above him, she held the mistletoe, hovering it over his chest, then his stomach, then his cock that stirred at the attention. "Oh no. I'm gonna have to kiss this."

"Gonna have to," he breathed.

She kissed the head, then licked the shaft, down... and up.

He inhaled through his teeth, and out with, "Fuck."

One hand on the base, the other massaging his balls, she sucked him into her mouth. His groans and sputters spurred her on, giving her little chills.

After a few minutes, he grabbed her head. "Baby, baby, stop."

She looked up, and let him go. "Why?"

"Gonna make me come like that."

"So?" She smiled saucily. "We have all night." If her mother's divorce-era benders were any indication, she'd be out 'til noon.

He arched a brow, considering, but before he could mutter an *As you were*, she said, "But, if you insist," and climbed on top of him, lowering her slippery pussy onto his cock.

"Ohhh..."

She licked her lips.

Yeah, this was even better.

When he reached up to touch her, she intercepted and pushed his wrists to the rug. As she rocked slowly, her mouth grazing his, eyes determined, she said, "Only me."

Speechless and stuck, he wildly searched her eyes. She wrenched him once, and stilled, waiting. He panted, "Buffy..."

With a wounded expression, she whispered, "Just... lie to me?"

Heart breaking, he touched her hair, her face, and said it: "Only you, Buffy."

Letting go of his hands, she bent towards him and began to move again, breath in his ear. "Again."

He coasted his fingers down her sleek back. "Only you. Just you..."

The thing was, it didn't feel like a lie.

They lay side by side, heads under the tree. He kissed her fingertips while she gazed at the blinking lights.

"What'd you get me?"

"Hmm?"

She turned toward him. "What'd you get me?"

He scoffed. "Not telling. You'll see it tomorrow."

"It already is tomorrow." She pointed at the living room clock. "It's after one."

He shook his head. "Morningtime. When it's light. That's how it works, you know."

"What'd you get mom?"

"Earrings."

"What kind?"

"I thought we were talking about your present."

"Well you won't tell me what it is."

He lay on his back. "I got her diamond earrings."

She raised her brow. "Expensive ones?"

"Relatively."

She touched his chest, fingertip circling his nipple. "So what'd you get me?"

"What'd you get *me*?"

"Cuff links."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah. They're snazzy. From the 1950s, like those other ones you wear."

"You pay attention to my cuff links?"

"I pay attention to everything."

He caressed her cheek. "You do, don't you?"

She shrugged. "You're always losing them in my bed. Last one I found, I brought it to the store to see if they had any more like it. I got *the* coolest ones."

"That's so sweet." He stopped rubbing her face. "They're not naked girls, are they?"

"Yes, they're naked girls," she said, rolling her eyes. "I'm giving you porn in front of my mother. How retarded do you think I am?"

"Alright, just checking. Wanted to be prepared."

"They're kittens, okay? Little yellow kittens with green eyes."

Thumb tracing the outline of her eye, he said, "I love them already."

She melted. "I told. Now you go. It's only fair."

He sighed. "I have two presents for you. The one your mother sees, and the one she doesn't."

"Ooh, sneaky." She gestured for him to elaborate.

"Your mum sees the jewel box, belonged to my grandmother. Real pretty by the way, ornate. You'll love it."

"And I see...?"

"You see what goes inside it."

She straddled his waist, eager. "What goes inside it?"

"You'll find out tomorrow."

"Is it diamond earrings?"

"No."

"Is it... a pearl necklace?"

He chuckled. "It will be, if you don't behave."

"Did it cost a lot?"

"I see what you're doing! You're not gonna get it out of me."

She pouted. "Grinch."

"Don't you mean Scrooge?"

"No! The Grinch Who Stole Christmas. He has a little little heart and he takes away all the presents."

"I know the story, love. But I'm not taking anything away. I just want to surprise you. *Tomorrow.*"

"Grinch." She pouted again, and wiggled a little.

"Maybe I am the Grinch," he said, grinding into her as he held down her hips. "I think my dick just grew three sizes."

She giggled.

"C'mere, Cindy Lou Who." She squealed as he tackled her, making ornaments fall from the tree. "I got a present for you."

She wore her secret present to bed that night.

"It's not quite the same," he'd told her, not quite lying. "Didn't cost seven thousand." Also not a lie -- they'd stopped making the one she wanted, so he'd paid extra for a spec piece with a couple of setting changes he thought she'd like. He didn't want her to know he'd spent so extravagantly; he just wanted to make her happy.

"But it's so... you're so... You had this made?"

"Special for you, yeah. Gave 'em the picture. It's all real, just a little different.... Are you crying?"

"No. Shut up."

"Let's see how it looks on you, yeah?"

New Year's Eve

"Almost midnight," he whispered.

"Uh huh."

He pushed up her skirt. "We can be quick."

"So quick..." She unzipped his pants.

"Nobody'll notice."

"Nobody..."

"Door's locked?"

"Uh huh."

He pushed her panties aside, rubbed his fingers over her wetness. "Oh god..."

"Please, please..."

"Yeah..." He surged into her, pinning her against Lilah Morgan's mirrored closet, their only light the shimmer of Los Angeles outside her wall-to-floor bedroom windows. "Oh Buffy... Look so good tonight..."

"Unh..."

"Feel so good... smell so good... Can't keep my hands off you..."

The closet doors rattled. "Gonna -- unh -- kill her closet..."

"Shit." He carried her over to the bed, threw her on top of the coats.

"Yeah... Spike..."

"Ohh... Buffy..."

A chorus of voices struck up in the loft. "*Ten... nine... eight... seven... six...*"

"Fuck..."

"...*three... two...*"

"Kiss me."

"*Happy New Year!*"

* * *

Sunday, January 5th, 1pm

"Just call me, I'll come get you."

Buffy spun the lollipop out of her mouth. "Kay. Can I borrow fifty bucks?"

Without a thought, Spike opened his wallet and handed over three twenties.

"You're not even gonna ask me what it's for?"

"Why should I?"

"I don't know. It could be for drugs. Or hookers."

He smirked. "Tell you what. You get drugs or hookers, call me straight away. Specially if the hookers look anything like you."

"You're such a perv."

"But really, kitten, fifty? You get what you pay for. Now, three hundred per, that's more like it..."

"Shut up. I'm getting waxed." She kissed his lips.

"See?" He ran a hand up her inner thigh, thumb lingering at her cotton-covered sex. "It's for me, anyway."

Their noses touched, Eskimo style. "It is. All for you."

"You need more? For other stuff? For you?"

"I've got spending money."

"Here, take forty. Just don't tell your mother."

"Right. Because I'm so indiscreet."

Her tongue tasted like cherry Charms. It was too easy to get lost in her, and he had to keep his wits about him in public. As they kissed, he opened an eye and pushed her away, heart thudding. "Is that Amy?"

Following his gaze, Buffy peered out the window. "No, that's a thirty year old blonde who looks nothing like Amy. And I'm meeting her inside anyway." She tickled his ribs. "Jumpy."

"Sorry."

"Bye, Spike." She kissed his cheek, and opened the car door. "I'll be thinking of you when I have hot wax dripped all over my pussy."

He clutched her arm. "Say that again?"

She giggled. "Bye, Spike."

"Get back here!"

Outside of the car, she put her lollipop back into her mouth and waved at him before hip-switching into the mall.

He watched her, mesmerized, until she disappeared.

* * *

Wednesday, January 15th, 9:15pm

"I'm gonna go to bed." Buffy turned away from her mother. Spike was standing against the doorframe, arms folded. She twitched a brow, mouthed, "Wanna come?"

"Stop right there, young lady."

Buffy froze. Spike straightened his posture.

Joyce said, "Your turn to take out the trash."

"Oh." Buffy made big 'thought she caught me' eyes at Spike. "Right. I'm Trash Girl." She hopped to the kitchen garbage can and attempted to pull out the bag, made a stink about how heavy it was, then dropped it and pouted, "Spike?"

He moved to help her, but Joyce stopped him. "He is not doing your chores."

"But... it's heavy..."

"Tell you what. You take one end, I take the other." Spike strode up and winked at Joyce. "I'll make sure she does all the dirty work."

He picked it up by the tie, and squinted at Buffy, who smiled. "This *is* heavy," he said, lifting it out of the can. "Scrawny chit like you couldn't possibly drag this three feet let alone all the way down the drive."

"What's a chit? Did you just insult me? Mom--"

"Go," Joyce said, eyes shut.

She grasped one end of it, opened the door and pulled it out back. When he closed the door, she took the whole bag with ease.

"Bloody con artist," he whispered.

"That's me." She flashed him her pretty teeth.

Together, they walked down to the curb. He opened the can, she dropped in the bag, wiped her hands, *slap slap slap*. Their eyes met in silent conversation.

He followed her back up the driveway, up the right side of the SUV, shielded from the house. He pushed her up against the car door and pressed his lips to hers.

Sighing, she melted into his embrace. It had been too long since their last tryst -- Joyce had made a resolution to make more time for family, which meant less time for them. The wait was excruciating.

"Need you," he said between kisses, burning for her. "Tonight."

She whispered, "Whenever you can get away, okay? Wake me up."

Forehead against hers, he nodded, and kissed her one more time.

* * *

Thursday, January 15th, 7:15am

Spike was roused by the beep of a truck in reverse and a faraway buzzing. He opened his eyes, saw honey-blonde hair. Buffy's naked shoulder.

It was morning, the garbage truck was outside, his alarm clock was sounding, and he was in his stepdaughter's bed.

"Shit!" he whispered, jolting up. "Shit, shit, shit!"

She came awake, and after a moment, comprehended. Her wide eyes met his.

He frantically searched the bed for his briefs. She found them by her feet, passed them to him. He jumped up and slid them on.

"Go downstairs," she instructed. "You fell asleep in the basement."

He nodded, and crept to her door. Unlatched it very slowly, and tiptoed out into the hallway, then down the stairs.

Just as he got halfway down, Joyce opened the bedroom door.

He reversed his direction.

"Spike?"

He rubbed his eyes. "Hey. Passed out downstairs."

"Oh, honey. We need to do something about your insomnia. You should try my pills."

"It's alright." He reached the second floor landing, and she hugged him.

"How much sleep did you get?"

He patted her back, eyes on Buffy's door. "Enough."

"It must've been so uncomfortable though, on the couch?"

"It was fine."

In point of fact, it was the best sleep he'd had in ages.

CHAPTER 7: *Desserts*

Friday, February 14th, 8:40am

Spike woke his computer and opened his email.

"You're here early." The vice president of sales tapped her pen at his cubicle.

"Aren't I always?"

"Yep. And I'm always impressed." She smiled. "Got big plans for you and Joyce tonight?"

He didn't follow. "Tonight..."

"Valentine's Day?"

"Oh, hell." He scratched his temple.

She laughed and moved on. "Better get on that phone."

"Yeah..." He turned to his computer screen.

From: Buffy Summers Subject: I Want You...

"Christ." He looked back to make sure he was alone, and held his breath as he opened it.

You have an e-greeting from Buffy Summers. Click here to pick it up.

He swiveled his computer screen away from the aisle.

Another window opened, and a picture of a slim, half-naked blonde surrounded by red hearts showed up. It was animated. The first frame read *I want you...* and the next read *...to be mine*. Her message in the box below it:

*xoxoxo,
your valentine's kitten*

With a smirk, he watched the card loop a couple of times. The girl was wearing a rhinestone neck-to-belly chain and a teeny tiny black bikini thong. When he finally closed the window, he returned to his inbox.

Mouse hovering over the "delete" button, he finally moved it to "reply."

From: William Huffman Subject: I Want You...

...to wear that tonight.

About to hit "send", he realized how foolish that would be. Her mother could check her email any time...

But would she check it today?

Not likely. And he could make sure she deleted it later.

A few tense seconds passed... and he sent it. He exhaled, and tried to concentrate on the rest of his email. Not more than a minute later, there was a new one from her.

Re: I Want You...

Girl in picture has different wardrobe than Buffy. :(

He smiled, and hit reply.

Re: I Want You...

You're so fucking adorable I want to lick you from your sexy little toes to your

Yeah, that would be fun jury fodder. He deleted the entire stream-of-consciousness line. Once more, with brain cells...

Girl in picture has nothing on Buffy. I'll see you tonight. Delete these. And go to school!

He hit send, checked off all the spam in his inbox, and sent it to the trash. Upon refresh, another email from her was waiting for him at the top of the list.

Re: I Want You...

1) did you see her boobs? 2) can't wait 3) deleted 4) i hate you

*xoxoxo
v.k.*

He was about to hit reply when his cubicle mate walked in. Quickly, he closed the window. "Hey! Mark!"

"Hey, Will. What's so funny?"

"Nothing. Turns out it's Valentine's Day."

"You forget too?"

He nodded. "Been a long time since I've had to worry about it."

"Welcome to married life." Mark took a sip of his coffee and sat down at his desk. "But if you value yours, better do something about it, pronto. Make reservations at her favorite place for dinner, bribe them if you have to. She'll never notice you forgot a present."

Spike leaned back in his chair. "Maybe I'll do both, ey?"

"Agh." Mark waved a dismissive hand. "Newlywed."

* * *

Spike discarded the Trashy Lingerie bag and receipt in the parking garage, and by the time he exited the elevator, he had everything neatly tucked away in his suit's interior pocket.

"Your wife called," the receptionist said.

His giddy smile dropped; hit with the blunt hammer of reality. "Right. Thanks." At his desk, he dialed the gallery and at Joyce's answer, he said, "Happy Valentine's Day, pet."

"Oh. You remembered."

"Course I remembered."

"I thought I'd have to drop more subtle hints."

He laughed. "No, I'm way ahead of you, love."

"And what are we doing for me?"

He typed *malaga restaurant santa monica CA* into Google as he said, "We're wining and dining you, of course."

"That's we as in just you and me, right?"

"Right." He wrote down the number. "Just you and me."

"Wonderful. I can't wait."

2) *can't wait*

"Me either." *Let the juggling act begin.*

* * *

"What time are the reservations?" Joyce asked, hanging her coat in the closet.

"Eight o'clock."

Buffy sat up to kneel on the living room couch. "Reservations for what?"

"Spike's taking me to Malaga for dinner."

Behind her, Spike sent Buffy a guilty shrug.

"Oh," she said, and looked at her mother. "Can I come?"

"Well, no. He made reservations for two. Don't you have a date?"

"My date bailed on me," she said, eyes on Spike.

"Oh. I'm sorry, honey. But tonight is--"

"You got a booth, right? I won't get in the way. I just want to bask vicariously in your food."

"Oh, Buffy..." Joyce looked to Spike, pleadingly.

He cleared his throat and said to Buffy, "I don't know, love..."

"I'll be quiet as a mouse!" Buffy said. "You won't even notice I'm there! You can be as romance-tastic as you want."

Getting no further help from Spike, Joyce relented. "Fine."

Buffy jumped off the couch. "I'll go get dressed."

* * *

"I just don't get her. Sometimes she wants nothing to do with me, sometimes she's clinging to my skirt. Or maybe she's clinging to your pants, I don't know."

"To my--?"

"Have you seen my diamond earrings? The ones you gave me for Christmas?"

Relieved that he didn't have to discuss Buffy's relationship with his pants, Spike said, "Can't say I have, pet."

"I bet I know where they are. Buffy?" She walked to the doorway. "Buffy!"

Buffy's door opened, her heels clicked down the hall, and Spike held his breath, bracing himself for her entrance.

And what an entrance it was: slinky red and white dress, red glamour girl shoes and lips to match. With her hair and skin tone, she was strawberries and cream with a dollop of honey - his favorite dessert.

"What?" Buffy said, casual as can be. She shrank back as her mother moved her hair aside. "What?"

Joyce made a no-nonsense face. "I believe those belong to me?"

"But--"

"Hand 'em over."

Grudgingly, she pulled the studs out, put them in Joyce's upturned palm. "You have a million earrings."

"And yet you somehow manage to commandeer the ones I planned to wear."

"I needed something to match my necklace."

"Where'd you get *that*?"

Lurid fantasies about eating strawberries and cream from Buffy's pussy dashed for the time being, Spike held his breath. She could lie her way out of this, he knew she could...

"This?" Buffy touched the ruby-diamond choker on her neck. "Xander. Xander gave it to me."

Joyce raised a brow. "It looks a little beyond his budget. Are you sure there's something you're not telling me?"

"What -- what are you talking about?"

Spike was getting worried -- she wasn't usually this nervous.

"Last year, your little shoplifting phase?"

"I did not steal it! God!" Buffy looked to Spike, fleetingly, for assistance, but he was pretending to busy himself with his cuff link. Not that he'd be any help anyway. "I told you, it was given to me. And it's not even real, it's a fucking knockoff, okay?"

Spike looked up.

"Okay." Joyce held her hands up. "If that's what you say, then I believe you."

"Look." Buffy reached behind her neck, unclasped it. "You want it so bad, take it." She tossed it onto her mother's bureau. "Take it like you take everything else."

"What the hell is that supposed to mean?" Joyce turned to Spike as Buffy slammed her bedroom door. "What is happening in her head?"

He picked up the choker. "Let me go talk to her, I'll--"

"No. You know what? Let's go. I'm not gonna stand for this. Not tonight."

It was Valentine's Day after all -- this was supposed to be Joyce's night. If he'd convinced her to come along, Buffy would only ruin his concentration, not to mention make his wife miserable and possibly suspicious.

"Right." He put the choker down, and followed her out into the hall. "Let's off."

* * *

Spike picked up the bottle of Merlot. "More wine?"

"Oh, no. Not yet." She pointed at her glass. "Still full."

"Right. Sorry." He put it down.

They smiled at each other, and gulped mouthfuls of wine.

"It's very good."

He nodded. "Nice and dry."

A pause. "Is it Spanish?"

He tipped the bottle up. "French."

"That's ironic."

He forced a laugh. "Innit?"

"Yeah."

Silence.

Another mutual sip of wine. His knee bobbed up and down. Gallery, work, current events. The decor, the bread, the wine. What else other than the subject uppermost on his mind -- Buffy, wounded and alone?

"So--" they said in unison, and chuckled.

"You go ahead."

"No -- what were you going to say?"

"It's not important, go on."

"I... I forgot. Isn't that silly?"

"Now I think I did too." A waiter passed with a tray of food. "You ordered the garlic chicken, right?"

"No, the paella, like I always do."

"Right. I knew that. Why'd I think it was the chicken?"

"I'm not sure."

Spike tapped his fingers on his plate, and pointed. "Oh. Buffy. Buffy got the chicken last time."

Joyce sighed. "Could we not talk about Buffy? Just for tonight?"

"Sure. Yeah. I just -- yeah."

Joyce scrutinized him. *When did he get so hard to talk to? Is it me?*

Spike looked around the restaurant, willing the food to come faster. What did it say about him that he had more stimulating conversation with a 16 year-old girl than with a perfectly intelligent 38 year-old woman?

Unsettled, he asked, "More wine?" and she nodded eagerly, saying, "Please."

Sufficiently inebriated, Spike and Joyce shuffled up the steps together, wincing at the loud, angsty music emanating from Buffy's room.

"Turn that --"

"Shhhh." He grabbed Joyce's arm and twitched a brow. "Better stays loud, yeah?"

She gasped. "Why, Mr. Huffman..."

He swayed on his feet, pointed at their bedroom. "Into bed with you."

Giggling, she stepped out of her pumps and reached behind her to unzip her dress.

"Oi, tha's my job." Spike walked against her, pushing her farther inside the room, kicked the door closed behind him as he unzipped and dropped her dress. Licked her neck.

They fell onto the bed together.

Joyce pulled something sparkly out of his suit pocket. "What's this?"

Oh... shit. Buffy's present had spilled out of his jacket pocket and onto Joyce. "This?" He took it and held it up to the moonlight. "This is a... surprise."

"For me? What is it?"

"Somethin' cheap and tawdry." He threw it aside. "Don't know what I was thinkin'."

"I could put it on... Let me see it again..." She reached down to the floor.

"No," he said a little too harshly, then covered with, "I want to see you completely unadorned and beautiful." He popped open her bra, determined to make her forget all about the trinket.

"Ohhh! Spike!"

Buffy's stereo cranked up to full blast.

* * *

Spike ducked his head under the stream of hot water, palms pressed against the tile wall.

Buffy was still blaring her music; it'd turned to thudding house somewhere along the way. As she'd drifted off to sleep, Joyce asked him to make sure it was off by eleven.

But facing her now... what could he say to her? How could he even begin to make this debacle of a night up to her?

When he turned off the shower, he heard:

*Who do you love
Who do you love now*

Yeah, she needed to turn that down.

He toweled off and reentered his bedroom. He slipped on a pair of pajama bottoms, quietly gathered the rhinestone chain, the black thong, the ruby-diamond choker, and put them all in his pocket.

At her door, he took a deep breath before turning the knob. Locked.

Who do you love now

He went back to his room, found a Swiss Army knife. Returned to her door and sliced into the crevice, unlocking it.

She was still in the dress, on her back, draped horizontally across the bed, head hanging off, blonde hair spilling down. Her mascara-smudged eyes opened, and she glowered. "What do you want?"

He closed the door, locked it behind him.

"Go away."

Heedless, he sat beside her. The song faded and another started.

"I don't want you. Go away."

Realizing that even Angry Buffy made him feel more at ease than Agreeable Joyce, he said, "I missed you tonight."

"Yeah? Before or while you fucked my mother?"

He took everything out of his pocket and poured each item on her stomach in time with his words: "Before. While. After." Choker, chain, thong.

He stood up to turn down the stereo before leaving.

"You think you can just buy me off?"

Fingers on the volume knob, he said, "No."

"Because I'm not your little whore."

"Never said you were."

Inspecting the rhinestone chain, she rolled onto her stomach. "Come here. And turn that back up."

He obeyed, and kneeled on the floor before her.

She fastened the choker end of it around his neck, and cracked a smile.

"Little tight," he managed.

"Good," she said, and yanked him toward her.

"Am I? Am I? Am I better?"

"Yeah, yeah, yes..."

"Say it," she sneered. "The whole thing. Say I'm a better fuck than Mom."

The choker around his neck was attached to the chain around her belly, and it tugged with every move she made. "You're... you're a better fuck than--"

"Louder!" She was determined to raise his voice above the music.

"Shit, you're... You're better than her, Buffy... a thousand... thousand fucking times... Better than anyone... Best I ever... bloody... had!"

She was flattered. "Really?"

He nodded, gulped. She was squeezing the hell out of his cock, drenching him with her juices, god, was there ever any doubt? "Really."

She pressed her cheek against his. "Spike..."

He unfastened his end of the chain and brushed her hair away from her neck. "I want you..." he panted, clasping it shut, "...to be mine."

She made a sweet little mew.

Lips against her ear. "Who's my Valentine kitten?"

She closed her eyes. "I am."

"That's right." He held her face in his hands and kissed her. "Show me how good you look."

She sat up, showing off his present in all its glory, breasts bouncing as she rode him.

He ran his fingers down her sides. "Yeah, girl in picture... got nothing on you, baby. You're perfect."

She descended to his ear. "I'm what?"

"You're perfect, Buffy."

"More, more. Gonna come."

"You're the perfect woman. Perfect body, perfect bloody mind, perfect for me, everything about you--"

"Uuuunh!" A fevered cry that crescendoed and rose in pitch toward the end, drowning out the music.

Too wound up, too turned on, too heated to care now, Spike only wanted one thing: for her to scream some more.

Spinning her onto her back, he hooked her knees on his elbows. "Perfect."

Saturday, February 15th, 9am

Joyce opened her eyes. "Oh, coffee. My hero."

Spike sat down on the bed.

She smiled, and sat up gingerly. "So... what happened last night?"

"Nothing much," he shrugged. "You screamed so loud the neighbors called the police, we got hauled to jail, stark naked... Buffy had to bail us out."

"Ah, it's all coming back to me." She touched his hand. "I had a great time... in prison."

"Yeah, so did the guards. They loved you. And that dance you did? Brilliant."

"I mean it, Spike. Thanks for a wonderful Valentine's night."

He wished she wouldn't do that. "You're welcome."

"Uhh." She rubbed her temples. "Thank god Buffy turned off that awful music. I think it gave me nightmares."

He stirred her coffee. "Yeah? Like what?"

She shook her head. "Crazy stuff. I can't really remember."

"Well. Just a dream."

"Yeah." She took her coffee and sipped. "Now, did you get me something cheap and tawdry, or did I dream that too?"

"Oh. That. Yeah." He nodded several times, considering various lies, and settling on the truth. "It broke."

"It broke?"

"Told you it was cheap. Picked it off the rug this morning, and it like exploded into a thousand pieces." And it did -- when he violently ripped it from her daughter's sweat-soaked, nubile body. Tiny rhinestones all over the bed, stuck to their skin... "I'll get you something else."

"Make me breakfast and we'll call it even."

"You got yourself a deal."

Sunday, February 23rd, 1pm

"Lower, lower," Joyce heard him say, and frowned. Quietly, she walked through the dining room and saw them in the kitchen, backs turned to her.

Spike had his t-shirt pulled halfway up his back. Buffy was standing at the island beside him, reading the paper, one hand scratching at his command. "Left... No, your other left."

She turned the page, still scratching.

"Oh, yeah. That's it. Oh...yeah." He let go of his shirt.

She smoothed it down, rubbed circles on his back and withdrew her hand, focus never leaving the article she read. "Ooh, I wanna see this."

"What you wanna see?"

As they talked, Joyce stood there, unable to announce her presence; wondering why she felt like she'd walked in on something when it was so clearly nothing.

But it was so casual. So comfortable.

So... intimate.

* * *

Saturday, March 8th, 2pm

Buffy listened for the car, waited impatiently at the door for him. Seemed like that trip to the airport took *forever*.

"Hi honey, I'm home," he grinned, shutting the front door behind him and peeling off his jacket.

He kissed her smiling mouth and pushed her up against the door, hands sliding up her legs.

She squealed, ecstatic. "I can't believe we have a week!"

He hoisted her knees up around his hips and narrowed his eyes at her. "No school for you, missy. You're staying right here."

She hooked her ankles behind him. "Will you write me a note?"

"I'll send a bloody singing telegram." He walked her to the couch and sang peppily, "Sorry, but Buffy can't make it this week. She's busy shagging her. old. man."

She giggled as he dropped her down, and dove on top of her.

"We can be as loud as we want," she said.

"Mind the neighbors, pet." He lifted her leg over her head. "I know how loud you can get."

"Mmmm," she moaned as their tongues met.

A whole week.

Older

PART TWO

CHAPTER 8: *Criminal*

Saturday, March 8th, 7:30pm

Buffy was straddling him in his bed, oohing and aahing and fucking him within an inch of his life when the phone rang. She reached for it.

"No!" He grabbed her hand, aghast.

She broke free and picked it up, voice raspy and breathless. "Hello?"

He prayed it was a telemarketer.

"Hi, Mom." She casually swiveled her hips. "How was your flight?"

Eyes wide, Spike shook his head.

"Yeah-huh. He's right here."

He gaped at her for a moment, and reluctantly took the phone she held at his face. "Joycie!"

"Spike?"

"None other." He sneered as Buffy circled her evil little hips.

"Were you... exercising or something?"

"Fighting over the remote control," he managed to say.

"Oh... Isn't that cute."

He rolled his eyes shut. *There's a word for it.*

Buffy swooped down and began to suck at his sweat-sheened nipple. He pushed her up.

"Anyway, I wanted to give you my number here."

"Right. Good." He gestured and mouthed, *Pen.*

She rolled her eyes and opened the bedside drawer, finding a Pilot marker.

"Got a pen and paper?"

"Just a sec--"

"No paper," Buffy said, closing the drawer.

"Go on," Spike said, and proceeded to transcribe the hotel number onto Buffy's inner thigh.

She giggled. "That's gonna sweat right off."

"What'd she say?" Joyce asked.

"Lord knows. She's watching some crappy reality show."

"Oh."

Buffy smiled down at him and clenched her inner muscles.

He almost squeaked. Joyce was saying something. "What's that, love?"

"I said everything's fine, thanks for not asking."

He shut his eyes and flung the pen aside. "I'm sorry, babe. Buffy's bein' a handful right now."

Buffy chuckled, and brought his free hand to her breast.

"Well you can always walk away from her." She sounded increasingly ticked off.

Realizing what he was doing, he dropped his hand. "Course love. I know that."

"Can you do that right now?"

