

And It Shall Come To Pass 1

Quentin Travers read the prophecy again and then once again. No matter how often he read it the meaning of it was clear. A battle was coming and the Council was unprepared to fight it. And as far as Travers was concerned the blame for that rested solely with one Buffy Summers.

If not for her, Rupert would have returned to England after being fired as her Watcher. He would have returned to the Council and taken his place as a Watcher here, where he belonged, where Travers could still control him. Instead he had stayed, choosing to stand alongside an insolent girl who always allowed her feelings to rule her head and her duty. And because he had stayed, Travers believed, she was still alive.

If she had died, as she ought, Travers could have persuaded the Council to take the required action to eliminate the second Slayer as well, to make way for the next Slayer to be called. Then things would be the way they should be. But as long as Ms. Summers lived, and Rupert stayed at her side, there were factions in the Council, powerful factions, that believed the work they were doing sufficient, despite the fact that neither of them were under Council jurisdiction. But now, in light of this new information, the situation was no longer tolerable. And there was not enough time to make the necessary arrangements to have a new Slayer called, not and have her be of any use in so short a period of time.

At least Rupert was right where he needed to be to fight this battle. After all, if he'd been in England, he'd currently be on his way back to Sunnydale. But, that was only the first step of what was required.

Travers slammed the book down on his desk, giving the book, considering its age and its worth, an appalling lack of respect. He caressed his jaw, thinking hard, working on a plan. He decided to start with Rupert. Surely he would listen to reason and he must still hold some sway over the girl. Noting the time, he picked up the phone.

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Anya answered the phone. "Magic Box, may I sell you something?"

Giles rolled his eyes at her greeting. At the suddenly nervous look on her face, Giles paid closer attention. He knew it must be due to whomever was at the other end of the phone connection because nothing he ever did or said to Anya seemed to have any effect on her at all. Anya just held the phone out to

him as if it was diseased. Giles, nervously, put it to his ear. "This is Rupert Giles."

"Rupert, Quentin Travers."

Giles' grasp on the phone tightened but he forced his voice to remain as pleasant as possible. "Yes, Quentin, what may I do for you?"

"We need to talk about that Slayer of yours."

"Please hold on for a moment." He put the call on hold and spoke to Anya. "I'm taking this call in my office."

She frowned at him. "Is everything all right?"

"Too soon to tell. But if Quentin's involved in it, probably not." Giles headed back to his office and picked up the phone, speaking without missing a beat. "In case you've forgotten she is no longer my Slayer, Quentin, thanks to you. She hasn't been for a long time."

There was a brief pause. "If you can talk her into taking her place again with the Council, we'll forget that whole unpleasant incident ever occurred."

Giles was a bit taken back. He stared at the phone, wishing he could read the other Watcher's mind. "What is this about?"

"We've found a prophecy. The Hellmouth is going to be reopened."

Giles leaned back into his chair. "If that happens, Buffy will close it, as she has done in the past. And the last time she did it, I wasn't her Watcher. She is quite capable of functioning without me." Giles scowled. Too capable.

"The prophecy is out of the Pergamum Index."

Giles' eyes opened wide. "The Pergamum Index?"

"Yes, and it clearly is speaking of you."

Giles' eyes drifted to the Pergamum Codex, sitting on his office shelf. The Pergamum Index was the twin to it, except that while the Pergamum Codex spoke of Slayer prophecy, the Index spoke of Watcher prophecy. And its prophecies, like the one of its twin, never failed to come to pass. Finally Giles spoke again. "What makes you think it refers to me?"

"We know the time is coming soon. The astronomers have confirmed it."

Every prophecy in the Index came complete with an accompanying astronomical drawing of the planets. The seer who wrote it apparently received convenient sky markings along with the vision, thus allowing those in the future the tools to determine the dates with astonishing accuracy.

"That's a bit vague, Quentin. Besides, if the date alone is convincing you that this prophecy concerns the current Watcher, shouldn't Wesley factor into this?"

"No, trust me, it is speaking of you."

"Please explain. Your obfuscation is growing tiresome."

"It refers to a Watcher of Darkness brought to the Light."

Giles stretched his neck out first to one side and then to the other. He was getting a headache. "I see. And you think because of my past ..."

"Yes, of course because of your past. You embraced the dark arts, Rupert. And then you rejected them, and took your place in the fight against darkness, in the light."

"I still don't see where the problem is. I shall simply assist Buffy." Giles bit back a frustrated sigh. Assuming she let him.

"It's not good enough. You must be bound together. You know what these prophecies are like, there's always magic involved. You must be a true Watcher/Slayer pair, with the Council standing behind you both. You know as well as I that there is a tremendous power in that, a binding magic, one that's lasted through the centuries."

Giles did know, but he also knew it didn't matter. "If it involves Buffy needing to pledge her allegiance to the Council, she won't do it."

"You must make her do it."

Giles let out a short laugh. "Make her do it? Buffy? You must be joking." Giles didn't like how bitter his voice was sounding.

"Allow me to read you the translation and see if you might find it worth your while to convince her." Travers took a breath and began:

*"And it shall come to pass that the mouth of Hell shall open
And a creature of such evil shall spew forth that none shall withstand it
And the goodness of the earth shall fall*

*Against this Darkness only one Light may prevail
A Watcher of Darkness brought to the Light
A Slayer bound to him by will and by magic*

*Only in the binding will the Light be unleashed
And the evil ripped asunder, the Darkness defeated"*

Travers paused for a moment. "Now do you understand how important this is? Perhaps it's time for you to have a talk with Ms. Summers, convince her that her petulant ways will be the death of us all."

Giles was still amazed at how quickly the need to defend Buffy rose within him. He fought back the words, knowing they were useless. "I will talk to her, but she has defeated a prophecy from the Codex and she will, I think, be unimpressed by the need to rejoin an organization she hates so fervently. She will believe that she can fight this on her own, or if need be, with me at her side."

"You might remind her that the Codex did say she would face the Master and die. And that did come true."

"Yes, but she didn't stay dead, did she?"

"It still came to pass."

Giles shook his head. "It won't matter."

Travers took a deep breath. "There is another Slayer."

Giles barked out an astonished laugh. "Faith? You can't be serious? Forgetting for the moment that she tried to kill most of us, she is presently in prison."

"Her release can be arranged."

"I refuse to work with her, she's unstable. She's as likely to join forces with the evil as to work to repel it."

"She may be our only choice."

"It's an unacceptable one."

"Then I suggest you talk to Ms. Summers and convince her of that, and let her know that her refusal will have consequences."

"How much time do we have?"

"Less than a month."

There was little else to say, so Giles hung up.

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Buffy dropped by the shop every couple of days, more often than not with Riley in tow. Sometimes she used the training room with Riley, or she simply visited. She rarely discussed patrols, asked any of them for advice, or trained with Giles. As far as her friends could see Buffy had bought the Initiative way of life, hook, line and sinker.

Giles was discussing the recent turn of events with Anya, Xander and Willow when Buffy walked in, Riley right behind her. Giles had a copy of the translated prophecy in his hand, faxed to him by Quentin. He stood when he saw Buffy come in. "Ah, Buffy. I'm glad you dropped by. I need to speak with you."

"So speak." She waved her hand as if giving him her royal permission.

Giles bit back a retort and kept to the matter at hand. "It's a prophecy."

Buffy rolled her eyes. "Oh yay." She glanced up at Riley. "So not my favorite thing."

Riley grinned at her phrasing and he grabbed a chair, sitting down at the table, looking at Giles. "What does it say?"

Giles read the prophecy out loud. There were a few seconds of silence after his voice dropped off. Finally Buffy spoke. "So, what's that supposed to mean?"

"Well, the Council believes..."

Buffy interrupted. "The Council? The Council sent you this?"

"Yes, they believed it of sufficient importance to contact me. I'd have had no access to this information if they hadn't."

"And wouldn't that have been horrible?" Buffy slumped into a chair. "Giles, don't you think that there has probably been a prophecy, somewhere, to go

with almost everything we've fought against here? And yet, somehow, miraculously, we made it, without someone telling us about it or how to fix it."

"Well, ordinarily I might agree with you but this is from the Pergamum Index."

Buffy rolled her eyes again. "And why am I so sure that I'm not gonna love this."

Giles ignored her tone and pressed on. "It is the twin book of prophecy to the Pergamum Codex, the book which ..."

She held up her hand. "Trust me, I remember."

Xander chimed in. "Me too." He looked at Giles nervously. "Is this Index thing just as bad?"

"Well, it's been proven to be just as infallible. Its prophecies always come to pass just as the prophecies in the Codex have."

Buffy snorted. "News flash, Giles. I'm still alive."

"Yes, but you did die, at the Master's hand. The prophecy did come true. And if not for Xander, you would still be dead." Giles flashed Xander a thankful look and Xander grinned back.

"Only because we knew about it, and I showed up and made it come true. The Master told me that. He said we fulfilled it. If I'd done what I said I was gonna do, and just quit, he wouldn't have been able to rise."

"He would have found another way, and eventually you would have had to face him."

"Yeah, but it would have blown the Codex out of the water."

Giles let out a frustrated sound. "Buffy, we can argue endlessly on the paradoxes of prophecies but the fact remains that we know now that the Hellmouth will be reopened by a deadly evil, and you and I are required to work together to close it."

Buffy shrugged. "So, what's the big deal? Tell me where and when and I'll be there. And we'll have the whole Initiative Team there too so we'll blow the evil badness to kingdom come."

Riley had to agree. "We can handle this. We've handled everything else that's come up."

Giles shook his head. "That's not what this requires."

Buffy almost growled in annoyance. "Giles, spill. You've got that look on your face I hate."

Giles looked affronted. "What look?"

"That look that says that I'm gonna hate what you have to say. So just say it already."

"You need to accept me as your Watcher again, and we both need to take our place within the Council."

Buffy's reaction surprised Giles. She laughed. When she stopped she stared at Giles. "Let me guess. Quentin Travers called you to tell you this."

"Yes, he did."

"God, Giles. Na?e much? Are you really falling for this?"

"Buffy, I believe that this threat is real."

"And I believe that the Council will do anything it can to get me back in its clutches." She stood. "No way." She flicked her finger against the paper in Giles' hand. "This is bullshit."

"I don't believe it is. I think you need to truly consider ..."

Again she interrupted him. "Consider what? Going back to the Council? After the way they treated me?"

"Buffy."

"No, I can't even believe you're suggesting this. I thought you were on my side."

"I am."

"Why is that suddenly feeling hard to believe?"

Willow let out a little gasp. "Buffy."

Buffy took a deep breath. "Look. I'm sorry, but I just don't buy it. The Council has never done a thing for me except screw up my life."

Giles tried not to let that hurt.

Buffy wasn't done. "Things are good now. I have a boyfriend and a good fighting team, and I like the way things are." She gestured to Giles and Willow and Xander. "You guys don't have to be in danger anymore, it's a major good." She pointed at the piece of paper. "Let me know when that's supposed to happen and I'll be there. And you can come too. But my guess is that it's all a big come on to get me back."

Giles raised his eyebrows. "Actually, if anything, it's a come on to get me back. It seems pretty clear that I am the Watcher in this prophecy."

"Yeah, well, without me, you're not exactly worth a whole lot, are you?"

Giles was unable to brush aside the hurt that this comment generated, despite the fact that he knew it was just Buffy doing her usual talking without thinking. He stood. "Yes, well. Thank you for your usual consideration." He turned and gathering his jacket he headed for the front door.

Buffy saw the looks everyone was shooting her, even Riley, and she realized how that must have sounded. She called after Giles. "Wait, Giles, I didn't mean ..." But he was gone.

Willow spoke first. "Buffy, that was a terrible thing to say."

"I didn't mean it that way. I just meant that the prophecy says we both have to be there."

Anya snorted at her. "Right, easy to say that, now that he's gone."

Buffy shrugged. "He's been mad at me before. I'll talk to him later and apologize. He knows I always say things wrong."

Xander stared at her. "Boy, Buffy. I never, ever thought that I would think this was a bad thing, but I have decided that there is such a thing as too much testosterone."

Buffy frowned at him. "What are you talking about?"

"You. You've been hanging around too much testosterone and it's rubbing off on you, and I don't mean that in a good way."

"How do you mean it, then?"

Xander pointed at the door. "Well, that, for one. You treat him like shit, Buffy. All you care about is working with your new team."

Riley shot Xander an annoyed look. "Hey, she said she didn't mean it. And her new team happens to include me, thank you very much."

Buffy walked over to stand behind him and ran her fingers through his hair. Riley leaned back and grinned up at her. Buffy grinned back, wiggling her eyebrows. "And besides, that's not all I think about."

Xander rolled his eyes. "Oh, forgive me, and sex. You think about fighting with your new testosterone team and sex." Xander glanced at Riley, to make sure he wasn't going to hit him. Riley just rolled his eyes.

Buffy started to get annoyed. "Why am I suddenly the bad guy because I found a way to fight that keeps you safe, that keeps Giles safe? He gets to have a life now, you all do."

"Yeah, except Giles' life, oh, and ours by the way, until you met Riley here, involved actually getting to be with you, and helping you, and that was important to us, and it was Giles' whole life."

Riley finally interrupted. "Guys, guys, I don't think yelling at each other is the way to fix this."

Buffy pouted, her hands on Riley's shoulders. "You guys are important to me. And so is Giles. You'll always be important to me."

"And we're supposed to know this, how?"

Willow piped in, her voice nervous. "He sort of has a point Buffy. We never do anything with you anymore, and you never ask us for help. The only time we ever see you is when you come by here."

"Well, you guys never ask me to do anything, either." Buffy didn't like feeling ganged up on.

Xander nodded. "Well, after getting told about 200 times that you're busy doing better and more important things, you start to learn. Even I have my limits for rejection."

"Riley frowned at Xander. "She has a sacred duty, you know that. It's not like she's taking long baths, and shopping all day."

Xander lashed out at Riley. "Yeah, a sacred duty which we used to help her with. Long before you even knew there was a Slayer."

Buffy looked at her friends, concerned now. "Hey, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to make you guys feel so bad." She leaned forwards against Riley and wrapped her arms around him, crossing her hands over his chest. "The Initiative keeps me busy, and then I have to spend time with Riley. I mean, he's my guy." She stood back up. "But I want to spend time with you guys too." Buffy smiled. "Let's do something tonight. Let's go to the Bronze." She looked down at Riley. "We can call some of the guys and they can join us."

Xander stood. "Sorry, Buff. While that sounds almost too good to be true, I think I'm gonna go find Giles."

Willow stood too. "Yeah, and I think I'm gonna go with him."

Xander gave Anya a quick kiss, gave her a promise to give her a call and he and Willow headed out the door, following Giles.

Buffy looked down at Riley. "Did you see that? Did I not just ask to spend time with them?"

"I think they sort of wanted to spend some alone time with you, Buffy." Not that Riley blamed them. He never wanted to share Buffy.

"Oh." She let out an exasperated sigh. "Why didn't they just say so? I'm not good with this reading between the lines stuff."

Anya looked up as a customer came in. "Well, excuse me, I have to go pay attention to one of the people in this store who might actually spend some money." She sent a scathing look Buffy and Riley's way and approached the newcomer.

Buffy watched as Anya walked away and then looked up at Riley. "Whatever." She looked towards the rear of the store. "Wanna go train, big guy?"

He stood and grinned down at her. "I am so taking you down."

Buffy laughed and shook her head. "No way." Riley reached for her but Buffy eluded him, laughing again, and ran for the back.

End of Part 1

And It Shall Come to Pass 2

Xander and Willow didn't need to look very hard. Giles had simply gone home, and that was the first place they went. When he opened the door he stood to the side and allowed them to enter. The three of them sat in his living room in silence.

Finally Willow sighed. "She didn't mean it that way, Giles." He looked so sad to her.

Giles smiled softly at Willow. "No, I know she didn't. But in a way she's right."

Willow shook her head. "No, she's not. I mean, sure she's the Slayer, but you know all sorts of stuff, and have kept us all alive, tons of times."

"Thank you, Willow. I appreciate that." Giles rose and stood by the window. "I suppose I just feel a bit obsolete. Somewhat like a factory worker who's been put out of work because a machine has just been purchased that will do the job more cheaply and effectively."

"The Initiative doesn't do the job more effectively." Willow refused to believe that anything the Initiative did was better than Giles.

"Well, perhaps not, but it's new and shiny, and the packaging is certainly more attractive to Buffy. She doesn't seem to need me anymore. I just haven't wanted to really admit it."

Xander slumped back in his chair. "She doesn't need any of us." He glanced up at Giles. "We're standing right next to you in the unemployment line, big guy." Silence fell on the room again. Giles took his seat and picked up the prophecy. Willow watched him as he read it. "Do you really think it's real?"

"I do."

"And you believe this guy when he says that you have to be back with the Council?"

Giles hesitated. "It's a convoluted subject."

Xander sighed. "Giles, with you, discussing orange juice is a convoluted subject." Seeing as he'd brought it up, Xander pointed to the kitchen. "Got anything to drink?"

Giles frowned at Xander's first comment but he nodded. "Help yourself." As Xander headed into the small kitchen, Giles called out again. "Would you put

the kettle on?"

Xander flipped on the burner, then opened the refrigerator. As he stared within he spoke. "So, how dead are we? Should I quit my job and start working my way through the list of things I want to do before I die?"

Giles let the paper flutter to the coffee table. He got up to join Xander in the kitchen. "There is, perhaps, an even larger concern. Or a more immediate one, in any case." He looked through the open space above his counter to Willow. "Willow, would you like anything?"

"Uh, juice." She stood up and moved to lean against the counter, opposite Giles. "What's the other concern?"

"Quentin. He threatened to have Faith released and to use her, instead of Buffy."

Both Xander and Willow stared at Giles. Xander sagged against the refrigerator. "What? What? He can't really mean that."

"I'm afraid if Buffy continues to be obstinate, that he does. I think he believes that I am the necessary person to fight this evil, and that I simply require a Slayer, sane or not."

Willow furrowed her brow. "But, why would Faith agree to join the Council?"

"I think Faith would probably agree to anything to get released from prison."