"Uh, yeah." He spun Buffy onto her back and pulled out of her.

"Hey!"

He held up his index finger, and went into the bathroom. Shut the door. "I'm alone, love. Sorry 'bout that."

Something hit the door and he heard, "Stupid."

"That's okay. You've just been spending an awful lot of time with her... "

He sat down on the closed toilet seat. His dick was still hard and shining with her juices. "You wanted us to get along, remember?"

"I know. I guess... I guess I'm just a little jealous."

He forced a chuckle. "Jealous?"

"I know. It's crazy." She sighed. "But I've been so busy, I haven't had the chance to enjoy you like she does."

He cleared his throat. "How about you and I..." he stuck his legs out in front of him, "go away together for a weekend? Just the two of us."

"That would be nice..."

"I'll make the arrangements, then."

"Spike?"

"Yeah, pet?"

"I love you."

He knit his brow. "Yeah, me too."

* * *

"Baby..."

She was in her bed, face down in the pillows. "No."

"What the hell was I s'posed to do? Bust a bloody nut while your mother listens in?"

"I don't care."

"She's not stupid, you know. She'll suspect something sooner or later. If she hasn't already."

"I don't care."

"Buffy..." He sat down at her bedside. "C'mon, sweetheart. Lemme make it up to you. Take you out to dinner."

She turned her head. "Where?"

He moved her hair out of her face. "Anywhere you want."

"Someplace romantic?"

"Sure. Long as it's not within a thirty mile radius."

Grinning, she said, "I know just the place."

* * *

They sat at a cozy candlelit table next to picture windows that overlooked the Pacific.

"Good choice," he said. "Bring all your secret boyfriends here?"

"You're the first." She explained, "Mom and dad took me here once when they were trying to 'reconcile'? It was such a joke." She hooked her arm into his. "I made a pact with myself that night that I'd come here with someone who'd never ever fight with me in a nice restaurant."

"And you brought me?"

She narrowed her eyes at him. "Don't start."

"I'll be good, I promise." He tapped the menu. "What you in the mood for?"

She shrugged. "Pick something out for me."

He opened it up, looked over the entrees. "Anything you don't like?"

"Surprise me."

The waiter approached, introducing himself and the specials with a thick accent. Spike then opened his mouth and replied to him in fluent, effortless Italian. Buffy watched in awe as it turned into a boisterous conversation.

When the waiter walked away, Buffy gawked. "Okay, I think I just came."

He chuckled. "Then I guess my work here is done."

"Talk about surprising." She leaned in toward him, biting her smiling lip. "You speak Italian?"

"Lived in Rome for three years. Had to pick it up sooner or later."

"Oh god. I can't believe you never told me this. Say something. Anything."

He took her hand, gazed at it as he ran his fingers over it. "*Ogni volta che ti bacio, dimentico dove sono.*"

She gasped, shuddered, and murmured, "What's that mean? Other than 'Buffy is now my bitch for life.'"

He smiled warmly. "Every time I kiss you," he pressed his lips against her hand, "I forget where I am."

"Ohh..." *I love you.* She tilted her ear toward him. "Say it again."

"*Vieni qui e baciami,*" he said into her ear.

"Translation?"

"C'mere and kiss me."

They kissed, light and teasing.

"*Le tue labbra sono dolci come il miele.*" He feathered his lips against hers. "Your lips are sweet as honey."

She whimpered. "Do we have to stay for dinner?"

"You can wait 'til we get home, can't you?"

"No."

"Well, you'll have to. I just ordered you a hundred-fifty dollar meal."

Furtively, she slipped a hand into her panties and brought a glistening finger to his mouth, rubbed it on his lips.

He was suddenly short of breath. "Right then. We'll make it quick."

* * *

"*La tua pelle e' come seta...*"¹

"Unh!"

"*La mia vita senza te è come un giorno senza sole.*"² He shut his eyes, god she was so wet...

"Don't stop! Please don't stop!"

He panted against her ear. "*Ho occhi solo per te, mio angelo.... sei bellissima...*"³

After rushing through dinner, he'd pulled into a small vacant beach lot on Pacific Coast Highway. Doggy style in the back seat, panties rolled down to her knees, skirt up, strong arms around her waist, hot Italian lovetalk in her ear.

Now Buffy was approaching orgasm number four, and he knew he wouldn't be able to hold on much longer...

"*Il mio amore per te... e' piu' profondo dell'oceano...*"⁴

"Hunh!"

Spike grit his teeth, and roared out a climax, SUV rocking along.

"Keep going, keep talking..."

He snaked a hand between her legs and kissed her hair, her exposed neck, "*Ti amo... ti amo...*"⁵

A guttural cry, and she collapsed, forehead hitting the soft carseat. "Oh. God."

He said into her back, "*Vorrei trascorrere tutta la mia vita con te.*"⁶

"Stop it. You're gonna make me come again."

"And that's a--?"

A bright light flickered on them, and there was a knock at the driver's side window.

They shot up.

He looked out the back window. A fucking cop car, with its colored lights spinning. "Shit."

¹ Your skin is like silk.

² My life without you is like day without sun.

³ I only have eyes for you, my angel...you are so beautiful.

⁴ My love for you is deeper than the ocean.

⁵ I love you... I love you...

⁶ I want to spend all my life with you.

He stuffed himself inside his pants. She righted herself, pulled up her thong, straightened her skirt.

Another knock. "Can you please open this window?"

He climbed into the driver's seat, cleared his throat, turned the key in the ignition and rolled down the window with an inane, "Evening, officer. There a problem?"

The cop stared at him blankly. "License and registration, please."

"Yeah. Sure." He opened his wallet, handed him his license, and reached over Buffy, who now sat quietly in the passenger seat, to open the glove compartment.

The cop scanned the documents for a moment, periodically glancing back up at Spike. "Who's Joyce Summers?"

Spike opened his mouth, looked out at the twinkling lights on the ocean. "Uh, that's my wife. Her car."

He gestured at Buffy, knowing the answer. "Is that your wife?"

"No. She's not." *Pillock*. "She's my girlfriend."

Buffy couldn't help but smile. *I'm his girlfriend*. The flashlight shone in her eyes.

"How old are you, miss?"

"Nineteen," she said.

"Do you have any ID to verify that?"

Spike held his breath.

"Yeah. Just a second." She reached down to her purse, sifted through it. "Shoot, I left my wallet at home, on my desk. I'm sorry, I didn't think I'd be needing it." She turned toward him. "But... I promise you I'm nineteen. My name is Debbie Madison, born February 12th, 1984. I graduated from Torrance High last year and now I go to Pepperdine. English major."

Spike lifted his brow.

"Who's that Dean at Pepperdine again?" the cop quizzed. "Winston?"

She shook her head. "Baird."

Spike suppressed a smile. She *was* good.

The cop nodded, and looked at Spike. "Where are you from originally, sir?"

"The U.K. London."

"Uh huh. Well, I don't know what you people do in London, but here in California, public fornication is a crime."

"Right. Sorry. Won't do it again."

The cop handed the documents back. "Get your girlfriend home, and buy something nice for your wife."

"Yes sir, officer. I will. Thank you."

As the cop ambled away, Spike and Buffy exhaled.

He looked at her. "Debbie Madison?"

She grinned. "Amy's sister. I've got an identity for every age."

"You little criminal." He shook his head with a smile, and started the engine. "Well, Debbie. Let's do what the man says and get you home."

* * *

Sunday, March 9th, 10am

Before opening her eyes, Buffy smiled.

He was spooned against her back, warm body enveloping hers as he peppered whisper-soft kisses over her temple, cheek, neck, shoulder, neck, cheek, ear...

Rearing into him with a little shiver, she led his hand to her breast.

He squeezed. "Mmm, *la mia piccola*."

"What pickles? Where?"

He nibbled on her ear. "It means you're my baby."

"Oh..." She arched her back. "How do you say, 'Take me now'?"

"Like this." He held her ass and nudged the tip of his hard-on into a warm, wet crevice.

"Mmn... I speak Italian good."

"Perfect pronunciation." He slipped upward.

"Oh! Whoa... where are you going with that thing?"

He chuckled with her. "Sorry, love. Didn't mean to." Directed it back down.

Quietly, she posed, "Do you want to?"

It took him a moment to register the invitation. "Have you ever?"

"Not yet..."

Eyes rolling closed, he sucked in a sharp breath. "Stay there, and don't make a fuss about this."

"About what?"

He reached over her to Joyce's bedside table, opened a drawer, and retrieved a little plastic bottle.

She squinted at it. "AstroGlide? My *mother's* Astro--?"

"I said, don't make a fuss." He rolled back into his previous position, behind her, and opened the top.

Buffy reluctantly withheld her fuss.

"Your mother and I don't do what we're about to do, alright?"

"Oh ew, I don't even want to think about--" And then he rubbed a lube-slickened finger between her buttocks.

"Just relax," he said to her ear. "Not putting my dick inside."

"What are you--" He slipped a finger up and into her. "Unh..."

"Gotta work you up to it, don't want to hurt you." He wormed it further in and groaned, just from the heat and elasticity surrounding his finger.

"Ooohh..."

"Feel good?"

She nodded fiercely, reaching back to grasp his thigh, and began to ride his finger.

"There's my girl... Such a quick study." Index finger snug, he maneuvered his middle and ring fingers to her pussy and rubbed softly.

Buffy moaned. It was so slippery wet, and his finger inside her, in *there*, yeah, this was new, and good. Very good.

With his free hand, Spike dripped lube onto his cock and tugged up and down in time with her movements, imagining himself inside of her.

She felt what he was doing at the small of her back. Wanted to see him doing it too; but right now, she needed him to focus on his other task.

She reached behind her and took him in her hand, taking over. He grunted and pulled her close, fingered her ass and rubbed her pussy faster, god she was *drenched* in lubricant, both synthetic and natural, and she was bouncing against him, sputtering and whimpering and crying out in sheer delight.

Fucking perfect, she was. A bouncy, gift-wrapped little package containing everything he'd ever wanted in a woman. And she was all his.

For now, anyway. This week. This minute.

Arm slowing, her grip loosened as she concentrated on her own impending orgasm.

He clutched a handful of hair at her neck, and pulled.

"Unh! Gonna... unh... gonna come..." His fingers were slipping over her, into her, and the tingly hair-pulling, it was just too good, too good to stop now; she held on for as long as she could, but his little growls behind her; and below, the noises of wet, sinful motion... she held her breath, and he wiggled his finger. "Ohhhh... YES!" That last cry was drawn out, jolted by her rhythmic bouncing.

The second her tremors died down, he withdrew his fingers and wrapped his other hand around hers, the one that had stopped moving. Moved it for her.

Buffy turned onto her back, threw the sheet down.

"Show me," she whispered, and took her hand away.

Eyes hooded and dazed with lust, he obeyed -- rose to his knees beside her, pulled at his cock, uptempoed the rhythm.

Watching him intently, she ran her hands over her body, inadvertently showcasing the various places he could shoot his load.

He did that little tongue-curl she liked so much, asked sotto voce, "Gonna show me yours?"

After a quick smile, she tweaked her nipple and slid her other hand down to cover her pussy. Her voice stayed whisper-soft: "I used to do this, thinking about you."

His scarred brow twitched. In her thrall, he waited.

She circled two fingertips around her clit, then pressed them to her opening, corkscrewing her hips to take them in. "Sometimes I still do."

Thumb and forefinger sliding over the head of his shaft, he whispered, "Oh, fuck, Buffy..."

"Did you ever think about me?" Lids lifting slowly, her gaze moved to his face. "Before?"

Eyes shutting for a moment, he nodded.

"When you were all alone?"

He nodded, slowly.

"When you were with her?"

Defeated, he nodded again.

She bit her lower lip through a small, proud smile, fucking herself faster.

One room separating us, mind on the very same thing.

With a groan, he doubled over, and opened his eyes just in time to watch his white come spill onto her flat, golden stomach.

She waited until he was done, then stuck a finger into it, spiraling it on her skin. "Goey."

Spent, he kissed her once and fell onto his back, breath jagged.

Buffy stretched her arms up and out and said emphatically, "Good *morning*."

He chuckled. "Can't wait to see what your good afternoon's like."

CHAPTER 9: *Weak*

Sunday, March 9th, 12pm

"You're not actually going to work tomorrow, are you?"

Stopping at the entrance to the living room, he drank her in. Hair damp and body barely wrapped in towel, she lay with legs akimbo on the couch, spooning raspberry yogurt into her mouth.

He leaned against the french door frame, crossed his arms, and said, "No."

She licked her spoon and nodded once. "Good."

Spike came in from the back porch, closed the door.

Eyes on the plate she was rinsing, Buffy pointed at him. "Off with your pants, Smokey."

"You ordering me around?"

"Uh huh. Nakedness is the order of the day." She dried off the plate, and glanced at him.

With a smirk, he made a show of it. Unzipped his jeans, pushed, and spread his arms out as they dropped.

She giggled. "Much better."

He kicked them aside and approached her. "Think I like this order of the day." Behind her, he ran his hands down her arms, pressed his body against her naked backside. "In fact, I forbid you to put on even a scrap of clothing, all week long."

"Ooh, you forbid me now."

He said into her ear, "That's right."

"Stop... you'll make me melty."

"I like you melty. I forbid you to be anything but melty. And naked. At all times."

"What about outfits?"

"Let's see... no."

She shut off the faucet, dried her hands and turned around. "What about sexy shoes?"

He looked up as if he was thinking seriously on the subject. "I might allow sexy shoes."

"I have some very sexy shoes," she said, tossing the towel onto the counter.

"I know," he said, fingers outlining a lock of hair that showcased the swell of her breast.

Palms on his chest, she brought them down the steely ripples of his torso. "And which shoes are you thinking of?"

Arms encircling her waist, he said softly, "The ones you wore that first night."

She smiled, touched. "You remember those?"

He nodded. "Pink. Strappy. Lethal. You put your foot up on the bar to show me your toes."

"You said you could tell how old a girl was by looking at her toes." She snorted. "You're so full of it."

"Yeah." He sniffed. "I just wanted to see some skin."

"And you think I didn't know that?"

"Did you?" His hands ran down her back, squeezed her ass, lifting her off the floor momentarily. "An' here I thought I was being crafty."

"You were craftless." She tucked her arms under his, constricted them around his lower back, and looked up at him. "You practically licked me with your eyes."

"Hey, now that's all part of the craft." He kissed her neck.

"Well, either way, it worked." *Mmm, kisses...oh, ear-licking...* "I was so willing to go home with you."

"And you think I didn't know *that*?"

"So why didn't you ask me?"

Unsure of the answer, he sensed it had something to do with deep, dark fear -- the type associated with uncharted wilderness or monumental cosmic bliss... or he could have just been playing hard to get. "I was afraid you wouldn't respect me in the morning."

She pursed her lips, lightly pinched his side. "Well that was stupid. I would've totally respected you. I would've respected you a lot."

He smirked, tilted his head. "Like you respected me this morning?"

She smirked right back. "Exactly like that."

"Should've taken you home, then."

"See?" Poking his chest, she teased, "Deal with that missed opportunity, loser."

Bittersweet smile crinkling his eyes, Spike looked away and back. "I deal with it every day."

Face falling, she searched his expression.

He pulled her close again. "Sexy shoes, 'ey?"

She answered with a slow-spreading grin.

* * *

Half a pair of heels in each hand, she said, "Well?"

Lounging on her girly pillows, hands folded behind his head, he said, "I remember those, too."

"These?" She looked at the black ones, adorned with little rhinestones. "From when?"

"From when you were a very very bad girl."

She smiled, and flung the shoe his way. "Might have to narrow that down."

He caught it and examined it, touching its straps. "Helped that they were kicking me. Left a nice imprint on my chin."

"Oh." A guilty wince. "The frat party."

"Yeah." He pointed at her with the shoe. "Still planning on blasting that Delta bloody Kappa house to bits, you know."

"Just because I got a little drunk?"

"They spiked your drink!"

"Yeah, well, nothing happened."

He scowled. "Because *I* got there in the nick of time. Alright, put these on."

"Yes, sir." She felt a little thrill, knowing that the memory fired him up. Sensually flipping her hair, she put one foot on the bed and eased it into one shoe, took her time with it. Made him wait; made him simmer; made him think about everything he could have done to her that night.

He wouldn't have done anything then of course, never would have done anything if she hadn't initiated... but oh, that night, when Joyce had sent him out on a search and he'd found her there, teetering on the arm of some brutish baby-faced prick, something had taken over, made him punch the guy out, smash a bottle over another one's head, throw her over his shoulder and toss her kicking and screaming into the car. He'd justified it as parental concern for her welfare, but the root of his outburst was far more primal and instinctive: Caveman Spike was claiming his mate.

The second the last strap was fastened, he threw her onto her back and, cool plastic kitten heels rubbing against his ears, he showed her exactly what he would have done that night.

* * *

When cloying, sugary pop music invaded Spike's pleasant dreams, he knew he was no longer dreaming, and Buffy must have had control of the remote.

She was on her stomach, nude, knees bent and ankles locked in the air, bare feet swinging to the beat of some glittery, sweat-drenched, hard-bodied video.

He ran the back of his hand down her silky shin. "Bad enough you have to listen to it. Need to watch it too?"

"My room," she said over her shoulder, "My remote control."

"Your horrible musical tastes."

"You're just old. This is a good song!"

"Old?" He grabbed her ankle. "Old?"

"Well, you are. What's your favorite music, like, classical?"

"If you mean classic Iggy, then yeah." Pulling her foot toward him, he nibbled at her toe.

"What's an Iggy?"

He shook his head, tsked. "So much to teach you." He kissed the arch of her foot.

"Well, maybe I don't wanna learn."

Crawling over her, hand traveling up her smooth thigh, her heady just-fucked fragrance bombarded his senses, made him hard. "Maybe you'll enjoy the lesson."

She smiled, ass rising to meet his touch. "Are we still talking about music?"

"Not in the slightest."

"In that case, I'm all yours."

"In that case," he kissed her lower back, "I'm a lucky man."

"Oh, wait. Hold that thought." She pushed him away, climbed up the bed to her sidetable drawer. "Pill."

"Right. Good thinking."

She opened the plastic box. "Uh oh."

He shot up. "What? What is it? What happened?"

"Breathe, Spike. I just need to get more."

"Oh. Christ." He held a palm to his speed-beating heart. "Right now?"

"Unless you're keen on playing Russian roulette with my reproductive--"

"Let's go." He vaulted out of bed.

She reached for her phone. "I have to call first?"

"Well, come on, hurry it up then."

She glanced at the sticker on the box and dialed the number. "What's the matter, you don't wanna fill me up with babies?"

He smiled, tilting his head. *Put it that way... I mean, no. God. No! What am I thinking?*

Watching the range of emotions play out on his face, she chuckled. "Hi, I need to refill a prescription?"

* * *

Buffy found him in the feminine products aisle and teased, "Are you feeling not so fresh?"

Spike chose a bottle of AstroGlide from the shelf, waved it at her. "Thought you might like one of your very own."

"Thanks. That's very... thoughtful."

Enjoying the way her cheeks flushed pink, he tossed it into her basket, stepped down the aisle... and plucked two 10-packs of Lifestyles Red from a hook on the wall.

She frowned. "We don't need those."

"Don't argue with your stepfather."

She gave him a slow, minxy smile. "Sorry."

"That's better." He scanned the aisle to make sure they were alone. "You got the stuff?"

"The birth control pills, or the heroin? 'Cause it turns out they don't sell that here. *We could* ask those guys in the parking lot..."

"Gonna spank that wise ass of yours, you don't watch out."

"Ooh, right here?" At his playful scowl, she grinned. "'The stuff' is gotten. And? I scored us some primo bubble bath."

"What's all the rest of this then?"

"Cookies and cosmetics. What? I'm a girl."

He flipped over her magazine to see the cover. *Teen People*.

"And a teen," she added.

He opted not to acknowledge that. "Right. Off we go. Still have to hit the liquor store."

"Are you liquoring me up tonight, you bad amoral stepdad?"

He fell into stride beside her, touched the small of her back, and bent toward her ear. "Oh I'll be licking you all ov--"

"Buffy?"

Spike retracted his caught-in-the-cookie-jar hand as Buffy spun to find the source of the greeting: one of her mother's friends, halfway down the aisle. "Oh... Jenny, hi!"

"I thought that was you!" A cat-eyed, slim brunette in her mid-30s approached them. "Hi honey!"

Buffy hugged her while sending him a mortified look. "Spike, you remember Jenny Calendar..."

That's when he placed her -- from the Christmas party, and from his wedding -- she was the event planner who'd put it all together for them in less than two weeks. "Right, of course, how are you," he said, mouth cotton-dry, and shook her hand.

"I'm good! Where's Joyce?" Jenny asked brightly, looking from one to the other.

"Oh, um, she's away on business this week. San Francisco."

"Oh, right! You two holding down the fort?"

"Uh huh!" Buffy said quickly, grin plastered on.

Jenny's gaze lowered to Buffy's basket.

Shit. Buffy turned, swinging it behind her back as she scanned the drug store. "Are you here with Alan?"

"Oh, no. He's got the flu, I was just getting him some NyQuil." She shook the box. "Course he never likes to admit he's sick, but he is a *wreck*. You two had that flu, didn't you?"

"Yeah. While back. Hellish," Spike said, rubbing his neck.

Jenny nodded. "Then you know how it is." She looked from Buffy to Spike, and back. "Well, I'd better get back to him. It was great seeing you!"

"Yeah, you too!" Buffy said.

"Take care now!"

"Yeah, cheers..." Spike watched her walk away.

Their eyes met, and slid to her basket. Among the incriminating loot was a bubble bath called "Kama Sutra", AstroGlide, two bright-red boxes of condoms, her birth control pills ... and *Teen People*.

"Yeah," Buffy summarized quietly. "That doesn't look fishy."

"Think she noticed? Or heard?"

"I don't know."

"Bloody hell. You know I think we're better off not leaving the house."

"Uh huh. Definitely staying in this week."

On edge, they hurried to the check-out counter.

* * *

"You're freaked out," she said.

"What? No I'm not." He kept his eyes on the TV as he channel-surfed.

"Yeah you are. You were gonna lick me and liquor me up and now you're all far away."

With a sigh, he reached out for her, beckoning. She crawled into his embrace on the couch.
"I'm sorry, sweetheart."

She snuggled against his warm chest. "It's okay."

He touched her hair, kissed her head. "We just need to be more careful."

"I know." She ran her hand down his bicep. "It's just, sometimes I forget..."

"Yeah. Me too."

Their fingers intertwined, and Buffy stared at his wedding band. "Do you want to call mom?"

He breathed in, nodded. "I was thinking about it."

She sighed. "Go ahead. I'll wait here."

"Thanks, love." He kissed her fingers and got up.

"Hold it--" She held his hand hostage. "Kiss."

Happy to oblige, he kneeled on the couch and kissed her softly, got lost in those sweet lips... then pulled away and gulped. "Don't go anywhere. I'll be right back."

"Okay."

He got up to make his way to the stairs, and smacked his forehead. "Fuck, the number!"

Guiltily, she raised her browline. "Sorry. It's um, not there anymore."

"I'll just call information."

* * *

When Spike got back downstairs, Buffy was sound asleep.

"How's Buffy?"

"Alright, I s'pose. Had to take her to get those... things tonight. Bloody embarrassing, it was."

A chuckle. "Tampons?"

"No, the... other stuff. She had a big date, was all out..."

"Oh, the pill!"

"Yeah. And god knows what else. I stopped looking after the condoms."

"Well good, I'm glad she's at least being careful. And it's nice that she trusts you."

"Yeah, lucky me. Hey, ran into your friend... What's her name."

Buffy turned in her sleep. Looked so innocent, so... young.

Is this who I am? A liar, a cheat? A cradle-robbing degenerate?

She sighed, sweet and melodious.

A fool for her.

He scooped her up in his arms.

"Mm... What happened?"

"Everything's fine, pet. I'm taking you to bed."

"Mm..." She slept all the way to her room, until he gently laid her down on her bed, pulled off her shirt and jeans and kissed her forehead.

She caught his arm. "Don't go. Please? Just be here with me?"

He'd wanted to leave her alone, think things over, but now he couldn't. He was too weak and she was too smart -- she knew thinking could only lead to decisions that neither wanted to make. Why fight it?

When the moonglow slid over his bare skin, she closed her eyes again, content.

He got into bed, pythoned his arms around her from behind.

She molded into him, caressed his face. "I don't want this week to be sad... We only have so much--"

He turned her head and kissed her.

CHAPTER 10: *Evidence*

Monday, March 10th, 1pm

Spike woke up to a flashing light and a little mechanical whir.

"Bout time! Thought you'd never wake up."

There was Buffy, standing at the edge of the bed with a Polaroid camera, wearing nothing but a grin and tossing the undeveloped picture onto her sidetable.

The picture of *him*, naked in repose, hugging a pink-flowered pillow on *her bed*.

Enraged, he spun upright, sheet barely covering his bottom half. "What the *hell* do you think you're doing?"

She took another. "Nice one."

"Buffy!"

"What? You look so sexy. All cute and mad and naked..."

"I'm *not* bloody kidding," he snarled. "Stop that *right now*!"

Laughing, she shook her head no.

He reached out. "Give it--"

Nimble hopping back, she took another shot. "Ooh, almost a full frontal!"

When he went for the first two pictures, she snatched them up, held them to her breast. "Too slow, Sleepy. You snooze, you lose."

He glowered at her, jaw clenched. "Burn them."

"It's not like I'm gonna show them to anyone!"

"Stop it now, and *burn them*."

"I'll put 'em in my diary. It's under lock and key! She'll never find it."

"Mothers *always* find diaries. Don't you bloody take another--! Give me that!" He was awake now, sharper.

But not sharp enough -- she darted past him. "I won't!"

He tackled her on the bed, jumping on her back, and swiped the camera from her grasp. Shaking her, he growled, "What the hell's gotten into you? You lost your bloody mind?"

She pouted. "You suck."

"Buffy, for fuck's sake." He sat up. She stayed put. He flipped the top of the camera closed. "One thing I know, concrete evidence like this always comes back to haunt you. Always."

"I was just having a little fun."

He gathered the snapshots that had fallen on the bed. "Yeah, me in jail, that's a bloody riot."

"God. I'm sorry, okay?"

The first one had developed completely. *I don't look my age, do I? Look 25 if I'm a day.* Spike noticed Buffy's ass move slightly as she huffed. Such a beautiful ass. If only she could see how pretty it looked from his perspective...

Weighing the camera in his hand, a slow, wicked smile spread across his face.

As long as he'd be building a fire...

He stepped off the bed, held the camera to his eye, and pressed a button.

Whirrrrr.

With a gasp, her head shot up. "Hey!" He snickered evilly and she spun around. "What happened to down with concrete evidence?"

"I'm still burning them. Later." He took another shot. "Ooh-hoo, full frontal."

"Wait! Stop! I have bed head!"

"Your hair looks fantastic. Mussed all sexy like." He tossed the developing picture at her.

"Yeah? You better not be lying to me."

"I'm not. Now spin 'round and get on your knees."

Two hours later, the bed was scattered with Polaroids, and a shot from her current vantage point was stuck to his sweat-slick chest as she rode and wrenched him, crying out with each sharp sink of her hips. He grunted and moaned along with her, holding onto her slippery ass, his neck curved over the edge of her bed between two rails of her metal headboard. One photo she took was taped to the wall above his head: the two of them, up close, kissing like sweethearts.

"I am so friggin' hungry," she said. "Screw the chopsticks." Stark naked, she sat indian-style beside him on the couch, shoveling Chicken Fried Rice into her mouth with a serving spoon.

"Now there's a Kodak moment," he said.

She pretended to be shocked. "Get you started and suddenly you're David LaChapeau. Good thing there's no film left."

"It's LaChapelle." He reached for the Mu Shu Pork carton. "And don't talk with your mouth full."

"Shut up." Drawing her spoon back, she flicked her food at him.

He gasped, looking down at the gob of sticky rice that had landed on his stomach. "You better clean that up, missy!"

She put her carton down and swiveled toward him. "I better." She licked up his thigh, then sucked the food into her mouth.

"That's disgusting," he said.

"Not what he says." She tilted her head toward his growing, jumping erection.

"Don't listen to him. He thinks everything you do is brilliant."

"Aww. He's sweet."

He laughed. "He's been called a lot of things, pet. Never 'sweet'."

"Oh, but he is sweet." Petting his cock, she reached for something on the coffee table. "Especially now." She dripped duck sauce onto the tip, and before he could do anything but whimper, she wrapped her mouth around it.

His skull collided with the arm of the couch.

If only every week could be like this.

* * *

Spike slid the shower door open to see an all-wet Buffy smiling at him.

"What took you so long?"

Taking a moment to appreciate the view, he said, "Had to clean up your mess."

"My mess? That was your mess."

"I meant the food, love." He stepped in, caressed her ass, and pulled her close. The phone rang. "Bloody phone. Can't you see we're busy in here?"

"I don't think it can." She switched places with him and wrung out her hair. "I'll get it."

"But I just got here."

"Well, too bad. I'm done."

He twitched a brow. "Not if I get you dirty again."

"Like you could right now."

"I could!"

"I'm getting the phone."

"Fine, fine. If it's your mum tell her I've been, uh--"

"Fucking me up, down and sideways?" She turbaned a towel around her hair.

Lathering shampoo on his head, he considered, and nodded. "Yeah. Tell her that."

"Will do," she clasped another towel shut under her arm.

"Be a good girl, Buffy."

"Aren't I always?" She closed the bathroom door and hurried to her bedside phone, checking the caller ID first. "Hey, Ame."

"I knew you weren't really away! You're totally ditching, you whore."

Buffy belly-flopped onto her unmade bed. "Yeah." She plucked the Polaroid off the wall and smiled. He looked so into her.

"Why?" Amy asked.

"Why not?" She turned onto her back, holding the Polaroid above her. "Mom and Spike are in Frisco, I've got the place all to myself."

"Oh. I thought she was going alone."

"He decided to go with her last minute."

"Aw, your grand seduction plan's foiled again?"

Buffy snorted, touching his 2-D lips. "Big time."

"You know Styles is gonna ream you for missing practice."

"I don't care. Let her kick me off the squad."

"You can't get kicked off -- you're the only one I don't hate!"

"I'll be back on Monday, Ame." She stuffed the photo under her mattress. "Besides, she thinks I had to go deal with my ailing grandmother, what can she possibly say?"

"You're a big liar who can forge your mom's sig like nobody's business?"

Buffy chuckled, and felt something stuck to her calf. Another Polaroid that got away? She peeled it off.

"Aren't you like, bored there all by yourself?"

"Nah." She blushed at the image in her hand: her, legs in the air, one hand on her tits, the other spreading her lips, all pink inside. She threw it into the pile that Spike made. "I'm having a great time."

"Loner freak. You want me to come by sometime?"

She gasped. "Oh, shit -- my ramen's burning. Lemme call you back later?"

"Sure. Later."

Buffy hung up, and exhaled.

Avoid phone rest of week.

* * *

He cast her a quick, disapproving glance as she came down the stairs. "Who said you could wear clothes?"

"You're wearing something." She gestured at his sweatshort-sporting self in defense, but he wasn't paying attention to her, just sifting through a box of CDs and LPs on the basement floor. "Whatcha doing?"

"Getting reacquainted with my record collection."

"Uh oh. Should I run now or now?"

He caught her calf. "Stick around, pet. You might learn something."

"Every time you say that I hear 'blah blah blah, one of these days I'm putting it in your ass.'"

Running a hand up her thigh, he said, "Well, that's true. But right now I'm talking about The Clash." He held up the LP.

"Oh no."

"First album might be a bit much for you, though. Here we are. *London Calling*, 1979, second best record they ever made." He stood up and turned on the CD player. "Look alert, I might quiz you later."

"1979? You were twelve."

"Points for arithmetic." He pressed a button and the 6-CD tray opened.

She folded her arms. "You were punk-rock when you were twelve?"

"Mohawk and all. How the hell does this thing work?"

"Take one out, put one in. Can I see a picture?"

"You'd have to ask my mum." He took out an N'Sync CD and put it aside like it was contagious.

"I'm so calling her."

"Good luck with that. The woman hates me."

"Why?"

He shrugged. "She wanted me to stay in Bournemouth and marry a nice, rich neighbor girl. I didn't."

"Because you were in love with someone else?"

He narrowed his eyes at her. "Personal Spike history won't be on the test."

"Fine." She added under her breath, "Touchy."

He stuck a CD into place and reluctantly reminisced, "Drusilla: She wore black lipstick and fancied herself a vampire. ...Not unreasonable if you knew her. I was 18 and restless; skipped town with her the night we met." For four years they lived an all-consuming, anarchic existence, and she fucked everyone who crossed their path.

"...And then?"

"She married a bass player and had three kids, last I heard." Shrugging, he pressed the *close* button.

"Well," Buffy said, arm sliding around his waist. "Vamp girl made a big mistake, letting you go."

"Yeah?" He thumbed her lower back as the first chords of "London Calling" rang from the speakers. "Why's that?"

"Her loss," she said, inhaling the faint cologne scent on his neck. "My sizeable gain."

"Nicely put." He pushed her against the wall unit, raising her skirt as he ground into her in time with the beat.

She giggled. "Is this music making you all teenaged and randy?"

"You... the music..." He nibbled at her earlobe. "Only difference is my Mum's not here to spoil the fun. She had a special gift for knowing I had a snog in the house." Then he noticed she was raising the volume.

Standing on her tiptoes, she got close to say, "If we keep it loud, she won't hear us."

"Where were you when I was sixteen?" he wondered, and before he could regret it due to the stunning actuality that she was not yet alive when he was sixteen, she answered plainly, "I'm right here."

She led him to the couch, lay on her back and pulled him over her. "I just moved in next door. I'm new here in... Pornmouth?"

"Close enough." Eyes glazing over, he stared at her lips. "Bournemouth."

"Right, Bournemouth. My mom told me to stay away from you, but I can't."

No doubt, he'd met his sexual match. "I know just how you feel."

"But," she touched his lips, "we can't go all the way. I'm a virgin."

He chuckled, sheepish. "Makes two of us."

She gasped, fingers dancing on the soft hair at the nape of his neck. "No way, really?"

He nodded. "Gonna be gentle with me?"

"Yeah, right!" For nineteen songs, they made out with clothes intact, groping and soul-kissing and seeking unattainable perfect friction. It was exhausting, exhilarating and, they both knew, a little absurd, but that was the point.

"Oh god, oh god," she said, and held her breath. He was grinding against her just right, panting in her ear, and yes, she was gonna come just... like... this...

"Fuck, fuck, Buffy--" he dug his fingertips into her ass and yelped in orgasm, just as "Train In Vain" came to an end.

As the room fell silent, the funny sunk in. "Did you just--"

"Yes!" he said, astonished. "To a bleedin' soundtrack! See what you do to me?"

She palmed his chest. "Wanna hit repeat? 'Cause I was just about to..."

Running a hand over her tank-top, he decided, "Think I'd rather take you upstairs and show you what I can do with my tongue. Make you a woman."

"With your tongue?"

"Got a long tongue." He illustrated.

"I know." She touched the tip of it before it snaked back in his mouth. "God, where were *you* when I was fourteen?"

He winced. "I'm gonna pretend I didn't hear that."

Right. Personal Buffy history not on the test either.

CHAPTER 11: *Bonding*

Tuesday, March 11, 9am

"I love waking up with you." She inhaled the scent of his neck. "I think I'm gonna miss this most of all."

He had to agree. Waking up with her in his bed, in his arms, the sun streaming through his bedroom's curtains, setting her hair and eyes alight? It seemed so right; exactly the way it should be. "We still got four more mornings, baby."

"And then it's over," she pouted. "Can't we just stay in bed all day?"

"Whatever you want." He pulled her toward him for a kiss, but she evaded.

"Nuh-uh. Tooth brushy first." She rolled onto her back and stretched. "Then breakfast in bed. Then freaky monkey sex for hours and hours."

He squeezed her soft teacup of a breast. "I like the way you think."

"What's a six letter word for catastrophe?"

"Fiasco," he said, folding the Science section as well as he could with one hand.

"Ooh! You're right. Because that's plaintiff and that's armada." She extricated herself from his grasp.

"Where you going?"

"I need a pen." She moved her breakfast tray to the bedside table. "Gotta write all this down so I can check it tomorrow."

He looked at the blank crossword puzzle in her lap, and back at her. "You been doing that whole thing in your head?"

"Uh huh. All solved."

He lifted a brow, impressed. "Second drawer, I think. You ever test your IQ?"

"Why? Think I might be a genius?" She twisted at the waist and reached for the drawer handle, then pulled it out of its hinges, making the contents spill onto the floor. "Or maybe an idiot savant."

He chuckled, rubbed her ass. "Just don't know your own strength, pet."

"What's this?" She'd picked up a slim paperback.

"What's what?"

"*7 Steps to Bonding With Your Stepchild?*"

"Oh." He smiled. "Right. Your mum bought that for me a while back."

"Did you ever read it?"

"Not a bloody word."

"Guess you didn't have to." She got up and rolled to his side with the book in her hand, reached under the sheet. "Look how well we bonded."

He pushed his newspaper off the bed. "I don't quite think this was the type of bonding she had in mind."

She stroked his balls. "Let's see what it says. I bet you did everything right."

* * *

Leisurely bouncing on her stepfather's cock, Buffy read aloud in faux studiousness, "These seven basic steps will give you the essentials... from deciding what kind of stepparent you want to be, to realizing that love comes later."

Jaw clenching, Spike circled his thumb over her clit. "Oh, she'll definitely be coming later."

Eyes sparkling, she held his hand there and her voice dropped to a sensual purr. "What kind of stepparent do *you* want to be, Spike?"

He smoldered at her, rubbing softly. "The worst kind."

"Mmmm..." After riding him for a few blissful moments, she held up the book again. "All stepparents confront feelings of excitement, confusion--"

"Excited... confused... check..."

"How do I share emotional and physical space with my new family, and how will we respect each other's privacy in our new home?" She giggled.

He surged into her and ran his hands over her glistening breasts. "I like sharing your space."

"Space invader. Oh, here's a good one." She read on with a straight face, "How will I know if my stepchildren like me?"

They crumbled into hysterics.

Face close to his, she asked, "How will you know?"

"I dunno... maybe when she starts wanking me off?"

"You think?" She righted herself and read, "How do I make sure I am not seen as trying to replace my stepchild's biological parent?"

He grit his teeth. "I've found that fucking her into the ground usually does the trick."

With a pout, she twirled her hair and said in a little-girl voice, "I'm confused. Are you my daddy?"

"Oh...." Chuckling, he shook his head, said quietly, "You're not going there, love."

"Why not?" she rolled her hips, and smiled, "...Daddy?"

Another nervous chuckle, and he squeezed her thighs. "Buffy..."

She flung the book to the floor, swept her hands over his chest. "Yes, Daddy?"

"Stop that."

"Stop what?" She bent down to nip at his torso. "Don't you like what I do to you?" Face to face. "Don't you like me better than Mommy?"

He gasped. "You're evil!"

She murmured into his ear, "Like father, like daughter."

His hands settled on her ass. "Oh, you're gonna get it..."

She could feel his cock throbbing inside of her; knew he was just waiting for an okay. "I want it. Give it to me, Daddy."

With an animalistic growl, he spun her onto her back, pinned her to the mattress, looked her in the eye. "Don't play with me unless you want to be played with."

She nodded. "I wanna play..."

He plunged into her, thrust deep. Sneered. "You want to be Daddy's Little Girl?"

"Yes!" Her voice lurched to a high and pleading tone.

He thrust again, making her whimper. Breath hot in her ear, he said, "But you've been so bad."

"Unh!"

"Making Daddy want you..." He thrust again, and whispered, "Making Daddy come inside you."

"Unh!" She wrapped her arms around his back. "I'm... I'm sorry, Daddy... I'll be a good girl. I promise."

He groaned, and breathed through grit teeth as he began to move in a slow, steady rhythm. "How can you be good when you're taking it right now? When you're taking Daddy's thick cock?"

"Oh GOD!"

"Yeah, that's right," he sped up, "Take it. Take all of it. You love it don't you, you *bad... little... slut.*"

She whined. "I love... I love it..."

His eyes clamped shut. "God, you're so wet. Jesus..."

"I can't help it, Daddy... you get me so hot."

"Ohhhuhh... Fuck..." He lifted her legs to hit her deeper, faster.

She touched the nape of his neck. "*You* love it, don't you Daddy?"

"Fuck... yeah... you know I do... everything... everything..."

"Tell me... mmn, tell me more..."

Struggling to speak, to breathe, he snarled, "Wet... wet little princess. Know exactly what it does to me. Know just how to bring your poor father to his knees, don't you?"

"Yes yes yes yes..."

"Got Daddy good and whipped for you."

"Yes!"

"How can I help it... my baby's got such a sweet, tight pussy..."

Nodding, she gripped his body tighter, pitching her hips up and circling them each time he was buried to the hilt.

He was babbling now, lost to lust. "Know I love doing this to you... only you... only you, baby... know I love you better than Mommy."

"Hunh!"

"Mine... wish you were mine... wish you were my wife."

An ecstatic, mindless moan, and Spike could feel her tightening, pulsing, the first signal of approaching climax. He ducked his head to suck on her nipple, and quickened his thrusts.

She threw her head back. "Yes, Daddy, yes!"

Pinching her nipple, he commanded, "Come for Daddy."

"UNNNHUHHHHH!"

Mercilessly, he pistoned in and out of her as she rode out a monster orgasm. Then, as she went limp in his arms, she sighed, "I love you, Daddy..." and with a helpless shout, he erupted.

Moments later, he was still trembling, head buried in the crook of her neck. Breathing heavily, neither made a move to speak or look at the other.

He lifted his head to read her: she was biting her lip, looking flushed and guilty. Heart swelling with affection, he said, "It's alright, Buffy. It's just a game."

"I don't... I don't really want to have sex with my father."

"Course you don't. I'm much better looking."

She touched his face. "You don't think I'm a freak?"

"No more than I am, love."

"Yeah, you got off on it too! Freak."

He hugged her close, her whispered *I love you* reverberating in his brain. "Yeah. I did."

* * *

"Hi." Her arms were folded on his chest, and she was smiling up at him.

"Hi," he said, smirking down at her. She hadn't stopped coiling herself around him and sighing adoringly since the Daddy Sex. They'd napped for a couple of hours, turned on the TV, talked a little, but she kept coming back to this.

"Hi."

"Alright, what is it?"

"Nothing." She grinned.

"You like me or something?"

"Uh huh. A lot." She sighed when he touched her hair, cozying into his palm like a kitten.

"You're adorable," he said.

She clamped her legs around his thigh, humped it slowly. Still wet.

"What are you doing?"

"Nothing. Can we have sex again?"

"You think I'm some kind of machine?"

She nodded. "A sex machine."

He chuckled. "Fair enough."

"C'mon," she said, pelvis undulating. "Pleeease? You can put it in my ass."

"Tempting. But I'm saving that for tomorrow."

"Why tomorrow?"

"*You* are a very bad girl," he said, stilling her hips. "I should spank you."

"Oh god. Please?"

He raised a brow.

"I mean, no no please... don't?"

"Alright, that's it." He spun her onto her back, and she lay in anticipation. He pulled her legs into the air, and slapped her ass.

"Yes!"

He dropped her legs, spread them apart, and cupped his hand over her pussy. "Look how wet you are. Tsk, tsk, tsk."

She held her breath.

Watching her, he raised his hand, snapped it down.

"Hunh!" She bucked up against him.

"You want another?" She nodded eagerly, so he spanked her pussy again, and again, and again; moved a little closer, keeping his hand movement light and rhythmic. She bowed and shook against him, and her mouth quivered and glistened in the glow of the afternoon sun.

"My pretty little girl."

Her eyes rolled back, and she held onto his arm. "Don't stop."

His wedding band was hitting her just so.

"Yes, yes, yes..." Her pleas were barely audible. She tightened her grip on his arm, he quickened the pace. "No, no, keep it the same, slow and soft..."

He loved it when she told him what to do; it was so... womanly. She nodded when he got it right again, closed her eyes.

At the fifth spank, she let out a husky cry and pressed his hand down.

He said, "God, you're hot," and with anyone else, it would be a trivial utterance, but with her, it was a confession, a prayer, an act of contrition.

Still coming, still circling her hips, she directed his middle and ring fingers inside her, and he curved them up, hit her g-spot. Her interior walls constricted around his fingers as she shuddered through her last wave, holding onto his hand.

"So bloody hot." He pulled out his fingers, brought them to his mouth... but she intercepted, brought them to hers. Sucked on his middle finger. Down... and up. Down... and up.

He watched her with hooded eyes. *Right, I'm ready again.*

And then she sucked in his ring finger, bit down on his wedding ring, slid it up and off with her teeth, and without ceremony, spit it out. It sailed over the bed, destined for the rug.

She smiled at him sweetly.

He smirked at her disdainfully.

Then he leapt on top of her and fucked her silly.

* * *

She bounded to the door in her pajamas and inspected the Blockbuster bag in his hands. "Oh, you got all the movies I asked for! How embarrassed were you?"

"Extraordinarily. Where's my kiss?"

Coyly, she smiled, moved toward him but stopped just short of his mouth. "Taco Bell?"

He held up a paper bag. "Chicken soft with hot hot sauce."

"And my ice cream?"

Before she finished her query, he'd held up another bag. "Dulce de Leche."

"You're the best there is." She teased him with kisses as she took the loot from his hands, but he wasn't responding in his usual playful way. "What?"

"What you mean, what?" How could she tell?

"Something's bothering you." She scanned his face for clues. "What is it, what'd I do?"

"Nothing," he assured her earnestly, "You haven't done anything."

"What'd someone else do?"

"Nothing's bothering me." He added with a feckless laugh, "I swear!"

"Okay," she said, unconvinced, but willing to accept it for now. She headed to the kitchen.

"Hey, I expect to be fully rewarded for my efforts," he said, hanging up his jacket.

"Oh, you will. All I need is a spoon."

He closed the closet door. "Sounds interesting."

* * *

"And then he falls in love with the quirky bird at the laundromat. The end."

She gaped at him, spoon hanging from her mouth. "Will you just watch the movie?"

"I can't. My brain cells are decaying."

"Oh, come on, it's cute!"

"You're only saying that 'cause you think *he's* cute." Ice cream in his possession now, he pointed at the screen with her spoon. And then it all came tumbling out: "Your opinion's

hinging on his All-American good looks. You know, he reminds me of someone. Oh yeah, that buggery rugby bastard had his mitts all over you."

"Huh?" She blinked at him. "Who?"

Well, too late to turn back now. And also -- how dare she play dumb with him! "You bloody know who."

"Not Angel..." She watched his eyes narrow. "Wait, you've been worried about *Angel* this whole time?"

"Saw him at the 7-11 tonight," he grumbled, digging into the pint. "Overheard him... *talk* about you."

"Ohhh," she said, knowing where the weirdness was coming from now. "What did he say about me? Was it mean?"

"Not exactly. It's not important."

"It is now. Tell me."

He rolled his eyes. "He was holding a girlie magazine and they all practically spewed all over it, joking-like, 'looks like Buffy, huh huh huh'. It was revolting. They all want to shag you, you know, all of them. Especially Asshole. Acting like he had, actually."

"You are so cute when you're jealous," she said, reclaiming the ice cream.

"I am not..." He was about to argue that it wasn't jealousy but rather a desire to defend her virtue when he realized he'd be lying. Whether he approved of him or not, Angel was the type of bloke Buffy saw every day, and one of these days she might figure out that she'd be better off with someone she could be seen with in public, someone less complicated; someone not old enough to be her father. "...cute."

She was moved to kiss his cheek. "You have nothing to worry about, Spike. We dated a little over the summer, but it was nothing -- and no, we never had sex."

He took the pint from her grasp and feigned disinterest. "Yeah? Why's that?"

"Well, we might have," her eyes slid to the side, "but then I met you."

The spoon he held froze in midair, and he stared at her.

"Don't look so shocked." She laughed to assure him that this wasn't something to take seriously. "I told you I was Obsesso Girl."

"You told me *Amy* was."

"Oh, right." She shrugged, said blithely, "She wasn't."

"Yeah, I had a hunch."

"I mean, she thinks you're smokin', but who wouldn't? Oh--" She lifted his t-shirt before a dot of Dulce de Leche fell from his spoon onto his stomach.

She licked both the spoon and his stomach clean, making him quiver.

This diversion was for the best, because she didn't really want to get into how much she'd obsessed over him the weeks after their first meeting. That she'd sincerely expected them to pursue a relationship. That she'd girlishly imagined them eloping to some swank European destination. That she'd wanted to die when she discovered that her mother had somehow landed him first.

Things were the way they were, and they weren't about to change. And the way they were wasn't so bad, considering.

It occurred to him that they should be discussing something important... but Buffy had a particular talent for making him forget everything other than her warm, wet-velvet tongue. Straddling him, she shed her tank top, and when her pert breasts bounced tantalizingly at his eye level, he was fully lobotomized by lust. She dabbed a bit of ice cream onto her nipple and he eagerly licked it up, sucked it in while unraveling the drawstring of her pajama pants.

She wrapped her arms around his head and moaned, thinking, *I have him now, that's all that matters.*

Craning to her ear, he murmured, "On your back."

Heady with anticipation, Buffy did as he said. He rose above her and pulled off her pajamas, found a throw cover and spread it beneath her, eased her legs apart.

She was still holding the pint. He put his hand in it and slathered Dulce de Leche ice cream all over her pussy. She squealed, and with a grin, he descended, tongue first.

CHAPTER 12: *Class*

Wednesday, March 12th, 8am

Spike zipped up his pants and approached Buffy, kissed her shoulder.

"I'm not speaking to you," she said.

"Didn't say anything."

"I'm not kissing you either." She closed his bureau drawer, a pressed shirt in one hand and a silk tie in the other.

He tilted his head. "That's not nice."

"That's what you get. Leaving a perfectly naked me to go to work." She held open the shirt, and he turned to put his arms through it.

"You know I have to." He faced her again to let her button the shirt, and arched a brow. "Unless you can think of a good reason for me to stay."

"What, suddenly my ass virginity isn't good enough?"

He smiled, hands running up her arms. "Saving that for the nighttime, pet. Candles, wine, the works..."

"Fine. Go, I don't care."

"You don't," he repeated, unconvinced.

"Nope." She roped the tie around his neck and pulled it through its loop. "I don't care that you're leaving me today, of all the days you could possibly leave me."

"What's so important about today?"

She scoffed, rolled her eyes. "Nothing, apparently."

He suppressed a smile. "What are you getting at?"

"You're stupid, that's what."

"Me? How am I stupid?"

She sighed. "You're not stupid, I'm stupid. It's stupid."

"Lots of stupidity going round..."

Eyes downcast, she shook her head. "It's not even a real thing."

He pressed up against her, opened the drawer beside her hip, and pulled out a little black box. Said low as he held it in front of her, "I think six months is a very real thing."

As it registered, she snatched it out of his hand. "Oh my god!"

He smiled.

"This is for me?"

"Open it."

She fumbled with the ribbon, and stopped. "Does this mean you're not going to work?"

"Like I'd leave you today." Hands on the bureau top on either side of her, he leaned in. "I gave 'em holiday notice two weeks ago."

"You are so sneaky."

"Yeah," he said, proud.

Eyes wet, she nudged him. "Spike..."

"Don't cry til you open it, pet. Might hate it."

"I can't believe you remembered."

Technically, he hadn't. But a few weeks earlier, he'd noticed a red heart framing March 12th in her bedside Day Planner, tiny blue 6 inside it. When he backed up six months, he found Thursday, September 12th adorned with glittery hearts, stars and exclamation points. Then he flipped through the months between, finding cryptic, girlish designs on each page -- a yellow flower here, a mistletoe there, acronyms for significant events -- and he was moved to do something about it.

Buffy stared into the open box. "Oh my god... How'd you know I wanted these?"

"You nicked your mum's pair, remember? Thought you deserved some of your own."

An adoring sigh, and she dug the diamond stud earrings out of the box, turning to the mirror. When they were in, she asked, "Okay?"

He touched her shoulders, kissed her neck. "*Magnifico*."

Buckling at the Italian, she said, "You realize you own my ass now."

"Would that be literally?"

"Yes it would."

"Works for me. But right now I'll settle for a kiss."

"Oh, you're gonna get more than a kiss." She jumped up onto his hips, he staggered backward as she mauled him with nips and growly bites, and they fell onto the bed together, laughing.

* * *

Slightly buzzed from the wine they drank at dinner, Buffy lay on her stomach, nude, watching a flickering candle.

She felt the bed shift at his weight, felt his feathery kisses on her back. His lips slid leisurely down her spine to the swell of her buttocks. Hands coasting up her thighs, he spread her open and licked her from front to back.

"Unh..."

She trembled and moaned as he swiveled his tongue all around her soft skin, over and over and over, for as long as it would take. Just as he felt her orgasm approach, he stopped.

"No... why did you--" Cold liquid spilled into her, and he slid a finger in. "Oh!"

She heard plastic crinkling, and glanced to see him rolling a condom on. Somehow, that image made the act seem even more illicit. She bit her lip and smiled to herself.

Two fingers... *whoa*. Three... *oh god*. She arched her back and her hips rose off the bed.

"There's a good girl," he praised, and she nearly came.

He pulled his fingers out.

"Gonna go real slow," he said, easing her up toward him. "You tell me if it hurts."

She nodded, a little nervous, and felt something press against her, something that felt much too large to ever make it through. Holding her by the hips, he bore forward, and she gasped.

"Relax, kitten. This is the tough part. Only gets easier. You push back now, real slow."

She took a deep breath, shut her eyes, and pushed back.

"Fuck," he whispered, and that only encouraged her. "That's it, baby... How's it feel?"

"Big...?"

"Just a little further now. Take your time." He ran a hand over her taut belly. "Daddy's got you."

With a sharp inhale, she reared into him, crying out as she felt him pass through a tight barrier... and suddenly it didn't hurt anymore.

"Yeah," he breathed, "Yeah... Oh god, Buffy..." He grasped her waist and thrust all the way in.

"UNH!"

Panting, he bent over her. "Still just big?"

"No..." she gulped, "Good -- Really good..."

"Thank god... 'Cause I am never leaving."

"What does it... what does it feel like?"

"Like... like fucking heaven... hot as fire, squeezing me..." He took her index finger in his hand and gripped it tightly, contracting and releasing, contracting and releasing. "Like this."

Hands intertwined, he moved within her, and she began to assist, passion and fervor building. She whispered, awestruck, "You feel like-- It's like you found a secret g-spot..."

"Knew you'd love this... Just knew..."

His fingers digging into her shoulders, balls smacking against her pussy, cock lunging in and out of her ass while he talked dirty -- Buffy felt on the brink of sensory overload.

Before long, she was bucking wildly, matching his feral grunts and groans with her own.

"Unh, yeah, Buffy -- let it in, that's it... that's my girl...."

"Oooh..." She grit her teeth. "Yeah! More, more... Harder!"

"Fuck..." It was bad enough he was enveloped in searing, elastic bliss; bad enough that he was fucking one of the most delectable little asses he'd ever seen; worse that he was the very first to have the pleasure. But the fact that she loved it so much she wanted more, and harder? How did she expect him to last?

Just as he accepted that he'd have to get her off another way, because dammit, he was coming *right the hell now*, her hoarse shouts rose to a fever pitch and culminated in one long, ear-splitting, resounding howl.

Simultaneous orgasm, timed down to the very second. He'd read about those.

Collapsing onto her back, he said, panting, "You have never, ever been so loud."

"Uhm... Do you..." She gulped. "Do you think the neighbors heard?"

"Fuck the neighbors," he said. "I loved it."

She giggled, and he bit her shoulder.

Thursday, March 13th, 12pm

Rustling through the mail, Spike looked up when Buffy walked into the kitchen, freshly showered and wrapped in terrycloth robe. "There's my Sleeping Beauty." He hugged her close, hand running down her back. "How're you feeling, baby?"

"Mmm, rested. And not sore at all. But... oh." She touched her throat. "Losing my voice."

"Why am I not surprised?" His forehead against hers, he said, "I'll fix you a cup of tea."

"With lots of honey?"

He couldn't help but smirk, gaze on her lips. "There's an idea."

"Oh, no it's not." She pushed him to arm's length. "I just showered! I don't wanna get all sticky."

"Sticky Buffy. My favorite."

"Sicky Buffy. Losing voice?"