Xander resumed his search through the refrigerator. "Not to mention the jollies she'd get out of having a Council sponsored free trip to Sunnydale, with a license to create havoc."

Willow walked over to stand next to Xander and pulled out the container of orange juice. She glanced up at Xander. "What are you looking for in there?"

"The answer to the great question of life, the universe, and everything."

Giles reached around them both and shut the door to the refrigerator. "Forty-two."

Xander sighed. "And yet, still, the Hellmouth remains." He took the proffered glass Willow was holding out and drank half of it. He shook his head in dismayed amazement. "Faith?"

Willow put the container of juice back in the refrigerator. "Giles, you have to

tell Buffy what Travers is planning."

Giles rolled his eyes. "And that will certainly make her wish to rejoin the Council at the earliest opportunity."

Willow persisted. "You have to tell her. She has to know that Faith might come back."

Giles sighed. "I know. I would have told her today but ..."

Xander glanced at him. "You had a hissy fit and walked out."

Giles glared but didn't comment. Xander wasn't that far off. He silently made his tea.

Willow was still confused. "I don't get it. How can they think that having Faith here will make it work? What is the magic part about? How does that work with the Council?" She looked up at Giles and repeated herself. "I don't get it."

Giles gestured them all back into the living room. He took a careful sip of his hot tea. "Good questions, all of them." Giles thought for a moment. "One must believe, first of all, in the presence of mystical power."

Willow flashed him a wry grin. "Hello? Witch here."

Giles grinned briefly at her and tried again. "Perhaps I chose the wrong phrase. Mythical may be more correct."

Xander flopped into his chair. "Sounds the same as mystical, 'cept with a lisp."

Giles ignored him. "It has to do with the power of belief, in the power of ...well, power." He looked at Willow. "Which came first for you? Your power, or the belief that there was a power?"

Willow thought for a second. "The belief."

"Exactly. There are some powers that simply exist on their own, but then there are some powers that require an underlying power, such as belief, to make them exist." He could see he wasn't getting through. Giles tried again. "Let's take God, for instance. Some people believe in a God, and some people don't."

Xander and Willow both nodded, encouraging him to go on. Giles posed a

question for them. "When someone prays to God, and doesn't believe, is that prayer more or less powerful than if that person truly does believe?"

Willow thought for a moment. "Probably less. Because he or she won't really believe it could happen, that the prayer could be answered, that there's someone really listening. It won't be encouraging, or feel as real. And they won't be as willing to look for the answers that might come in response to a prayer."

Giles smiled at her. "Exactly. Whether or not God exists, to a certain extent, the power is in the belief of the myth; the belief in the usefulness of a being that one turns to for assistance or guidance. It's a very real sort of magic. Not one that is created by spells or potions. It's the power of belief. A Watcher and a Slayer, in order to be at their peak, must believe in each other, must trust each other, and rely on each other. Their greatest strength lies there." He tapped the piece of paper. "I believe that this prophecy refers to that magic."

Xander looked at the piece of paper. "So, how does the Council fit into it? You guys haven't been official for a while. Ever since graduation." Xander thought about his own words and he sat up straighter in his chair. "Giles, is this what's made Buffy change so much?"

Giles' eyebrows lifted. "Hmmm?"

"Buffy." At the confusion in Giles' eyes, Xander hastened to explain. "You guys used to be like this." He crossed his middle and index finger. "It was so weird to watch. You knew what the other was thinking. You guys would look at each other and you could see that all sorts of things were happening. Even when all that bad stuff with Angel, and her birthday, make that birthdays, came up you guys were still so tight. It felt right, somehow. Like no matter how bad things got, when you guys were together, you just knew that it would work out. Even Wesley couldn't touch that. But then she quit and then Riley came along and she stopped working with you so much, and she just ...she just changed and nothing feels right anymore."

Willow nodded, wondering herself now. "And you changed. You got sad. I figured it was just that you were sad she was moving on, but is it more than that? Maybe you guys have lost that magic, and it really is real, I mean, big time real. Maybe losing it is changing you."

Xander took another large swallow of his juice. "At least when you changed you sort of stayed the same. I mean, you still care, you still think things matter."

Giles frowned. "Buffy thinks things matter, Xander."

"Not really. Or less and less. She just likes the fighting, and the sex, and the hanging around. She doesn't seem to care...not like she used to."

Giles stared at the two of them, his eyes wide. He put his cup down and sat back. Even though he had rationally understood about the powers he had just spoken about he had never really looked at what was going on with he and Buffy through that particular lens. "I..." He ran a hand through his hair. "I never thought of that." He took off his glasses. "It would certainly explain a lot." He felt foolish for not having put it all together before.

Xander slapped his knees with his hands. "So, all we need to do is let Buffy know that Riley is really bad for her because the Initiative has sucked all the magic out of her, and that part of being the Slayer is that she has to hang with her Watcher and we're all set."

Willow winced at the likelihood of that. She still wasn't satisfied. "Okay, that part makes sense. But even if you got Buffy to come back and be your Slayer, and the Council hired you back, you still don't like the Council, or trust them, so how does that part of the magic work?"

Giles shook his head. "I don't know." He put his glasses back on and picked up the prophecy again, reading one of the lines out loud. "A Slayer bound to him by will and by magic."

Xander cocked his head to the side and then he snorted. "Maybe Buffy's partly right."

Giles looked at him, his eyes wide. "What do you mean?"

"Maybe Travers is full of shit." He amended his thoughts. "Or partway full of shit. Maybe this just needs you and Buffy connected, but the Council part doesn't matter. Maybe once the Council chooses who to pair up, their part is done, and the rest of it depends on you guys."

Willow considered Xander's words. "Giles, do some Slayers and Watchers have problems working together?"

Xander rolled his eyes. "Willow, Wesley? The Mad Madame Post?" As Xander considered those Watchers he glanced at Giles. "Are you like the only normal and likeable Watcher that exists?"

Giles smiled briefly. "No. I agree that you've no evidence to support that, but there are many men and women of enormous integrity who belong to the Council, now and through the ages."

Willow hadn't finished with her subject yet. "So, are there Watchers and Slayers who get assigned to each other who don't really believe in each other and so don't get the magic power of it? Is that why a lot of Slayers die young?"

Giles took his glasses off and put an end of an earpiece in his mouth. "I suppose it's possible. This connection, or magic, if you will, is one of those things that every Watcher knows exists and just takes for granted, for the most part. I don't imagine any of them have actually set out to determine if they and their Slayer are magically supported by their connection. I don't even know if there is a way to determine that."

Xander snorted. "We just found a way. Get a Watcher and Slayer together who are totally connected. Then let the Watcher be fired, and then have the Slayer quit. Then keep them apart. Works every time."

Willow hadn't ever pressed Buffy for details because that particular birthday had been so painful but she had always wondered. "Giles?"

"Hmmm?" He was still chewing on his earpiece.

"Why did you get fired? I mean, for real. Buffy never really told us, except that you cheated by telling her about the test and then helped to save her life."

Giles looked at Willow in surprise. "She said that I helped save her life?"

Willow nodded. "At the house. You killed that vampire."

Giles nodded his head in memory of that. He shook his head. "That was very gracious of her considering I almost got her and her mother killed." His face grew clouded.

Willow felt bad for bringing up the subject but she felt the need to persist. "Why did you get fired?"

Giles gave her a brief rueful smile. "Because I loved her." At Willow's look he clarified. "Not like that. Not romantically. I just loved her. The Council thought I'd lost my objectivity." Giles shook his head. "They were probably right."

Xander sighed. "I'm lost again. What does the Council think this magic is if it's not you guys caring about each other?"

Giles glanced at Xander. "I think the Council sees it more as a mutual respect, a working, professional relationship, one where emotion doesn't

cloud the issue."

"And they think a test like that is gonna firm that right up?" Xander got up to get more juice. "I gotta tell you, I'm not thinking they're doing this right." He poured himself a glass and offered it up to the other two. At their headshakes he put the juice back. "In fact, it's kind of amazing she didn't quit right then and refuse to work with you anymore. If anyone did that to me, that's what I would have done."

Willow glared at Xander. "Xander."

Giles stopped Willow from taking Xander to task. "No, he's right. I never did understand why she forgave me and continued to pledge her allegiance to me."

Willow scooted to the edge of her seat. "Giles, for the same reason you forgave her for all the bad stuff that happened to you. I mean, come on, her and Angel? Jenny? You getting tortured, her running away, everything that happened, if you add it all up, was way worse than what you did. And you forgave her." She looked at Xander. "We used to talk about it. How you just...forgave her, over and over again. Maybe it's a part of the magic. Of you and Buffy being connected. And it was how she forgave you. Because whatever you were together, it was bigger and more important than all that stuff, no matter how bad it was."

Xander threw himself back in his chair. "Okay, so we've pretty much decided that you two together...stronger, better. And that somehow to beat this big bad you need to get it working again. I still don't get the Council part."

Giles let out a sigh. "I don't either."

Willow furrowed her brow. "Can you feel that it's different? I mean, since you got fired, or since Buffy quit? Are things different?"

"It's hard to answer that Willow. It's hard to pinpoint where things fell apart. Certainly I miss the resources. And even though purchasing the shop has given me a focus and a source of income, I suppose I still feel a bit rootless. But that could be as much because Buffy's drifted away as my estrangement from the Council."

"Could you rejoin the Council?"

"Yes, I could have at any time. All I needed to do was leave Buffy and go back to England. I probably could have rejoined, if I've pushed it, and managed to stay here, but Buffy would never have forgiven me."

"So, do you have to tell her?" Willow winced at her own words. "I mean, maybe this whole thing drips downhill. You get connected to the Council, and Buffy gets connected to you."

Giles shook his head. "It's hard to feel connected to the Council when men like Quentin Travers are in power. Buffy's right about that, I don't really trust them. I believe in many of them individually, but as a whole, I'm not sure they've kept the vision of who and what they should be."

Xander slouched in his chair. "Okay, so now we're talkin' revolution. Taking the Council over, ripping out the bad parts, getting their heads on straight." He looked at his watch. "How much time do we have?"

Giles ran his hands over his face and put his glasses back on. "The whole thing's so damn complicated."

Willow shook her head. "Maybe we're just making it complicated. You and Buffy became the Watcher and the Slayer already through the Council. Like I said, maybe their bit's already done. Maybe the only thing that needs to be fixed is you and Buffy." She scrunched her face up. "Maybe if you tell Buffy to never mind about joining the Council she'll listen to the rest of it."

Giles sighed and pinched the bridge of his nose under his glasses. "It's not that simple, Willow. It's not just a question of her listening. This calls for the magic of the Watcher and the Slayer, and I..." He took a deep breath. "And I don't believe it's there anymore. She doesn't believe in me or what I am or what I can do for her."

"You need to tell her that. And you need to tell her that it's a bad thing."

He smiled sadly at Willow. "Telling her isn't the answer. This is something she must truly believe, that I must believe."

Willow gasped. "You don't believe in her, either?"

"It's not that I don't believe in her, Willow. I know she's the Slayer, I know she has power. I just don't feel connected to her. I don't understand her and I can't predict what she'll do. I don't know her anymore." A painfully sad look came over Giles' face. He couldn't even remember the last time he'd spent a moment alone with her. There were always people around now, always Riley.

Xander let out a long sigh. "And into this, Travers is gonna bring Faith. Man, he just doesn't get it. If this is about trust, it ain't gonna work with Faith, no matter what the Council thinks."

Giles just glanced at Xander and then sat back in his chair. Finally he sat up. "Well, in the meantime, we have our work cut out for us. We need to research this prophecy and see what else we can find. We have to know more."

Xander and Willow nodded. Xander stood and stretched. "We're on it. I'll be at the shop as soon as I get off of work tomorrow."

Willow stood as well. "I'll come by during all my breaks. And I'll bring Tara too."

Giles looked at them both gratefully. "Thank you."

Xander shrugged. "Hey, no problem. That's what friends are for."

Willow nodded. "Absolutely."

Giles smiled again. Somehow it hadn't crossed his mind until right now that these two considered him a friend, and not just an appendage that came along with Buffy. It shamed him a little. "I'll see you tomorrow then." He rose and walked them both to the door. "Please be careful going home."

They both pulled stakes out of pockets. At his relieved nod Willow opened the door. Giles walked out far enough to make sure they got to Xander's car safely. Then Giles re-entered his home and sat back in his chair. Lost in his thoughts he sat there until finally sleep claimed him.

End of Part 2

And It Shall Come To Pass 3

Giles sat on his bed, frustrated. He had called Quentin as soon as he'd awakened. And as expected the conversation had not gone well. Quentin was too entrenched in his need for the Council to be the seat of power in all dealings with the Slayer. He had no desire to discuss the mystical or mythical underpinnings of the magic he himself had brought to light. All he cared to believe was that it simply needed to be made official again, and the magic, clearly of a most pragmatic kind, would assert itself.

Quentin read Faith's rehabilitation reports over the phone to Giles. Faith was better. The psychiatrists felt her well on her way towards a full recovery. She'd been a model prisoner once she'd settled in. Despite Giles' verbalized concerns that Faith was clever and manipulative, Quentin refused to be

swayed. Giles needed a Slayer, and either would do, as long as whoever it was, accepted Council authority. Giles had called Quentin a rather unflattering name and hung up.

Giles ran his hand through his hair, not sure what to do. He knew he needed to talk to Buffy again. Giles wasn't looking forward to it. Nor did he believe it would do any good; on the contrary it would likely make her even angrier with the Council and with him. Giles stood up and looked out the window, pushing the curtain aside, replaying the conversation with Xander and Willow through his mind.

For the first time he found himself admitting that there were times, these days, when he didn't like Buffy. That he wasn't particularly glad to see her when she came into the shop. That he found her abrasive and occasionally abusive. He also didn't like himself very much. He was drinking too much. And despite the purchase of the shop he still spent too much time brooding and unhappy, purposeless.

Before he'd been assigned to Buffy, and for the first three years of their relationship, he hadn't felt that way. He'd always found purpose in his work, in expanding his mind, in contributing to the repository of knowledge available for the use of others. He had found his work exciting, and satisfying. Giles had attributed his declining attitude over the last year and a half to the events of his life, to watching Buffy drift away, to losing her. But now he wondered if it was so much more than that.

Certainly the events of their lives had contrived to push them apart. Once the library was gone, they no longer saw each other every day. Buffy had gotten swept up in school, and then in Riley and the Initiative. Giles couldn't place the blame for their distance solely on Buffy. He had encouraged her independence, thought it important. He'd made no efforts to pull her back, to keep her close. He'd missed her, certainly, but had never expected that the result of it would be that Buffy would start to pull away entirely. Or, that there would be a price to pay for both of them.

Giles glanced at the clock and began to get dressed. Perhaps they truly needed each other. Not just to fight evil, but to be fully alive. Maybe they had been connected by magic and, once connected, it wasn't an option to live their lives apart. That together they were more than they had been alone, and that once together, only with each other could they feel that whole. And somehow, apart, they were now less than they had ever been. As if their pulling apart had also leached out the best of each of them, and left them shadows of what they had been.

Giles sat on the edge of the bed to tie his shoes but paused to explore

another piece of truth. Giles longed for her, deep within himself. Not a sexual longing, but a longing so profound he felt it in his soul. He ached with her absence. It hurt like nothing else ever had. Despite seeing her several times a week, she might as well have been as distant as the stars in the night sky. And Giles knew that despite feeling that he no longer liked her very much, that he still loved her, as much as it was possible to love something or someone.

Giles headed downstairs, still musing. Where had they slipped off track? Where had they missed the turn that would have kept them together? How had they lost the connection? And most importantly, could they get it back in time?

##

Travers paced his office. All of Rupert's entreaties hadn't fallen on deaf ears. Faith was a concern. Travers wasn't completely blind to the damage she could do. There was a knock on his door. Travers impatiently opened it up and saw his secretary. "Yes?"

"One of the sorcerers found something."

That got Travers attention. "Who?"

"Jordan."

"Where is he?"

"In the library, upstairs." Travers left his office. The Council had several sorcerers on their payroll. They spent a large part of their time doing research, much as the Watchers did, but their primary responsibility was researching magic, spells, and power. Travers found Jordan surrounded by teetering piles of books. "What did you find?" Travers had little patience for pleasantries.

Jordan looked up. When he saw it was Travers his eyes lit up. "You know that prophecy you asked me to research?"

Travers nodded. "I understand you found something."

"Yes, I assumed you wanted me to focus on the magical part." At Travers nod, he continued. "I found a spell."

"What kind of spell."

"A spell to bind a Watcher to a Slayer."

"So a Watcher can bind a Slayer?" This would solve everything. Rupert could bind Ms. Summers.

Jordan shook his head. "No, the Slayer has to say it. It binds a Watcher to her."

Travers sat down. "Explain."

"It's quite old. I've only found the one reference to it. I don't know much about it other than the actual spell and what it's supposed to do."

Travers gestured impatiently with his hands. "Let me see it." Jordan pushed the book towards him. Travers read it and looked up in some surprise. "This is it, just these two lines?"

Jordan nodded. "Just those two lines. But that's all it takes to make the Watcher hers. Well, she has to kneel and..."

Travers frowned. "Why isn't it used anymore?"

"It's a powerful spell. It gives the Slayer a lot of...control over the Watcher. I imagine it went bad a few times and the decision was made to stop using it."

Travers waved off those details impatiently. "How long does it last?"

"Until one of them dies."

Travers tapped the table with his fingers, creating a drum roll. "If a Slayer is unstable, will she affect the Watcher?"

Jordan thought about it for a minute. "No, I don't think so. In fact, it might help her, having consistent access to a steadying influence."

"She wouldn't be able to make him do things he normally wouldn't?" Travers couldn't afford to lose Rupert to the darkness again.

Jordan shook his head. "No, she couldn't force him, but she could make it pretty uncomfortable for him if he refused her."

Travers waved that off. Rupert was trained for discomfort. He was a Watcher, after all. Finally he smiled. "Thank you, Jordan. I think you've just helped me make my decision." He pointed at the book. "Write that down for me, will you?"

I have to make some phone calls."

Jordan nodded and reached for some paper.