"But you sound so sexy... all smokey nightclub vixen. I love it..."

"Stop it," she laughed, swatting his hands off the rising hem of her robe.

Defeated, he breathed in. "Oh well. Could've been fun."

"It can be fun later. When I'm dirty again."

"Everything you say makes me want to bend you over this counter and have my wicked way with you, do you realize that?"

She smiled. "'Cause of the voice?"

He ran a thumb down her robe opening. "'Cause of you."

"How about 'where's my tea?' What does that make you want to do?"

"Bossy," he drawled, and went about the tea-making.

She noticed the official-looking documents scattered across the kitchen island. "What's all this?"

"Citizenship kit," he said, finding a mug in the cupboard.

"You want to be a citizen? I thought you were all proud of your Britishness."

"Your mum thinks I should go dual." He dropped a bag of PG Tips into the mug and poured from the kettle. "Sent out for those ages ago."

She rifled through the pages, picked one out and grimaced. "How many stripes are there in the flag? Are they kidding?"

"You'd think." He handed her the mug. "But I'd wager they don't have much of a sense of humor."

"No American knows any of this stuff! Or cares." She sipped some tea. "Mmm..."

"You don't know how many stripes are in your flag?"

"I don't *care* how many stripes there are."

"Thirteen, for the first thirteen states. No one ever taught you this?"

"Well, maybe, Mr. Know-It-All, but it was promptly forgotten in order to better retain the important information in life."

"Like who's been thrown off *American Idol* this week?"

"Well, yeah. But hey, I know stuff. Lots of stuff. Just not government stuff. It's dull."

"Let me ask you something." He took the paper and read aloud, "Who makes the laws in America?"

She squinted. "The lawmakers?"

He shook his head and put the paper down. "That's it, you're going back to school tomorrow."

"Am not! You already wrote the note."

"Then we're having a class right now. You're learning something."

"You're not serious. I learned something all last night."

He pointed at her. "Don't talk back to your teacher."

She quirked a brow and smiled coquettishly. "I can think of a lot better things to do with *that* scenario..." She trailed a fingernail up his t-shirt. "*Mister Huffman.*"

His mouth opened, tongue touching his teeth. "Can you now."

"Shall I slip into something a little more appropriate?"

"Yes."

"Not just me." She grabbed him by his collar. "You're putting on a suit."

* * *

"Mister Huffman?"

"Yes, Miss Summers."

"I have this..." she hopped up on the dining room table, pigtails bouncing, legs splayed and swinging, "...problem."

It was amazing how she could put on virtually any outfit and immediately make it his fetish du jour: today was Parochial School Girl. White blouse tied at the waist, short pleated skirt riding up her thighs, white cotton panties... And fucking *pigtails*.

"A..." He cleared his throat. "A problem?"

She looked away shyly.

Tentatively stepping toward her, he ventured, "Is it... something I can help you with?"

She pressed her skirt down between her legs and slid back a little, braless cleavage coming into view. "I hope so."

"What is it, then? Miss Summers."

Her eyelashes fanned upward until her gaze locked into his. "I can't stop thinking about you."

"I see..." Hands in his pockets, he approached his little seductress. "And what do you think about, when you think about me?"

"Lots of things. All kinds of things."

Lasciviously sizing her up, he said, "Like...?"

"Like you... kissing me." She teased one finger over her full, candy-pink lips, and down her front. "Touching me." She hitched up her skirt a little. "All over."

"Touching you..." Feather-light touch from the end of her thigh-high stockings to the hem of her skirt. "Like this?"

She gulped. "Uh huh."

"How about," fingers sliding between her legs, over her cotton panties, "like this?"

"Mhm..."

"You're a naughty, naughty girl, Miss Summers." He yanked her close. "I should punish you."

"Oh god yes!"

He fell out of character to say, "Give in just like that?"

"I'm sorry, the punishment thing, you can't say something like that--"

"I can't believe how wicked you are. You're..." he searched her mind-numbing body for the right phrase.

She held up her chin, challenging him. "I'm what?"

"The sexiest thing that ever lived."

She smiled, chastened.

"And I'm not gonna stand for it." His expression turned stone-serious. "Turn around Miss Summers. Now."

Unable to conceal her excitement, she hopped off the table, and did as he said.

Body pressed against hers, he ran his hands over the thin material that covered her breasts, down her pelvis, up her thighs, and between her legs.

"Unh..."

"Naughty little thing... Time I taught you a lesson."

She whimpered.

"Lesson the first." He roughly pushed her face to the table, lifted her skirt, then yanked down her panties. This made her say, "Oh!"

With a sneer, he unbuckled his belt, whipped it out of its loops, and rubbed her ass softly. "Lesson the first: Never, ever make your teacher hard in class."

Melting, she made a noise like, "Hunh..." then she cried out as she felt the sting of his belt on her ass.

"Now that left a pretty mark." He nudged her legs apart with his knees, holding her lower back down with one hand. "Legs open, Miss Summers."

Buffy's eyes rolled back. God, did he know how to play...

"What's this?" he asked, rubbing between her legs. Silken liquid pooled into his hand.

"Um--"

"Lesson the second." He snapped the belt again. "Speak only when you're called on."

"Ooh," she couldn't help but breathe. This was the best day ever. "Yes, sir."

He was relishing this power play a bit more than he thought he would -- leave it to her to bring out the beast in him. "I've got to make an example of you," he drawled, "The class has to see what a proper young lady mustn't do." Her moan of approval egged him on. "For instance. A proper young lady wouldn't hem her skirt higher than allowed. A proper young lady wouldn't dare expose her midriff. And a proper young lady... would never stain her underclothes whilst taking Teacher's punishment." He snapped the belt again. "But as you can see, class, Miss Summers isn't very proper at all."

Buffy was elated. *Per. Fect.*

"Lesson the third." He whipped it between her legs, and she shouted in surprise. "Don't come all over Teacher's belt." She sobbed, so he bent down and checked, "You alright, love?"

"Oh, god yes."

He straightened. "Now you've done it." He slid his belt between her legs, pulling it up slowly. "You've gone and dirtied my belt. What've you got to say for yourself, Miss Summers?"

"I'm sorry...?"

"Are you? I think you're lying. I think you're enjoying this much too much." He rubbed the belt across her mouth, then used it to tie her wrists behind her. "I need to step up my punishment." He unzipped his pants. "Now observe, class, the way she rears into me like it's second nature for her. Like a common harlot." He leaned close to her ear. "Like a bitch in heat."

"Yes..."

"That's a naughty girl. I don't think I will give Miss Summers what she's begging for."

She whimpered in protest. "Please?"

He yanked her up by her binding. "On your knees, girl." She slid into position, and he angled his cock at her mouth. "Show the class what whores like you do best, Miss Summers."

With an "Mmmm", she wrapped her lips around the head of his cock and slowly sucked him in.

"Oh... that's good... Real... yeah.... Lesson the... lesson the... what lesson is this?"

Buffy giggled and shrugged.

"Third? Yeah... Lesson the third, which is..." He nestled a hand in her hair as she bobbed up and down. "Everyone should be like Buffy here, she's... a shining example of... purity and goodness and damn good blow jobs... Class, give Buffy a round of applause."

She let him slip out of her mouth and stood up to curtsy the imaginary class. "Is there anything else you'd like to teach me, Mr. Huffman?"

"Yeah." He spun her into her previous position and plunged into her, getting a good grunt out of it. "Lesson the fourth," he growled in her ear as he fucked her, "You do this with a real teacher and I'm killing him."

"Never! I would never..."

"Promise me, Buffy."

"I promise..."

He grasped her pigtails to steer her back and forth, and noticed she'd loosened the belt and broken free. "Oi! No wriggling out of your restraints, Miss Summers."

"You're gonna have to -- unh -- punish me some more."

"Oh I'm gonna punish you, alright--" He pulled out, and she squealed as he shoved her onto her back and climbed aboard the table. Sinking into her again, he bucked hard and fast, making her scream and sigh. "Bad, bad Miss Summers... Naughty! Little! Whore!"

"Yes! Yes! Yes! Fuck me, Mister--"

Something beneath them snapped, and suddenly the table gave way and sagged to one end. They braced themselves until it stopped.

"Bloody hell."

Buffy burst into laughter.

"Isn't this wood?"

"Yeah, it's wood. It's not the right wood." He glanced down the aisle, and turned back to her smiling face. "What?"

"I know where to find the best wood." She touched his belt buckle.

He caught her wrist. "You stop that."

"Make me."

"Oh, I will." Caressing the wood plank in her hand, he said, "Might make a paddle out of this so I can punish you good and proper... Miss Summers."

Eyes betraying her lust, she moved into kissing distance.

He blinked. "Wait. Stop. Public place."

"Yes. Right." She stepped back. "Stopping. Let's go."

"Home. Yeah. Right after we find the right w... material to fix the table with. Why'd I let you come with me?"

She followed him down the aisle, hands clasped behind her back. "Because you liiiiike me."

"I do not."

"Do too-oo."

"Do no-ot."

"Your pants are so on fire right now."

Bemused, he gave her a look.

"Liar?"

He warned, "Don't make me kiss you."

She beamed. "See? Like me."

"Do we have to fix it right now?" she asked, standing over him as he measured the broken table leg. "We have two more days."

"Yeah, well, I'm not quite sure what I'm doing, so this could take two days."

"Aw, cute!"

He stopped what he was doing to peer up at her. "How is that cute?"

"There's something you don't know."

"Yeah, adorable. Do me a favor, love. In the garage, there's a little plastic junk box, nails and screws and what-all. I need it."

* * *

"Mom is totally gonna notice that." She kneeled on the upside-down table, cocking her head at the wooden brace supporting the broken leg.

"Not once you stain it."

"Me? Why me? And don't tell me staining is a woman's job."

"No, but it's your turn. You been sitting here barely contributing." He wiped his forehead with the back of his hand. "Distracting me with your sex-kittenish wiles."

"What do you expect when you're all shirtless and sweaty? Besides, it's not my fault the table's broken."

"Not your fault? Clearly, it took two."

"Hey, I didn't tell you to sex me on top of it."

"You sat on it with your legs spread! If that's not an invitation I don't bloody know what is."

"Do me on the table'?"

"Alright." With a shrug, he shoved her backward and lifted her legs.

"No!" she managed between giggles. "I meant that was the invitation!"

He nuzzled her neck. "You can see how I get confused..."

"Okay, ow..." Something was digging into her back. "Pain. Unsexy pain."

"Sorry," he sat up, and watched her as she straightened. "You're so fucking pretty. It's not fair."

A light pink blossomed on her cheeks.

He sighed. "Hand me the wood stain."

"I can make us dinner."

He squinted at her skeptically. "You cook?"

"Of course I cook. I mean, I can bake a cake like nobody's business. How hard can it be to bake a fish?"

"Well, it's a little different..."

"Spike. I want to cook for you."

"Alright, love," he shrugged. "Have at it."

Excited, she jumped up from the table and into the kitchen. "You are gonna be so surprised."

He smiled at her back. *Always am.*

* * *

"How is it?" Her eyes were bright and hopeful in the candlelight.

Swallowing something that tasted akin to sawdust, he said as convincingly as he could, "It's delicious. Perfect."

Suspicious, she tried a bite herself. Their eyes met, and her sour grimace turned to a grin. They chuckled silently together.

Matter-of-factly, Buffy took both of their plates, slid their contents into the garbage, and picked up the phone to dial a number. "Hi, I'd like to order delivery?"

* * *

"I'm sorry I'm a terrible cook." She tossed her crust into the box.

Head tilting, he brushed her hair from her cheek. "You don't have to impress me, Buffy."

"I know, I... I guess I just want to be all the things that..." *Mom is for you.*

A hush came over them, and he touched her hand.

CHAPTER 13: *Dreams*

"**Kitten?**" He followed her answering "Mee-ow..." to the master bathroom, opened the door. Tea lights spotted the room, framed the tub edges and subtly illuminated her face and shoulders. Her hair upswept in a messy bun, she was up to her nipples in bubbles, breasts wet and glistening.

Noticing that he was transfixed by her leg rising out of the water, her sudsy foot pointing and resting on the faucet to turn off the flow, she asked, "Well?"

He looked at her face.

"Aren'tcha gonna come in?"

"Can I take a picture first?"

She smiled, back of her hand propping her cheek. "You'll just make me burn it."

He pulled off his t-shirt and unbuttoned his jeans. "What'll I do when I'm too old to remember?"

"I'll remind you."

The naïveté of that statement touched him into silence -- he'd forgotten that young girls think in forevers. Stepping into the tub, he made himself comfortable behind her and picked up a floating body sponge. Rubbed it up her back, over her breasts, squeezed it on her shoulder.

She hummed in contentment and he cradled her close, listening to her sweet noises, the tiny bubbles sizzling.

Joyce was coming home soon. No more bubble baths, no more naked orders, no more uninhibited frolic and leisurely tranquility -- back to sneaking about and being ever-vigilant. Back to the way it was.

"I wish..."

He blew a cloud of suds from her neck. "What do you wish?"

"I wish it could stay like this forever."

Yeah. He softly kissed her cheek.

She sighed. "What's gonna happen when she...?"

He let the question hang in the air for a moment. "I suppose it'll be like before she left."

"But aren't things..." She lightly petted his hand on her throat. "Don't you feel like things are different?"

He focused on a tea light, letting it blur his vision. "Yeah. I do."

"Spike?" She waved a hand through the bubbles before her. "I... I know we're not supposed to talk about this, but, there's... there's something I need to say."

Inwardly, he panicked: What would he do with it? What would *he* say?

Feeling his body tense, she quickly chose a different tack and falsely brightened. "You have massive B.O. right now."

He gasped, and laughed. "Excuse me?"

"Oh yeah. Spike the tool guy needs a serious hosing down." She turned around to straddle him, body sponge in her hand. "I'm not even sure a bath is gonna do it."

He knew what she was doing: he'd caught the vulnerability in her eyes. "Thought you liked sweat."

"I like the way it *looks*. Not the way it smells."

He grabbed her wrist. "Better wash me good then."

"I don't know... there's gonna be some nasty-ass bathwater."

"Go on, love." His leg shot out of the water. "You can start with the feet."

"Ew!"

"You don't like my feet?"

She shrieked and parried as his toes assaulted her person. "I'm not like you, Mr. Foot Fetish."

"Not a fetish. A keen appreciation," he corrected. "C'mon, give 'em a kiss."

"Aah!" she cried, ducking his feet. "No, you freak!"

"This little piggie likes Buffy..."

As she tugged the duvet over her sleeping lover, it occurred to her that they hadn't had sex since the table escapade. Simply spending time with him was enough sometimes, and she was almost certain he felt the same. It had stopped being just about sex for him a while ago... hadn't it?

Watching his chest rise and fall, she coiled her naked body around his. Brushing a lock of still-damp, slightly curled hair away from his temple, she kissed his ear and whispered, "I love you."

* * *

Friday, March 14th, 1pm

Buffy watched from the bed as Spike pulled a long silk scarf out of Joyce's dresser drawer. Wrapping the ends around his palms boxer-style, he asked, "Do you trust me?"

"In your dreams," she said. Then, "Is there a reason I should?"

He twitched a brow. *Because you love me.*

* * *

Spike opened the door very quietly, smiled again at the sight of her bound and blindfolded on her bed. She huffed, frustrated, but her nipples tightened right before his eyes and little goosebumps rose on her flesh. Oh yeah, she was ready.

He took one ice cube out of the bowl, and, careful not to touch her anywhere else, pressed it to her lips. Starved for sensory gratification, she mewed and licked until he slid it down her chin, down her neck, over her collarbone and to one nipple. Back arching, she shivered and shook and made sweet little noises that made him hard.

The ice was melting fast due to some unseasonably warm weather... or maybe Buffy was just that hot. He lifted it in the air, waiting for her to anticipate his next move. Cold water tapped onto her belly, and she shuddered.

When the ice cube made contact with her other nipple, she agitated herself against it. His breath caught and his cock wanted out of his underpants, and into her mouth. This whole bondage thing was designed primarily for her pleasure, but as per usual, it was driving him crazy. He could pretend to dominate her as much as he wanted, but she was always in control.

When it melted to water, he picked up another. Kneeling between her spread legs, he coasted it down her belly, over her thigh... up her inner thigh, and against her labia. She said, "Ohhh!" but when he pressed it against her clit, she squealed and tried to wriggle away. He wasn't having it.

She whimpered and moaned, and just as she gave in to the icy sensation, he popped the cube in his mouth, and crunched.

She giggled and said, "Do it again." Before she completed that command, another cube was on her thigh. "No! No, no..." she whined, head whipping back and forth.

"What? You don't want it here?"

"No!"

"Where do you want it?"

"Where you just had it..."

"And where's that?" He poised it at her inner thigh.

Her ass rose off the bed. "You know where!"

"Here?" He put it on her knee.

"No!"

"I'm waiting..." He moved to her ear. "Tell the doctor where it hurts."

She flushed deep red. "My..." She bit her lip, smile self-conscious, and whispered, "My clit."

He wished he could videotape this. "Oh, you mean... here?"

She sucked in a breath and drew out softly, vulnerably, "Yeah."

Rubbing it over her swelling flesh, watching her hips gyrate in impatience, he took pity on her. "I'll have to check your temperature." He popped it into her tightest channel, making her scream, and with another cube between his teeth, he bent forward and slid it over her pussy, up and down. She rocked and shuddered against his face, moaning. Then he pushed it inside her with his long tongue.

"Oh god!" Her hot, delicate flesh enveloped his tongue, and soon, a rush of fluid. He sucked it up as her body spasmed, holding onto her ass. "Oh! God!" she said again, and said it once more as she came down, punctuating with a, "Wow."

One last lingering kiss, and he set his chin on her sweat-sheened belly. "Wasn't s'posed to let you come that quick."

She said, still panting, "Who says?"

"I says. Doctor's orders, yeah? Got a whole bag of tricks here I meant to try on you first." He picked up the honey bear to illustrate, as if she could see what he was doing.

"So?" --*pant, pant, pant, gulp*-- "Trick me some more."

He raised a brow. "Yeah?"

"Oh yeah," she said, nodding fervently. "I'm not nearly cured."

"Well then." He popped the top and turned it upside down. "Be rude for me to withhold further treatment."

After licking come and strawberries and cream and honey from her spasming cunt, he was done waiting. He rubbed his erection against her, topped it with a shot of Reddi-Wip and said, "Open up and say 'Ahh'."

With a giggle, she dutifully followed the doctor's orders, but the phone rang before he could get there. She begged him to ignore it, but he checked the ID -- it was a forwarded call from his office -- which meant it could very well be Joyce.

"Fuck," he said. "I'm sorry, babe."

She huffed, "At least take off my--"

He covered her mouth with his hand as he answered the phone with a curt, "William Huffman." She thrashed a little beneath him.

Buffy could hear her mother's voice on the line. *As usual, Mom ruins everything.*

"Hello, darling," he said, checking Buffy's reaction -- but she was blindfolded after all. And naked and spread-eagled and tied to the... "How's it going?"

"Well, very well!" After running off a few of her triumphs, she asked, "You?"

Well, I just ate a delicious meal... "No complaints." Buffy bit his hand, hard. "Ow!"

"Are you okay?"

"Yeah, yeah, I just," he shook the pain off and glared at the girl with sharp teeth, "bloody paper cut."

"Aw..."

"It's fine." Buffy was thrashing again. He lifted her blindfold and she glowered at him, so he put it right back down again. "Will I be seeing you tomorrow then?"

"You will!" She made her tone play-seductive, "I can't wait."

"Makes two of us, pet." Buffy was worming her way out of one wrist restraint, so he said, "Until tomorrow."

"Until tomorrow," she said, and he hung up.

"Get me the fuck out of this thing!" Buffy shouted. "Let me out!" After briefly considering leaving her bound and having his wicked way with her to get her past this juvenile episode, he wisely helped her out of the scarves. She flung the blindfold to the floor as she got up to leave the room. "Asshole."

"I had to take that call, Buffy--"

"You forced me to listen to it! If you'd let me up I could've left the room!"

"Okay, admittedly that was in poor taste, but--" She didn't find that amusing, so he cut her off in the hallway, held her close against the staircase railing, cream-covered hard-on stabbing her in the back. "Stop, Buffy. Please. I'm sorry you had to listen to that drivel. I beg you to forgive me. I will do anything you say." His hands gravitated toward her sticky nipples.

That felt nice... and at least he admitted it was drivel. "Whatever, you just want your dick sucked."

"Well, yeah, but..." She snorted, and he knew he had her again. "Look how tasty," he brought a bit of cream to her lips. "How can you resist?"

"Easy," she said, not really meaning it.

"That's all right, I'm easy too -- I'll settle for a tit fuck." She gasped and pounded his stomach while he pretended to double over in pain, then hoisted her over his shoulder and returned her, half-heartedly protesting, to the bed.

* * *

"Right, I give up. Where is it?"

"Where's what?" she said, knowing full well what he'd been searching for for over an hour. It was ticking them both off.

He held up his left hand, wiggled his naked fingers.

"Beats me." She turned a page in her magazine.

"Buffy..."

"Spike..."

"Is it in here? Did you hide it somewhere in here?"

"Please. Like I'd want it anywhere near me."

"If you threw it out--"

"I didn't throw it out!" She smacked her magazine closed and tossed it off the bed. "God."

"You want me to waste our last night searching for a bloody ring? Is that what you want?"

"Why can't you just tell her you lost it?"

"Be a mite suspicious, don't you think? 'Yeah, spent all week with hot stepdaughter, by sheer coincidence lost symbol of fidelity!'"

She stormed past him in the doorway. "I don't care what you say."

God, she drove him mad. "What's the matter with you now?"

She hurried down the steps. "I don't know where the stupid thing is, okay? Maybe you vacuumed it up."

"I already checked. Twice!" He followed her down to the front door. "Where are you going?"

"What do you care? You stay home and search for your fucking 'precious'."

The door slammed in his face, and he blinked in confusion, shook his head, and ran after her, forgetting completely that he was in his underwear. "Buffy? Buffy!"

She spun around, shouting, "What?"

"Hey," he said, voice low. "I'm sorry I snapped at you, alright? I'm at my wit's end here. Come back inside."

She crossed her arms. "All you care about is that ugly ring."

"No, all I care about is finding it so I can spend the rest of the night with you." He brought her hand to his cheek.

Lips quivering, she lifted her welling eyes to his. "Why does it have to end?"

Realization softened his features. "Oh, baby..."

Standing with her in the front yard, he pulled her close, let her cry against his chest.

"I hate this." It was so much easier to be mad at him than to admit that it couldn't go on like this.

"Come inside," he said, stroking her hair, "you can yell at me some more."

She sniffled. "The ring's in the junk box."

"What?" Knuckle on her chin, he raised her head.

She looked up at him, sheepish. "The junk box in the garage?"

He couldn't help but find the humor in this. "What am I gonna do with you?"

"Spank me?"

Arm on her shoulder, he led her back toward the door. "Isn't that how I lost the blasted thing in the first place?"

"No," Spike said, snatching a stack of Polaroids out of her hand.

"Can't we just keep a couple?"

He scanned them fondly before card-dealing them into the tin trash can.

"Come on. You can get like a safety deposit box at the bank."

Swayed by her reasoning for a second, he came to a definitive, "No."

She sighed, fingering one Polaroid -- the first one she took of him asleep. When she noticed him waiting, she reluctantly surrendered it.

"That all of them?"

"Every last one," she affirmed with a nod.

"Right. Here goes." He held up the kerosene bottle, but she caught his wrist. Their eyes met, and he said, "You'll remind me."

With a smile, she looked down, and let go.

He squirted the kerosene, lit a match, and dropped it into the can. It ignited with a *whoomp*. It was a windless night; they wrinkled their noses at the smell of burning chemicals.

She linked her arm in his, reverently watching the blue flame shoot into licks of orange and ash that flitted onto the porch floor. "We coulda made S'mores."

* * *

The sound of rhythmic splashing echoed in the room. And kissing and moaning.

"Oh..."

Sudsy water ebbed at the corners of the bathtub as he rocked her close, back to his front, mouth on her neck.

Her eyes were shut tight. Each growly little kiss he pressed against her neck gave her an electric tingle. And his fingers...

His left hand was curled up under her thigh, fingers tickling her clit. His right hand slipped over her breasts.

The heat of the water made her even more light-headed as she held her breath to climax.

* * *

Saturday, March 15th, 11am

Toweling off his hair, Spike emerged from the bathroom and noticed her on her tiptoes, tapping her mother's lipgloss on in front of the dresser mirror. "Is that mine?"

"Huh?" Buffy glanced down at the white dress shirt that ended at her naked knees. "Oh, yeah. Why?"

He smiled, and dropped the towel.

Fuck the cheerleader, the sophisticate, the schoolgirl, the Little Red Riding Him. *This* was, by far, the sexiest thing he'd ever seen.

"Aaaah!" she screamed as he slung her over his shoulder and threw her onto the bed.

"Better not be wearing this when I get back," he warned, nudging a knee between her thighs, "or we'll both be in a lot of trouble."

She giggled as he kissed her neck. "Don't you have to go now?"

Eyes flashing, tongue curling, he directed the tip of his hard-on into her always-ready entrance. "Let her wait."

* * *

1:35am

Spike drew a breath, roused by the sensation of a warm tongue on his cock.

Illuminated by the bedside lamp, Buffy smiled up at him, crawled up his body and sank down, taking him in.

Beside him, Joyce turned in her sleep.

Eyes widening in terror, he shook his head frantically, tried to push her off.

She just smiled, and rode him faster. The bed began to shake.

"No, no..."

"Don't think. Don't worry. Just feel it."

"Buffy, stop, don't!"

"How do I feel?" She bit his earlobe. "Do I feel better than Mommy?"

He lost control, lost his inhibitions, and let go. "GAH!"

She looked down at him, brow furrowed. "Honey?" Then her voice was replaced by a less breathy one: "Honey?"

Spike opened his eyes, disoriented. Buffy was gone. Joyce was beside him in the dark room. "Wha?"

"You were dreaming."

"Oh." He tried to even his breath. "Right. Did I shout?"

"Uh huh. 'Buffy, stop, don't.' What happened?"

"Uh." He panted, thinking quickly. "Dreamt she was attacked by vampires."

Joyce chuckled. "Vampires?"

He nodded. "Then... then she turned 'round and staked 'em all right through the heart. It was brilliant. You'd have been impressed."

"See? Buffy can take care of herself even in your nightmares."

"Guess so." He touched his stomach under the sheet. *Oh, bloody hell.* "Sorry to wake you. Go back to bed, love."

She kissed his cheek and rolled over. "Night."

"Night." Frowning, he quietly reached for the box of Kleenex.

First time since high school he'd had a sodding wet dream.

* * *

Sunday, March 16th, 2pm

Buffy laughed. "You spooaged yourself?"

"Shut it, you," he teased, staring at her mouth.

"Make me."

He shoved her up against the sink, kissing her breathless. She unzipped his pants. Aware of the muted buzz of the hedge clipper outside, they hoped there was enough time. She turned around to face the mirror, raised her skirt. He ran his hands over her breasts, shut his eyes and pressed his lips against her ear. "I've got to put in a lot of hours to make up for last week..."

"Uh huh. And your point?" Their eyes met in the reflection.

"Might not have as much time to..."

She nodded impatiently, and tilted her head to bare her neck for his kisses. "As long as you come back to me."

"Always, Buffy. I'll always..."

"Unh..."

"Always come back to you."

CHAPTER 14: *Homework*

Thursday, March 20th, 9:45pm

"Hey, Spike?"

"Yeah, sweet?" Oh, good show. That's the way to cover up -- offhandedly call her 'sweet' in front of Joyce. Did she notice? Didn't seem to; she was looking at Buffy, waiting for her to continue. He swallowed his mouthful of food and turned to Buffy, who sat at the head of the table.

Her fork clanked against her nearly untouched plate. "You know stuff about European history, right?"

"Little bit, yeah." He casually sipped at his wine.

"I've got this paper due tomorrow, it's kind of all over the place. Will you help?"

"Sure, if I can."

"You're not too tired?" Joyce touched his arm, concerned. "I could do it if you're--"

"No, love, it's alright. Got my second wind. C'mon then, let's give it a look."

"Great." Buffy pushed her chair back with a smile. "I'll go get it."