##

Buffy didn't show up for a few days and she didn't return Giles' calls. When she did finally appear, with Riley in tow, Giles let out a sigh of relief. She was studiously avoiding making eye contact with him and he assumed she was feeling badly about her remarks when last they had spoken. This was getting to be quite a pattern. Words spoken in haste, followed by apologies. He touched her lightly on the arm. "May I speak to you privately, Buffy?"

She glanced at him, surprised, but she nodded and followed him into the training room. Buffy made herself comfortable on the couch and looked up at Giles. She spoke first. "I'm sorry about what I said. I didn't mean it the way it came out."

Giles smiled sadly at her. "I know that." He sighed and wandered a bit around the room.

Buffy watched him. It was at times like this, when they were alone, that she missed him the most. Most of the time she could ignore it, in fact, chose to ignore it, like ignoring a dull cramp until it slowly disappears from your consciousness. Because focusing on it does no good. Because focusing on it makes it worse. It was the main reason she worked so hard to avoid spending time with him alone. It hurt too much.

Giles finally spoke. "When did it happen?"

Buffy frowned, at a loss. "What? When did what happen?"

"You and me. When did we lose each other?"

Buffy's eyes widened, wondering if he were reading her mind. She spoke cautiously, still not willing to focus on it. "What do you mean by that? We're right here."

Giles shook his head. "No, we're not. We circle around each other, and we're exceedingly polite, and sometimes cruel. But somewhere along the way, whatever we were to each other, was lost." He looked at her. "Do you know when that was? What happened?"

Buffy felt a sting of tears. She shook her head. "Maybe..." She shook her

head again. "I don't know."

Giles sat down next to her. "Maybe what?"

Again she shook her head. "I really don't know. I remember that I couldn't imagine doing this without you, and now, I miss you, so much sometimes, but I don't...I don't feel like I need you, you know, to help me with the Slaying. And I don't know...what's left after that." Even talking about it hurt.

Giles nodded, looking at his fingernails. "I've done a lot of thinking about it, Buffy, and I believe that our separation has done us some harm."

"What do you mean?"

"I believe that by distancing ourselves, for whatever the reason, that it's weakened us both."

Buffy frowned, not liking that idea. "I don't think I've ever been stronger."

"I don't mean physically."

Buffy didn't understand. "Then, how?"

Giles caught her gaze, speaking earnestly. "Can't you feel it? That something's missing? That you're not quite what you're supposed to be, who you're supposed to be?"

Buffy did feel that way, but she always pushed past it. When she fought hard enough, and trained long enough, she could push it away. She didn't want to deal with it, then or now. She stood and put her hands on the punching bag, setting it in motion. "What's this about, Giles?"

"I'd like to start seeing you more. Just the two of us."

Buffy shot him an incredulous look and she pointed to the main body of the shop. "I'm with Riley."

Giles rolled his eyes. "Good Lord, Buffy, not like that. I'm not asking you for a date. I'm asking you to put some energy into us, as Watcher and Slayer. I think it's important. I'm also not asking you to leave the Initiative or to stop taking full advantage of what they offer you. But I think there's a reason a Slayer has a Watcher, and vice versa, and it's more than simply for training and research."

Buffy scrunched her face up. "And what are we supposed to be doing when

we're having this alone time?"

Giles let out a short laugh. "I haven't the slightest idea."

Buffy smiled at him and Giles smiled back. Then her eyes narrowed and Giles could almost see the wheels start to spin in her mind. "Is this about that prophecy?"

Giles let out a sigh. She had been about to agree, and now he could lose her again if he didn't choose his words carefully. "In part. According to that prophecy we certainly need to be closer than we are. But even if there were no prophecy this is something I would still ask. The prophecy has merely forced my hand, so to speak, provided me with an impetus to try to rectify what's pulled us apart."

Buffy looked at him suspiciously. "I don't want anything to do with the Council."

"I understand that."

"The other day you said I had to go back to the Council."

"I believe I was mistaken in that. I think it is just necessary that you and I believe in each other, the way we used to do."

"Believe in each other how?"

"I'm not really sure Buffy, but we need to find a way to be important to one another again."

Buffy let out a little cry. "I'm not important to you?"

Giles stood and walked over to her. "Of course you are. I said that badly. I wouldn't even be having this conversation with you if you weren't very important to me." He thought for a moment. "You don't seem to require my assistance in fighting or training, or even researching, and I, well, I have started to build a life that is not entirely focused on you. In many ways, we don't need each other anymore, and yet, I think we are bound to one another in a way I can't explain. I believe we need to find a way to fit into each other's lives again."

Giles glanced down at Buffy to see if she understood and his eyes caught hers. For a moment they both felt it, they both felt the connection, the way it used to be. It felt like home and they both felt the promise of a healing within them. They were so close, Buffy could feel the heat from his body, and feel

his breath on her face. Giles caught the scent of her perfume. For a brief moment the air was thick between them. Then Giles caught a glimpse of panic in Buffy's eyes, that he was sure was mirrored in his own, and he took a step backwards.

Buffy was relieved to not feel so crowded by Giles. But then she found herself fighting against the urge to take a step toward him, to be close to him again. His presence felt like an oasis in a desert and her thirst was overwhelming.

They couldn't stop staring at each other. Giles lifted a hand and reached out cautiously, as if to not startle a wild animal, to place his fingers against her cheek. Her eyes closed for a moment and when she looked up at him, his eyes were closed too. When he opened his, he smiled at her. "God, I've missed this. I've missed you."

Buffy put her hand over his, pressing his open hand against her cheek. "Me too."

Xander burst through the door, startling them both. "You guys better get out here."

Giles dropped his hand and turned to face Xander. "Xander, what is it?" He began to stride to the door.

Xander stopped him. "Travers is here, and he's brought Faith." He glanced quickly at Buffy. "Did you tell her?"

Giles fought back his anger at the intrusion. "No, I haven't had time."

Buffy grabbed Giles' arm and spun him around. "Tell me what?"

"That Quentin had threatened to bring Faith in if I couldn't bring you around."

Buffy took a step backwards. "Is that what this was? You bringing me around?"

Giles shook his head fervently. "No, Buffy, I told you the truth. I've already admitted to you that the prophecy forced my hand. But this is something that we've both needed." He pointed to where they had been standing. "Didn't you feel that? We belong together, you and I."

Buffy had felt it, but she was shaken by Xander's announcement. "You told me I didn't need to go back to the Council. Why is Travers here?"

Giles' eyes darkened in anger. "I have no bloody idea. I called him and told

him to leave Faith out of this."

"What else did you tell him?" Giles could hear the angry suspicion in her voice.

"Nothing. I didn't tell him anything. In fact, I haven't spoken with him since the day after I spoke with you. I've been leaving him messages ever since, urging him to just trust that you and I would work it out. I believe we can."

Buffy wanted to believe him but she also knew that Travers and Faith were standing in the next room. "How are we supposed to do that now?"

Giles let out a sigh and shook his head. "I don't know. But, please Buffy, don't give up on us."

Not answering him, Buffy swept by him and headed into the main part of the shop.

End Part 3

And It Shall Come To Pass 4

Quentin looked annoyed at being kept waiting. "Ah, Rupert, Ms. Summers. I believe you know Ms. Wilkins?"

Buffy sent Faith a mocking smile. "Nice name, Faith. Make that one up all by yourself?"

Faith smiled back, just as mockingly. "Well, he was the closest thing to a dad I ever had. Or he was until you killed him."

Buffy took a step in her direction but Giles grabbed her arm. She glared up at him. "Wait until we know more," he said softly.

Faith grinned. "Hey, Giles. Still trying to teach her how to behave? Aren't you tired of that yet?" She walked a few steps closer to him and then gave him the once over. "Man, you just keep getting better looking every time I see you. Retail must agree with you."

Giles rolled his eyes. "Faith, must you?"

"Oh, I must." She grinned at Buffy. "Have you screwed him yet?" Faith looked at Giles again, her eyes full of approval. "I'll bet he's a real tiger." Faith

growled at Giles.

Buffy's eyes snapped with anger. "Back off, Faith."

Faith put her hands up, and took a step back, pretending to appease Buffy. "Don't sweat it, B. I was just asking." She looked over at Riley and gestured at him. "I mean, I'm sure Giles would be better in bed than soldier boy there. He was a bit of a yawner." Faith pretended to yawn. Then she grinned at Xander. "Even Xander was better than he was, and he was a virgin."

Now Anya was shooting daggers at Faith, and at Xander. Giles glared at Quentin. "This is your solution?"

Quentin smiled. "They're only words, Rupert. And if I remember correctly, your Ms. Summers had quite a colorful way about her when she spoke." He gave Buffy a patronizing smile.

Buffy remembered. "Bite me."

Again, Quentin smiled. "See, Rupert. It doesn't mean anything."

Faith walked over to Quentin and put her arm through his. "Yeah, Q here talked to the prison authorities and they think I'm ready to become a contributing member of society again." She squeezed his arm. "Don't they?"

Quentin unthreaded his arm and moved a step away. "Quite."

Giles took a deep breath and counted to ten. "Quentin, this is all unnecessary. If Faith has been rehabilitated, that is all well and fine, but she can go fight evil someplace else. Buffy and I were just agreeing to work together again." Giles hoped that Buffy wouldn't disagree with him.

She didn't. In fact she moved to stand even closer to him. Quentin eyed them both and then he walked across the room to stand in front of Buffy. "Are you ready to rejoin the Council?"

Buffy scoffed at him. "No."

Quentin pursed his lips. "Ah."

Buffy looked up at Giles. "You said I didn't need to."

Giles looked at Quentin. "You got my messages?"

Quentin nodded. "Yes. I understand your point of view. However, I don't

agree." He looked back at Buffy. "So you refuse to willingly take on your Slaying responsibilities?"

Buffy glared at him. "I am the Slayer."

Faith shook her head. "A Slayer, B, a Slayer. We're a dime a dozen these days."

Quentin ignored her. "Ms. Summers. I believe I asked you a question. Part of being the Slayer means that you are a part of the Council. Are you willing to accept that?"

Buffy glanced up at Giles, her eyes clearly showing her frustration. He pleaded with her softly. "Buffy, it doesn't have to change anything."

Her eyes widened. "You want me back with the Council?"

"No, I want you back with me. The Council doesn't matter."

She pointed over her shoulder with her thumb, towards Quentin. "He seems to think it does."

"Since when have you ever let what he says make a difference to you?"

A quick grin formed on her face in response to Giles' words. Then her eyes darkened. "They made you do that test to me, they fired you, they refused to help Angel. I can't go back. They hurt me, they hurt you."

Quentin chimed in. "I'm still waiting for your answer."

Buffy turned to him angrily. "You can stuff the Council."

Giles dropped his head, seeing nothing but disaster ahead, for all of them, because of her hastily spoken words.

Quentin nodded. "You do understand that there will be consequences?" He turned to Giles. "You did tell her that, didn't you?"

Giles glanced at Faith. "I think you've made the consequences pretty clear."

Faith grinned. "Oh, you ain't seen nothin' yet."

Quentin's lips tightened. "Ms. Wilkins, please."

Buffy spoke angrily again. "What exactly are you planning on doing to me?"

Because unless you have a gun tucked away somewhere I don't see you taking me on. And in case Faith here failed to let you know, the last time she and I went at it, I won. You've already fired Giles. So, I'm not exactly shaking in my boots here."

"You misunderstand me, Ms. Summers. The consequences aren't for you." He turned to Faith and nodded.

Faith grinned, her eyes lit with pleasure. She moved to stand in front of Giles. Buffy glanced up at Giles, some fear in her eyes at the thought that he might be harmed. She moved so she stood between Faith and Giles. "Don't touch him." She looked at Quentin. "Leave him alone. This has nothing to do with him."

Quentin smiled at her. "On the contrary, this has everything to do with him. Rupert has just been reassigned. He is working with Faith now."

Giles stared at Quentin as if he were insane. "I refuse. I am still not working for the Council and you have no jurisdiction over me."

Faith took a piece of paper out of her pocket. "A Slayer bound to him by will and by magic." She grinned at Giles. "Well, we know I'm willin'." She looked at Buffy, at the look on her face. "Relax, B. I just want to talk to him." She pulled out a chair and gestured for Giles to have a seat. "Sit." Faith glanced at Buffy again. "If it makes you feel better you can stand right behind him."

Giles slowly sat, relieved when Buffy did move to stand behind him. Buffy looked around the rest of the shop, noting that everyone had equal looks of interest and horror on their faces. She caught Riley's eyes and he gave her a weak smile. Buffy felt a flush of anger when she remembered that he had slept with the other Slayer and she turned back to face Faith.

Faith was grinning at her. "What's the matter, B? A little trouble in paradise?" Faith looked down at Giles and then she crouched down in front of him, taking one of his hands. "Looks like it's gonna be you and me, Giles."

Giles looked at her, trying to figure out what her game was. "Faith, what do you want? Why are you here?" He tried to pull away his hand.

Faith held on tight. "Didn't I make myself clear? I'm here for you." She took his other hand as well. "Like I said, you need a Slayer bound to you by will and by magic. I told you I was willing. So, here's the magic part." She grinned up at Buffy and then looked back at Giles and spoke. "By the power of the Slayer, I bind thee to me."

A bolt of energy flew from Faith's body to Giles'. Buffy felt the whiplash from it and it threw her to the floor. A groan was torn out of Giles' throat as he fell to the floor, curling into a fetal position. Buffy was on her feet in a flash, kneeling by Giles' side. She sent Faith a venomous look. "What did you do to him?" She looked up at Quentin and her voice grew dangerously tight. "What the hell did you have her do to him?" She looked down at Giles. He was moaning, his hands on his head, palms over his temples.

Faith had landed on the floor too. She was shaking her head. "Wow. That was intense."

Buffy got her hand around Faith's throat. "Stop it, whatever you did to him, undo it."

Faith grinned around her discomfort. "It's too late, B. Can't stop it." She turned to watch Giles and realized that she was 'feeling' his discomfort at her invasion. She mentally jabbed a little deeper and felt his pain increase. She looked up at Buffy, grinning. "Watch what I can do, B." Faith closed her eyes and jabbed again. Buffy heard Giles' cry. Turning her head in fear, Buffy heard Faith's voice taunt her again. "You might want to let go of me before I kill him."

Buffy angrily pulled her hand away. She turned back to Giles and pulled him up, holding him protectively. "Faith, if you hurt him again, I'll kill you."

Faith stood up and dusted herself off. "No, you won't, because every time you come near me, he'll pay for it." She shook her head at Buffy. "You should have thought of grabbing him before, B. It's a little late now." She grinned. "But go ahead and enjoy yourself now because it's the last time you'll ever see him."

Faith sensed some movement in the shop and she turned to find Willow edging her way to Giles. "Stop right there, Red. No heroics. And that goes for the rest of you. I'm in a pretty good mood; I'd hate for you to ruin it."

Buffy glared at Faith. Her arms tightened around Giles. He was clearly still in pain, his breaths coming out in grunts. She spoke to him, her voice tinged with fear. "Giles, talk to me. Are you all right?"

Giles could barely think with the presence inside his mind. The anger and seething emotions were tearing him apart. A part of him slowly registered Buffy's voice. He gritted out her name. "Buffy?"

"I'm right here, Giles, I'm right here."

Giles groaned again. "God, get it out."

Buffy's voice revealed her panic. "Get what out? Tell me, Giles, what's happening?" She looked up at Faith, repeating her question. "What did you do to him?"

Quentin sat down. "He'll be fine." He glanced at Buffy. "I did warn you there'd be consequences."

If Buffy hadn't been so worried about Giles she'd have strangled him, right there, in front of everyone. "Consequences to me. To me. Not to him." Her eyes filled with tears as Giles groaned again. "What's happening to him?"

Faith laughed. "He's got me on his mind."

Giles was finally starting to push his way to sanity, finding the thread of his own thoughts, of who he was. He opened his eyes and, while they were still bright with pain, Buffy could tell he was back with her. She brushed back his hair from his sweat- drenched forehead. "Are you all right?"

Faith taunted him. "Yeah, Giles, tell her, are you all right?" She frowned down at Buffy. "I think I'm tired of you touching him. Move away from him."

Buffy shot her a deadly look. "I'm not going anywhere."

Faith shook her head. "You never did catch on too quickly, did ya B? Don't you get it? If you don't do what I say, he gets hurt." She glanced at Giles. "Watch." Faith closed her eyes for a second.

Giles let out another loud cry, grabbing at his head again.

Buffy glared up at Faith, tears of frustration in her eyes. "Stop it, stop it."

"Get away from him and I'll stop."

Buffy looked down at Giles and slowly, reluctantly, let him go, inching away from him. As soon as she did, she could see him start to relax, the pain lessening. Faith crouched down in front of Giles. "Hey, Watcher man. You gonna say hi to your new Slayer?"

Giles slowly opened his eyes again. He stared at Faith and then his eyes sought out Quentin's. The words came out halting, as if thinking and forming thoughts were a strain. "How could you let her do that to me?"

Quentin was unmoved by Giles' dismay. "Desperate times call for desperate

measures. You needed a new Slayer. Now you have one. I'm sure you'll find a way to work with her to eliminate this new threat that hangs over our heads."

"How do you expect me to even think with her in my head?" Giles closed his eyes.

Faith took exception to his comment. "Hey, what's so bad about me?"

Giles opened his eyes to glare at her. "You really want me to answer that? Out loud?"

She lifted her eyebrows. "Ouch. Nope, that was plenty loud enough in your head." She grinned. "This is sort of cool. I get to hear everything he's thinking." Faith grabbed Giles' arm and hoisted him up, putting him back in the chair. She frowned down at him. "I'm not that bad, am I?"

Giles tiredly nodded. "And infinitely worse."

Faith looked at Buffy and grinned. "He's even sarcastic in his head. You should hear what he's not saying."

Buffy moved to stand in front of Quentin. "What did Faith do?"

"Faith has enacted a spell that has effectively bound Rupert to her. She is now his Slayer, or to put it more correctly, he is her Watcher."

Faith sat in Giles' lap, straddling him. "Yup, he is all mine."

Buffy tried to move to stop her but Faith put up a hand, warning her. "Remember B. I'm in his head. I can kill him with a thought." Faith wiggled up against Giles. "Ooh, imagine the fun we'll have when I get you alone."

Giles spit out his response. "Unless you plan to take advantage of me once you've rendered me unconscious, I don't think you'll be having any fun."

"Oh, come on, Giles." She held his face tightly with one of her hands and pressed her lips against his.

Giles tried to turn his head but she held him with her strength. He closed his eyes and thought the most vicious thoughts he could come up with.

Faith let him go and considered him. She smirked knowingly. "We both know that a man can only resist sexual advances for so long. Sooner or later you'll give in." She wiped her lipstick off his mouth. "And then we'll have us a good time." She grinned at Buffy. "Won't we B?" Faith looked concerned for a

moment. "Oh, that's right, you've been too busy screwing vampires and soldier boys to notice what you had under your nose."

"Shut up, Faith."

Faith laughed. "Shut up, Faith. Ooh, scared of that." She looked at Quentin. "Okay, Council man, I did what you wanted, now you do me."

Quentin looked momentarily disconcerted at her choice of words but then he recovered. "Quite." He stood. "Ms. Summers. Until further notice, this shop is now Council property and I'm afraid that you're trespassing. Please remove yourself."

Buffy stared at him. "You've got to be kidding."

"No, I'm quite serious. You are no longer allowed to enter these premises. You have chosen to be without Council resources and so you shall be. You will not contact Rupert, you will not have access to these books, or to any of the supplies on these shelves." Quentin swept the room. "In fact, you may all leave."

Buffy caught Xander's eyes and she sent him a pleading look. Xander gave her the briefest of nods. Not that he had intended to just leave Giles here alone. He looked at Quentin and with a gesture he took in himself, Willow, Tara, and Anya. "Uh, we, uh, we sort of come with the store."

Quentin furrowed his brow, at a loss. "I beg your pardon?"

Faith laughed. "He wants to stay and help." Faith got up off of Giles' lap and headed over to Xander, running a hand down his jaw. "You sure, pretty boy?"

Xander swallowed but he nodded. "Giles asked us to help research this Hellmouth thing."

Faith swung around and looked at Giles and she nodded, accessing his memories. "You're right. He did ask." She looked at Quentin. "They can stay, they might be useful. And if they're not, I'll get rid of them." She pointed at Buffy. "You can leave. But before you do, let's recap what's happened to you today." Faith marshaled her thoughts. "Well, let's see. I now have your Watcher. I now have your friends. I have your headquarters, and all your supplies and information. Oh, and I slept with your boyfriend. Well, technically that didn't happen today but I did want to mention it again. So, that leaves you with, gosh, nothing." Faith grinned. "This is so great."

Buffy glanced at Giles and saw how much discomfort he was still in. His eyes

were closed, his brow furrowed, his breathing still rapid. Buffy moved closer to Faith. "If you think this is done ..."

Faith moved to stand behind Giles, putting her hands on his shoulders. She pressed down, a little too hard, and Giles winced. Faith made sure Buffy noticed. "It's done. He's mine. If you try and sneak in here, I'll hurt him. If you try and contact him, I'll hurt him. If you use any of the people in this room to try and get to him, I'll hurt him and them." She let up the pressure on Giles and Giles let out a sigh of relief. He looked up at her with hateful eyes. Faith grinned at him. "Man, who knew you had such a mouth on you?" She moved her grinning gaze to Buffy. "I love this guy." Then her gaze hardened. "So, time for you to go, B. Oh, and take your boring boyfriend with you."

Buffy glared at her, feeling completely helpless. She spoke his name, her voice trembling. "Giles."

He turned to her. "It's all right, Buffy. I'll be all right."

Faith looked at him and then she shook her head at Buffy. "Damn, isn't he noble? You messed up with him, big time. They don't come much better, you know. I can tell."

Buffy barked out a bitter laugh. "If you think he's so great, why are you hurting him?"

"It's just my nature, B, you of all people should know that. It's just my nature." Faith pulled Giles' head back against her breast and she stroked his face. "But don't you worry about him. My Watcher and I will get along just fine."

Giles tried to pull his head away but again Faith kept him there. He stopped struggling and just closed his eyes as she continued to stroke him. If everyone in the room didn't know better, it might have appeared to be a tender moment between the two of them.

Quentin moved towards the door and he flipped the sign to the closed side. "Until this threat is passed, you can ill afford to be distracted by customers." He looked at his watch and gestured to Buffy. "Come along Ms. Summers. I have a plane to catch."

Buffy stared at him. "You're leaving? You're leaving him with her?"

Quentin let out a sigh. "Yes, Ms. Wilkins has given me her word that no lasting harm will befall Rupert."

Buffy barked out an incredulous laugh. "Her word? Her word? Do you

honestly believe that her word means anything?"

"It is in Ms. Wilkins' best interest to overturn this prophecy. She's a bright young woman. She knows it will do her no good to hurt the one man necessary to fight this evil. I believe she understands this."

Faith nodded. "I sure do." She grinned at Buffy. "Don't worry. I'll take real good care of him."

Quentin opened the door. "Ms. Summers? Please don't force me to make good on one of Ms. Wilkins' threats." He looked up at Giles. "Welcome back to the Council, Rupert. We will, of course, start paying you immediately."

Faith walked towards the door and stood by Quentin's side. "Oh, and B? I'm assuming you've got the patrol thing handled, right? Cuz, I'm gonna stick by my man's side, at least until the Hellmouth thing is over. Then him and me, we'll be leaving Sunnydale."

Buffy shook her head. "He is not going anywhere with you."

"You just don't get it, do you? He'll go where I tell him to go. He'll do what I tell him to do, or this will happen."

As she closed her eyes to give Buffy another demonstration of her power Buffy spoke up. "No, no, don't hurt him. I'll go." She turned to Riley. "Come on." Riley moved to her side.

Faith grinned again. "Man, it's been a good day. Best day I've had in a long time." She looked at Buffy, her head at a saucy tilt. "Bye."

Buffy clenched her jaw, her teeth grinding, as she left the store. Faith closed it behind her, locking it. Buffy watched as Quentin got into the back seat of a car that was waiting for him. The car moved away from the curb and headed down the street. She looked back into the store. Grinning at Buffy, Faith walked over to Giles, and then walked around him, her fingers trailing over his body suggestively. "Wanna go train?"

Giles looked up at Faith. "Will this be nothing but an endless, cruel game to you?"

She sat on his lap. "It can be whatever you want it to be."

Giles stood quickly and Faith found herself sitting on the floor. Giles hissed at her. "I want it to be nothing." Buffy felt a fierce exultation at his denial of her.

Faith immediately snapped to her feet, her eyes flashing. Her fist was a blur as it lashed out and connected with Giles' jaw. He fell to the floor, hard. Buffy moved to the door but Riley grabbed her. Tears in her eyes she stared at Giles lying on the floor.

Faith shook her hand out as she prodded Giles with her foot. "Man, I have really gotta work on that temper of mine." Faith pointed towards the training room door, looking at Xander. "You did say there was a training room back there, didn't you?"

Xander nodded, his eyes on Giles.

Faith nodded. "Good. I'm gonna go do a workout, work off a little steam." She caught them all with her gaze again. "Try to remember, anything you say to Giles, I'll be able to pick out of his mind, so if you don't want him to get hurt ..." Faith let the threat trail off as she headed into the back.

End of Part 4

And It Shall Come To Pass 5

Xander and Willow rushed to Giles' side. Willow gently lifted his head and rested it on her thigh and glanced up at Xander. "Will you get an icepack?"

Xander nodded. As he rose he was surprised to see Buffy still standing outside the door. He caught her eye. After a sad look, he headed over to the refrigerator.

Buffy put her hand on the glass. Riley touched her shoulder. "Come on, Buffy. There's nothing you can do here."

Buffy shook off his touch. "I'm gonna kill her." Buffy took off running for the back of the store. She burst in the back door and launched herself at Faith, her momentum taking them both to the floor.

Faith grinned and kicked out with her feet, shoving Buffy off of her. "Not good enough, B."

Buffy punched her, snapping Faith's head back. She punched her twice more in quick succession. "Looks pretty good to me."

Faith backhanded Buffy and as Buffy stumbled to the side Faith spun around and kicked her, taking her further off balance.

##

Willow held the icepack to Giles' face, speaking softly to him, encouraging him to come back to consciousness. He opened his eyes briefly and then closed them as the light from the store assaulted him. Groaning, he put his hand up to feel his jaw, running into Willow's hand and the icepack. He cleared his throat. "Where's Faith?"

They all heard the commotion in the back at the same time. Willow's eyes opened wide. "In the back."

Suddenly Giles let out another groan and he grabbed his head, his breath coming out in fevered pants. He started moaning. "Oh, God, oh, God, oh God, make it stop, make it stop." His knees moved until he was curled up against Willow.

Willow looked at Xander, her eyes in a panic. Xander was off his knees and running for the back before another second had passed.

##

Buffy kept her footing and struck again at Faith with her fists.

Faith grinned. She loved a good fight. "See, B, as long as I'm conscious ..."

Xander burst in the door. "Stop it, whatever you're doing, stop it, it's killing him."

Buffy turned to Xander. Faith took advantage of the distraction, punching Buffy hard in the face, hard enough to slam her into a wall. "Like I was saying, as long as I'm conscious, I control Giles. I don't even have to be near him."

Buffy ran into the store, running over to Giles. He was still curled against Willow, almost incoherent with the pain. Buffy glowered at Faith. "Faith, so help me God..."

Faith disregarded Buffy's threat and looked down at Giles. "Hey, I'm getting better at this. He's still pretty much awake. It's much more fun than when he goes all sorta unconscious."

Buffy sprang to her feet and made as if to lunge for Faith again.

Faith pointed at Giles. "Tick tock. I don't know how long he can take this."

It took every ounce of self-control Buffy had but she relaxed her body out of a fighting stance. "Stop it, stop hurting him."

Faith grinned. "Okay."

Everyone let out a sigh of relief when they saw Giles' body start to relax. He lay there, on the ground, his breathing still rapid. Willow reached for his hand and Giles held on tight. Looking up at Buffy, tears in her eyes, Willow spoke. "Buffy, you have to leave. You have to leave now before she hurts him again."

Faith moved to sit on the table, enjoying the scene before her. She pulled a piece of gum out of her pocket, unwrapped it, and put it in her mouth. She offered a piece to anyone who was paying attention to her. Faith grinned when they all shook their head no.

Faith chewed her gum for a minute. As Buffy continued to stand there, Faith shook her head. "Hey, girlfriend."

Buffy turned away from Giles and faced Faith. The expression on her face had sent vampires running. "What."

"Let me go over the rules again with you cuz I don't think you're getting them. You can't come here anymore. You can't see Giles. You can't touch me. If you do ...well, let's just say that you saw what's gonna happen." Faith looked at Giles. It looked as if he had fallen asleep. Only the fact that he was holding Willow's hand tightly gave away the fact that he was still awake. She stood. "Aw, isn't that cute."

Willow glared up at Faith. "You're ...you're ... I can't even think of a word bad enough to describe you."

Faith barked out a laugh. "You have got to work on your delivery, Willow." She turned again to Buffy. "Get out."

"Faith ..."

"Get out. Now."

"I'm still gonna kill you."

"Well, you better just hope I don't see you coming or you'll be killing him too." Faith looked at Giles and then back at Buffy. "I'm gonna count to five and you better be gone. One ...two ..."

Xander grabbed Buffy's arm. "Go."

She resisted.

"Three ..."

Even Tara spoke up. "Buffy, you need to go."

"Four ..."

Anya yelled. "Go."

Buffy ran.

##

Riley had long given up trying to get Buffy to calm down. She had already hit the punching bag in the Initiative training room hard enough to send it flying a few feet to the ground. She was still so angry that she was practically giving off sparks. Riley just watched her, waiting for her to choose the time to speak.

When she did, Riley began wishing that she'd just start punching things again, as long as it wasn't him. Buffy glared at him. "You couldn't tell the difference? You couldn't tell the difference between me and that?"

Riley winced. "Buffy."

She didn't really care what he had to say. "No, it's not all right. You slept with her." Buffy knew that she and Riley had gone through this way too many times already but the hurt felt brand new again.

"Buffy, I didn't know I was sleeping with her. I thought I was sleeping with you. You know that. I would never sleep with anyone else. I love you."

Buffy started pacing again. That Riley had slept with Faith was only a part of what was making her crazy at that particular moment. But it was easier to be mad at Riley than to deal with the pictures in her mind. Pictures of Giles curled up on the floor in agony, Faith straddling his lap trying to force him to kiss her, and she, herself, running away and leaving Giles to deal with Faith on his own. Her hands clenched into fists. "I have to talk to him."

"You can't talk to him. If you talk to him, Faith will know it and she'll ..." He didn't finish his sentence. He didn't need to.

"I can't just leave him there."

"Of course you can't. We'll think of something."

"She'll end up killing him."

"Don't you think she just wanted to prove a point tonight? I mean, I know she's a little unstable but he's her Watcher now. She'll ..."

Buffy spun around to face Riley, interrupting him angrily. "He's my Watcher. Mine."

Riley looked at her confused. "Buffy, he hasn't been your Watcher for a long time, and not just because he was fired. You don't use him that way anymore. You don't need to. You have me, and the Initiative. You said that to me yourself."

Buffy's eyes filled with tears. She had said that, in this very room. That she didn't need Giles, that she was glad she had all these new resources that didn't come attached with lessons and admonishing looks. It was so much easier this way. Figure out what had to be killed and kill it. No one expecting her to be anything but a killer who liked to party.

And until a few hours ago she would have still said it. But then Giles had spoken to her and touched her, not physically, but inside, inside where she was real, where she wasn't a killer, and had woken something up. She remembered what the two of them used to have, and how it was so much deeper, and more comforting, and richer than what she had now.

She looked around the room. How had she gotten here? How had she gotten so lost? How had she and Giles drifted apart so completely? She shook her head and looked at Riley. "He's my Watcher. He always has been, he always will be. I get that now."

Riley frowned. "I don't understand. What do you mean, you get that now? Just because she has him, you want him again?"

Buffy shook her head, knowing she could never make him understand. No one could ever understand what she and Giles had once meant to each other, could maybe mean to each other again. Riley didn't have a Watcher. If she asked him he'd probably say that Maggie was his Watcher, and Buffy supposed that she'd been acting in that capacity for Buffy as well. And while Maggie was pretty great, she wasn't Giles.

Buffy started pacing again, her thoughts uncomfortable. She knew that ever

since she had met Maggie, that Giles had come up the loser in any comparison between the two of them. Somehow Maggie had seemed more exciting, more like Buffy. Figure out what the job is, do the job, and move on. Work hard, and then go play hard. Simple. And Maggie had a whole bunch of people who reported to her. Who jumped when she said jump, who never contradicted her or teased her. She demanded respect and she got it. The people under her knew how to fight and they had money and weapons and Buffy had really, really liked it.

But now. She looked around the room again. Now it felt so sterile. And she felt hollow, misshapen. After today, after those few minutes with Giles, all she wanted to do was crawl inside of him, be in his presence, and soak him up like a sponge, until she was whole again, until she was herself again. Buffy sat on the ground, pulling her knees up tightly. She looked up at Riley. "We can't just leave him there."

Riley got up and moved to sit on the floor near her. "I agree. Don't worry, Buffy. We'll think of something. Maybe we can shoot her with a trunk, knock her out, get Giles away from her."

Buffy shook her head. "We don't know how this mind control thing she has works. It might not matter how far away she is. When she wakes up she could kill him." Buffy's lips tightened. "She has to be dead. It's the only way."

Riley shook his head. "I can't just ask one of my men to shoot her, to kill her. Maggie would never approve it. She's human, Buffy."

Buffy clenched her jaw. "No, she isn't."

"She is. She might be acting inhuman, but she's human. And the Initiative won't touch her."

"Why not? They took Ethan away."

Riley pursed his lips. "They couldn't keep him, Buffy. He was out within a few hours." He smiled ruefully. "Maggie hates anything that reeks of magic. The only reason she's so willing to have you work with the Initiative is because you can physically fight so well. She can understand that. If being the Slayer was more about magic and less about brute force she wouldn't have anything to do with you, no matter what I thought. I've suggested she let Willow and Tara work with us because of their magic abilities and she categorically refused."

Buffy stared at Riley. "You never told me that."

"Once she said no, there wasn't much point, was there?"

"How can she be so blind?" Buffy ignored the voice inside of her head that was asking her how she could have been so blind.

Riley's eyes narrowed. "She's not blind.

"What would you call it? How can she pretend there's no magic when she fights demons? What is that?"

"She sticks with what she's good at. What the team's good at. Demons are, well, you can see them, and you can kill them. It's an easy mission for a team to deal with. These are the bad guys, now go get them. Everyone's clear, everyone works together. You throw magic in the mix, and it stops being so clear."

"Even with demons it's not that clear. You know that, Riley."

"Yeah, I know that. I don't particularly like it, but I know it. But even you have to admit that most demons are bad news. And even if I know that there are gray areas, Maggie doesn't agree, and neither do most of the people here." He took her hand. "And neither do you, most of the time."

Buffy pulled her hand back. "What do you mean?"

"Buffy, we've been working together for well over a year. At first you used to worry about some of the demons we were killing. You wanted to know more about them, have Giles look them up, make sure that they were dangerous to humans, but now you don't do that anymore. You get an assignment and off you go, just like the rest of us. And that's the way it should be. There's no room for questioning orders when you're in the field. That's what gets people dead."

Buffy saw herself, just for a moment, through Riley's eyes. And she didn't like what she saw. Buffy covered her face with her hands. Riley moved to put his arm around her and Buffy stood up, moving away. "We need to think of something."

Riley stood and moved to her, then wrapped his arms around her from behind. "We will. You will." Riley nuzzled her neck.

Buffy pushed him away. "What are you doing?"

Riley grinned. "Come on. You're so tense. I'm just trying to help you relax."

"I'm tense because the man that I ..." Buffy stopped short, her mouth refusing to end that sentence the way her mind intended, not even sure where the hell that thought had come from. "...because a man that I care about is in danger."

Riley moved to Buffy again. "I know that. But you'll think better once you relax a little. And I know just what to do to help you relax."