"Right, but it wasn't that one event that *caused* the war. All the reasons to start one up were percolating under the surface already; his assassination was just one of those things that set it off, got everyone all riled up and pissed off. It was a turning point, not a cause."

Buffy was doodling in her notebook as she listened to him. "Okay, so you're saying I have to write this whole thing over?" She wrote in an even hand: FUCK ME NOW.

She felt him jolt beside her. He leaned over her to cross it out -- Joyce was walking into and out of the room, cleaning up.

"Not the whole thing. Just this bit back here." He gave her a sidelong glance as Joyce walked into the kitchen. She smiled.

"So the entire first part?" She wrote on it: FUCK M

He pushed her hand out of the way and scribbled over it again. "No... Well, this part, anyway." He wrote: RIGHT NOW?

She smiled and underlined his question, took off the punctuation in reply. "And how would I do that, exactly?"

"Well, I'm thinking..." BAD GIRL.

She crossed out the BAD and wrote HORNY above it. WANT ME?

"And if you take out this bit..." ALWAYS.

"Oh! I've got an idea." LET'S FUCK.

Joyce walked back into the room, and he quickly crossed everything out. "That's good, but the question is... where does that fit in?"

"I know!" MY MOUTH.

He chuckled and scribbled over it. "I've got a better idea." YOUR ROOM.

Nodding, she considered this carefully. "That is so smart. You're like a genius."

"Up," Joyce said, bending forward to wipe off their side of the table.

Buffy lifted her notebook, Spike raised his arms.

"I'm gonna type this into my computer," Buffy said. "Come upstairs with me."

* * *

"Right..." Spike said, eyes shut, hands on her slim, undulating waist. "So it goes like this..."

"Uh huh..."

"While the assassination... of... of... Archduke Ferdinand... may have, uh... *sparked* the outbreak of World War I, historians believe... that the, the war had... you know... deeper... deeper causes."

"Deeper..."

"Right, deeper. Causes... the war..."

They faced a computer screen that said THE STUPID-ASS CAUSES OF WORLD WAR I, and nothing else, as she rode him on her desk chair.

"Got it," she said, nodding and typing 1) HISTORIANS. "Go on."

"Uh." He gulped, lifting her skirt so he could watch her ass. "Yeah, so... here's what you write..."

"Uh huh..." She leaned her head back against his.

He moved her hair out of his face, over her shoulder, and kissed her neck. Felt her tremble in response. Then he remembered what they were supposed to be doing, and he looked at the screen. "Historians. Bloody historians. Right."

She chuckled.

He bit her neck, and she hissed. Bit a few more times, then started to suck.

She whispered, "You're gonna give me a hickie..."

That didn't stop him. She felt so good, tasted so good, and she loved being sucked on, if that new rush of warm fluid coating him was any indication. Over the soft fabric of her blouse he rolled her nipples between his fingertips, making her gasp and shudder.

There was a creak on the stairs. He let go of her breasts, let go of her neck, stilled her hips and said authoritatively, slowly, as if she was taking it all down, "Historians believe it resulted mainly from, from the growth of uh, extreme national pride among various European peoples..."

She clacked at the keyboard GO AWAY MOM GO AWAY GO AWAY GO AWAY
BUSY FUCKING YOUR HUSBSDK

"Yeah, that's right..." he shut his eyes, "...also, an enormous increase--" she wiggled on him for that, "--in European armed forces, a... a race for colonies, and uh, the formation of military alliances. When the fighting began--"

"Are you telling her what to write?"

They froze. Joyce on the other side of the door.

"No, love," he said, hoping his voice didn't sound too strained, "just reading out what she's written here so she can take it all down."

"Okay, just checking. Goodnight Buffy."

"Night mom!"

They heard her turn and retreat.

"Right, where was I then?"

"When the fighting began."

"Right. When the fighting began, France, the UK, ah, the United Kingdom, and Russia-- who were known as the Allies--backed Serbia."

The bedroom door closed.

They set into frenzied motion, but the desk chair wheezed beneath them.

"Stop, stop, hold on," he whispered, and spun the chair to face the bed. He propelled her forward until her palms flattened on the bed and her ass was up in the air, then he squared his feet on the floor behind hers, yanked her toward him and plunged in.

Unable to scream out, she grit her teeth and sighed.

As much as he wanted to just plain fuck her into next week, he knew he had to keep spouting this historical bullshit: "Right, so, the Allies..." thrust, thrust, thrust, "opposed the Central Powers," squeeze, circle, thrust, "made up of Austria-Hungary and Germany." Thrust thrust thrust thrust... his vision blurred, "Then, you know, other nations came along

and..." thrust thrust thrust thrust thrust, *god, wet*, "...fucking joined the Allies or the..." he wiped the sweat from his brow, some of it dripped on her ass, "Central bloody Powers."

Her concentration on his non-verbal task was interrupted by a giggle.

He smiled, slow and wicked as inspiration struck: "Like Italy, for instance."

"Mmm..." She stopped, pressed against him, and her head popped up. "Mm?"

"Yeah, you like Italy, don't you?" He pulled back, slid farther in, and in, and in...

Eyes closed, she nodded several times.

Voice honey-smooth, he said, "Joined the Allies in 1915, Italy did."

"And..." she took in a breath as she reached down to touch herself, "what'd they say when they joined?"

"I think it was something like..." he bent down to her ear and whispered, "*Se così sexy, non posso resistere.*"⁷ And he covered her mouth to stifle her inevitable cry. Holding in his own ecstatic groan, he came just moments after she did, and slumped over her, panting and light-headed. "Yeah, so. Looks like you got it, pet."

"Yeah." She sighed contentedly. "I definitely got it."

"Next time you need a little help," he kissed her shoulder, "you know where to come."

She vowed quietly, "I promise I will never come for anyone else."

"Don't," he cautioned, "make me hard again."

"But it's fun..."

"Save it for next time, when I don't have to give a bloody lecture." He pulled out of her, put his dick back in his pants, and took a moment to fondle her ass before readjusting her skirt.

She spun around, and stood on her tiptoes to kiss him.

It lasted a long time. Too long -- he finally had to pull away.

She looked up at him, whispered, "Can you stop working late now?"

"Not yet, love," he said, touching her face. "But soon. I promise."

Wednesday, March 26th, 7:30pm

"Congratulations, honey!"

Ripping open her Lean Cuisine box, Buffy looked up. "What?"

⁷ You're so sexy, I can't resist you.

Joyce covered the phone receiver. "He got promoted!"

"Oh." Buffy tossed it in the microwave, pressed the buttons. *Now I'll never see him.*

"Oh honey," Joyce said. "Of course I understand! You're a big shot now."

Buffy desperately wanted to talk to him, but she couldn't tell her mother that.

"Okay. I'll see you then. Bye bye." She hung up the phone and turned to Buffy with a giddy grin. "They gave him his own office and everything. Apparently they were dazzled by all the work he's been putting in the past three weeks."

Two weeks. That's two. He took one week off to fuck me nonstop while you were away.

"We have to put off Palm Springs for another week, but--"

"When's he coming home?" Buffy interrupted.

"I don't know. Late." She looked at her. "Why?"

Buffy watched her spinning dinner and shrugged. "He said he'd help me with my Italian."

"I thought you were taking French."

"Yeah, I switched."

* * *

Thursday, March 27th, 11:30am

"William Huffman." When he heard a familiar throaty chuckle at the other end of the line, he smiled. "Hello."

"Willlliam..."

"Quiet you."

"You got your own office, huh?"

His brow arched. "Where are you?"

"School. Where'd you think I was?"

"No telling with you, pet." Why was he loosening his tie? He tightened it again. "What you ringing me in the middle of the day for?"

A pause and a quiet, "Thinkin' about you."

He sat back in his chair. "Is that right?"

"It's been a while, Spike."

Twirling his pen in his hand, he nodded. "A week."

"I'm kinda starting to feel neglected."

He watched someone walk by. "Well, that's unacceptable."

"Good, then I'll be right over."

He sat forward. "What? No."

"Why not? You've got an office. It's got a door, right?"

"No. You are -- That is not happening in my office."

She sighed. "Fine, fine."

He lowered his voice. "But it will happen in your bed."

"Tonight?"

"If I can, yeah."

A pause. "You promise?"

"I promise to try."

* * *

Friday, March 28th, 1:50pm

"Will?"

Spike looked up. Claire, the receptionist, standing beside a distraught Buffy. Her cheeks were red and tearstained.

"Buffy?" Brow creased with worry, he stood up.

She sniffled. "I--I need to talk to you. Can I--"

"Oh sweet..." Decorum forgotten, he hurried to her side in a near-panic. "What is it? What's wrong?" Who do I kill?

She fell into his arms and began to sob.

"Aw," Claire said with an empathetic pout, and whispered, "Why don't I give you a little privacy?" as she closed his window blinds.

"Thanks," he told her over Buffy's head. "Tell them I'll be at the meeting at 3, alright? Just need to take care of this."

"Of course." She left, shutting the door behind her.

He combed his fingers through Buffy's hair. "Honey, sweetheart, what is it? Talk to me, baby."

She moved her hands around his waist, and down to his ass. As she squeezed, she looked up at him with a smile.

Jaw dropping, he pushed her to arm's length. "You... little faker!"

"Yeah."

He shook his head. "I can't believe you."

"I know, I'm brilliant."

"No, you're leaving."

"What? Nuh-uh..."

"Yea-huh. Out of my office, now. Back to school."

"No!"

"Yes." He reached for the doorknob.

She blocked his way, stood against the door. With a tease of a smile, she languidly pulled at her belt.

That's when he noticed what she was wearing: a short black trenchcoat and black fuck-me pumps... and nothing at all underneath.

Eyes on her perfect, naked, pink-tipped breasts, his mouth went dry. "You're trying to get me sacked."

"Is that British for 'laid off'?"

He nodded, hypnotized by her body. Over six months and he was still at its mercy.

"I'm not trying you to get laid off. Just laid. Or... off. Whichever, take your pick."

He forced himself to look at her eyes. "Buffy, this isn't a joke, this is my job--"

"And your meeting's at 3, so I'd say you have an hour free."

He shut his eyes, took a deep breath, exhaled. "Look, I'm sorry about last night, I've been working--"

"Very hard, blah blah blah." She shrugged. "I forgive you. But only if you open your eyes."

The slightest hint of a smirk curled his lips as he opened his eyes.

"And down..."

He swallowed as he let his gaze travel down her body, and back up.

"Are you cheating on me?"

"What?" he asked, genuinely stunned. "Of course not, no!" As if he'd have the stamina for two of her!

"Good." She closed her jacket, twitched a brow. "Well? Time's a-wasting, William. What'll it be? An hour comforting your distraught stepchild in total privacy? Or an hour surfing the internet for porn because you threw me out of your office?"

God, she made a lot of sense. "You are pure, unadulterated evil."

"You love that about me."

Nodding, he stepped forward, arousal clear on his face. "I do."

She pushed him back. "Go sit at your desk."

"What?"

"Sit at your desk. For the interview. Do I need to draw you a map?"

So she wanted to play. "I think I can manage." Leering all the while, he slowly walked backwards to his desk and sat at his chair.

She sauntered toward him. "Hello, Mr. Huffman. Or can I call you Will?"

"You can call me whatever you want."

"Well, Will. I hear you have a job opening here at Morgan Inc."

"I just might." He put his hands behind his head, sized her up. "But tell me, Miss..."

"Summers."

"Yes; Miss Summers. Tell me, what are your qualifications?"

"Well..." She rounded the corner of his desk. "I'm qualified in many different... positions."

He chuckled. "Are you."

She stood at his side. "I'd like to demonstrate one right now, if that's okay."

"Please. Go right ahead."

Turning, she noticed the framed picture of her and her mother on his desk. Sneaky Spike kept a picture of her on his desk so he could look at *her* all day -- how perfect was he? She bent over to inspect it closely. "Who are these people?"

"Woman on the left's my wife." He watched her naked ass move. "That sexy, gorgeous bit-of-fluff's on the right's my live-in loveslave."

She picked it up. "Your loveslave, huh?"

"Girl can't get enough of me."

She put it down and turned to face him. "You are one lucky guy."

"Count my blessings every day."

"Well I--"

Enough. Spike yanked her into his lap, gripped her tight and kissed her, hard. Buffy didn't complain, just wiggled on top of him as she kissed him back.

He stood up with her in his arms and cleared a path on the desk, lay her down on it. As she arched and opened before him, he couldn't imagine why he'd slept through so many opportunities to do this -- actually, he could: certain remote recesses of his sex-starved brain acknowledged that ever since she'd said the Words, he'd gone out of his way to avoid The Serious Talk. But that was just paranoia -- she'd never requested anything more from him; it was all pretty fucking plain anyway. As he untied her belt, opened her jacket, he vowed, "I will never neglect you again."

"Unh..."

He pushed her backward, and ran his hands down her naked, arching body, down her collarbone, cupping her breasts, down her torso and between her legs.

She shook at the contact, at the feel of his rough fingertips. "Oh god..."

"If you want this job, Miss Summers, you've got to learn to keep your voice down."

She smiled.

He pressed his thumb into her pussy. She whimpered. "That, I'll allow. Sounds like crying. Don't move."

She closed her eyes and waited there, on her back on his desk, legs open and dangling down. She heard him pull up his chair. Then she felt his fingers on her inner thighs, and his tongue on her pussy. "Oh!"

"What'd I say, Summers?"

"Voice down?" she peeped.

"Good girl." He tasted her again, slowly, teasingly at first. By the time he got to hard and relentless, she was bucking wildly into his face, just a few lashes away from orgasm.

He stopped. She sobbed in protest, hands reaching to finish the job. He swatted her hands away, then stood to drop his pants. His eyes rolled back as he entered her, and her arms fanned out, and pens and paper clips and cups and picture frames fell to the floor.

Pumping in and out of her, he watched her move, the graceful curve of her neck, her body, her facial expressions. On his desk. She was *on his desk*. How many late nights had he wished for this? And why was she so good at making his every fantasy come true?

She shuddered and whimpered through a torrential climax. He ducked his head to watch his red, swollen shaft slipping in and out of her pink pussy lips, faster, faster, faster, then thrust deep to empty himself inside of her. "Fuck!"

He fell forward, kissed her and declared, "You're hired."

* * *

Monday, March 31st, 9pm

"Hey." Buffy jumped in, closed the car door and quickly scanned the mall exterior. All clear; she kissed him.

"Mmm." Hand roving up her skirt, he stopped when he felt something lacy, something new. "What's this?"

"Employee discount," she said with a proud grin. "Best menial job ever."

Lifting the skirt and inspecting the pink lace beneath, he said, "I approve."

"Of the job, or the panties?"

"Both, if one yields the other." He focused on the road and rolled out of there.

"You should meet me inside sometime, pick something out for me."

"Yeah. Malls, not really my element. It's like everything I hate, all crammed into one place. Shopping, Americans, teenagers..." He tickled her thigh.

She snorted. "Right, 'cause you're such the adult."

"Wha--? I'm very much... such the adult."

"No, you're a boy in a man's body. Me, woman, girl's body."

"I'm not a-- Where do you come up with that? And your body is very womanly."

She shrugged, brushing something off her shirt. "That's why we work out. We meet halfway."

A scoff. "You call this working out?"

"So far."

"Until the inevitable fallout."

She frowned at him. "Be a little more gloomy, why don't you?"

"I'm sorry, Buffy, but it's the way the world works -- says the *adult* twenty years your senior. Do bad things, the world comes 'round and bites you in the ass."

"I don't think we've done anything bad."

"Yeah, well, you're blissfully deluded. A blissfully deluded *child* in a *woman's* body," he made sure to point out.

She spotted a neon sign in the near distance. "You could be too, you know."

"A child in a woman's body?"

"Blissfully deluded."

He glanced at her, intrigued. "Yeah?"

"Three easy steps." She took off her seatbelt and sidled up to him, mimed the opening of his head, "One, you remove all this nasty conscience and morality stuff. Dump it right out." She zipped his head back up. "Two, you take me to that place right there." She pet his hair and leaned in to his ear. "Three, you let my womanly body do the rest."

* * *

"You are a terrible, terrible influence," he gritted, back against the motel room door.

"Mmhmm..."

Grasping a handful of her hair, he said, "A very... very bad girl."

"Mm..." She sucked hard as she drew back.

"Fuck -- woman... You're all woman..."

Buckling at that, she held his ass and, rubbing her nipples against his thighs, deep-throated him.

He pulled her up by her hair. "Can I be a child inside a woman's body?"

She grinned, stumbling under his weight toward the bed. "Yes..."

* * *

Joyce heard her daughter's husky giggle as the front door opened. She closed her book.

"Bite your tongue," she heard Spike laugh. Then a playful, "Watch it!"

Buffy giggled again, and it seemed she was purposefully keeping it low.

"Joycie?" he called out.

"Upstairs," she said.

There was a short silence, and "Thanks for the ride, Spike," Buffy said almost teasingly, heels clacking up the stairs. She breezed past her mother's room, untying the neck of her halter top with a noncommittal, "Hey Mom." Her door squeaked open and shut, and the music went on: *Sweet 16 in leather boots / Body and soul, I go crazy / Baby, baby I'm a hungry, sweet 16...*

When did she start listening to punk?

Joyce's book cover seemed to mock her: another one-sided attempt at relationship improvement. Why did she even bother? Embarrassed, she hastily stuffed it into her drawer as Spike hopped up the steps.

She picked up on his sidelong glance at Buffy's door before he strutted in with a Cheshire grin. "Hello, darling." He shut the door behind him, leaned against it and pulled at his tie, grin in place all the while.

"You're in a good mood," she said, unable to control an edge of accusation.

"I guess I am." He cut the eye contact and opened a bureau drawer as he unhooked his cufflinks. Buffy's kitten cufflinks.

"Good day at work?"

"Nothing special," he said, unbuttoning his shirt and glancing at her in the mirror. "You?"

"Yeah, actually. I convinced Genya Tarasevic to show with us."

"Tarasevic, Tarasevic... Oh, right -- the toast of the Ukraine? The one you've been after for months?"

She nodded. "The very one."

"That's brilliant, love! You're the one should be in a good mood." He snapped his fingers at her. "We should celebrate."

"Well," she tread carefully, "I was thinking we could celebrate by... going to Palm Springs this weekend...?"

"Right, yeah, the weekend!" He looked down and concentrated on his belt, as if he was thinking of a way to get out of it.

"Unless it's no good for you, I mean, we can put it off again..."

"No." His eyes met hers, boyish and sincere. "We're gonna do it. You and me, pet."

She smiled, breathing a quiet sigh of relief.

"I'll make all the arrangements first thing tomorrow, right? You don't have to do a thing."

"Okay."

"I'm proud of *you*," he drawled as he sat at her side. "And after I wash off this Downtown grime, you're gonna tell me all about it." He gave her a quick peck.

I give you my body and soul sweet 16

"You smell like hotel soap," she said.

"And you," he kissed her wrist, inhaling, "smell of rosemilk. Love that scent on you."

She, and every one of her doubts, melted. He touched her chin and kissed her lips, softer this time.

"I'll be right out, yeah?"

"Yeah," she said, under his spell. It didn't even bother her that Buffy's music was too loud.

*Now baby I know...
That's not normal
But I love you,
I love you
I love you, sweet 16*

* * *

Thursday, April 3rd, 7:35am

"Have you seen my watch?"

"Nope," Joyce said from the bathroom.

Checking her bedside drawer, he spotted a paperback: *How To Save Your Troubled Marriage... And Make It Last!* The words cleaved into him: they were troubled? She *knew* they were troubled? He glanced at the bathroom door and picked it up, opening to a random page. Several passages were highlighted with yellow marker.

"Find it?"

He dropped the book into the drawer, hoping she hadn't seen.

Eyes darting from him to the drawer, her mouth opened and closed.

He didn't know what to say either.

"It's just a book," she finally dismissed.

"Yeah, I didn't--"

"Oh, god, and here I go breaking the first rule..." She paced past him and sat on the bed, then looked up at him. "Communication?"

Bloody hell. "Right." He sat beside her and took a perfunctory stab at communication. "Is there uh... somethin' you want to talk about?"

She breathed in, out. "Yes. No. I'm not sure. Do *you* want to talk about anything?"

She knows, he thought, She knows and she's torturing me. "Joycie... What's this about?"

After a thoughtful pause, she said, "When we met, you were..." She smiled fondly at the memory. "God, you were so attentive. The things you would say... And the way you just...*needed* me. I fell, head over heels, I..."

With a sober nod, he trained his gaze on the floor. "And now?"

"It hasn't changed for me." Her eyes met his, posing a question with such unguarded yearning it made his heart ache.

"Joycie." He covered her hand with his. "I know I haven't been a model husband--"

"It's not that--"

"But I want you to know, I love you, and I will--"

Clasping her hand to her mouth, she whimpered.

"What? What'd I say?"

The whimper gave way to a sob. He held her quickly, pulled her close, and she whispered, "You haven't said that in so long..."

"Oh, sweet..." He shut his eyes. "I'm so sorry."

CHAPTER 15: *Growing*

Friday, April 4th, 5pm

Pouting, Buffy pulled a fistful of his hair. "Do you really have to go?"

"Come on, kitten..." He'd left work early to see her, spent an hour working her over on the couch, wasn't that enough? "You know I do."

Hand going limp, she sighed. "Guess I'll have to find some other fun."

Spike tugged her close, grip possessive. "Better not."

"Oh so while you're in Palm Springs doing my mother, I'm supposed to sit here and twiddle my thumbs?"

Bristling, he said evenly, "It's not the same and you know it --"

"Maybe I'll go to the Bronze and get that other bartender--"

"Your mother is my *wife*."

"So divorce her! Problem solved!" Oh, what a relief to finally utter those words...

His head hurt. He couldn't deal with this -- not now. Not today of all fucking days. "It's not that easy--"

"Yes, it is! You don't love her--"

"I never said that," he spoke over her with a strength of tone that felt like a slap in the face.

A lump forming in her throat, she pushed him up and off. He was right -- he never had said that.

"Knowing about us would break her in half," he explained intensely. "I don't want to hurt her like that. Do you?"

Her eyes welled. Her stomach cramped. She wanted to die. "If you love her so much, what are you doing with me? Just, what -- having a little fun?"

"Don't be stupid." He got up and reached for his pants. "You know how I feel about you--"

"How? How do you feel about me?"

He sighed, massaging his forehead. "Buffy..."

She whisked his pants out of his grasp. "Look at me and tell me how you feel about me."

"I have to pick up your mother--"

"I don't care!"

His pants became the object of a tug-of-war. "Well, I do."

"Could've fooled me!"

"Oh Christ, Buffy, GROW UP!" He won the tug-of-war -- and froze, startled by his ferocity and the implication of those two little words. Looking into her eyes, he tried to send her a silent apology, but it wasn't received. The damage had been done.

Brow furrowed, lips quivering, she said as she bolted up the stairs, "Have a great fucking time."

He could have called out for her, could've caught her before she slammed the door and locked him out. Could've begged her forgiveness. Could've done a lot of things, but dammit, he was late.

* * *

"Palm Springs, here I come." Positively beaming, Joyce picked up her overnight bag and switched off her desk light.

"Romantic getaway with your very own Jude Law," Lilah sighed. "Color me jealous."

"I'm a lucky woman, aren't I?" Joyce said, and her phone rang. "Oh--"

"Go," Lilah waved her out. "Leave. It's not important."

"It might be Jude." With a wink, Joyce dropped her bag and picked up the phone. "Morgan Gallery, this is Joyce."

"Joyce Summers?"

"Speaking."

"Ms. Summers, this is Principal Snyder. From Buffy's school."

"Oh. Is there a problem?" She turned her light on and watched Lilah walk away.

"Well it's come to my attention that Buffy hasn't made up her schoolwork from her vacation last month, and with her absences piling up--"

"Vacation? What vacation?"

There was a pause. "You went to visit her grandmother for a week last month, correct?"

She scoffed. "Is that what Buffy told you?"

"I'm looking at a note from her stepfather."

She blinked, and sat down. "A... a note from..."

"A Mr. William R. Huffman."

Joyce felt her mouth go dry. "Can you tell me... what week that was?"

"Uh, the week of March 10th."

A moment passed, and he asked, "Hello?"

Her vision blurred at the red line across her wall calendar that spanned March 9-15:
ARTCON, SAN FRANCISCO.

* * *

"Thanks, Claire." Joyce tried to sound carefree with Spike's receptionist, but her hands were shaking and she felt nauseous. "Have a great weekend."

"You too!"

She hung up the phone. Taking a deep, steadying breath, she dialed Spike's cell. 2 rings, and--

"Right. This is Spike. So... leave a message." "Now press the--" *Beep.*

She didn't speak. The fact that he still hadn't changed the outgoing message he'd recorded with Buffy was more glaring than ever.

Line 2 was blinking. She switched over.

"Hello, gorgeous," he said. "Your chariot awaits."

* * *

Joyce stared at the taillights ahead of them. The bouquet of carnations on the dashboard, curling from thirst. Her husband's veined fist on the steering wheel. The glare of passing cars gliding over his profile like empty slide projections.

"He left a while ago," Claire said. "Maybe he's picking up something for the trip... Oh, but Buffy called asking for him. That must be it. Did you try the house?"

Spike glanced at her and back at the road. "Sure you're alright, love?"

"Mm-hm," she said quickly.

"It's wonderful that they're so close. My kids took forever to get used to their stepdad."

"Haven't said two words to me since we left."

"I'm fine," she said.

"Oh, yeah! She came by last week. Some kind of teenage crisis."

A movie billboard showcased on the roadside said *What A Girl Wants*. He thought about Buffy; that disconsolate look she gave him before running off. Slamming her door. Sulking in her room. ...Dancing at the Bronze...

"Yeah, he said he didn't get to spend much time with you in Frisco, you were working so hard."

Joyce watched his jaw flex, his arm muscles twitch before he asked again, "You sure?"

She caressed his bicep. "Honey, don't worry, I'm fine. Really." If it bothered him that much to see her upset, there had to be a rational explanation for all of this. Demanding that explanation, however, was something she couldn't quite bring herself to do. Not here, en route to Romance Land... maybe not ever -- she could only imagine his outrage at the mere suggestion... because she *had* to be wrong. "It's just been a stressful day."

Patting her thigh, he gestured at a sign that said *Palm Springs - 20 mi.* "I know just the cure."

* * *

Buffy sat with Amy on the floor of the family room, munching on Doritos and Entenmann's cookies.

"I'm so puking this all out later," Amy declared.

"I hope I get fat," Buffy said. "No. Morbidly obese."

This stunned Amy. "What's the matter with *you*?"

"Nothing." She threw half a cookie down onto the table. "I hate Spike. Hate."

She sipped her beer. "Why, 'cause he's immune to your feminine wiles?"

"Shut up." Buffy sighed and changed the channel. *Can't Hardly Wait* was on. After a few minutes, she said, "Let's throw a party."

"Here?"

Her face lit with mischief. "Yeah. Tomorrow night."

Amy shrugged. "Cool."

* * *

"I have to say, Spike, this is paradise." Palm trees gently rustling, moonlight shimmering on the pool's surface, the aroma of night jasmine and haute cuisine... Joyce was impressed. "How did you find it on such short notice?"

"Friend at work knew a guy, pulled some strings." Spike discreetly turned on his cell phone. No calls. "I'm glad you like it."

"Are you expecting a call?"

"No," he said, looking up at her. "Shutting it off." He took her hand and kissed it. "Can't have any distractions."

"I doubt the office would need you now."

"Yeah, well." He let go of her hand, picked up his fork. "Just in case."

She hadn't meant to address the elephant in the room, but it was so intrusive she was having a hard time seeing anything else. And she was tempted to see his reaction to a statement like, "You think Buffy might call you."

"B--?" This is when he realized a laugh meant to convey disbelief can sound an awful lot like guilty conscience. "Why would I think that?"

"Because you're friends," she shrugged and cut into her salmon, hoping that was a laugh of shock. "You're close."

"Well-- friendly, maybe, but I wouldn't say 'close'."

"Closer than she and I are, that's for sure."

Well... granted. "Don't worry, Joyce. She'll come 'round."

"The way she resents me for what happened with her father, I can't see her ever getting past that." Folding her hands, she gave him a sidelong glance. "Does she... talk about that at all?"

"With me?" Another incriminating laugh escaped of its own volition. "Like I said, love, we're not that close."

"So... what *do* you talk about?"