Buffy barely kept the expression of disgust off her face. "Riley, stop it. I can't."

Riley sighed and stepped away. "Listen. I know you think Giles is in danger, but maybe it's not as bad as it looks. Faith wasn't completely bad. She helped kill those vampires when she was here last. She voluntarily allowed herself to be arrested. I can't believe that she'll keep this up. Maybe if you stay away and stop setting her off, she and Giles will find a way to work together."

"You don't get it. They won't."

"Why not? He is a Watcher. The purpose of his life is to watch over a Slayer."

Buffy's heart objected to his words. Not a Slayer, she thought fiercely, this Slayer. She patted herself on the chest a couple of times, her body echoing her silent sentiments. Then she shook her head. "They'll never be able to work together because she's made him a slave, and he won't ever be okay with it. He won't ever allow her to control him. He'll push back and he'll push back until she hurts him bad enough to kill him."

Riley touched her arm. "That won't be your fault, Buffy."

But she knew it would be. Because she had walked away from her Watcher, from Giles. Because she had discounted everything Giles had said to her until it was too late. She shook Riley's hand off. "I gotta go. I gotta go wait for Willow and talk to her."

"I'll come with you."

She shook her head. "No, I want to go alone."

Riley looked down at her, despairingly. She got like this sometimes. And, he had to admit, it was usually after she was with Giles. She'd get moody, and he'd feel uncertain of his place in her life. As if the relationship between them that was usually rock hard and solid become ephemeral, nothing more than smoke and mirrors. Nothing for him to grab a hold of. He couldn't bear to let her leave like this. "Buffy, I don't think you should go." He needed to keep her away from this. He needed to keep her away from Giles. He needed to keep

her with him.

Buffy glanced up at him and saw the earnestness in his face. She knew he loved her. She knew he'd do just about anything for her, anything within his scope of expertise. But for the first time she saw how limited that scope was. Buffy looked at him sadly, and just shook her head. Without another word she picked up her jacket and left the room. Riley sat on the floor again, knowing it was pointless to follow, knowing that if she wanted to evade him that she simply would. He lay back on the floor and let out a long breath.

##

Willow didn't want to leave but Giles made her. He made them all leave. Faith just watched them, her eyes glittering. Willow glanced up at Giles one more time. "Let us stay."

Giles shook his head. "Willow, it's late. We all need to get some sleep. Even Faith has to sleep. I'm grateful for your concern, more than I can say." Giles lightly touched her cheek with his hand.

"I don't want to leave you alone with her."

Xander glanced at Faith. "Yeah, big guy. I don't think that's such a good idea." He spoke softly.

Giles could feel Faith rooting around in his head, eavesdropping. He gritted his teeth. He looked at the four of them and reminded them again. "She knows everything you're saying. If I'm hearing it, she is too. You must remember that. I couldn't live with the thought of any of you being hurt." He actually wanted them to go. As much as he longed for their company, as much as he didn't want to be alone with Faith, he feared for them more.

Faith sauntered over. "Okay, I'm bored. Time to wrap this up." She ran her fingers temptingly down Giles' back. "Time for bed." She grinned at him.

Giles let out a breath, his temper fraying. "Faith, get away from me."

"Ooh, I love it when you talk mean."

Giles walked to the door and unlocked it. He gestured to Willow, Xander, Anya, and Tara with his hand. "Time for you to go."

Willow glanced at Faith and her face hardened. She glanced up at Giles again. "But we'll come help you research tomorrow, right?" There was nothing

Willow wanted more than to be a thousand miles away from Faith but nothing could shake her resolve to stick by Giles.

Giles smiled at her. "Yes, that would be appreciated." Giles needed her help. He needed all of them. Tonight had been too stressful to get any research of worth done. But he needed them to leave now. He needed to have a little time where he didn't need to fear for them.

The four of them headed for the door, reluctant to leave. Xander turned to him one last time. "You'll call us if you need anything?"

Faith rolled her eyes in disgust and helped them out the door with several hard pushes. Not hard enough to hurt, just hard enough to get them out of the store. She locked the door behind them and waved merrily at them through the window.

Giles sighed and looked at the locked door. "Are we staying here all night?"

"Nah. I'll just let them get out of here and then we can go." She pressed against him, her breasts rubbing his arm. "Your place or mine?"

"Do I have a choice?"

She grinned. "Nope. I don't have a place. Well, I do now. Your place." She ran her hand over his butt. "Our place."

Giles grabbed her hand and pulled her in front of him. "Faith, my home will never be your home. I may not be able to stop you from staying there but you will never be welcome, either in my home, or in my bed."

Faith just looked at him, her eyes hungry. "You forget, Giles. I can see in your mind. I know everything you like. I know just how to touch you, how to make you crazy with desire. I can be the best lay you've ever had."

She disgusted Giles and yet, a part of him felt sorry for her. "Is that how you see yourself? Is this what you've become? A good lay?" Giles braced himself for a new onslaught of pain but she didn't retaliate. He moved away before she changed her mind and began straightening up the books, closing the ones resting open, their aged spines not up to the abuse.

Faith just watched him, sure of herself. He was just a man, just like the rest of them. And she'd never met one that didn't fancy a quick lay with a willing woman.

End of Part 5

And It Shall Come To Pass 6

All four of them went to the Bronze. Not because they wanted to party, but because they didn't want to say goodnight to each other yet, and being around other people made them feel safer. They sat in a corner booth, miserable.

Finally Xander spoke. "Okay, I have to say that today looms pretty high on the suckiest day ever list."

Willow felt sick to her stomach. "Do you think he'll be okay?"

Anya was tearing her napkin into little pieces. "I wish I still had my power, she'd be sorry then."

Xander touched her arm. "Not your area, Anya."

She sneered at him. "No, but I would have known someone who could have done something." She started on another napkin.

Tara sat close to Willow. She couldn't even imagine what it would feel like to have someone in your mind like that. Her eyes widened as she looked up and saw Buffy approaching the table. She squeezed Willow's hand to get her attention.

Willow looked up and saw Buffy. Her eyes filled with tears. "Oh, Buffy. It was awful, the whole night was so awful." Willow began to cry and Tara held her in her arms.

Buffy's eyes filled with tears in response. She looked at Xander. "Is Giles all right?"

Xander nodded. "Yeah, he's all right. Or at least he's still standing, no matter how many times she knocked him to his knees." Xander's fists clenched, remembering how helpless he'd felt as Faith kept hurting Giles just for the sheer enjoyment of it. "I hate her."

Buffy noticed his fists and she placed one of her hands on top of one of his fisted ones. "We all do."

Xander's lips tightened. "I knew he was pretty tough. He's been through a lot. But I gotta tell you, he's something else, because no matter what she did to

him, he just got right back up and didn't give her an inch."

Buffy shook her head. "It's gonna get him killed."

Xander glared at her. "What do you want him to do, Buffy, cave? Let that psychopath tell him what to do?"

Buffy shook her head. "No, no, I didn't mean it that way. But he needs to stay alive until we can figure out a way to get rid of her. If he pisses her off enough to just kill him, all he's gonna be is dead."

Willow lifted her head away from the warmth of Tara's arms and looked around. "Where's Riley?"

Buffy smiled sadly at Willow. "I left him at the Initiative." She let out a sigh. "Look, let me just say this. I know I've been really stupid. I don't know what happened to me, I don't know how I got pulled away so far from Giles, from you guys. I love you guys." Buffy bit her lips hard to keep from crying.

Willow moved to hug Buffy. "We love you too." Willow pulled back. "Giles thinks it's magic."

Buffy shook her head, not understanding. "What's magic?"

"What went wrong with you guys. That it's because you stopped being together, getting together, doing, you know, the Watcher-Slayer thing, that it's done bad things to both of you."

Giles had tried to explain something of this to Buffy earlier today. Buffy felt as if it was years ago now. "So, the magic pushed us apart?"

Willow shook her head. "No, the other way around. You guys lost the magic when you stopped being around each other. It's like when you guys were put together as a Watcher and a Slayer there was this magic that kept you strong, kept you focused, and just made you better. But when the library blew up, and you started dating Riley, and you stopped hanging around each other, it's like you sort of stretched the cord until it pulled out of the socket and you both lost your electricity."

That analogy made sense to Buffy. She'd felt that today, felt that electricity. Had felt a power start to flow back into her when Giles had stood near her. She ran her hand through her hair and looked at them all, a lopsided smile on her face. "So, here I am, power outage girl." She felt a longing for Giles sweep through her, followed by a flash of anger at Faith for daring to try to keep Giles from her.

Xander wasn't quite so willing to forgive and forget. "I don't get it, Buffy. I mean just a few days ago you didn't even care if Giles was alive or not. I mean I know you're concerned about Giles getting hurt, but what's this all about? Are you just mad because Faith's taken something else that belongs to you?"

Willow gasped at Xander's comment and glanced at Buffy, expecting her to be furious. Buffy just looked at Xander, her face sad. "I guess I deserved that." Buffy bit her lips again, looking away, trying to compose herself. A few sniffles and a few deep breaths later she turned back to Xander. "You're right, a week ago I didn't care. This morning I didn't care. Right now, I can't even imagine feeling like that." Buffy fought off some tears again.

Anya handed her a napkin. "Here, tear this up. Maybe it will help."

Buffy let out a shaky laugh and began to worry the napkin with her fingers. "When Giles asked to talk to me today, you know, privately, I didn't know what to expect. But then, we started talking, and he started talking about this theory of his, and all I know is that I started missing him so bad, and then we looked at each other and it was like ...", she turned to Willow, "...exactly like you said, like I'd been plugged back in, like I could feel this energy, and this ...this ...good stuff just start filling me up."

Willow nodded. "The magic."

Buffy nodded. "Then, after Faith made me leave, I went back to the Initiative and it just seemed so ..." She shook her head, at a loss for the right words.

Willow helped. "So not magic."

Buffy nodded, her eyes shiny with tears. "Yeah, so not magic." She looked at Xander. "I know there's no reason for you to believe me, but this isn't about Faith, it's about Giles. It's about me and Giles and me needing him back, and wanting him to be okay."

Xander looked at Buffy for a long moment, and then nodded. "Okay, then, what's the plan?"

Buffy had no idea. They all sat there and thought. Finally Buffy looked at them. "Can you guys get him alone, figure out a way for me to talk to him?"

Willow shook her head. "She's in his head, Buffy, remember? Any conversation he has, she can hear it."

Buffy clenched her jaw. "I have to see him. I have to talk to him."

Willow sat there, trying to think of any loopholes. Her brain was tired. Her heart was tired. It was bad enough that Faith kept hurting Giles, but when she ... Willow blurted it out. "She kept touching him."

Everyone looked at Willow. Buffy's eyes narrowed. "What?"

"Faith, she kept touching him."

"Touching him, how?" Pictures of Faith straddling Giles' lap, kissing him, came to mind.

Willow blushed, miserable. "Like she wanted him, like she owned him. Like what she did when you were there, except worse."

Buffy tried to control the feelings rushing through her. There were so many of them she could barely sort them out. "Worse?" She looked at Xander.

Xander nodded. At one time this had been a fantasy of his, being forced to submit to touches by a woman lording it over him. It wasn't anymore. Not after tonight. He'd had sex with Faith and it hadn't been the funnest thing he'd ever done, and he'd been a willing partner. Xander suspected that if Faith tried to force Giles, that it wasn't something Giles would enjoy in the slightest, and probably wouldn't live through. At the look in Buffy's eyes he tried to back things off a little. "I mean she didn't, you know, actually, do anything. She just made it pretty clear to everyone that she was planning on it, whether Giles wanted to or not."

Willow answered the question in Buffy's eyes. "Which he didn't. At all. Not even a little." She looked at Buffy, her eyes filled with hurt for Giles. "We didn't want to leave him alone with her. We wanted to stay. He made us leave. He was afraid she would hurt us."

Buffy's voice was so tight she could barely recognize herself. "Where are they now?"

Willow shook her head. "We don't know. Either still at the shop or back at his place, I guess." She moved her chair closer to Tara's and rested her head on her shoulder. Tara stroked her hair.

Buffy sat for another moment. "Is she still gonna let you guys research?"

Willow nodded, not saying anything.

"Okay, then, here's the plan." Buffy looked at Willow. "Willow, you and Tara have to find out everything you can about this binding thing that Faith did. We need to know if we can break it, how long it lasts. Maybe you can find another spell that will block it, at least long enough for me to talk to Giles."

Willow sat up and nodded. Having a plan was already making her feel better. Buffy looked at Xander and Anya. "You guys have to run interference. Every time Faith or Giles want to know what Willow and Tara are doing you have to distract them. Giles can't know, or Faith will find out."

Xander nodded. "Gotcha." He looked up and smiled at his girlfriend. "We can do that." Anya nodded back.

"Good." Buffy stood. "We can meet back here every night." She looked at Willow. "I'm moving back into my dorm room so you can catch me there, too."

Willow let out a sigh and nodded. She looked up at Buffy. "Where are you going?"

"I'm going out to kill some vampires, after I beat the crap out of them, pretending they're Faith."

Xander grinned, although it quickly faded. "Sounds like good therapy to me." It was hard to feel cheerful about anything, worrying about Giles.

Buffy took them all in. "We'll fix this. We'll win. Just like we always do." She faltered with her words, recognizing how absent she'd been. "Did ...like we always did ...and will do ...again." She stared at them, begging them to work with her.

Willow nodded emphatically. "Right. We'll do something to Faith and rescue Giles and then it will be just like the old days."

There was a moment of silence, the task before them daunting at best. Buffy shook off her fears and with another look at the four of them she headed off.

##

When Giles woke up the next morning he was amazed that he had slept soundly all night. He'd been so tired that he'd ignored Faith and simply stumbled upstairs and fallen into bed. He'd been asleep before his head hit the pillow. Not that he should have been completely amazed, he'd had an exhausting and painful day. It was more that he was surprised that he'd allowed himself to fall asleep so deeply knowing Faith was right there.

He could tell she was lying next to him. Her breathing was deep and regular and he guessed she was asleep. For a moment Giles enjoyed the sense of having his mind to himself. Then he lifted his head and took a nervous look down at his body and then her body. Giles let his head fall back in relief when he found that they were both fully clothed.

Giles turned his head and considered Faith. He wondered if he could just kill her. He had a knife under the bed. All he needed to do was grab it and plunge it in her chest, or in her throat. It would need to be an instant killing thrust because if it wasn't she'd take him with her. He dispassionately ran through various techniques, considering her position, finally choosing the best method, but he didn't move. He knew he couldn't do it. He couldn't just murder her as she lay in his bed, however unwelcome she might be.

Faith woke up and opened her eyes, only to find Giles staring at her. She found his thoughts and she grinned. "Good morning to you, too." Faith tsk tsk'd him. "You should have done it. I would have." She rolled on top of him and he tried to push her off. She laughed, ignoring his efforts and rubbed against him. "Come on, you know you want me."

Giles marshaled his strength and flung her off, throwing Faith off the bed. He glared down at her. "I have no intention of sleeping with you."

Faith moved to her knees and she reached under the bed and withdrew the knife that had been on Giles' mind. She put it against his throat. "Is this how you were gonna do it?"

Giles spoke softly, though his voice was still angry. "If you can read my mind you know exactly how I would have done it."

Faith moved the knife until the point was pushing up under his chin. "Like this. Right into the back of the brain." She moved it away and ran the flat of it across his cheek. "I don't know why you're fighting me. We could have some serious fun."

"Your idea of fun and mine are entirely different."

Faith grinned. "Not that different." She tapped his temple with the knife. "I know what you've done. I know what you like. Trust me, we'd do just fine."

Giles closed his eyes. He pictured himself strangling Faith. Then he opened his eyes and looked right at her. "We would not, as you say, do just fine. I have no desire to touch you, in the least."

Faith tapped his temple again, harder. "You're lying. I can tell. There's a part of you that's ready to go, right now. That's always ready to go." She stared past him, as if seeing a motion picture being run for her viewing pleasure alone. Her eyes focused back on Giles. "You think about having sex with Buffy." She grinned. "And Willow, and Anya, and Tara." She giggled delightedly. "Ooh. And Willow and Tara together." Faith shook her head. "Giles, you're an animal."

Giles simply sent her more pleasant thoughts. Staking her, decapitating her. His mind was filled with the wish that he had killed her. She just knelt on the floor until he spoke to her. "Faith, I am a normal healthy male. I refuse to allow you to make me feel badly for fantasizing about beautiful women. It does no one any harm, nor do I ever intend to act on them, as you well know."

He continued. "If you'd look a little harder you would see that I also fantasize about some of my customers and the woman I lease the store from." He leaned towards her, completely ignoring the knife. "My body may respond to you, but it is purely instinct. Trust me when I say that there is a world of difference between instinct and fantasy." He grabbed Faith's knife hand. "And let me tell that the one woman in the world that I cannot even imagine fantasizing about, is you."

Faith jerked her hand free and slashed the knife down, cutting Giles' cheek. She slashed down again but Giles rolled away across the bed. Faith followed, lunging after him. Giles found his feet and headed for the stairs, knowing his death was right behind him. Suddenly he heard her laughing. He spun around at the head of the stairs. She was sitting on the bed. "Okay, you get points for that one. That got under my skin."

Giles watched her, still cautious, wondering what her game was.

Faith lay back on the bed, stretching, showing her body off. She ran her hands down her body, over her breasts and stomach and hips. She glanced at Giles. "You may not be fantasizing about me now, but you will be."

Giles shook his head. "Never."

Anger flashed over Faith's face again and she closed her eyes and lashed out with her mind.

Giles let out a cry and he stumbled. He tried to catch himself but the pain in his head disoriented him so his hands flailed at nothing as he fell down the stairs. Faith walked to the head of the stairs and sat on the top step, looking at his body, lying crumpled at the bottom. She leaned against the banister

and spoke to Giles, although she was reasonably certain he couldn't hear her. "Thanks for moving fast enough so I didn't just kill you. This is way more fun." She looked at the knife and wiped Giles' blood off on her pants. Then she started cleaning under her fingernails with the tip.