"I don't know... Nothing dire. You know. We just take the piss." He amended quickly, "Joke around."

"Yeah." She looked down, nodding. "She really loves you."

His mouthful of food suddenly became very difficult to swallow. Was she saying this to get a reaction?

"You have a special bond." She sipped her wine. "I'm glad she has that. The male influence."

He gulped and focused on his plate. "She's a special girl."

"Yes, she is." She watched him searchingly, and he avoided her gaze.

"But enough about her," he said, holding up his glass. "To you and me, alone at last, yeah?"

Joyce smiled tightly, toasting him, herself, and the elephant. "To us."

Saturday, April 5th, 12:15pm

"Spike!" Joyce yelled louder than the other four times.

Not even a stir.

Lips thin, she slammed the bathroom door so hard the framed picture over the bed tilted.

He moaned.

"Wake up."

"What time is it?" he asked, pillow-muffled.

"It's *noon*."

Spike managed to squint at her, and down at his rumpled clothes. "I'm dressed. Why...?"

"Because you got hammered last night and passed out." She put on her sunglasses and yanked a towel out from under his feet.

"Where are you going?"

"On our vacation."

"Joyce, wait--" The door shut between them, and he sighed.

Turning on the bed, he heard a sustained tone. It was the cellphone in his pocket.

He fished it out -- still no calls, so he switched it off, chucked it across the room, and rolled over.

* * *

12:22pm

"*Right. This is Spike. So... leave a message.*" "*Now press the--*"

Buffy cut the connection and stared sullenly at the phone keypad. She flipped through her DayPlanner, ran her finger down the Ts, and dialed another number.

"Hello?"

"Hi, could I speak to Angel?"

* * *

10:30pm

"Oh, Spike." Joyce held the small velvet box up to the bedside light. "I love opals."

"I know." Kneeling at her feet, eyes twinkling, he said, "If that's not enough, just say the word. Gift shop's still open, or I could boost that Ferrari you fancied in the parking lot--"

"I forgive you," she said, desperately needing him to be the person he claimed. "Just kiss me."

Ascending to her level, he took her head in his hands and kissed her.

* * *

11pm

"I think I broke your lamp." Larry showed it to her.

She shrugged as she walked past him, "Break whatever you want."

"You fucking rock." He held up both the lamp and his spilling beer cup. "Buffy fucking rocks! Whoo!"

She found Angel in the den surrounded by football buddies and friends. As she made a beeline for him, the circle instinctively hushed.

"Hey, Angel."

"Hey, Buff." He flashed her his most disarming smile. "Nice party."

"Wanna go upstairs?"

Eyes fixed on her, he handed his drink to a friend. "Uh huh."

11pm

Staring at the ceiling, Joyce silently listed the reasons someone like him would lose interest in someone like her. For one thing, her age was really starting to show. Maybe she needed Botox.

"I'm sorry, Joyce," he said again. "I don't know what's wrong with me."

Onto the few pounds she'd gained since they met, she replied dully, "It's all right."

"No, it isn't." Spike sat up and rubbed his neck. *None of this is.*

"Spike..." She reached for his shoulder, but he immediately stood and sought out his pants. "Where are you going?"

"I need a smoke. I'm sorry, I just... need one."

On her back again, she listened to him dress. Clearly she wasn't enough for him. Maybe he, movie star good-looking, deserved someone prettier... younger...

Anyone but Buffy, she thought as he walked out.

Sitting on a stout wall by the pool, Spike pulled his cellphone out of his back pocket and turned it on. *I missed call. Home.*

Returning the call, he felt a rush of relief -- he really needed to hear her voice. But after several long rings, an unfamiliar male voice answered, stunning Spike momentarily. "Summers residence. I think. Right? Yeah. Summers--"

"Who the *hell* is this?"

"This is Jake. Who's --?"

"Give me Buffy." There was a party going on. A fucking *party*!

"What?"

"Buffy!"

"Oh, uh... hold on. Anybody know where Buffy is?"

There were a few hollers, some laughter. He distinctly heard some girl shout, "Leave her alone, she's getting laid." More laughter and cheers, and something that sounded like, "Go Angel."

"Sorry sir, but she's uh... not available for phone consultation at the moment."

"Get her on the bloody phone, right--!"

Click.

Seething, Spike growled and kicked the nearest vertical object, which happened to be made of cement. Once the pain abated, he sat down, flipped open his phone, and called the Torrance Police.

"Party going on at 1630 Revello Drive. Underage drinking. Thought you should know." He flipped the phone closed.

There. That feels better.

He took out a cigarette and smoked it leisurely under a swaying palm.

CHAPTER 16: *Promise*

Midnight

Joyce picked up the phone, voice hoarse from sleep. "Hello?"

"...Mom?"

"Buffy? What is it? What's wrong?"

Beside her, Spike listened, still wide awake.

"I'm um... I'm at the police station."

She jolted awake. "What?"

"No, mom, it's not as bad as you think. I don't think. I invited a few friends over tonight, and it kind of turned into a party--"

"A party? You had a *party*?"

Spike sat up, feeling remorseful. All he wanted was for her to stop getting laid.

"I didn't mean to! Anyway, the cops came."

"And arrested you?"

"Well, they can't hold me here. I'm a minor. But they... kind of want to talk to you."

Joyce took a deep breath. "We're coming home right now."

"I'm sorry."

"Oh, you will be."

In silence, Spike and Buffy sat on a police station bench. She hadn't looked at him once. Alternating between wanting to slap some sense into her and wanting to beg her forgiveness, he ultimately settled for, "You okay?"

Let's see, Buffy thought, I've been sitting in a police station for two hours after being arrested during a meaningless sex act with someone I don't even like because you won't tell me you love me, and my mother's about to wring my neck. What do you think?

Her reticence frustrated him enough to say, "You do it to spite me? Is that it?"

She glanced at him askance, and looked away.

"Kitten..."

An office door opened, and a furious Joyce strode out. "Buffy? In the car. Now."

* * *

"I don't know what to do with you. I really don't." She flew past a stop sign.

Buffy sat repentant, and a little scared, in the back seat. "I said I was sorry."

"You know, that's just not enough anymore," she said, taking a screeching right turn. "I am so tired. Physically, emotionally... I'm tired of trying, Buffy. First a call from the principal, now this?"

The principal? Spike had a bad feeling about this.

"You forged a note from Spike, didn't you. To get a week off from school." Joyce prayed she'd answer yes.

Briefly, Buffy's gaze met Spike's. "Yeah."

Oh, thank god, thank god, thank god, and how dare she. "What were you thinking? I mean, you could've gotten away with it if you'd only made up the work, but no, you've been cutting classes left and right!" Before Buffy could reply, Joyce continued, "I had to lie to your principal, Buffy, tell him yes, we did go on vacation, just to save face! Who knows what the hell he thought was going on!"

Spike was shocked. All this was brewing on the tense, wordless drives to and from Palm Springs? Why hadn't she said anything? Was it because she suspected *him*... "Joyce--"

"And you!" She glared at him and the car lurched forward. "You tell me everything's fine after Parent-Teacher Night! She's just great! She's so *special*! She's a model student! She's just fucking wonderful!"

"I -- I didn't want to upset you! She promised she'd do better."

"Well she didn't. And now I'm *really* upset."

* * *

"Go to your room," Joyce snapped at Buffy after assessing the war zone formerly known as her house. "I'll deal with you in a minute." Hand on her hip, she turned to Spike. "I need to talk to your stepfather."

Uh-oh. Buffy crept up the stairs but opened and shut her door and lingered in the hallway to listen, just in case.

Keeping her volume low, tone fierce but betraying a tinge of hope, Joyce said, "Tell me the truth. What happened that week?"

"What...?" Feeling faint, he tried his best to look shocked. "What week?"

"I had an enlightening chat with your receptionist on Friday."

As he searched her eyes, it slowly dawned on him. *Oh. Shit.*

"Apparently, you were in San Francisco too. Funny how I didn't see you there." She gave him one last chance to prove her wrong: "What's going on?"

"Nothing!" he began, buying time to think, head spinning, why didn't he cover his tracks? Why did Buffy make him so blind? "Joyce, I swear to you, it's not --"

A wracking sob interrupted him. "Mommy, it's not his fault! I... I didn't want you to find out."

Joyce looked up the steps, and glared at Spike as she said, "Find out about *what?*"

"Uh..." Was she going to tell her? Was she that upset with him? *Should I run now or now?*

"I'll tell her everything, okay?" Buffy descended the staircase and sat on a step. It didn't take much to get the tears rolling; she'd been holding them back for two days. And the cover story, she'd come up with back in March... she'd just neglected to let Spike in on it -- it didn't seem important once it appeared they'd gotten off scot-free. "I met this guy... at school? Not Xander. We went out for a little while, and..." She sniffled, and looked up at her mom. "I got pregnant."

Joyce gasped in shock. Spike nearly matched it.

"It was an accident, okay?" She gazed down at her hands, breath shuddering, face contorting in painful false memory. "When I told him about it, he just... *dumped* me. And I didn't know what to do, I... I begged Spike to help me. I needed someone to take me to the clinic, to stay with me that week. I asked him to write the note, and I made him promise not to tell you." She wept outright. "I'm sorry mom, I just thought you'd be so mad..."

"Oh," Joyce breathed, hand at her mouth. That's what all the secrecy was about; *that's* why he couldn't talk about her; that's why... And poor Buffy, her little girl...

She sat down on the step, wrapped her arms around her daughter. "Oh honey. You could've told me. I'm not a monster..."

"I know, but I was just so confused..."

"Of course you were..."

Over her mother's shoulder, Buffy looked at Spike. Still stunned and relieved, but far from amused, he commended her silently, *You did it again.*

Joyce reached out for Spike's hand. "No more secrets. Okay?"

"Yeah," Buffy said. "Okay."

Spike sat on the back porch steps, staring at the moon.

The door slid open behind him, and soft bare feet padded out.

"If it isn't the little Oscar contender," he said, sardonic, as Buffy sat beside him. "Brava."

"Hey, you should be thanking me. I saved your ass."

"Up for debate." Smoke streamed out of his nose as he spoke. "Points for being a caring father type, points off for being a lying bastard."

"Better than a cheating one."

He gave her that.

She picked the cigarette out of his hand and took a drag. Then she sputtered and coughed.

"Good girl. Don't get used to it." He patted her on the back and reclaimed the stick. "'Sides, think of the baby."

With a sheepish chuckle, she rolled her eyes.

They sat in silence for a while, until he heard her whisper, "I'm sorry."

"About?"

She looked at her hands, folded before her.

He inspected his cigarette. "About him?"

"Um... you know I made all that up, right?"

His expression was hard, cold. "Was it Angel?"

Her eyes widened. "What?"

"Don't play innocent with me. I ring the house and some wanker tells me that you're--"

Mouth agape, she sprang to her feet. "*You* called the police!"

It *was* Angel! "Bloody right I did, and serves you right!"

Incredulous, she stared at him for a long time, finally turning on her heel and hurrying into the house.

Settling in for a long, lonely night, Spike tossed his cigarette across the yard and packed another.

* * *

Sunday, April 6th, 9pm

Palm on her cheek, Buffy said listlessly, "Can I be excused?"

"Why don't you try eating something first," Joyce said.

"I'm not hungry." Her chair screeched as she stood up, eyes meeting Spike's for a moment before she left the dining room.

"Homework, and straight to bed," Joyce called out to her. "Got it?"

"Yes, mother."

* * *

"Shit!"

Spike heard the slam of Buffy's door and perked up.

Joyce appeared in their bedroom doorway. "She's not in her room."

"She's gone?"

"Her window trick again." Joyce heaved a tired sigh. "I really thought it might be different this time..."

Brow etched in a deep scowl, he put on his boots. "I'll find her."

"Wait, think a minute. Shouldn't we try calling her friends before you careen all over town?"

He shook his head, yanking on his boot strings. "I got a good idea where she is." He picked up his cell phone, stuck it in his pocket and brushed past her.

She followed him down the stairs. "And where, pray tell, would that be?"

"Stay here. Case she calls." He threw on his leather jacket and went out into the night.

* * *

Spike sped down Torrance Boulevard, knuckles white on the steering wheel. He cast his phone aside. She wasn't picking up.

He turned on Arlington, ran a red light on Engracia, and veered left into the Bronze lot, tires screeching. Quickly, he strode past double-lines of kids waiting to be ID'd and accosted the bouncer at the front door.

"Hey, Spike, long time no see," the bouncer said, looking him over. "Heard you got yourself a good woman and cleaned up your act."

So many things were wrong with that sentence. "Seen a girl in here, 'bout this high," he put his hand up to his chest, "long blonde hair, sixteen, pretty?"

The bouncer chortled. "Guess it didn't take."

Sanctimonious, Spike snapped, "She's my stepdaughter."

"Alright man, sorry. But you just described about half the girls I let through tonight. Go look for yourself."

With a nod, he pushed past him and into the club. It was dark, the music was loud, the room was wall-to-wall body heat, but it took him all of three seconds to spot her.

Dancing. With Xander.

He mowed down a path and glared at the boy before yanking Buffy's arm. Impulsively breaking free, she spun around, and beamed as she recognized him. "Spike!" Before he could stop her, she'd jumped into his arms, legs constricting around his waist, mouth at his ear. "Wanna dance?"

"You're drunk," he said, trying to put her down.

"Little bit." She moved to his other ear. "Wanna fuck?"

Luckily, the music prevented anyone else from overhearing that gem. "No."

"But I'm wearing the shoes. See?"

He glanced briefly. The pink ones. "I'm taking you home."

She laughed airily. "I'm not going *anywhere*."

"Yes you bloody well are." He reversed control of the grip, kept her stuck to him.

When she realized he wasn't kidding, she thrashed against him, springboarding off his torso. "Put me down!"

"Excuse me, but what the hell?"

The boy was talking at him. "This doesn't concern you, alright?"

"I think it does. She's my friend and she wants you to put her down."

If he didn't have an armful of Buffy just then, he'd have probably knocked him out. "She's also a minor who's been drinking. Like you."

When Amy took his arm, Xander backed down, but kept his scowl in place.

"Come on." He carried a flailing Buffy to the back door. The music muted behind them in the alleyway, and her cries of protest rang in the air.

As she writhed and scratched and pounded at him, demanding that he set her free, he brought her to a narrow alley, dropped her and pinned her shoulders against a brick wall. "Were you gonna fuck *him* too -- or did you already?"

"What's it to you, huh?" she yelled. "Aren't I too young for you? Aren't I just your jailbait fucktoy?"

He covered her mouth. "Keep your voice down!"

"NO!" She pushed him with all her might, and his back hit the opposite wall. "You're such a fucking coward, you know that? You know the truth as well as I do, but you're too fucking weak to admit it! You're the one that needs to grow up, not me!"

Well, that was uncalled for. "Buffy--"

"Shut up!" Her shoulders wracked with sobs. Real, honest-to-goodness sobs, the kind that are too ugly to fake. "I hate you! I hate you, I hate my mother, and I hate my life!"

"You think if I tell you how I feel it'll make it all better? That it'll make the rest of the bloody world go away, that it'll make her disappear? It won't!" He grabbed her elbows and said it again to make it very clear: "It won't."

Her expression turned to a pitying grimace. "How 'bout *I* just go away? Let you live your fucked up little lie." She wrenched free of him to leave.

"Buffy -- don't! " He caught her arm, heart pounding in his chest, knowing only that he had to say this: "Don't go."

She turned to face him.

"Please. You know I'm--" Anguished, he clamped his eyes shut. "God, you know it, why do you make me say it?"

A single tear rolled down her cheek. "I need to hear it."

He breathed deeply in, out, in, out, as deep, dark fear gripped him: Everything would change with these words, everything, he didn't know how but it would. Was it worth it? Could he do it?

Face falling, heart breaking, she turned away.

Suddenly he magnetized to her, grasped her arms to force eye contact. Voice choked with emotion, he said, "I'm in love with you, alright? I'm completely, insanely in love with you and I don't know when it happened but it did. I think about you every fucking second of the day, I obsess over your well-being, I go apeshit with jealousy when I think of you with another bloke, yeah, I love you, Buffy, alright? I mean..." he sniffled, "I don't know how to stop it or, or what to do with it, I've never bloody felt this way, you know? I've gone all my life without this and I've been just fine, and why... why does it have to be you?"

She fell into his embrace, crying on his t-shirt. "I knew it, you stupid jerk."

Shuddering, he held her tight, upturned her face and kissed her wet cheeks, her lips. "Only you, Buffy."

Tasting his tears, she whimpered, "I'm so in love with you, Spike."

As their mouths met, she impatiently reached for his belt. He hiked her legs up, pulling her skirt along for the ride. They'd been expressing their love this way for so long it had become ritual.

"Oh, Buffy... I've been so stupid..."

"No, I have... I'm sorry I... with Angel? I'm sorry. I was just so..."

Shaking his head, he shushed her: "It's my fault. It's my fault."

"I'm telling you, something's weird with them." Xander put his hands in his pockets as he headed down the alley. "They're way too touchy-feely."

Amy matched his stride. "Please. If anything was weird, I'd know."

"Yeah, but did you see the way he looked at me? The way he looked at *her*? What kind of stepfather *is* that?"

"The young, stud-muffin kind?"

"Exactly. It's just wrong that he's that young and that good looking and she was *that* all over him."

She shrugged. "She's got the major hots for him. And apparently, so do you."

"C'mon, you know what I--"

"*Unh! Yes! Yes! Y-mmph!*"

"*Shhhh.*"

Amy and Xander froze, staring at each other, mouths in little o's. Following the origin of the disturbance, they turned to see two dark intertwining figures framed by a narrow alleyway.

"Whoa, that's... unsanitary," Xander said.

She grabbed his arm to force him to stop ogling.

As they hurried toward the parking lot in embarrassed silence, Amy saw something curious.

She frowned at the silver SUV. "That's weird, they should be..."

"What?"

Holy. Shit. "Nothing."

* * *

"I got her," Spike said.

Buffy snuggled up to his arm, content. *He got me.*

"Yeah, she's fine. Right. Sure. Ten minutes."

Buffy took the phone, turned it off, and kissed him.

* * *

"And you are not to go *anywhere* other than work and school without my express permission, is that clear?"

Buffy nodded, hand on the stair banister. "It's clear."

Spike stood by the door, quiet.

"I don't think you understand the gravity of this, Buffy."

"I do. I took off while I was grounded. I drank. I made a mistake."

"Damn right, you did. A big one."

"I'm sorry, Mom. I won't do it again." She looked at Spike to say, "I promise."

Older

PART THREE

CHAPTER 17: *Safe*

Sunday, April 6th

Grabbing a midnight snack, Joyce heard a strange noise. Was it Buffy? Was she crying? It was coming from the basement.

She opened the door. Another sob, louder this time. "Buffy?" she whispered. It was hard to make sense of the shapes lit by dim moonlight.

Down a few steps, she could see the crown of Buffy's head, pressed against the couch. As she got closer, Buffy whipped her head back. She was naked, writhing on something... on *someone*. His left hand slid up her stomach to her breasts, and she glimpsed a gold wedding band.

It was her husband, of course, clutching her daughter to his lap as if it were second nature.

Oddly, she wasn't shocked or even all that surprised. What bothered her most was that they hadn't had the courtesy to stop -- Buffy noticed her there, but didn't break her stride. "Hello, mother," she said casually, a sly smile curling her lips. "I won."

Joyce woke from the dream, turned her head. Spike was on his side, snoring, hugging a pillow.

The doctor had said the new, stronger sleep-aid prescription might cause vivid dreams. She hadn't expected them to be *this* disturbing.

What had Buffy said to her? It was something awful, whatever it was... Before she could sort out the details of the dream, the drugs, like an ebb tide, sucked her back to sleep.

Monday, April 7th, 8:35am

"You little whore."

Buffy was bewildered: As the first bell sounded, Amy had ushered her into the girls' room with a huge wicked grin on her face as if she had dirt about someone else, but apparently, the dirt was on her. "What'd I do?"

"I can't fucking believe you! And I can't *believe* you didn't tell me."

"T - tell you... tell you what?"

"You're fucking him. You are *fucking* him!"

Buffy's eyes widened. She couldn't know... just because of last night...? "What? Who?"

Amy pouted as she said, "Your stepdaddy, that's who."

She rolled her eyes, turned to leave. "You're bent. You've completely lost it."

"You can't deny it. I saw the car! The *empty* car! I heard you scream, 'oh yes, oh yes, harder Daddy, yes!'"

Buffy scoffed as she faced her. "I didn't call him Da--"

Amy's brow shot up, a triumphant smirk beneath it.

Oh crap... crap crap crap.

"When were you planning on telling me?"

"Amy--"

"Oh my god! Now I know what you were doing all that week! *Him!*"

"Amy, I'm serious. No one can know about this. No one."

"Well, duh." She chuckled, high on a secret. "He could go to jail."

"It's not funny." Buffy sighed. Why didn't she just do her lying thing?

Maybe she was tired of keeping it a secret. Maybe she wanted to be able to finally *talk* about it like it wasn't shameful or bad... like they were real.

"I won't tell." She crossed her heart. "On my father's grave. Honest."

"Thank you." Buffy leaned back against the sink.

Amy smiled. "...As long as you tell me the *whole* story. Like, now."

Buffy exhaled, and checked under the bathroom stalls before she started her tale.

Wednesday, April 9th, 7pm

"Spike?"

"Yeah?" He stopped on his way up the stairs to see Joyce at the dining room table, piles of paper scattered about, squinting at one particular document.

"What's this?"

"What's what?" On closer inspection he found that she was referring to his trust fund bank statement from December. Their accountant had stuck a post-it note on the page that said ITEMIZE LARGE WITHDRAWAL. Shit, he thought. Shit! Bloody joint filing. He took the page out of her grasp and willed his hand to stop shaking, wondering, What would Buffy do? She'd Emmy-win her way out of this, and so, by God, would he. "Oh, that. Christmas presents." Buffy'd be impressed with his nonchalance.

"Whose Christmas presents? Please tell me my earrings weren't twelve thousand dollars."

He put the paper down, confident, relaxed. "And if they were?"

"Spike, as much as I love them, we agreed you wouldn't be extravagant with this account. This could be our retirement. Buffy's future!"

Or her present... *Her \$8000 present...* "Look." He sat down. "When my mother dies, god willing, whether she'd like me to have it or not -- whether *I* want it or not, I get everything. 'Everything' being an outrageous sum that'll put this little nest egg to shame. Not to mention Buffy's dad's worth his weight in ticker tape." He touched her cheek. "You have to understand -- 'til now, I never had anybody to spend this on. I want my girl to be happy *now*... I don't want her to wait for it." He congratulated himself on a spin well-spun.

Joyce couldn't help but smile. *My girl.* "I do appreciate it, Spike. But expensive diamond baubles aren't the key to my happiness. They could've been a hundred dollars; it's the thought I care about. So please, for me--"

"Yeah, alright. I'll be thrifty." He kissed her head. "You win."

She watched him walk away, a repressed memory jogged. *Hello, Mother. I won.*"

* * *

Friday, April 11th, 9:02pm

"Thank you for shopping at Victoria's Secret, have a nice evening." Buffy put the charge slip into the cash register and prepared to close up... until a pin-up bra and garters set splayed onto the counter as a man said, "Wanna buy these for my girlfriend, but I'm not sure they'll fit."

She met Spike's eyes with a smile. "Do you know what size she is?"

"Not sure..." Slowly, he cocked his head. "Bit like you, actually."

"Really?"

"Exactly like you. In fact, I think you should try it on for me."

"We don't do that for customers, sir."

"Uh huh. And when do you get off work?"

She pursed her lips. "Nine."

He checked his watch. "So, technically, as of about two minutes ago, you're free to model this outfit for any bloke you like, yeah?"

"Spike..."

"Don't like it?" He shrugged. "I'm game for anything in the store; maybe one of those pink fluffy jobbies with the--" Her eyes darted behind him and he followed her gaze, dropped the hand that was previously gesturing at his chest, because: "Amy! ...I didn't know you worked here too."

Looking as if she was about to bust into giggles, Amy nodded.

He spun to glower at Buffy.

"Calm down, Spike," she said. "It's okay."

Amy cleared her throat and sauntered away.

"How is that okay?" he hissed. "I'm a bleeding dolt! Why didn't you stop me?"

"Shhh. She knows, okay?"

His eyes widened, and he couldn't form words. "Y--"

"I didn't tell her. She heard us last Sunday."

"Heard us...?" The memory of that night returned. "Fucking hell. Does Xander know too?"

"No. Nobody else."

"Secret's safe," Amy said, suddenly beside him, making him jump. "And I think that's a great choice for Buffy."

He looked down at the lingerie on the counter, and back at Buffy, who smiled.

With a sigh, he said, "Ring it up, then."

* * *

"Why didn't you tell me she knew?"

"I didn't want to scare you."

"Bit late for that."

Amy got into the car. "I hope I'm not, you know, interrupting or anything."

"It's not like we have sex in the car," Buffy said.

"Not what I heard," Amy said, and laughed. "I can't believe you used my sister's stats. That is so awesome."

Spike glared at Buffy.

"Okay, Amy, not helping." She touched Spike's arm. "Relax. This doesn't go any further than the three of us. Amy doesn't blab."

"Right," he said, exhaling. "Well, Amy. What do you think?"

"I think you make a hot couple," she said with a shrug.

Teenagers did have a way of simpling things up.

* * *

Saturday, April 12th, 9am

Spike got out of bed, stretched, and went for the bathroom. Locked. Joyce was showering. Since when did she lock the door?

Oh, well. He headed groggily to the hallway bathroom, opened it, and found Buffy, sitting on the toilet, panties at her knees. Tinkling.

She startled and tensed, wordlessly communicating that this was a private moment and he should leave. Unfazed, he closed the door behind him, sauntered toward her, and very casually pulled his cock out of his briefs.

When he aimed between her legs, she reflexively spread her knees and scooted backward, hands up.

As he proceeded to piss into the toilet, their eyes met, and her initial expression of repugnance evolved into one of affection -- he was sharing something intimate with her. His brow arched, his wrist flicked slightly, and she felt a gush of hot liquid on her pussy.

She gasped... and let out a shuddering laugh.

Flashing her a smile, he finished up, bent down to ardently kiss her cheek, and left before she could say a word.

* * *

Sunday, April 13th, 12pm

"What's that?" Joyce asked as Spike walked past her and up the steps.

"CD for Buffy," he said, tapping it against his palm.

"Oh."

"Expanding her musical horizons." He reached the second floor, knocked on Buffy's door, heard her voice and said, "Found that song you wanted."

"Come in."

She was already shimmying out of her pajama bottoms. Smiling at her, he quietly turned the lock and pulled his t-shirt over his head.

Naked, she took the jewel box out of his hand, dropped the disk in her stereo. "Which one?"

"First," he said, stroking himself to readiness.

The song began. She cranked it up. He lifted her by the hips, rubbed the tip of his erection against her soft, juicy center.

Head rolling back on his chest, she teased, "What is this crap?"

"Longest bloody song I could find." He cupped her breast, pinched her nipple, and surged into her.

She held in a moan and glanced at the stereo readout: 6:20. "Still too short."

"Don't ever say that while I'm fucking you."

She giggled, and he eased her forward, pumping in time with the beat.

*Whenever I'm alone with you
You make me feel like I am home again
Whenever I'm alone with you
You make me feel like I am whole again*

Slipping out of his grasp, she spun to face him and wrestled him to the floor, sweet smile curling her lips. "You only chose this 'cause it's long?"

As she began to bounce on his cock, he managed, "Only reason."

*Whenever I'm alone with you
You make me feel like I am young again
Whenever I'm alone with you
You make me feel like I am fun again*

"Liar," she whispered in his ear.

"Can't prove anything." He bit her neck, kissed her mouth...

*However far away
I will always love you*

Holding a fistful of her hair, he raised her head so she'd look him in the eye.

*However long I stay
I will always love you
Whatever words I say
I will always love you
I will always love you*

Friday, April 18th, 7:30 pm

"I don't think I've ever seen you look so bored."

Spike shrugged at Joyce, sheepish. "Yeah, well. Department stores. Not really my thing."

"I know, I know. Here." She put a bag into his hand. "Go get this stuff gift-wrapped."

"Right. A task. I can do that."

"I'll meet you by the escalators in an hour, okay? And if you see Buffy, remind her that we're not shopping for her?"

"Yeah, fat chance. Prob'ly trying on half the store."

"If she's not downstairs, go check in juniors, will you?"

"Right. Juniors." And if anything made him feel like a criminal, that was it.

* * *

Riding the escalator down to ground level, he spotted her in the jewelry section. *Likes shiny things, my girl.*

She was talking to the saleslady, smiling and nodding, holding something slinky in her hand. He approached just as Buffy sighed, and the saleslady put it away.

"Don't look so glum," he said. "I got a job for you."

She faced him, and he put the bag in her hand. "Huh?"

"Gift-wrap it."

"Why me?"

"She's *your* aunt."

"Come with?"

He shook his head. "Got my own to-do list."

"But--"

"In a hurry now. Off with you."

"Fine, fine. God." She walked off.

He looked down at the counter, and back at her retreating form.

When she was out of sight, he turned back to the saleslady. "Which one was she pining for?"

She smiled, and took out the display. "It's an Italian 14 karat white-gold holding hearts anklet. She wanted to add this to one end." Her acrylic nail pointed at a matching heart with a tiny letter inscribed: *S*.

Gazing at it for a moment, he reached into his back pocket for his wallet and handed her his American Express card. "Then let's add it, shall we?"

"I wish *my* husband was as thoughtful as you."

He chose not to correct her.

* * *

She wasn't in customer service, wasn't anywhere on the first floor. With a sigh, he headed up the escalator to Juniors.

Thumping music assaulted his senses. Screechy little girls were everywhere. Some of them may have even been her age, possibly older, but it just drove the point home: there was nobody like her. Nobody.

"Psst."

He halted, looked around. She was standing by the fitting room, an armful of clothing in her hands. They smiled at each other.

"You lost, mister?"

"Not anymore."

"C'mere."

He walked up to her. "You're not supposed to be shopping for yourself, you know. Family reunion and all that."

"Uh huh. What do you think of this?" She held up a pink, gauzy blouse.

He touched it. "Is it see-through?"

"I don't know. Guess I'll have to try it on."

"Oh no. You're not spending the next hour in there while I die of boredom out here."

"So come in with me."

"I can't go in there."

She peered into the fitting room. "I don't see a sign that says no fathers allowed."

With a smirk, he felt compelled to add, "Not even shockingly young, exceptionally virile fathers?"

"Oh, don't worry, I'll tell 'em you had me when you were like twelve, that I'm the tragic result of severely lacking sex-ed and after Momma died of crack we found comfort in each other." As he reeled at this improv, she walked in and asked the woman, "Is it okay if my dad comes in with me?"

"Yeah, I guess." She handed her a number. "Take anything that's open."

She flashed Spike a grin, and jerked her head in the direction of the rooms. He followed her, thinking it peculiar that in one department he was assumed her husband, and in another, just two flights up, he was most believably her dad. Oh well; he got to fuck her either way.

She chose the empty room at the very end. As soon as the door shut, they were fused at the mouth and hips. The voices of girls and their mothers and friends reverberated from the other stalls as he pulled off her shirt and she unfastened her pants. Mouths teasing, he pressed his fingers between her thighs, rubbed her through her thin cotton panties.

She tried to force his hand inside, but he pulled away, stepped back, and shook his head. "Uh uh. You try on that shirt."

She scoffed. "Are you serious?"

He sat down on the little bench. "Dead serious." Wiggling a brow, he said softly, "Daddy wants to see you in it."

Well, in that case... "Whatever you want, Daddy."

"Can I get that in writing?"

"You get that in action." She unhooked her lacy bra and tossed it at his head. He wadded it up and ostentatiously inhaled her scent.

"Ew," she laughed. "Freak."

"The shirt."

"Getting there."

She picked it off of its hanger, slipped it over her head, and flipped her hair out.

He sat back, and beckoned with a finger.

She closed the gap between them, widened her stance and lowered herself onto his lap.

"This," he said quietly, teasingly as he ran a hand down the outline of her breast, "is completely obscene."

"Is it?"

He nodded. "I forbid any daughter of mine to buy it." And then he clasped his mouth over the thin material that covered her nipple.

She gasped, and shuddered, eyes rolling back as she held his head. Nodded compulsively. *Yes, yes, just like that...*

But then the sucking got loud. She squirmed, tried to push him back, but he wasn't having it. He was kneading her ass now, suckling at her breast...

Could anyone hear? Would they know what that sound meant? Did it matter when it felt so good? He moved to the other nipple and she lost her train of thought. She shook in place, and oh, he knew he could make her come just by nipple stimulation, it was so close... so close... She held her breath, held his head, and exploded internally. Then she rocked in his lap.

He stuck his hand into her panties and made her lick his shining finger, then he held her to his groin, looking like he was about to eat her alive.

She slid to her knees and tugged his pants open.

As they tuned out the "Does this make me look fat"s and "Oh my god, that is so you"s in the neighboring stalls, Buffy sucked her stepfather's cock.

It only took a minute. He suppressed a groan as he came, held her head down. When he was spent, she pulled up -- but one more spurt was left, and it landed on her shirt.

She laughed. "Um... Is this your way of telling me you want me to buy this shirt?"

"Looks like it's been marked, yeah."

"You've been marking me a lot lately." He twitched his brow at her, and she gave him a disapproving scowl. "How am I supposed to pay for this? What'll the salesgirl say?" She pulled the shirt down to inspect the white spot. "I can't believe you Lewinskyed my shirt."

"What, you're not gonna lick it clean?"

She rolled her eyes and tugged it over her head. "You lick it, perv. In the meantime, I have a wardrobe to try on."

Wiping the blouse with his shirttail, he said, "Take your time, pet. Take your time."

He bought her everything she wanted.

CHAPTER 18: *Family*

I am

"**I hate these family get-togethers,**" Buffy sighed, leaning back on the porch steps, head resting on his stomach. "I wish we could just opt out."

Moving errant strands of hair out of her face, he said, "You don't know how lucky you are. You've got a great family."

She frowned up at him. "You've got to be kidding."

"No, I'm not. Big, loud, happy families full of hearts and puppies -- they're hard to come by."

"What hearts? What happy? 'Cause I don't see it."

He ran his thumb over her cheek. "Someday you will."

1:30am

Joyce heard something shatter in the basement.

She didn't want to go, didn't want to see, but something compelled her down the stairs.

The TV was on. She heard a giggle.

"Buffy?" she tried to whisper. Then she came in full view of the couch.

They were lying on their sides, him spooning her. Naked? He kissed her shoulder, grasped her hip, and noticed Joyce there. "You're imagining things," he said, and Buffy laughed heartily along with him.

Joyce sat up in bed. Another dream. Just another dream that drew on her feelings of exclusion and irrational jealousy, images fueled by paranoid fantasy and too much Ambien.

...Except this time, Spike wasn't beside her.

Heart pounding, she threw on her robe and tried Buffy's door. Locked.

She went down, through the dark kitchen, to the darker basement. Marched all the way to the couch. No one there.

Picturing a sickening tableau of him in Buffy's room, the lock closing her out, she passed through the kitchen again, and heard him clear his throat.

Surprise on her side, she flung open the back door -- Spike was sitting on the porch steps, smoking. Alone.

He turned his head, held up his cigarette. "Caught me."

"Spike," she said, tightening her sash as she approached him. "We have to hit the road early tomorrow, shouldn't you get some rest?"

"Don't worry 'bout me, love."

After a moment, she came out with it: "What's keeping you up at night?"

Spike actually welcomed this question tonight, because he had an answer. He gestured at the space beside him. "Want to have a seat?"

Tentative, she sat beside him.

"My mother's keeping me up at night."

Well, that was the last thing she expected to hear. "Your mother?"

"Funny, yeah?" At her empathetic headshake, he said, looking out at the yard, "I've been thinking, ever since I've become a family man... About her. How tough it was for her, raising me alone. I was a handful -- I fought her tooth and nail, blamed her for my dad's runner..." He raised a brow. "I was a bit like Buffy."

Joyce chuckled. "So you were."

"But so much time's gone by. It's too late to make things right."

"No, Spike." She caressed his shoulder. "It's never too late. A mother's love -- it lasts forever, no matter what. Take my word for it." He cupped his hand over hers. "Now come to bed," she said, kissing his cheek and tousling his hair. "Or I'll make you call her this instant."

He smiled. "I'll be up in a tick."

Her robe swished as she went back inside.

"Wow," Buffy awed from her windowsill perch above him. "You're better than *me*."

"I wasn't lying. Not completely, anyway." He extinguished his cigarette and stood, sending her a pointed glance. "Neither was she."

Searchingly, Buffy stared at him until he strode into the house.

Saturday, April 19th, 7:15am

"Buffy?" Joyce knocked on her door. "Buffy, I'm not kidding, we're losing valuable time!" With a frustrated sigh, she found Spike in the bathroom, comb raised to his head. "Could you please do the honors? She listens to you."

"Oh," he said, nodding and putting the comb down. "Sure."

"I'll go put the food in the car."

"I'll make sure she's up." He slyly pocketed his Swiss Army knife and moved down the hall as Joyce descended the stairs. He made a show of banging on Buffy's door and sounding sensible until the coast was clear, when he jimmied his way in.

She was sprawled across her comforter on her stomach, dead asleep, tank top riding up her back, pink see-through panties giving him an alluring eyeful.

"Buffy..." He closed the door, crept toward her, slipped into bed and took her in his arms. She instinctively coiled herself around him. Hands roaming up and down her warm, soft back, he kissed her neck several times, whispering, "Wake up, beautiful."

She hummed sweetly and squeezed his shoulders, protesting, "Mm-mm..."

"Mm-hm," he corrected, but then his fingers involuntarily slid over the swell of her ass and underneath the elastic of her panties. She arched to meet his touch as he dipped two fingers into the cleft between her cheeks, angling up to rub her clitoris.

"Mmmn..."

"Door's unlocked, baby." He kissed her ear, inhaling deeply. "We have to go."

"Don't stop..."

Rational thought once again edged out by the incredible feel of her in his arms, on his fingertips... And now she was reaching into his pants, stroking him.

Hearing the car door slam, he upped the pace. "Shit. Hurry up."

"Don't rush me!"

He chuckled. "God, I love you."

She grinned, eyes still shut. "Say it again."

"I love you."

Both her hips and her hand pumped faster. "With the 'god'."

"God, I--"

"Buffy, are you up yet?" Joyce yelled from downstairs, and Spike propelled off the bed and landed on his ass. Buffy laughed.

Rubbing the part of his skull that he'd banged on her sidetable, he said, "Yeah, she's awake!"

"Well, come on, let's get a move on!" Her heels clacked away.

Buffy whispered before she got out of bed, "Now you see why I hate these things?" He grabbed her foot, and she turned to look at him and his goofy smile. "What?"

"I like your knickers."

"Horndog."

"Don't change them."

"Okay, first of all, ew. Second, I'm wearing a bikini today."

He looked her up and down. He'd never seen her in one of those, had he? "Let's see you put it on then."

"No!" she giggled, wresting free. "I need a quick shower." She grabbed a towel, adding to herself, "A cold, quick shower."

"Fetch me a bucket of ice while you're at it," he said, attempting to will his hard-on away. Her sheer pink panties landed on his head, and she winked, "Or you could just jizz into those."

"That's disgusting," he said, and took a hearty whiff.

She said, "Ugh!" as she left the room.

He absently checked the window for Joyce's whereabouts. She was in the driveway, opening the trunk, and their eyes met.

As he thought, What is she thinking? she was thinking, Why is he in her room?

* * *

"Hamburger or hot dog?"

Buffy smiled flirtatiously.

He flipped a burger. "Aren't you hungry, pet?"

"Starved."

"So, which is it?"

She scanned the crowd in her aunt's backyard: no one in earshot, mother occupied at a patio table by the pool. Safe, she reached out and tickled his side with the answer, "Horndog."

"Hmm..." He surveyed the stocked picnic table beside the grill. "Don't think that's on the menu."

"I'm ordering special."

"Ah. You're like one of those vegetarian types. Get preferential treatment."

"I'd better."

Eyes on her mother, he said, "Meet me in the second floor loo in ten minutes."

* * *

"Oh, sorry." Buffy closed the bathroom door after seeing one of her distant cousins fixing her makeup at the sink. Where was Spike?

She peered out the hallway window and spotted him, blockaded by a group of her relatives. After a moment, he looked up, raised his brow in defeat.

She shrugged. *We've got our whole lives.*

* * *

Buffy opened her eyes to see Spike reclining in the lounge chair beside hers until he was level with her.

"I just want you to know," he said sotto voce, "that you're driving me mad."

"Me? What'd I do?"

She had to ask? He shot her a knowing look, glanced down. She was sunbathing on her belly, teeny pink bikini showcasing her perfect ass.

Languidly, she slid her index finger under the side seam. "What, this?"

"Absolutely mad," he said, pretending to stretch, hands balling into frustrated fists.

She giggled.

"Spike?" Joyce called from afar.

"Fuck me," Spike exclaimed under his breath.

"Right now?"

Getting up from the lounge chair, he mumbled, "The sooner the better."

"Just remember, we'll be home by midnight," she teased.

"I could be a bloody pumpkin by then. You'll be sorry..."

* * *

"It's getting a little chilly, don't you think?" Joyce sipped her cocktail. "Maybe you should put something on."

Crunching on a Tostito, Buffy said, "I have something on." *Something that makes Spike absolutely mad...*

"Did you get to swim?" Gayle asked Buffy, who shook her head and dipped another chip in salsa while furtively glancing at Spike. He was looking anywhere but at her.

"It's too cold to swim now," Joyce said.

"No, it's great at night," Cordelia said, body submerged, arms folded on the poolside. "Warmer in than out. Seriously, Buffy, if you're over the whole family thing like I am? I strongly suggest the pool."

"I have a crippling fear of that pool," Buffy said. "Thanks to you."

"Oh my god, that was a million years ago! Will I ever live that down?"

"Hey tiny Buffy, c'mere!" Dunk. 'And stay down! Ha ha ha!'"

"Alright, alright. I was evil," Cordelia said. "And also twelve!"

"I don't know. I think the pool makes one evil."

"I say we fight that evil," Spike suggested, biting a carrot stick and pointing with it. "Get you over your fear once and for all."

"Huh?"

"Come on love. I'm suiting up, we're goin' in."

"Um... over my dead body?"

"Oh, Buffy," Gayle said. "He's right! There's no better way to overcome."

"No better way," he repeated, with a rakish look that said, Wanna overcome? Luckily it could easily be confused with his Up for a challenge? look, as no matter what he did or who he was talking to, he always looked like he wanted to have sex.

She remained wary. "Promise not to dunk me?"

"I promise to be gentle," he said, and Buffy whimpered in terror. He patted her shoulder. "Be right back."

Her aunt sighed to Joyce. "He is so good to her. You really scored a winner this time."

Joyce smiled, watching Spike saunter into the house to change.

* * *

The sun was setting, and the sky darkened with each passing moment.

"It's a lot smaller than I remember it," Buffy said, feet flat on the bottom of the 4'5 marked area.

"See? Nothing's quite as bad as it seems."

"Is her fear conquered yet?" Cordelia asked from the deep end.

Buffy pointed at her cousin. "Don't you come any closer."

She rolled her eyes, and said to Spike, "Please spank her inner moppet or whatever? *So* tired of this."

"I'll do what I can."

"Thank you!" She swam to the ladder, and climbed out, leaving them alone in the pool.

Buffy chuckled as Spike smiled at her. "Shall I spank you now or later?"

"Later," she said.

"Come with me." He took her in his arms, made her straddle his waist.

"Oh no, I'm not going to the deep end," she said, not about to let go. "That's where evil dwells."

"Yes you are."

"But -- evil..."

"Only way to overcome." He began a backstroke, her clinging to his front.

"I'm all wet," she whispered in his ear.

A sharp intake of breath, but he soldiered on. "So am I."

"You know what I mean."

Out of the lamplight of the shallow end, he stopped swimming and tried to let her go.

She stayed put. "I like it here."

"How can I dunk you like this?"

"Are you nuts? You're really dunking me?"

"What, you think we're here for something else?"

"Yes! She's gone--"

"Here, I'll make it easier for you. Dunk me first."

A bit too eager to oblige, she pushed his head underwater, and he immediately ran his hands up her thighs and nuzzled his face between them, making her tremble. He came back up with a wicked grin. "Now you."

"Guys?" Joyce hurried to the poolside and stage-whispered, "We're about to bring out the birthday cake."

"We'll be right there, Mom."

"She hasn't let me dunk her yet."

Joyce looked from one to the other. "Okay... Just hurry up."

"Joyce?" someone called from inside.

"Coming!"

As Joyce went back to the house, Spike said, "Down you go."

Buffy held her breath and he pushed her down, slowly. Level with his swimtrunks, she bit at the outline of his cock, then licked a line up his chest to his nipple.

Quietly gasping, he glanced at the people gathered at the back porch.

She emerged, face much too close to his. "I think I'm starting to be okay with this."

He smirked. "Told you I could fix it."

"I'm so fearless, I can do this." She splashed him and swam away.

"Oh, now you're gonna get it." He pursued her.

She'd stopped under the diving board, holding onto the pool's edge. He came up beside her. It was very dark under there.

"Is everybody ready? Where's Gayle?"

Their eyes slid to the commotion, and back to each other.

"Happy birthday to you..."

He pulled down his trunks, just enough. She slipped her bikini bottoms off and bunched them in her hand before raising her knees and taking him in.

He felt unusually cold; she felt unusually hot. It was a luscious combination.

"Happy birthday dear Ga-yle..."

As she rocked against him, they took turns keeping a vigilant eye on the partygoers. Their pace quickened, and their eyes met. He moved a triangle of cloth away from her breast and rolled a nipple in his fingertips.

She bit her lip, eyes rolling back.

Their heavy breathing sped up, loud enough in their ears to drown out the wry, smattered rendition of *'For She's a Jolly Good Fellow'*.

Buffy climaxed, emitting a nearly imperceptible whimper.

"Which nobody can deny!"

Spike grit his teeth and bit back a growl, turning it into labored breath as he held her hip down and curled his tailbone up, emptying his unquenchable desire into her.

A boisterous round of applause.

Breath slowing, they shared a secretive giggle.

"How the hell did you fit forty candles on this? I hate you all."

Her bikini bottoms floated past his head. Her eyes widened. "Oh crap!"

He plucked them out of the water, checked their visibility to the rest of the group, and held them up in the air, tongue against his teeth. "Finders keepers."

"Don't you dare." She snagged them from his grasp and quickly put them back on. He swam her to the ladder, and they returned to the group.

Mid-laughter, Joyce looked up. "So? Are you cured?"

"Totally overcome," Buffy said, beaming.

* * *

As soon as he closed the door of the guest room, he murmured, "Totally overcome?"

"Yeah. What's wrong with that?" Buffy picked out her clothes and went into the adjoining bathroom, leaving the door open. "I didn't say it first."

He shrugged. "Could be taken the wrong way."

"We *are* the wrong way." Leaving the door open, she flung a towel his way, then dried her hair and put it up in a loose bun.

He fluffed the towel on his head. "Don't have to rub it in her face."

"Well I'm sick of her face." She peeled off her wet bathing suit and toweled herself off.

Entranced by the display, he said, "Come here."

She laughed, "Again? I thought you didn't wanna rub me in your face."

He picked something out of his jeans pocket and lured her with, "Got something for you..."

She peered at his closed fist. "There's a present?"

"Gonna come here?"

"It's not my birthday yet." She smiled, and padded toward the bed.

"Do I need an occasion?" He sat her down on the bedside and took her foot in his hand. "Close your eyes."

"This is a trick," she said, closing her eyes and lifting her leg. She felt him kiss her toes and clasp something on her ankle.

"Open."

Seeing the anklet she'd lusted after in the store, with the little S on it too, she squealed in delight and jumped up to hug him. "I love you!"

"I know you do." They kissed. "But if she asks, you've got a boyfriend named Simon."

"Simon? Ew! I would never date a Simon. ...Scott. His name is Scott."

"Oh is it now?" he teased. "Where's he live, the little bastard? I might pay him a visit."

She made up an entire history for her new imaginary boyfriend Scott while they dressed, and he said, "I just want you to know, I don't approve."

"Maybe that's why I like him." Ready to go, she went for the door, but he smacked his palm against it, making it slam shut.

Behind her, he ran his hands possessively over her breasts, her hips, inhaled the scent of her neck... Cheek pressed into the woodgrain, she felt her skin vibrate from his touch. "Only me," he whispered.

She reached back to grasp his neck. "Only you."

Satisfied, he opened the door for her, and came face to face with Joyce standing in the hallway, hands on her hips.

"You got dressed in the same room?"

Shocked at the mere suggestion, both answered on impulse: "No, she dressed in the bath!" he said, while she said, "I was in the *bathroom*, mom. God." Buffy brushed past and went out back, and Spike stayed put, thinking, That worked out nicely.

Joyce smiled and rubbed her hand on her forehead. "I'm sorry. I forgot there was a bathroom in there."

"You okay?"

"I'm... yeah. I'm fine. A little paranoid, but fine. Please don't mind me."

"Don't worry about it, love." He stepped up to her, rubbed her shoulder, kissed her forehead. "Shall we?"

She hooked her arm through his. "We shall."

CHAPTER 19: *Over*

10:30pm

Buffy sat in the back, watching Spike's eyes in the rearview. She stole a glance at her mother, passed out in the passenger's seat, and looked at him again. He was looking right at her. She smiled, and nudged her bare foot between his and her mother's seat.

He glanced down. Very carefully he touched her leg, rolled the anklet upward with his palm, and squeeze the arch of her foot.

Raising her leg, she rubbed her toes on his neck, his cheek. Heard his sharp inhale. He bit her little toe. Checked Joyce again.

Then her leg went away. What was she doing?

Her panties landed in his lap. *Oh.*

Discovering a slippery spot of dew in the center, he glanced backward. Her legs were open and she was touching herself.

Satisfied that Joyce was still out, he made a show of stuffing the crotch of her panties in his mouth and sucking with a wet slurping noise that made Buffy giggle and kick him. He nabbed her foot, rubbed the fabric over her toes and licked them, adjusting the mirror to watch her eyelids fall, her head roll back...

Then he realized he was swerving into an occupied lane, and swiftly righted the car.

Joyce woke up. "What happened?"

In a flash, Buffy's foot retracted, and Spike stuffed the panties into his jeans pocket, saying, "Sorry about that."

Their eyes met in the mirror briefly before he returned it to its normal position.

Midnight

During a long, mostly one-sided conversation about how sorry Joyce was to be acting so strangely lately, it must be the pills, she was going to stop taking them and Gayle and everyone else was right, he was wonderful, almost too good to be true, Spike passed out.

On any other night this might have annoyed her, but tonight she gazed upon him with great affection. Tonight, he looked like an angelic little boy who was... getting an erection?

Hmm... she hadn't seen one of those in a while; maybe she could take advantage of it while it lasted. Feeling scandalous, she snuggled up to him and said, "I should get you out of these jeans."

"Mm..." He wrapped an arm around her and mumbled, "Love you."

Deeply touched that he'd say this even in sleep, she decided to relish the moment and forgo the sex, even if it had been months since their last successful encounter. This was what really mattered to her anyway. And while she thought this, she noticed something pink protruding from his pocket.

She dug into his pocket as he whispered in her ear, "...Sweet Buffy."

She sat up. In her hand was a tiny pair of Victoria's Secret underwear.

Queasy, lungs deflating, heart stopping, she stumbled off the bed and backed away from the stranger who lay there.

* * *

Sunday, April 20th, 11am

As Spike filled the dishwasher the next morning, cheerful and oblivious, Joyce walked into the room, opened a cupboard and handed him a white plate to wash.

He took it... and froze. On top of the plate was a Polaroid close-up of Spike and Buffy, tongues mingling, mouths smiling. *What?* He couldn't breathe. *How?*

"It was under her mattress. But this is what really tipped me off." She held up Buffy's pink panties, then threw them at his feet.

Oh, Christ.

"You've been having an affair," she said, disgusted, "with my *daughter*."

Body going numb, he helplessly watched the plate smash to shards on the floor, the Polaroid untouched. It looked so vulgar now. "*Concrete evidence always comes back to haunt you. Always.*"

"The late nights, the money, the week I went away, it was all for her." She shook her head, wrestling with the concept. "And I knew it -- I *knew*, I just... didn't want to think you were capable."

With a nervous chuckle, he attempted to fashion an explanation, "Joyce--"

"No more lies." Slow and measured, she said, "All I want to know is how long."

Facing the sink and bracing his palms on the cool countertop, he shut his eyes. He wasn't gonna Buffy himself out of this one, and she wasn't here to make up some cockamamie story that Joyce wouldn't buy anyway.

It was over.

"How. Long."

Taking a deep, shaky breath, he rasped, "Bout seven months."

With this spoken confession, final, inalterable, some part of him felt relieved to come clean.

She nodded. And nodded. "At least it hasn't been from day one."

His first impulse was to take offense, but when she asked, "Is that so farfetched?" he had no reply.

Her eyes were wet, but her tone was strong. "Are you in love with her?"

"Don't be ridiculous. She's sixteen."

"Answer me."

He pressed his palms into the countertop, knuckles going white. "Yes."

"I want you out of my house. Right the fuck now." She walked out of the kitchen.

Staring at his hands, he nodded.

* * *

Buffy bounded through the front door, and saw her mother sitting on the couch with a glass of Scotch in her hand. Staring off into space.

"Mom?"

No response. She walked up to her. "Mom? Hello?" She put her shopping bag down. "Earth to--"

"Tell me he was a monster," Joyce said. "Tell me he took advantage of you."

Her eyes widened. "What?"

She continued to stare straight ahead. "Did he force you?"

She felt her heartbeat in her ears. She felt faint. "Who?"

There were footsteps behind her. Spike, with a duffle bag. He paused for a moment, locking eyes with hers, then looked down and continued to the door. Dropped it on the pile of suitcases she hadn't even noticed when she walked in.

"Oh my god." Buffy turned to her mother. "Did you read my diary?"

"Why?" She slammed the glass down on the table and turned up the sarcasm. "Does it have all the juicy details?"

"What..." She turned to Spike, who was on his way up the stairs again. "What did you tell her?"

He didn't answer, but Joyce did: "Enough."

"Mom, I can--"

"Seven months, Buffy!" She stood up, looking at her for the first time. "Seven months?"

"I--" She stepped backward.

"I'm tempted to throw him in jail, I really am. But I have a funny feeling you aren't the quintessential victim."

"Mom," tears spilled from her eyes, "I'm in love with him."

"Oh, that's just heartbreaking! That's beautiful! I know, let's move him into your room! You can be happy together and I'll go look for a *new* husband!" She picked up her drink and threw back a shot. "Find someone your own goddamn age."

Buffy made for the stairs.

"Oh no you don't. I forbid you to speak to him! I forbid you to look at him ever again!"

She glared at her mother, and ran up the steps.

She found him in the master bath, throwing items into a plastic bag. He didn't look at her. "You heard your mother."

"I don't care what she says! I love you!"

"Don't." His hands shook.

"Spike?"

He looked at her. "It's over, Buffy."

"No!"

He walked past her. "Goodbye."

Her face contorted into a tearful grimace as she watched him leave.

* * *

Tuesday, April 22nd, 7:30am

"Buffy?" She got no answer, but she knew she was awake -- that exasperating new wave song she'd been playing all night was on loop again.

*However far away, I will always love you
However long I stay*

"Buffy, it's time for school."

"I'm not going."

"You have to."

I will always love you

"You can't stay in your room forever."

No answer.

Joyce let out a burdened sigh, and walked down the hall.

* * *

Thursday, April 24th, 4pm

Spike stared at the Polaroid in his hand, and out his motel room window.

His cell phone was still ringing. He'd gotten used to the sound.

* * *

Friday, April 25th, 2pm

"Okay, who died?" Lilah wondered.

Joyce wiped the wetness from her cheek and attempted a smile. "No one." She looked down, tears starting anew. "Just me."

Lilah shut Joyce's office door and handed her a tissue. "Wanna talk about it?"

When she could speak again, she said, "My husband's been sleeping with my daughter."

"Oh, honey," Lilah said. "I could've told you that."

She looked up at her, surprised.

Lilah shrugged, apologetic. "Maybe I'm just a good judge of character."

With a mirthless chuckle, she said, "No, I'm sure it was obvious to everyone but me."

"Want me to have him fired?"