##

They had arrived at the store early. It was Saturday and they had all woken at the crack of dawn, none of them having slept well. Their apprehension grew when Giles was late. Willow used the time to start her research but after a while she was unable to concentrate. When he was over an hour late Anya grabbed the phone and called his home.

Faith answered. "Watcher central. It's your dime."

"This is Anya. Is Giles there?"

"Yeah, he is. But, he's sort of unconscious now. And he's bleeding a little bit too. I don't think he can come to the phone. Can I take a message?"

Anya hesitated, the look on her face spreading consternation among the other three. "How did he get unconscious? Is he okay?"

"Oh sure. He's pretty tough. It looks like he's still breathing okay, or ... maybe he's not. Hold on." Faith got up to crouch by Giles. She watched him for a minute and then nodded. She put the phone back to her ear. "Yeah, he's still breathing okay."

Anya had started the conversation off frightened, but now she was getting angry. "Listen you bitch. You better not let anything happen to him."

"Or what, demon girl? Or you'll come over here and watch me while I hurt him some more, knowing you can't stop me?" Faith let out a heavy sigh. "Listen to us. I don't want to fight. I need you guys. I need my team. After all, we have a Hellmouth to close." She grinned. "Did that sound peppy enough? Or do I need to work on it?"

Anya was speechless with rage. Xander came over and took the phone away from her. "Faith, where's Giles? What's going on?"

"Xander, buddy. How's it hanging?"

Xander could almost feel his testicles retract. "Let me talk to him."

"Nope, can't let you do that."

"When is he gonna get here?"

Faith considered Giles. "Well, let's see. He fell down the stairs about an hour ago. If he's gonna wake up, I'm guessing it should be pretty soon, and then we'll be in there in about an hour. Unless he's puking. You never really know with a concussion. If he's puking it might take us a little longer." She threw the knife, watching it thud into the ground a few inches from Giles' forehead. "Does that work for you?"

Xander thought he might puke. "Maybe I should come over, make sure he's all right."

"Sure, the more the merrier. To tell you the truth it was getting kind of boring just watching him. At least if you're here I'll have someone to talk to." Faith retrieved the knife and moved farther away and with a rapid hand movement she threw the knife again. She got even closer this time. Smiling she went and yanked it out again. "Hey, and bring some donuts, would ya?" Faith hung up.

End of Part 6

And It Shall Come To Pass 7

It took Xander a considerable amount of time to get Giles up and on to the couch. Giles helped as much as he could but his head was spinning, and his legs wouldn't cooperate. Once Xander got him lying down he saw the cut on Giles' face. He looked up at Faith, even angrier than he had been when he'd first arrived to find her fixing herself some hot chocolate, Giles lying on the floor at the foot of the stairs. "How'd he get that?"

Faith shut the refrigerator door. "Damn, no whipped cream." She looked at Xander. "I tried to give him a shave." She glanced over at Giles, shaking her head. "I think I need some more practice."

Xander kept his mouth shut, knowing that Faith would hurt either him or Giles with little or no provocation. He went into the bathroom and got Giles' first aid kit. Sitting on the coffee table he cleaned up the wound on Giles' face, wiping the blood away, and put some antibacterial ointment on it. Then he sealed it closed the best he could with some steri-strips. Going into Giles' freezer he pulled out a couple of icepacks, the ones Giles always kept in there for Buffy, even though Xander couldn't remember the last time she'd been here.

Xander gently placed an icepack on the side of Giles' face where the largest amount of bruising seemed to be blossoming. He put the other one on his wrist, which seemed quite swollen. Xander hoped it wasn't broken.

Faith drank her hot chocolate, watching Xander, and then decided to go out and get her own donuts since Xander had neglected to stop on the way. She helped herself to Giles' wallet and skipped out the door. As she was leaving she stuck her head back in. "Don't forget that no matter where I am, that I'm hooked in. Don't try anything."

Xander nodded, just wanting her to go. Once she left he wished he could somehow barricade the house from her return but he knew it was a fruitless effort. She would be able to break her way in. He also thought about calling the police, but even if they took her away she could still kill Giles.

Xander looked down at Giles. He seemed to be sleeping again. Xander remembered something about not letting someone with a concussion sleep. He called to his friend, his voice harsh with worry. "Giles. Giles."

Giles heard his name being called and he heard the worry. He tried to find his way out of the murky waters his mind seemed to be swimming in. Xander let out a breath as Giles' eyes started to flicker open. Giles winced at the pain in his head. There seemed to be several Xander's sitting in front of him. His voice was thick. "Xander?" He tried to sit up.

"Yeah, it's me big guy. Lay back down."

"What ...what happened?"

"Well, I'm guessing Faith got mad at you about something and she pushed you down the stairs, after she had some fun cutting up your face."

Giles remembered being cut. He put his hand up and felt the steri-strips. "You?"

Xander nodded. "She graciously consented to let me come over and pull you up off the floor."

Giles let out a short and painful laugh. "Where is she?"

"She went to get donuts." Giles looked up at Xander to see if he was serious. Xander nodded and spoke again. "How do I check to see if any bones are broken?"

Giles sighed, trying to think. He could feel the pull within him to just go back to sleep. He tried to sit up again. When Xander resisted Giles spoke. "No, I need to sit up or I'll go back to sleep."

Xander let him sit up. As Giles' face started looking a little green, Xander looked for a garbage can. He put it on the floor in front of Giles. "Hey, if you're gonna puke, aim it right here."

Giles shook his head, and winced at the pain. "I'll be all right."

Xander rolled his eyes. "You know, you keep saying that, and I'm starting to believe it's a big lie. You do realize I'm actually sitting right here, looking at you? Let me tell you, you are not, by any stretch of the imagination, all right."

Giles closed his eyes and then he started slowly flexing and extending joints, checking himself. When he was done he spoke. "Other than my wrist I think I got off rather easily, considering. And I think it's just sprained."

"What do I need to do for that?"

"It just needs to be wrapped. There should be a wrap bandage of some sort in the first drawer in the bathroom. Then if I could talk you into some tea and some aspirin I believe I really will be all right."

Xander frowned but he got up and headed back into the bathroom. With Giles' instruction Xander wrapped his wrist. While the tea was brewing Xander gave Giles his aspirin with some water. Giles took them gratefully. He glanced up at Xander. "Thank you for coming over."

Xander nodded and sat again. "No problem." He touched Giles' arm. "I'm just glad you're alive."

Giles rested his head back against the couch. "For the time being."

"Buffy had a point."

Giles lifted his head. "You saw Buffy?"

Xander grimaced. "I shouldn't have told you that."

Giles closed his eyes. "No, probably not, but seeing as you have, tell me, is she all right?"

"Other than being worried to death about you, yeah, she's fine."

"So, what was her point?"

Xander followed the conversation back and then nodded. "Right. That getting dead by having Faith kill you because you're making her mad is still dead."

Giles let out a soft silent laugh. "I know." He looked down at himself. "And I certainly provoked her enough for this."

Xander shook his head. "None of us want you dead. You need to stay alive until ..." Xander stopped talking. "You just need to stay alive." He needed to remember to guard his tongue, not say too much.

Giles caught Xander's gaze. "I don't know if I can ..." Giles sighed. "She wants too much from me. I don't know if I can live with myself if I don't fight her. I'm afraid I'll lose too much of me."

Xander stood in response to the kettle whistling. Giles' talked him through the tea making and Xander proudly brought the mug back over to Giles. "There, my first cup of tea."

Giles smiled at him. He took a cautious sip. "Thank you. It's lovely."

Xander tapped his own temple with an index finger. "Is she in there? Can you feel her?"

Giles gingerly shook his head. The pain was lessening. "No, thank goodness. I can't tell you what a relief it is."

"Then we can talk, right?"

Giles shook his head again. "No, when she returns she'll be able to read my mind, and know what we talked about."

Xander sighed. "This sucks so bad."

Giles took another sip of tea. He glanced upstairs. "Would you ...would you mind getting me a change of clothes? I don't feel quite up to tackling the stairs again."

Xander stood. "Everything? Skivvies on up?"

"Please."

"You won't fall asleep?"

"No, I'll be sitting right here." Giles smiled up at him, touched by the boy's concern. "Really, Xander. I'm fine." He grinned, just a little. "I've had lots of practice being knocked unconscious. I have a very hard head."

Xander grinned a little in return and then he dashed up the stairs.

##

By the time Faith got back, Xander had called Willow, assisted Giles in changing his clothes, and made him his second cup of tea. Faith barged in the house. "Honey, I'm home." She glanced at Giles. "You look much better."

Giles ignored her and sipped his tea.

Faith sat on the coffee table, and stared at him. "Let's see what you guys talked about."

A look of disgust crossed Giles' face as he felt her enter his mind again.

"Aw. Buffy's worried about you. Isn't that sweet?" Faith grinned. "And isn't that just like her to worry about you now, after she's been completely ignoring you for the last year." She stood and put her hands on her hips. "Yup, that's our B. Hot and cold." She glanced at Xander. "Right Xander?"

Xander sort of agreed with Faith but he had no intention of letting her know that. Plus he wanted to believe in the things Buffy had said last night. He spoke to Giles instead. "You want some toast, or something?"

Giles shook his head. "No, I don't believe I'm quite ready to eat anything."

Faith picked up Xander's jacket. "Time for you to mosey along. I'll bring him to the store in a little while."

Xander shook his head. "Why don't you let me drive you? I don't think he can drive in his shape, and you don't have your license. Plus you might need some help getting him to the car."

Faith grinned, looking at Giles. "Isn't that sweet? He doesn't want to leave you alone with me." She pursed her lips, cocking her head from one side and then to the other as she looked at Xander. "Okay, you can drive us." She leaned down, as if to tell Giles a secret but she spoke loud enough for Xander to hear. "He doesn't get it that I like hurting you better when there's an audience. It's kinda like killing two birds with one stone. I hurt you and I hurt them." She stood up again. "Although I may have to ease up a little today, otherwise I'm

thinking you'll be spending most of the day unconscious, and that's pretty boring."

Giles put his tea down and tried to stand up. It took both Faith and Xander to keep him from falling again. And it took both of them to get him out to Xander's car. Once they got to the shop, Xander dragged the couch into the main shop from the training room, and he helped Giles get settled.

Willow got out a couple of fresh icepacks and put the used ones back in the freezer to get cold again. Her eyes were filled with tears when she sat by his side. He patted her hand. "I'm all right, Willow. Just a little bruised."

She wanted so much to hug him but she was afraid it would make Faith mad. So she gently squeezed his fingers. "We were so worried about you."

With good reason, was the thought that went through Giles' mind, but he kept it to himself. He changed the subject. "How's the research going? Have you found anything?"

Willow's eyes opened wide and she looked guilty for a moment, which surprised Giles. He looked at her with narrowed eyes. That made Willow even more nervous, terrified that he would think something or ask something that would give what she was researching away to Faith.

Giles was about to speak when Anya butted in. "Do you need to throw up?"

Giles looked up at Anya, confused, but successfully distracted. "No, Anya, but thank you for asking."

"Well, if you do, let me know, so I can get you a bucket. It would be hard to get the smell of vomit out of this rug."

Giles sighed. "Yes, very thoughtful."

Anya smiled. Willow flashed her a grateful look and went back to the table.

Giles sighed again and reached for one of the books Xander had stacked on the floor by the couch. Settling in, and doing his best to ignore the games Faith was playing inside his head, he started to read.

End Part 7

Buffy had sent Riley home again. He had spoken to Maggie on Buffy's behalf and as suspected she would not, under any circumstances, condone the killing of a human. Riley's hands were tied. It all felt too horribly familiar to Buffy. First the Council refused to help her save Angel, and now the Initiative was refusing to help her save Giles. And both times, men she cared about were in danger because of Faith. The difference was that when Angel had been dying, she'd had Giles.

Buffy lay in bed, feeling lost and aching for that connection with Giles. Having had such a small taste of it, after missing it for so long, was almost worse than not having rediscovered it at all. A part of her wished it had never happened. That she could be back at the Initiative, going on the hunt, and then having sex with Riley. Living that life had never left her with this hole in her gut, a longing that cut so deeply that she thought she might die from it.

She pictured Giles in her mind and she wrapped herself around it. She thought of that moment in the training room when he had touched her cheek and she relived it over and over again. Realizing finally that she would never fall asleep she got up and headed out.

##

Giles was in the shower. Faith had gone out. She had picked up a stake, and left. Giles assumed that she needed to work off a little steam. He was only thankful that she had decided not to work it off on him.

He was exhausted. Never had he thought it would be so much work to try to not think of things. To erase an idea from his mind before it had even started. To be constantly vigilant over every stray thought. This was his feeble attempt to stop the pain. It was getting to him; Giles could feel it affecting him. The small compromises he was making to keep from being hurt. It sickened him. It made him fear what he might become. But even he, who had withstood hours of torture from Angelus, was finding it hard to deal with the pain that Faith inflicted.

Giles never knew when it would hit. He didn't know which thoughts would enrage her, which actions of his she would interpret as worthy of punishment. And because she was in his head, she knew how to hurt him, she knew just what to do to cause him the most exquisite pain, and keep it coming until he was just at the edge of his tolerance and then take it just a little further.

His thoughts about women seemed to make her angrier than anything else. She was determined to break him, in this above all other things. She

desperately wanted him to want her. Giles wasn't quite sure why it was so important to her but it was. And so it became equally important to him to not give in to her wishes.

She had threatened to hurt anyone he fantasized about. Until he started fantasizing about her, Faith had made it clear that anyone else was off limits. She did her best to weaken his resolve. She started to walk naked around the house. She would touch herself, bringing herself to orgasm as he lay next to her. She would use phrases that she knew turned him on, and talked about how she could touch him, how he could touch her, using every piece of sexual knowledge she could find in his mind. Things he'd done, things that drove him crazy, things he'd always wanted to do.

Giles lay in bed at night and thought the desire would eat him up alive. But he continued to resist her. The thought of touching her, of touching Faith, this monster who was his captor, disgusted him. He was sure that if he actually had sex with her that he would never feel clean again.

So he fought against her as best he could. But the thoughts of sex intruded. On those few occasions when Faith left him alone he found some release. All his life, as he'd masturbated, he had imagined himself with women. Different women, but always someone he knew and cared about. For the first time, Giles was afraid to think of being with anyone, afraid that Faith would, indeed, extract some revenge. And yet, it was too familiar a path for his mind and he found himself incapable of not imagining being with someone.

So Giles latched on to Buffy. Buffy, who could protect herself. Buffy, who had never been far from his mind or his heart since that day in the training room, and whom he missed with a passion. Other than an occasional fantasy as he pleased himself, Giles had never given any serious thought to an actual sexual relationship with Buffy. All he had ever wanted was a place in her heart. For a long time, while they were together every day, he had felt secure that he had one. That she truly cared about him, that he was important to her. He had simply known it. But, as they had drifted, that surety had slowly vanished.

He thought about that moment in the training room when their eyes had caught. There had been such a taste of potential in the air. And when he had touched her cheek it was as if he had come home. That she was his home. Giles stroked himself and he imagined himself touching her, thrusting into her, her legs wrapped around him. The fantasy took control in a new way. He could feel a real desire for her grow within him, one that took precedence over his desire for a sexual release. His body yearned to actually hold her, to be feeling her skin rubbing against his, to taste her. He shouted her name as he came, his orgasm so strong that he almost fell.

Long after his body calmed down he continued to stand under the shower, letting the water cascade over him. His mind was still filled with thoughts of Buffy. Always, after he came, his mind let loose of the fantasy, knowing it was simply a means to an end. But now, this time, all he could think about was holding Buffy in his arms.

##

"Hey B." Faith moved into step next to Buffy.

Without any conscious thought, other than the hate racing through her, Buffy attacked.

Faith, expecting it, ducked and then faced Buffy, in a fighting stance.

Buffy glared at her. "What the hell are you doing here?"

Faith looked surprised. "I live here now, remember? With my Watcher."

"He is still my Watcher." The emotions continued to pour through Buffy. Hate, anger, jealousy. She knew she couldn't hope to win a fight feeling this way and she tried to calm down.

Faith shook her head. "Hate to differ with you on that. He is most definitely my Watcher." She started to play with the stake in her hand in a sexually suggestive way.

Buffy tried to ignore it. Tried to ignore what it meant. "Where is he?"

"Home. Our home." Faith grinned. Still on guard, Faith strolled a few feet away, leaning against a tombstone. "He's good, B, real good."

Buffy's voice was tight. "What do you mean?"

"Just like I thought he'd be. Big and hard." Faith licked her lips. "He gets so worked up just lying next to me in bed."

"Faith, shut up."

Faith had no intention of shutting up. She wasn't even lying. "I make him crazy." She touched her temple. "I can see in his head. I can see what he wants, how he likes to be touched, how he likes to play. I know the things he's only dreamed of doing, the stuff he's never told anyone." She grinned. "Until

now."

Buffy could think of nothing she wanted more than to rip that smile off of Faith's face. The thought of her and Giles together was almost more than she could bear. This was worse than Angel pretending to be Angelus, kissing Faith in front of her. This was worse than when she found out that Riley had slept with Faith while she was in Buffy's body. "I said, shut up."

"Yeah, my Watcher's quite an animal. I knew he'd be good. I just had no idea how good. How long he can last. How creative he can be." Faith wanted to laugh at the look on Buffy's face. This was perfect. Faith's acute frustration at Giles' continued refusal was starting to fade. After staking a couple of vampires, and now, getting to tear Buffy's heart apart, she was starting to feel better.

Buffy walked away. It was either that or beat Faith senseless and she didn't want Giles to get hurt. "I'm not listening to this." Buffy wanted to go somewhere and scream.

Faith just followed her. "You should see his body. I mean, yeah, he's a little older, but mm-mmm. Those legs, that butt." She had never actually seen him naked but through his mind she knew his body intimately. She touched herself right above her hip. "He has the cutest little birthmark, right here."

Buffy started praying for vampires. Praying that one would snap Faith's neck. But then she realized that as long as Faith was here, that she wasn't with Giles, wasn't hurting him. She spun around, now wanting to talk. "So, how's the research going on the Hellmouth thing? Got that solved yet?"

Faith grinned, but allowed Buffy to change the subject. "Nope, not a thing. Willow's been a complete washout, her and her lesbo friend, and Giles, well, he hasn't been up to much research. I've been sort of wearing him out, keeping him up all night. He tends to nap a lot at the store."

Buffy had no idea if this was true or not. After the first couple of days Willow and Xander just stopped talking about what shape Giles was in. When she'd found out about Faith causing Giles to fall down the stairs Buffy became so angry she smashed her hand down on the table at the Bronze and broke it in half. From then on they just told her that he was fine. And even though she knew they were lying, nothing she said coaxed any information out of them. She wondered if they knew. If they knew that Giles and Faith...

Buffy was almost grateful when Faith spoke again, derailing that train of thought. "He dreams about you, you know."

Buffy looked at Faith in surprise. "He does?" She foolishly grasped at this idea, longing for any way to be with him, even if it was just in his dreams.

Faith nodded. "A lot."

Buffy knew Faith wasn't telling her this to be kind. But she couldn't resist asking. "What ...what does he dream?"

"All sorts of stuff."

"Like what?"

"Well, he had one today. He'd been kidnapped by vampires and chained in a room. They beat him, and occasionally drank from him, but he stayed tough. He knew you were coming, he knew his Buffy was coming to rescue him, all he needed to do was hang in there." Faith grinned.

Buffy knew it was a mistake to ask but she couldn't help herself. "What happened?"

"You showed up all right. And he was so glad to see you. You should have seen the smile on his face. But then, you began to kiss one of the vampires." Faith wiggled her eyebrows at Buffy and leaned forwards. "That's a shocker, huh?" She continued. "Then, you took a sword off the wall and ran it through his heart."

Buffy stopped walking, her hands pressed over her own heart. "He dreamed that?" She had to fight back the tears.

Faith nodded. "Yup. There's a whole lotta killing going on in those dreams of his. Killing, betrayal, it's a regular soap opera in there, with you just ripping his heart out." Faith grimaced. "One time, for real." Faith grinned. "I'm thinking he has some issues. What do you think?" She had enjoyed picking through Giles' dreams. The ones he was having now and the ones he'd had in the past. His dreams, since he'd come to Sunnydale, were intense. And many of them were about Buffy. In most of the bad ones Giles dreamed that he let Buffy down, that he failed to save her, that he stood watching as Buffy was killed, over and over again. "Yeah, most of his dreams about you really suck."

Faith let out a happy sigh and looked at her watch. "Well, I'm thinking that my man is probably starting to wonder where I am. I hate to keep him waiting." Faith licked her lips again. "I expect we'll have another long night." Laughing, she turned and moved quickly away.

Buffy watched her until the darkness swallowed her up. Then, moving to the

closest mausoleum, she slid down it, until her knees were pressed against her chest. Covering her face with her hands, she sobbed.

##

Willow had a hunch. It had niggled at her all evening until finally she couldn't stand it anymore. She went back to the Magic Box, letting herself in with the key Giles had given her when he'd first opened. She found the book she wanted and sat down, reading. Two hours later she found what she was looking for. Closing the book she put her head on the table, resting it on her arms. "Crap."

By the time Willow arrived at the Bronze she was late. Buffy showed up a few minutes later, her eyes red and face blotchy. Willow looked at her, concerned. "Buffy, what's the matter?"

Buffy blurted it out. "Are Giles and Faith having sex?" The thought of it almost made her sick to her stomach.

Willow shook her head. "No."

Buffy stared at her, her eyes still brimming with tears. "No?" She felt a little bit of hope.

Willow shook her head again, quite firmly. "No, they're not."

Buffy sniffed, and wiped her nose. "How do you know?"

Willow looked at Xander for help. Xander wasn't sure how to help. He wasn't sure they weren't sleeping together. Being a guy he could tell when a guy was, well, paying attention. There was no doubt about the fact that Giles was clued in to Faith, big time.

Willow saw that no help was coming from that direction so she tried to explain. "He avoids her. He hates for her to touch him. He turns away every time she get near him." Her voice was strained. She hated to watch Faith play her games. "Trust me, there is no smoochie goodness of any kind going on."

Buffy looked at Xander for confirmation. Xander did the best he could. "Well, let me just say, that if they are, it isn't anything Giles is enjoying." That much he was sure of. At the look in Buffy's eyes he put a hand out. "Don't break the table, Buffy. They won't let us back in."

Buffy sat on her hands, as miserable as she'd ever been. "I'm gonna kill her. I

have to."

Willow shook her head. "You can't."

Buffy stared at Willow. "What? What do you mean?"

Willow retrieved the book she'd taken from the Magic Box. "You can't kill her until the prophecy thing is over." Willow couldn't believe how calmly she could discuss Buffy murdering Faith. She decided it was because Faith was acting all demony, and not like a human anymore.

"Why?"

"Because I found something." She opened the book to the piece of scrap paper she'd put in it to keep her place. "It's in Latin, but essentially it's about the prophecy."

Buffy tried to curb her impatience. "Willow, talk."

"Well, it says what the other one did, that a Watcher and a Slayer have to be bound together to beat the evilness. And I know that Giles thought that you and he could do it, you know, once you guys got reconnected, but it wouldn't have been enough." She pointed to the book. "They talk about the spell in here. The one Faith used. It says that that's how they need to be together to win." She turned the book to Buffy. "There's a picture."

The rest of them leaned over the table to look at the picture. There were a man and a woman kneeling, their hands touching, palm to palm. A ripple of something was radiating off of them. Buffy touched the ripple on the page. "What's that?"

Willow scrunched her face up. "I'm not sure. I'm thinking light maybe? The prophecy says that the light will be unleashed." She shrugged, not certain.

"So, Faith and Giles have to do this together?" Buffy hated that idea.

Willow nodded, not happy about it either. "They have to, Buffy. It's the only thing that's gonna work."

Xander slumped back in his seat. "Assuming Giles is still alive in two more weeks."

Buffy turned her unhappy eyes to Xander. "Why? What else has she done to him?"

Xander swallowed. "Nothing."

"Xander." Buffy's voice was now angry.

"Buffy, there's no point in telling you. You can't do anything. You can't stop it. He's just pigheaded. He can't stop needling her. I mean, he doesn't do it as often, but he still does it." And Xander had to admit that as awful as it was to watch Faith hurt Giles in retaliation, he still felt like cheering every time Giles successfully goaded her.

Buffy looked back down at the book and saw the picture of the Watcher and Slayer, facing each other, hand to hand. She wanted to rip the book into tiny pieces. Without another word she got up and left.

Xander let out a long breath. "Man, this just keeps getting funner and funner."

End Part 8

And It Shall Come To Pass 9

Willow told Faith and Giles about what she'd found when they all got to the store the next day. Faith and Giles looked at each other and then back at the picture. Faith grinned and slapped Giles on the back, almost knocking him down. "See, it's all for a good cause."

Giles growled at her. "Faith, do not think for a minute that any of us believe that what you've done is for a good cause."

Faith reached out quickly and grabbed Giles' hands. "Well, let's try it." She started to bend his wrists back until he was forced to kneel or have the bones snap. He glared up at her. She grinned. "That's a good position for you."

Giles yanked her down to her knees with a quick motion. She had to put out a hand to keep from landing on her butt. Giles raised his eyebrows, his expression smug. "You need to work on that balance of yours, Slayer."

Xander winced, knowing Faith would let Giles pay for that public comment. He tried to distract her. "Hey, let's see if this works." He held up the book and tapped the picture. "Palms together."

Faith still had a bruising hold on Giles' hands. She let go, much to his relief, and they moved their hands until their palms were touching. Even this innocuous touch made Giles' stomach roil. He couldn't bear to be touching

her in any way. He felt her anger at his thoughts, almost making it impossible for him to think. He pushed his way through it and looked at the picture again. He spoke to Willow. "Do we need to be saying anything?"

Willow shook her head but took the book from Xander to check again. "No, according to this, whatever's supposed to happen should just happen."

The four of them looked at Giles and Faith. Nothing was happening. Or at least nothing like the picture intimated. Tara offered a suggestion. "Maybe it only works when there's evil around."

Giles glanced at Faith. "If that was the case, it would certainly have been activated."

Faith moved her fingers so she was holding Giles' hands again. She began to squeeze. "You know what? I'm getting a little tired of your attitude."

Giles tried not to give her the satisfaction but as she started crushing his fingers he let out a cry, his eyes shut tightly, his brow furrowed.

Xander tried to interfere again. "Hey, come on Faith, ease up a little, okay?"

As Faith glanced up at Xander, Giles used the opportunity to pull his hands to yank her in closer. Then he spun his body so his elbow connected with her cheek. She let out a cry and stumbled backwards, letting go of his hands.

Furious, she stood and lashed out with a boot-clad foot, kicking him in the side. Giles fell back from the force of her kick, grabbing his side in agony. Xander knew she wanted to kill him. He could tell just from the look on her face. Without volition he found himself standing and putting his own body in the way. Faith didn't care who she hit. She let a punch fly and it connected with Xander's face, spinning him around. He fell on the table, knocking it over, books spilling everywhere. Willow and Tara watched, horrified.

Anya moved to stand over Xander, protecting him. Faith grinned. "You all want some, hmm? Good." She pulled her fist back to hit Anya. But she had forgotten about Giles.

With a yell, Giles barreled into her, his momentum and the weight of his body moving her away from Anya and halfway across the store. He was livid at the threat to his young friends. Taking advantage of Faith's startled reaction to his move he hauled back, and with every ounce of his strength he punched her, right between the eyes, catching the bridge of her nose. He heard the snap.

Faith screamed in pain and fury. Her hands flew to cover her nose, to try to

make the pain go away. She pulled hands away covered with blood. She hissed at him. "You broke my nose."

Giles glared at her, fury coursing through his body. "If you ever touch any of them again, I will kill you." He yelled at her. "You want to take someone on, you take me on."

Anya helped Xander up and the four of them stood there, jaws open, watching Giles.

Faith snarled at him. "Fine, you want me to take you on? Then, take this." She closed her eyes and grabbed his mind.

Giles fell to his knees again, grabbing his head, feeling as if his mind might explode with the pain. Feeling a rage he didn't even know existed inside of himself, he found the strength to fight back. Without even knowing what he was doing he followed the connection back to Faith and found himself in her mind. And then he struck back at her.

Willow grabbed Xander's arm as Faith let out a scream and stumbled against a shelf, knocking merchandise to the floor. She let out another cry and then shook her head, trying to clear her mind. It took her a few moments to figure out that Giles was there in her head. She grinned at him, a feral grin made all the worse with the blood dripping down her face. She closed her eyes and focused on the pain she was sending him.

Giles closed his eyes as well and concentrated. There was no doubt that Faith had the far superior physical strength, but she was an amateur when it came to a fight between the powers of their two minds. Giles had been honing his mental skills and concentration for years. Faith rarely bothered to think at all. Giles countered all her mental parries and within moments had Faith on the floor, writhing in pain.

Giles pulled back and opened his eyes. He smiled down at Faith. Xander hoped that Giles never smiled at him like that. He glanced at the other three and he could tell they were all thinking the same thing. "Well, what do you know? This little connection between us, Faith, apparently it's a two way street."

Faith rolled onto her back, panting. "Get fucked, Giles."

Giles grinned at her again. "I would if there was someone around I felt like fucking." He had forgotten he had an audience. All he knew was that he had won this battle and he felt drunk on it.

Faith took a deep breath. Giles read her thought a second before she leaped and tried to brace himself. He slammed into the wall, bookshelves slipping out of their grooves, books sliding to the floor. Faith punched Giles in the stomach three times in quick succession. He lost the ability to breathe as he bent over. Knowing a knee kick was coming at his jaw he rammed into her mind with a nearly lethal blow. Before she was able to follow through on the move Faith let out a cry and fell to the floor unconscious.

Giles lowered himself shakily to the ground to avoid falling down and he leaned against the wall. Willow got to him first. "Are you all right?"

Xander reached down to help him up. "Jesus, Giles."

Giles allowed them to assist him up and he sat on the couch. His body hurt all over.

Anya glared down at Faith. "We should kill her. We should kill her while she's unconscious."

Giles tiredly shook his head. "We can't. We can't kill her."

Anya switched her glare to him. "Why not? She hit Xander." Giles let out a pained laugh at her reasoning. Then the next thing he knew Anya was hugging him. She moved away, self-conscious. "Thank you for not letting her hit me."

"You're quite welcome." Giles closed his eyes. Willow gently rubbed his forehead. He opened his eyes and smiled at her, then closed them once again.

Anya frowned. "Why aren't we killing her?"

Tara pointed to the book, now resting on the floor. "The prophecy."

Anya let out a disgusted noise. "Can we tie her up?"

Xander nodded. "I'm all for that. Although I think we'd need to chain her."

Giles shook his head. "Not yet. I'd rather reach some sort of détente with her if at all possible. We need her a willing participant in two weeks time." He glanced down at her. "At least I know I can render her unconscious if I need to."

Xander looked down at her too. "That was pretty spooky to watch." He glanced at Giles. "How did you figure it out?"

Giles gingerly touched his side where Faith had kicked him. He winced and moved away from his own hand. Tara went to get him an icepack. "I have no idea. I was so mad at her that she would try to hurt any of you that I ..." He looked up with a smile at Tara and took the icepack. He laughed one of his silent laughs. "I got angry."

Anya rolled her eyes. "And you couldn't have gotten angry two weeks ago?"

Giles raised his eyebrows at the idea. "I thought I was." He turned his head just slightly to the side and smiled briefly. "Apparently I was wrong."

Xander crouched by the side of the couch. "Are you all right? Did she break anything this time?"

Giles shook his head, and then he leaned forward and put his hand on Xander's shoulder. "Thank you. That was a remarkably foolish but very brave thing to do."

Xander tried to shrug the words off but he was delighted by Giles' praise, even with the foolish bit thrown in. "She was gonna kill you. I had to do something."

Giles smiled at him and then he looked up at Anya. "You too, Anya."

She grinned at Giles. Looking down at Faith she kicked her. She looked defensively at them. "She hit Xander."

Tara belatedly realized that Xander could probably use an icepack too. He grinned at her when she handed one to him and he placed it gingerly on his face.

Giles looked at Willow. "Willow, have you found anything else about this spell?"

Willow shook her head but then she hesitated. "Can we talk now?"

Giles looked at Faith and then back at Willow. "I believe we can. However, we should still be cautious and try not to do anything that will set her off. She is, as she so eloquently pointed out with her fists, still the Slayer and capable of doing enormous harm." He stood, his legs still shaky. "In fact," Giles looked at Xander, "Let's get her on the couch."

Refusing to let Giles help, the four of them got Faith on the couch. With a practiced hand Giles felt for the break in her nose that he himself had caused

and he set it with a quick motion. Xander winced. "I bet that hurts."

Giles nodded. "It does. That's why I thought I'd do it while she's still out." He took his icepack and placed it on Faith's nose, holding it there. Tara went to get a wet cloth and after an approving smile from Giles she began to clean the blood off of Faith's face.

Giles looked up at Willow. "Is there a particular reason you asked that, Willow? Was there something that needed to be said?"

She shrugged. "Just that I've been looking. Looking for a way to break the spell, or come up with one that you could use to counteract it." She grinned at Giles. "Looks like you figured that one out on your own." Giles smiled at her. She continued. "Anyway, it's why I found what I found." She let out a sigh and made an unhappy face. "Poopy prophecy."

Giles nodded. "Indeed."

Xander righted a chair and sat in it after turning it around so he could rest his arms on the back. "What happens after two weeks?"

Giles looked at Faith. "Hopefully she'll simply agree to leave."

They all looked down at her. Then Willow brightened. "So can Buffy come back now?"

A longing for Buffy swept through Giles, and all he wanted to do was say yes. But he shook his head. "No, I think she should stay away for the next two weeks. Her presence will simply incite Faith to anger and possible acts of violence." He looked up at Willow and Xander. "Please tell her to wait." Having to wait two more weeks to see Buffy felt like an eternity but he felt this the wisest course of action.

Willow and Xander exchanged dubious looks. They couldn't imagine Buffy liking that request. Willow tried again. "She really, really wants to see you."

"As I do her. But the priority is to get through the next two weeks as unscathed as possible. I don't want Faith taking her anger out on any of you. If she were provoked enough I don't believe that her fear of what I might do to her would stop her."

Anya raised her hand, as if requesting permission to speak. Giles raised his eyebrows at her. She put her hand down. "Why don't we just kill her, and then Buffy can do the spell and then the two of you can stop the evil?"

Giles looked down at Faith and then looked at his friends. "I...I know it's foolish, but somehow it feels wrong, cold blooded."

Anya volunteered. "I'll do it."

Giles glanced at her, his brow furrowed. "Could you really? Just kill her?" Anya nodded. Giles didn't believe her. "Anya?"

Anya looked down at Faith and frowned. "If she touched Xander again, I could."

Giles nodded. "Yes, if she hurt any of you again, I could too. But right now, she can't. I can protect us, I can sense if she means to do any of us harm. It would no longer be self-defense."

They all looked at Faith, all of them wishing she would just die, maybe from her broken nose. Xander scowled. "She could still do bad things."

Giles agreed. "Yes, she could. Much as Spike could. And yet, for some insane reason none of us have staked him. In fact we let him into our homes as if he were nothing more than a harmless bunny." When Anya let out a cry Giles looked at her, apologetically. "Sorry, Anya." She nodded, letting out a whimper and moved closer to Xander, holding on to his arm.

Willow frowned. "Where is Spike anyway?"

Giles let out a sigh. "I have no idea. Somewhere brewing mischief, I'm sure."

Willow was staring at all the books scattered on the floor. One of them caught her eye. She hadn't seen it in a while. It must have gotten stuck behind some others on one of the shelves. She let out a cry. "Ooh, ooh, I just remembered something."

They all looked at her as she stared back at them. Finally Xander made a face. "Will, are you gonna tell us? or Do we have to give you money?"

Willow snapped out of it and dug the book out. "I read this a while ago and I thought it was kind of weird." She glanced at Giles. "I meant to ask you about it but I guess I forgot." She finally found what she was looking for and let out a yell. "Ah ha."