"No," she said. "I already threw him out."

"How 'bout followed?"

She searched her boss' no-nonsense expression.

"You think he won't try to see her again?"

Joyce swallowed. Dammit, she was right.

* * *

Friday, May 9th, 1pm

"Still coming to my place tonight?" Amy asked.

Buffy nodded as she put her history book into her locker. Her life had become a dull routine: She would wait until her mother left for the day, walk to school, zombie through her classes, walk home, and go straight to her room. On weekends, she stayed at Amy's and lamented over Spike's sudden disappearance from her life.

But today was different, because her cell phone rang, and it was his number. "Oh my god," she whispered, and answered, heart racing. "Hello?"

There was a distinct inhale. "Buffy."

She grinned from ear to ear. "Spike!"

"Yeah."

With a smile, Amy rolled her eyes and made herself scarce.

Buffy leaned against her locker, pleading softly, "Don't say anything bad yet, okay? I just want to hear your voice."

After a long pause, he said, "I'm going completely mad without you."

Ecstatic, on the verge of happy tears, she exhaled.

"I need to see you."

She bit her lip. "Where are you?"

* * *

Buffy paid the cabbie and ran up the steps to room 8. Knocked on the door.

"Oh baby," he said, and she jumped into his arms.

* * *

"You're so beautiful," he said, trailing his fingertips up her naked backside. "*Bellissima.*"

"Mmm..." She spun around to face him, wrapped her arms around his neck, and pouted. "I don't want to go."

He sighed, moving her hair out of her face and touching that pouty lip. "What am I gonna do with you?"

She traced a figure-eight pattern on his chest. "Take me far away?"

He smiled. "Wish I could."

Their hands interlaced, and she noticed he wasn't wearing his wedding ring anymore. "I heard her on the phone, talking about an annulment."

He nodded, looked away.

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to..."

"Don't worry kitten, I can take it. God knows I deserve it. How is she?"

"She's... I don't know. We're not big on share time right now."

"I feel terrible," he said. "I never meant to hurt her. Or tear you two apart like that..."

"We were already torn, Spike. She was already hurt. These things happen. My mom's a survivor, she'll be okay."

He looked her over. "And you?"

"As long as I have you."

"You say that now."

She frowned. "What does that mean?"

"I don't know. What happens when you grow out of this? Of me?"

"You're not a pair of pants, Spike. I'm in love with you."

"You're also sixteen."

She pushed him up.

"What'd I--"

Standing now, she turned to face him. "I'm not a kid, okay? I'm not an innocent! Don't fuck me like I'm a woman and talk to me like I'm a child."

"I'm not-- I've got more perspective than you, is all. Feelings change faster when you're younger. You don't know how you'll feel in a year."

"So you knew you'd break up with Mom nine months after the wedding?"

He raised his browline, and nodded. "See your point."

"So shut up."

He searched her eyes. "But what if I lose you?"

She straddled his lap and said softly, "You won't."

CHAPTER 20: *Broken*

Saturday, May 24th, 1pm

Buffy glared sullenly at the man sitting across from her: arms folded, waiting patiently as the seconds ticked by.

"I don't want to go!"

"Either you go, or I have Spike arrested. The choice is yours."

"Would you like to tell me why your mother believes you should be here?"

"Not really," she said, reading a diploma on the wall. *Oxford University. Rupert Giles.* Didn't Spike go to Oxford for a minute? Not the same time as this guy -- he was way old. And stodgy.

"Right then. Let's start with why you don't want to be here."

Buffy sighed. "Because there's nothing wrong with me."

"And being here implies there's something wrong with you?"

"Well, duh."

"What if I told you it merely implied that there's something... amiss in your life?"

"I'd tell you you're talking to the wrong person. *She* should be in this chair, not me. She's the very definition of amiss!"

"You're referring to your mother, I take it."

She leveled with him. "Look, I know what you're trying to do. And I'm sure you're a very nice man; I'm sure you've helped a lot of people. But I'm gonna tell you right now, you're wasting your time with me."

"Actually, I'm getting paid rather well for this hour. How you use it is entirely up to you."

She rolled her eyes and slumped back, returning to silence. The clock ticked, sounding like raindrops on a tin roof.

"Beautiful plus Sexy..."

"Big plus... unh... Strong!"

There was a torrential storm that day, and having picked her up at school without incident, he felt bold enough to stop at the site of their second-ever tryst. As the rain

pelted the old Cadillac and the temperature rose inside, the glass fogged to opaque and she fingerdrew a heart on the rear window with the insignia: B + S. Playing dumb, he made guesses as to what she might be referring to, and they kept erasing and writing until the glass was clear and they whispered sexy words to each other while making love.

"Beddable plus... oooh... Succulent..."

"Buck-naked," she said with a smile.

"Scrumptious."

"Um..."

He looked into her eyes. "Beloved."

"Soulmate," she whispered.

"Buffy."

"Spike..."

Dr. Giles coughed, breaking her out of her reverie.

Monday, May 26th, 11am

"This can't be good." Lilah handed the bulky manila envelope to Joyce, who was having second thoughts.

"Spying on my daughter? I can't open that."

"Look at it this way. For seven months she shagged his British brains out under your very own roof."

She nodded, took a deep breath, and took the envelope. "Right."

Spreading the contents across her desk, she got angry all over again.

"My birthday's coming up."

Not quite ready to fasten her jeans, he kissed the hollow of her hip. "I know."

"So's our anniversary."

Resting his chin on the spot he'd just kissed, he frowned in puzzlement.

"The day after my last birthday, I met you."

With a smile, he shook his head. "Scandalous."

"I'll be a year away from legal." She sighed. "God, I wish I could just be 18 already."

"If we were in England," he closed her jeans, "none of this would be a problem."

"Then I want to live in England."

He smiled up at her. "Yeah?"

She nodded. "I'll see you on my birthday, right?"

"Of course you will." He climbed up her body to hug her tight.

There was a beep-beep outside.

"Oh, hell."

She kissed him, and whispered, "I better go."

"I'll miss you."

"Me more." They kissed again.

"Oh, here. Cab fare." He reached for his jeans and gave her five 20s.

"I'm such the call girl," she said with a grin.

"Don't turn me on," he said. "Out with you."

He put his briefs on, followed her to the door, kissed her goodbye, told her he loved her.

"See you next week?"

"I'm not going anywhere," he said.

Two minutes later, there was a knock.

With a frown, he asked, "Buffy?" and opened the door.

It was Joyce.

His eyes darted to the parking lot.

"She left," she said.

He swallowed.

"Consider this your last warning. If you so much as contact my daughter from this moment on, I'm calling the police and showing them these." She held out a manila envelope.

He looked down, took the envelope, opened it carefully. A listing of Buffy's incoming and outgoing cell phone calls... The cab company report... And then, photos upon photos of Buffy entering and leaving his motel room, some of him in just a towel, kissing her hungrily... Him fucking her late at night on a deserted beach... Her legs up around his shoulders in the car... *Jesus.*

"If I could make you leave the country, I would, you degenerate prick." The fierce depths of rage in her eyes told him that this wasn't just personal -- it was maternal. She was protecting her. "If I could kill you where you stand, I would. Am I making myself clear?"

"Yeah," he said, voice no more than a whisper.

"Good." She swiped the envelope back and marched down the steps.

* * *

Thursday, May 29th, 5:30pm

"I'd like to see you both together," Dr. Giles suggested.

"Us... together?" Joyce hedged.

"Yes, if that's all right with you."

"I don't know if she's ready for that." On second thought... "I don't know if *I'm* ready for that."

"It might be worth a try."

"Dr. Giles..."

"Please." He opened a hard candy and popped it in his mouth. "Call me Rupert."

"Rupert. She's very... Combative right now."

"I understand. But sometimes it's best to work through that behavior in a safe environment. Chocolate?" He turned the jar of candies toward her.

* * *

Saturday, May 31st, 1pm

"Tell me what you're thinking right now, Buffy."

"This is the stupidest idea ever?"

"Buffy!"

"No, no, Joyce. We're allowed to say whatever we feel here. What about you; how do you feel?"

"Well, I... I'm frustrated. I don't know how to get through to her."

"This blows," Buffy said, and headed for the door.

"Get back here!"

"Or what?" Buffy whipped around to face her mother. "Did she tell you, Dr. Giles, how she blackmails me to come here twice a week? Did she tell you she'll put my boyfriend in jail?"

"Your *boyfriend*?" Joyce shot up. "He was *my* husband! And he deserves to be in jail!"

"Why? Because he loves me? If you can't have him, no one can?"

"No, because he *broke the law*!"

"You cheat on your taxes!"

"Everybody cheats on their taxes! What they don't do is get their jollies with minors!"

"In England this wouldn't even be an issue!" She gestured at Dr. Giles. "Tell her!"

"Well this isn't England, is it?" Joyce said. "And somehow I think my husband nailing my daughter would be an *issue* no matter what country I'm in!"

"See! This is all about your jealousy!"

"No, it isn't!" she cried, arms up. "I don't want this for you!"

"That's not your decision to make, Mom!" Her eyes watered and her breath shook. "You don't get it. I will *die* without him."

"Oh, please spare me!"

Buffy was fed up. "Consider yourself spared," she said, then walked out and slammed the door.

Joyce stood there for a moment, staring at the door.

"Well," Dr. Giles said. "Finally, some progress."

She looked at him and said, "Go to hell."

Monday, June 2nd, 3pm

Spike stared at the telegram.

YOUR MOTHER IS VERY ILL. SHE WISHES TO SEE YOU. PLEASE CONTACT ME IMMEDIATELY.

B. KENT, ESQ.

It crumpled in his fist, and he sat down on his bed.

Buffy knocked on his door. "Spike?"

No answer.

She knocked again. His car was here. It was Monday. Where was he?

On the other side of the door, he sat on the floor, knocking back whiskey from a bottle.

Twenty excruciating minutes later, she left.

* * *

"What did you do?"

Buffy stood in her mother's doorway, seething.

Joyce turned a page in her book.

"Did you talk to him?" She advanced. "Did you threaten him?"

She threw her book aside and hissed, "I did what I had to do to keep him away from you."

Buffy's eyes widened. "I will never, ever forgive you for this."

"What else is new," Joyce said, done with trying.

"I'm moving in with Dad," Buffy said.

Joyce looked up, unsure if she was bluffing. "You won't be able to see him there either."

"As long as I don't have to see you." She left the room.

Joyce breathed in deep, and out.

* * *

Tuesday, June 3rd, 11am

"Yeah, LAX to London. ... Heathrow's fine."

He picked up the Polaroid of him and Buffy, touched her face.

"No. That'll be one way."

* * *

"Have you spoken to Buffy lately?"

"No... not for months," Hank said. "Why? Is she okay?"

"More or less. She seems to think she's moving in with you."

"Oh... Well, we haven't talked about that, no. What's going on?"

"I need a favor. *Buffy* needs a favor."

"Shoot."

"If she asks to stay with you, please don't say no." Despite everything, Joyce wasn't about to let a rejection from Hank cause Buffy irreparable damage. Boyfriends come and go, but a father should always be there.

"Well-- for the summer, maybe, I... Are we talking forever?"

"Please, just tell her she's welcome, Hank."

"Tell me what's going on first."

Joyce sighed.

* * *

"Your father would like you to stay with him for the summer."

"What?"

"Isn't that what you wanted?"

"Yeah," Buffy said, trying to figure her mother out.

"I'll drive you the day after school's out. Your birthday."

"My birthday? I've got plans for my birthday."

Joyce tried not to get upset. "You're going to have to cancel those plans."

"You want to get rid of me," Buffy surmised.

"I want you to be happy," she said.

"Just not with Spike."

"That's right. Not with Spike."

"I'll never stop loving him."

"Neither will I," Joyce said, and their eyes met.

* * *

Monday, June 9th, 2pm

"Morgan Gallery, this is Joyce."

A pause. "Joyce."

Oh, god... "Spike?"

"Look, before you hang up, I just wanted to tell you, I'm leaving. I'm going back to England."

She was silent.

"Thought you should know. I won't be back."

After a moment, she said, "Good."

"I'm sorry I hurt you, Joyce."

She hung up the phone, tears stinging her eyes.

A moment later, she dialed Rupert Giles.

CHAPTER 21: *Brave*

Friday, June 13th, 11am

Spike heard a swish, and looked for the source. An envelope under his door.

He picked it up, recognized her girlish handwriting and, caution forgotten, he opened the door. The cab was already driving away.

He opened the letter.

Dear Spike,

I'm leaving to spend the summer at my Dad's in Sherman Oaks. I know you can't talk to me, but it's my birthday tomorrow, and if I just see you for a second, if you just drive past the house or something, anything, I'll know you still care.

I leave at 5.

*Love always,
Me*

There was a pink lipstick print over the "Love". Picking up his airline ticket, he checked the departure time. 5pm.

Saturday, June 14th, 4pm

Spike loaded the trunk of the Cadillac with a duffel bag and two suitcases. Slammed it shut. Got in the car.

In his breast pocket were three documents: his airline ticket, Buffy's letter, and a stamped letter addressed to Buffy, her birthday present inside.

He sat there for a moment, thinking.

Then he started the engine, headed for LAX.

if I just see you for a second, if you just drive past the house or something, anything, I'll know you still care.

It was asinine. Childish. She knew how much he cared. She knew she was his whole world.

Which is exactly why he had to leave. He had to allow her to move on to someone less... all-consuming. He had to grant her her adolescence. Had to let her live, be free...

Spike noticed a line of graffiti on an overpass: HOME OF THE FREE

See, it's a sign, he told himself.

And then came the follow-up: LAND OF THE BRAVE

The last word burned into his eye sockets. He wasn't leaving her to spread her wings and fly. He was running with his tail between his legs, just as he'd always done.

At the next exit, he veered off the highway.

* * *

As Joyce closed the back door, Buffy looked out at the empty street.

"Are you ready?"

"It's too early. You said we'd leave at 5."

"Well, we're ready now. Come on, or I'll start to think you want to stay."

Heart sinking, Buffy made her way to the passenger side, opened the door--

A car came to a screeching halt on the street. His car. *Oh my god.* He shot out, ran to her and she said, "Spike!"

"Buffy," he breathed, and hugged her tight, lifting her off the ground. She kissed his face, his lips.

Joyce was stunned. "You're supposed to be in England!"

Buffy looked up. "What?"

He touched Buffy's hair. "My mum's sick. I'm going to see her."

"And I'm going to call the police."

"Joyce," he said. "Buffy and I need to talk for a minute."

"Oh, you have got a lot of nerve."

"Thanks," he said, pleased, and took Buffy's hand, leading her to the car.

"She's gonna call the police, Spike..."

"Let her." He followed her into the front seat and closed the door.

"Where are we going?"

He grasped her hands. "Promise me something."

"Anything..."

He placed something into her palm, closed her fist around it.

They weren't going anywhere, she realized. This was goodbye. "What--"

"Promise me that one year from now, if you still love me, if you still want me, you'll come find me."

"I--" She opened her palm to see a dazzling ruby-diamond ring. She looked up, eyes wide and welling. "Spike?"

He touched her pretty face. "Promise me."

"I promise. Of course I promise."

He handed her a folded piece of paper. "This is where you'll find me. Provided I'm not in a holding cell."

She sniffled. "Do you have to go?"

He kissed her eyelids, her cheeks, her mouth. A goodbye kiss.

She burst into tears.

* * *

Thumb poised over her cell phone buttons, Joyce watched as Spike kissed the tears from Buffy's face. As she clutched his shoulders like a rock at sea. As they wept together, oblivious to the world around them.

It was unsettlingly beautiful, and she thought: *He was never mine.*

One Year Later

"Haaaappy biiiiirthday toooo yooooou!"

A group of university kids, piss drunk and cheering and spilling their beers.

Spike felt an unbidden twinge of envy. There was another birthday being celebrated today, halfway across the world. And he wasn't a part of it.

He'd hoped he wouldn't dwell on it; after all, a lot had happened in the past year: seven months caring for his mother before she passed; another five dealing with the ensuing red tape and the purchase of this pub -- it kept him occupied, distanced him well enough to accept her decision, whatever it may be. But all month he'd been haunted by reminders; a birthday song, a pert American accent, a flash of honey-blond hair...

What was she doing now? Who was she spending her birthday with?

Was she coming?

Doublefisting gin and vermouth, he angled their spouts into the shaker on the bartop. He had to face it. She wouldn't be coming -- not tonight or any other. The time may have flown for him, but she'd lived a full year of adolescence without him, practically a lifetime.

And then, as if it were an imprint of his memory he heard, "I'll have a Seabreeze?"

He almost didn't want to look up; didn't want to be disappointed just because some underage SoCal tourist had the same idea of what a grown-up drank; but he looked up anyway.

Buffy stood there, sweet smile curling her glossy lips, holding in her delicate fingers a toothpick that skewered an olive... and the ring he gave her on her right hand.

Gobsmacked, Spike managed to say, "Virgin, you must mean."

She cocked a brow. "In your dreams."

He couldn't take his eyes off her. She was so gorgeous he could hardly breathe. "Is that what this is?"

"You're spilling."

"What?"

She nodded at his overflowing shaker.

He put the bottles down, looked at her.

She sucked the olive off the toothpick, and said, "Hi, Spike."

He shook his head, amazed. Never stopped loving her, not even for a second. "Hello, Buffy."

"I hope I'm not too late," she said, clearly meaning it in more ways than one.

With a smirk, he assured her, "You're right on time."

Their eyes locked for a long moment, and she said, "Do you plan on kissing me anytime soon?"

"I plan on starting in about ten seconds, and not stopping for the rest of my life."

"Ten," she began, "nine..."

Eyes on her, he backed up and passed the other bartender his towel, saying over his shoulder, "You're closing up tonight."

The bartender looked Buffy over. "That your ex-wife?"

He murmured, "Future."

"Right then. Good luck to you."

"Five... four..."

He jumped over the bartop and kissed her breathless before she got to one.

* * *

At Buffy's sated purr, Spike folded his hands over her glistening belly and reveled in the sight of her rapturous and naked, excepting the brastrap that was still tethered to one shoulder. It had all happened so fast: tearful kisses in the bar, ardent makeout in the cab, a quick appraisal of his flat (and the assurance that yes, he lived here all alone) followed by one awkward pause, one long kiss, and finally, the economical nudging of clothing as he fucked her en route to his bedroom. Eventually, they made it past the stairs to his actual bed, where he'd prolonged her second orgasm with his tongue.

Once she could speak again, she said fondly, "I remember the first time I saw you like that," pinpointing the moment she fell in love with him.

He remembered it well: the first time he tasted her. "Seems like yesterday."

"It does, doesn't it?" She traced the curve of his ear. "Like no time has passed at all."

"But it has," he said. "I can see it on your face, your body, the way you carry yourself... Thought you couldn't get any more beautiful, but now you're..."

"Older?"

"Yeah. And it looks dead good on you."

"You too. I like your hair," she said, tousling it with her fingertips. "It's blonder."

"Not a family man anymore." He slid his hands under her ass, cherishing the privilege. "I can rebel yell all I want."

"And as of today, so can I. Well," she forced herself into nonchalance, "until school starts anyway."

He was unable to disguise his rising panic: "School? You're leaving for college?" But of course she was. She wasn't going to stay here with him, who was he kidding? He was just a stop-over -- a loose end she needed to tie before starting her *real* life.

"Yeah," she said, feigning cluelessness, "I'm going to this place -- it's pretty small, you probably never heard of it... Oxford?"

"Oxford?" he said suspiciously, "Oxford... University?"

She looked up as if she had to think about it. "Yeah, that's the one."

"Wait. You're going to Oxford. The one here. In England."

"Uh huh," she said, perky.

He began to laugh, relieved and shocked -- and impressed. "How in the bloody hell'd you manage that? You were a truant! A, a juvenile delinquent!"

"Not at Sherman Oaks I wasn't." She admitted, "Also, I knew someone who knew a guy."

"Does this mean you'll stay with me?"

"Do you want me to?"

"Do I want you to," he repeated wryly. "Look at me, I'm an inch away from begging."

"I don't know," Buffy mused as she surveyed his bedroom. "How could I possibly fit in this teeny tiny apartment that takes up *four floors*?"

"Don't forget the estate. That's even smaller."

"An estate? I'm definitely staying with you."

"Gold-digger." He kissed her belly, her naked thighs. She was here, and she was staying with him. "How did this happen? How'd I get so lucky? And how on earth did your mother let you apply to a school near me?"

"Believe it or not, Mom's sort of over it. She met someone. She's weirdly happy."

"What?" He frowned. "You mean she won't be pining over me forever?"

"Shut up." She flicked his forehead. "And no, she won't. That's my job."

"Well I won't have you pining." He climbed up her body. "Nothing but instant gratification, from now on."

"Mmm, I like." She caressed his second hard-on of the night.

He stopped her. "Hey, what kind of someone?" When she didn't follow, he said, "This someone of hers -- is he your type of someone?"

"Ew, no! He's the fuddy-duddy, tweed-wearing psychiatrist type, not the hot young Armani-wearing sexgod that no woman-child can resist. What, you think I just sleaze out for anyone my mother brings home? It was you, stupid, not the mom connection. Because hello, that's kind of ew. And besides, I saw you first."

He smiled. "You just called me young."

"In comparison, yeah. He's like, fifty."

"I like him already." He ran a hand up her side, made her shiver. "Not gonna let you go this time."

"You better not."

"Won't. Not ever. Marry me."

She searched his eyes, hoping she'd heard him right. "What?"

"Marry me. Please. Make me the happiest ex-stepfather on earth."

Willing her face expressionless, she shrugged. "Mmkay."

"Okay?" he asked aghast, tickling her ribs. "Okay?"

She wriggled and shrieked beneath him. "Yes, all right? *Yes!*" When he let up, she slapped his chest. "Of course I'll marry you, you 'tard! God, took you long enough to ask!"

"Oi! You insulting me again?"

She chewed her lip. "...No?"

"That's better." Grinning, giddy, he pulled the ring off her finger and slid it into its proper place, giving it a soft kiss to seal the deal. "Wish I'd met you here. Could've married you straight away."

"Woulda shoulda, but look at us now." She cradled his cheek. "We're a fairy tale, you and me."

"Told you so." He took in a long, contented sigh, brushed his thumb over her lips. "My precious Buffy. *Tesoro mio.*"⁸

"Oooh...." She fanned herself and said, "I think I missed this most of all..."

"*Il mio amore,*" one ear, then the other: "*la mia anima...*"⁹

⁸ My little treasure.

Her head hit the pillow. "Oh god... Don't make me come again..."

"*Angelo mio... Mio... dolce bocconcino.*"¹⁰ She mmm'd at that. "*La mia bellissima moglie...*"¹¹

"Yeah, okay, keep going..."

"I know just where to take you for our honeymoon..." He kissed her neck to punctuate each destination: "Italian Riviera... *Genoa... Roma... Firenze... Milan... Sicilia...*" She nodded and writhed enthusiastically at all of them. "Wait, not there... They'll bloody pounce on you..." Her ass in a firm grip, he wet his cock on her slit.

"And... and... what would they say?"

With a sneer, he thrust into her on each accented syllable: "*Hai un bel culo*"¹², they'd say. And you'd say, "*Ma sei matto? Sei disgustoso! Nemmeno se tu fossi l'ultimo uomo sulla terra.*"¹³

"Unh! Unh! Hunh!" She undulated and bucked beneath him. "What... what... what am I saying exactly?"

"You're telling them to sod off." He emphasized the last two words with simultaneous thrusts.

She said into his ear, "What would I... What would I say to you?"

He softened, still thrusting on the accent but adding a swirl: "*Spogliami. Che sensazione meravigliosa. No, non smettere... Piu in fretta. Oh, Dio...*"¹⁴

"*Oh, Dio...* Yeah, that sounds... mmmmn, about right... but first?" she managed slyly between hot breaths, "I think I'd say, *Mi sei mancato da morire. La mia vita senza te è come un giorno senza sole.*"¹⁵

"Wh-- ?" She'd spent the year learning Italian! "That *is* sexy! Say something else."

She giggled. "*Ti amo*"¹⁶, Spike."

He pumped into her with a playful, "*Ti bloody amo*, Buffy."

"Oh! *Ti-* ahh... ohhh... Don't stop, don't stop..."

"*Pero hablo Español tambien, mi amor...*"¹⁷

⁹ My love, my soul...

¹⁰ My angel... my sweet mouthful.

¹¹ My beautiful wife.

¹² You have such a sweet ass.

¹³ What are you, crazy? You're disgusting! Not if you were the last man on earth.

¹⁴ Take off my clothes. That feels wonderful. No, don't stop... Faster. Oh, god...

¹⁵ I missed you terribly. My life without you is like day without sun.

¹⁶ I love you.

¹⁷ But I speak Spanish too, my love.

"Oh!!"

"*Amado mio... je t'aime...*"¹⁸

"Oh god-- French..."

"*Mais oui, mon cherie,*" he said, pretty much exhausting the extent of his knowledge, "and, uh... *Ich liebe dich... Sprechen sie...* fuck, you feel good..."

"Mmmn... *Aloha...*"

"Heh... *wo ai ni...* uh... *mahal kita!* Um..."¹⁹

Their eyes met and she whispered, "I love you."

"Yeah..." He Eskimo-kissed her. "That too."

THE END

¹⁸ My sweetheart... I love you.

¹⁹ German, Hawaiian (sorta), Mandarin and Tagalog for, you guessed it, 'I love you'.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A very special thanks, as always, to **Love** for the endless inspiration and for being my always-available sounding board -- and also for reading portions of this story aloud in melodramatic and/or *Strangers With Candy* voices, saving me from the burden of taking myself seriously.

While this began as a solitary project, it certainly didn't stay that way. I consider this manifestation of *Older* the collective effort of a whole lot of deliciously pervy people -- I was just the one who got the final say.

Supa-dupa thanks to my fellow pervs **KJ Draft** and **TrueCrystal** -- both gave me fantastic ideas when I mulled over new scenarios, and KJ helped me tremendously through some rough spots, editing as well as contributing character insight and lines of dialogue. Their scene input is far too prodigious to list, so let's just say all the best stuff comes from their brilliantly naughty brains. Special thanks also to **Max Kelly**, who patiently held my hand through "the week" and made some fun suggestions, including Bad-Cook Buffy and the Little Red joke.

Many thanks: to **little_bit** for suggesting an office sexcapade and for approving of the ending; to **Susan Tasche** for suggesting the Halloween scenario; to **Mezz** for the mistletoe suggestion; to **M** for the tree-shopping suggestion and to Wicked Temptations Greeting Cards for making just the right postcard. Thanks to the two **Chiaras**, aka **kya_velvetbean** and **spikie79** for helping out with the Italian. Thanks to my high school sweetheart for the popsicle and fever inspiration. Thanks to the various boyfriends and girlfriends and one-night-stands who've shaped my slutty experiences and made me the self-proclaimed sexpert I am today. And thanks also to whoever wrote that made-for-TV movie, "Sweet Temptation" that inspired the first scene that got this whole thing rolling. Rob Estes circa 1994 can be my Mom's boyfriend any time. Mmmeow.

Shoutout to *The Wire*, from which I stole a sexy image, and big ups, of course, to *A Fish Called Wanda* -- "Speak it!" Excerpts from the book *7 Steps to Bonding With Your Stepchild* have been reprinted without permission, because I had a hunch they wouldn't give me permission even if I asked nicely. Songs transcribed include some Dannii Minogue song I've never heard before (creative Googling), "Sweet 16" by Iggy Pop, and "Lovesong" by The Cure, although "Just Like Heaven" would be on the *Older* soundtrack too, were there such a thing. Finally, I think a blanket apology is in order to Joss Whedon, David Greenwalt, Sarah Michelle Gellar and James Marsters, for my manipulation of their unsuspecting characters and/or naked bodies in such lewd and licentious ways. Oh, the shame.

Much love to everyone who's contributed fanart and media for this story, much of which inspired new scenes. Thanks to **Linda**, who made the lovely original artwork that I redesigned for the cover. Thanks to **supergirl** for creating a beautiful fanlisting for this story. And finally, I owe profuse gratitude to the 1600+ readers who jumped through fiery hoops to read this, and more amazingly, those who begged, and stuck around for more. It feels good to finish this, and you're why it's finished. So, spank you and good night!

All queries, money, misdirected rage and/or worship can be directed to: olderfeedback@nautibitz.com