Xander was getting aggravated. "Will, I've had enough suspense for one day."

Willow grimaced as she reread the section. She finally just handed it to Giles. Giles read the section and let out a sigh. "Well, we've just found another

possible reason not to kill Faith."

Xander looked between Willow and Giles. "And that is?"

"There's no way to be sure, but if this refers to the connection that Faith and I have, then if she dies, I die."

Xander's jaw dropped. "You're shitting me."

Willow clarified. "It says that a connected Slayer and Watcher, if either of them dies a violent death, the connected partner dies too."

"So, if Faith kills you, then she dies."

Giles nodded. "Assuming by connected they mean bound."

Xander looked at Willow. "And why didn't you mention this before, say when Faith was trying to kill Giles a dozen times a day?"

Willow scrunched her face up. "I didn't think of it. I read it a while ago, before this whole thing even started. I didn't know what a connected Slayer and Watcher were. I mean, Buffy got pretty violently killed by the Master and Giles didn't die, so I didn't think it had anything to do with them." She sent a deeply apologetic look at Giles. "I'm really sorry. If I'd remembered it sooner I might have kept you safer."

Giles smiled at her. "Willow, we've all been a bit distracted. At least we know it now." Faith began to stir. Giles looked at them. "Perhaps it might be wisest if you left. She might do better if it's just the two of us."

They all nodded nervously. Willow glanced at him. "You'll be all right?"

He nodded, smiling gently at her. "Yes, I'll keep my distance once she's awake." Faith stirred again. "Go." At the tone in his voice they left.

End of Part 9

And It Shall Come To Pass 10

It was an uneasy truce at best. Giles didn't trust Faith for a minute. He was reasonably sure that she wouldn't try to kill him, now that she knew that it would probably result in her death as well. But it didn't stop her from being willing to make his life as wretched as possible. In fact, it seemed as if that

were her new goal in life.

Faith's head still hurt, although her Slayer healing had kicked in and the swelling around her nose had almost disappeared. She was pacing the length of the store as Giles slowly cleaned things up. Giles tried to ignore Faith the best he could, ignoring the anger she was radiating.

Faith was very angry at the turn of events. She was trying to come to grips with the realization that she had somehow ended up with a tiger by its tail. This had not been what she'd signed up for. She turned to him. "I'll just leave."

Giles shook his head. "You can't leave, Faith. Not for two weeks."

"You can't stop me."

"Yes, actually, I believe I can, if you force me to."

"If I ran, you'd never find me."

Giles stopped what he was doing and looked at her. "I think I could find you no matter where you went, no matter where you hid. Besides, if you leave, I'll probably die when the Hellmouth opens, and then you'll be dead too, no matter where you are." He took a step towards her and spoke angrily. "You started this, thinking it was a game. Well, you can damn well finish it." Giles took a deep breath. "And then you can leave and if I'm lucky I'll never have to see your face again."

She grinned and tapped her head. "I won't ever really be gone, Giles." Faith got some enjoyment out of the fact that the idea of her always being in his head bothered him so much.

"I know that. And the thought of it sickens me." He glared at her. "I can only hope that the farther away you are the less I will feel it." Then he grinned at her, not nicely at all. "And do remember, that I am, as well, in your head."

Faith scowled. She sent him the barest whisper of a painful sensation and then retracted it. Faith knew she had one thing in her favor. Giles, regardless of his quite seamy past, was not a violent man by nature. He wouldn't choose to inflict pain if he could avoid it. It gave her an edge. She'd hurt him several times today, briefly, and all she'd gotten in return were some glares. As long as she kept it light, she could still make his life pretty miserable. And there was still that other game Faith liked to play so well.

Faith approached Giles and he backed away. Her quicksilver thoughts were

difficult to follow but he determined her intent. He put up his hand. "Don't."

Faith grinned. "Come on, Giles. How many times can you stand in a shower and jerk yourself off thinking about Buffy? Just think how much better you'd feel if you could just lie back and leave the driving to me."

"Faith, I will never allow you to touch me like that. Nor do I have any intention of touching you in a like manner."

Faith considered him, determining her strategy. "I'll bet Buffy would like to hear about your sick little fantasies. You'd probably never see her again if she knew you were getting off thinking about doing her." That had driven Faith crazy, that Giles would rather dream about doing Miss Milktoast, than her.

Giles felt a moment of alarm at the thought but then he saw a sign of satisfaction on Faith's face as she scored the hit. He took a threatening step toward her. "May I remind you again, that I now can see into your mind? I know your past, and your fears, and I can use them too. Don't make me do it." The thought of using her that way, when he could see how wounded she had been, sickened him. But he'd do it if he had too.

Giles had hoped, for a moment, once things had calmed down, that he might find some reason to think more kindly of Faith, to find some reason to excuse her behavior, to believe that she truly could be rehabilitated. And when he'd seen her life, he had felt true sorrow for her. But he had also seen that it was too late. She had crossed too many lines, and he saw no remorse, no longing for a softer life, no kindness within her at all.

Faith started pacing again, having no intention of leaving the matter alone. Making Giles want her was still a game she was determined to win. And she was sure she could do it; it was only a matter of time. Whenever Giles let his guard down she insinuated herself in his mind. Pictures of her naked, touching him, him touching her, them rutting like animals, rolling on the ground. As the day progressed Faith grew increasingly aroused. And Giles felt himself struggling with his own desire as well as her own.

He spent the day trying to learn how to block her, attempting to keep her thoughts and images at bay. And he fought against the desire, clinging to the thought of Buffy.

##

Buffy was sitting in her dorm room on her bed, her pillow clutched tightly against her chest, when Riley showed up. She let him in and then she

crawled back onto the bed, resuming her position. Riley sat on the edge of the bed. He missed her so much he could hardly see straight. He put out a hand to touch her hair and she flinched. Riley sighed and dropped his hand. Buffy sighed as well and touched his arm. "Riley, I'm sorry. I don't know what's wrong with me."

"You're upset."

"I know, but ..." There was so much more to it than that. Stuff she couldn't explain to Riley, stuff she didn't even understand.

Riley took her vagueness as a sign of hope. "This is just a phase, right? I mean, once things get settled between Giles and Faith, then it will go back to the way it was, right?"

Buffy just stared at Riley. She didn't know how to answer that, mostly because she didn't know how things would get settled between Giles and Faith. Willow had told her what had happened. That Giles was now in Faith's head too. But for some reason that just made Buffy more miserable. Now Giles knew Faith better than he knew her. He knew everything about Faith. Now they might really find a way to work together as a team. He might decide to touch... Buffy sighed, her heart shying away from that thought. It latched onto an equally depressing one. Buffy couldn't kill Faith. Ever. So she'd be in Giles' head forever.

Riley watched her face, trying to follow her thoughts. He couldn't. He shook his head. "Maggie's been asking about you."

Buffy glanced up at Riley. "Why do I not think that's a good thing?"

Riley hesitated. "She just believes that a team should stick together. You're still patrolling, but you're not coming to any of the briefings, or debriefings. She knows you're not training with the team, or hanging out. It concerns her."

Buffy fought back her annoyance. "What the hell does she expect me to do?"

"Be a team player." Riley gestured at the room. "Look at you, Buffy. You're just sitting in your room all alone. What good is that doing? You should be at the Initiative, putting your emotions to good use. Being here by yourself isn't helping anyone, including Giles."

Buffy sighed. "I know that." And she did know that. But she couldn't go back to the Initiative. She was afraid she would lose herself again. And Maggie had chosen not to help Buffy save Giles, and regardless of the fact that Giles seemed as if he'd be okay, Buffy wasn't ready to forgive her. She glanced up

at Riley. "She's not my boss."

Riley stood and paced to the other side of the room. "I know that, Buffy. She knows that. But she pulled a lot of strings to get you in. She put herself on the line for you. You owe her."

Buffy stood as well. "I owe her? Riley, the only reason she pulled so many strings was so she could use me."

Riley's eyes grew hard. "That's not true."

Buffy rolled her eyes. "Yes, it is. And she did it for you." Buffy walked up to Riley and put her hand on his chest. "She cares about you. I make her nervous. And once she finds out that..." Buffy swung away.

Riley grabbed her arm and spun her around. "Once she finds out what, Buffy?" He spoke the truth he was afraid of. "That you and I aren't together anymore? That she's lost the one hold over you she thought she had?"

Buffy looked up at him defiantly. "Yes, once she finds out that, I don't imagine she'll want to keep me around." She smiled ruefully at Riley. "Besides, I've just discovered something else that she won't like."

"And what's that?" Riley was still reeling from Buffy's confirming words.

"Being the Slayer? More about magic than I thought. Even if you and I were to stay together, even I were to stay with the Initiative, I have to spend time with Giles, training with him, being with him."

Again, Riley grasped at this hope. "She can deal with that. I can deal with that. Don't walk away, Buffy, please. Even if you walk away from the Initiative, please don't walk away from me."

Buffy looked up at him again, sorrow in her eyes. Riley searched her face, and finally realized that she already had. He backed away, so angry and lost for a moment he frightened himself. Without another word Riley walked out of her room. Buffy watched the door shut behind him, and then she crawled back on the bed, clutching the pillow once again to her chest, and wished with all her heart that Giles was holding her.

##

By the end of the week everyone was feeling strung out and nervous. Faith had never gone this long without sex and she spent most of the day prowling

around the shop. Giles was proving intractable, and yet she could feel his desire, his sexual need, and it fueled her own. She no longer had the option of forcing Giles as she might have last week and that just added to her frustration. She'd tried to make some moves on Xander but Giles had felt her thoughts and had knocked her to her knees with pain before she'd barely touched him. That was Giles' limit. He rarely retaliated against the stuff she was putting him through, but if she so much as thought about hurting one of the others she paid for it instantly.

She hated him. She hated that he had somehow ended up with the upper hand. She hated that he was learning how to block her, that she was having a harder time reading his thoughts. And she hated that she was still an open book to him. Faith thought about leaving but she knew that Giles would be able to find her, even anticipate her moves, and drag her back. And the truth of it was that she had to get him through this Hellmouth thing for her to stay alive. So she prowled. And even knowing he could hear everything in her mind, all she thought about was revenge.

Xander could feel Faith's eyes on him. He knew that Giles was keeping Faith away and he was very grateful. It kept him reasonably certain that Faith wouldn't do anything to him. Instead he was afraid that Faith might do something to Anya. Anya could pick up sexual energy as if she had radar. And she knew Faith was eyeing Xander. Anya was about ready to kill Faith. Her barbed comments, which generally just amused Faith, were occasionally incendiary and Faith was itching to get into it with her.

Willow and Tara were tired from researching. Neither of them believed, when it came down to it, that Faith would willingly participate in closing the Hellmouth. It was pretty clear to everyone that if Faith could figure out a way to do it, that she'd let the Hellmouth swallow them up and she'd dance on their graves. But they hadn't found anything else. Nothing. Not even a hint of how they could defeat the prophecy other than Giles and Faith working together. And it was happening sooner than they thought. The Council had called with an update. As the time approached, the exact moment was easier to pinpoint. They had four days. Four days and then their lives would depend on Faith.

Buffy was dying inside. She had run into Faith twice over the week while patrolling and each time Faith had talked about having sex with Giles. What he felt like, tasted like, the things he said and did. Mostly Buffy didn't believe her, but a part of her was afraid it was true. She had lost so much to Faith, why not Giles? What had Buffy ever done to keep him with her, to earn his loyalty? She was overrun with guilt, consumed by loss. And she was being taken over by a fever. She laid in bed, burning up, Faith's words having triggered a passion within her. A passion to be touching Giles herself, to taste

him, to have his hands on her, to have him whispering in her ear, finding his release in her body.

Buffy struck the bed with her fists, frustration coiled in her gut. She knew that Giles had asked her to stay away but she couldn't take it anymore. Buffy was beginning to believe that she might never see him again and that was untenable. She finally couldn't take it anymore. Buffy had to see him; she had to see him now. She quickly got dressed and left her dorm room.

##

Giles was pacing. He felt as if he was burning up from the inside out. Nothing he did quenched the fire. He knew it wasn't normal. He knew it had nothing to do with wanting Faith, although she had certainly lit the flame currently within him. He didn't want Faith, not any part of him. He had not lost that much control and he knew he wouldn't. But the sensations in his body were stunning in their depth. And Buffy was the focal point.

Giles was sure much of it was the magic. He had spent too many years living with magic not to recognize it. Now that Giles understood the magic between he and Buffy, it was as if that very magic was now demanding to be replenished and it pulled at him. And Giles had unknowingly exponentially increased the pull by focusing his sexual energies on Buffy. So there was nothing in Giles that wasn't aching for her, needing her, wanting her to be with him so badly he thought he might not survive if he had to go another minute without her.

And suddenly he knew he wouldn't. Pulling on his jacket, he grabbed his keys. He yanked the door open and found Buffy standing there.

End of Part 10

And It Shall Come To Pass 11

Buffy leaned forward and rested her forehead on his chest. She spoke softly. "Would you let me do that?"

He ducked his head to hear her. "Do what?" An image of Buffy's lips doing what Faith's were currently engaged in raced through Giles' mind.

She lifted her head. "Do that spell?"

Giles had to work hard to switch gears, to follow Buffy's conversation. He

paused for a moment then spoke. "To bind me?"

Buffy nodded. "Yes. If we'd known about it, would you have let me do it?"

"Does it matter?"

"Would you?"

Giles considered Buffy. He was bewildered by her question, not sure what she wanted. "I'm not sure how to answer that. If it was something we had to do to fight this evil then I suppose the answer is yes. But, if it was just to bind me to you, I don't think I'd choose to do this with anyone."

Buffy bit her lip to keep from crying. "Not even me?"

"Buffy, I understand your frustration with the situation. Trust me, I'm frustrated too. But I don't believe you'd really want me in your head, nor would you particularly want to be in mine. It isn't entirely pleasant. There are reasons to keep things secret, reasons to not voice thoughts. We should all have the right to our privacy and the right to leave the past behind."

"If you had to choose, between her and me, would you choose me?"

He touched her shoulder. "Oh, Buffy, of course I would, in an instant."

Buffy squared her shoulders. "Let me do it."

"Excuse me?"

"Let me say the spell. Maybe I can take her place. Maybe another Slayer can break the binding. Then it will be you and me instead of you and her."

"Buffy."

"Giles, I mean it. This is until you die. This is forever. This is her making you crazy forever. This is me feeling like I've lost a part of you, and I'll never get it back. Never. Let me try. If you have to be bound to someone, let it be me."

Giles looked at her, suddenly frightened. A part of him was more afraid of Buffy being bound to him than he was with Faith, afraid that Buffy would see his past, see his thoughts and be repulsed. This young woman in front of him, as much as he loved her, had a far greater power to hurt him than Faith ever would. He shook his head. "Buffy, I don't think..."

She interrupted him. "Giles, don't think. Just say yes."

Again he looked at her, still rebelling. And then he remembered. He remembered that regardless of what spell Faith had done that Buffy was his Slayer and she had the right to ask this of him. He smiled sadly at her. "All right."

Buffy nodded, nervous now. "Okay, do I need to kneel like she did?"

Giles shook his head. "I don't think so. I think you just need to say the words."

Buffy got on her knees anyway, and she took his hands in hers, the way Faith had. Then she lifted a hand and ran it down the side of his face. "I love you, Giles."

Giles closed his eyes, hoping that she still would. "Say the words." He prepared himself for the mental blow.

Buffy put every bit of her longing into the words. "By the power of the Slayer, I bind thee to me."

End of Part 11

And It Shall Come To Pass 12

Nothing happened. Giles opened his eyes and looked down at Buffy. She said it again. "By the power of the Slayer, I bind thee to me."

Giles breathed her name like a prayer. "Buffy." And then she was in his arms. They closed tightly around her and she squeezed him so hard he might have protested if it hadn't provided him with such undeniable proof that it was indeed she.

Buffy was the one who suddenly remembered. She pulled back, looking up at him. "Is Faith...?"

He shook his head. Giles' hands came up and cupped her face, in disbelief that she was actually there, in front of him. Then the desire, eclipsed momentarily by her unexpected presence, swept back into him. He stepped back, dropping his hands, almost afraid to be touching her, afraid of what he might do.

Buffy followed him inside as he took his step and she shut the door behind

them. Leaning against the door she took him in, her eyes feasting on him. "I had to see you."

Giles nodded, feeling speechless, fighting the urge to simply move to her, press himself against her, and run his hands down her body.

She noticed his jacket, the keys in his hand. "Were you going somewhere?"

Giles looked down at his hand, noticing his keys as well. He smiled a bit of a lopsided smile and looked at her. "To find you."

Buffy gave him one of her brilliant smiles, as her eyes grew bright. "You were?"

"I had to see you, too."

Buffy took a step closer to him and looked him over with serious scrutiny. "Are you all right?" She saw the resolving bruises on the side of his face and the faint scar across his cheek. Buffy reached out a hand and touched it. "Does this hurt?"

Giles almost flinched at her touch, which sent off echoes of craving in him. He took another step back, away from her hand. At the hurt look on her face he tried to console her. "Buffy."

She interrupted him, her voice shaky with emotion. "Are you sleeping with her?" Buffy was afraid to wonder why he had stepped back, afraid it meant he wanted another woman's touch. Faith's touch.

Giles shook his head. "No."

"No?" Her voice was small and lost.

Giles let out a groan at the misery on her face and this time took a step toward her, putting his hands on her shoulders. "No, Buffy. I'm not. I wouldn't."

Buffy nodded, only partly reassured. Her insecurities goaded her. "Do you want her?"

Giles let out a pained laugh. "God." He dropped his hands off of Buffy's shoulders and stepped away again. Giles turned to face the wall and leaned against it, arms extended, palms flat on the wall, head bowed. He repeated Buffy's question. "Do I want her?" How could he explain to Buffy? That he didn't want Faith, but he did want. That Faith put that wanting in him, with her games, with her knowledge of him, with her own sexual appetite. And the

magic made him want, and Buffy's presence made him want. He felt like a black hole, the gravity of his wanting affecting the air he was breathing.

Buffy waited for an answer, her heart pounding, assuming the worst. She moved to stand behind him. "Do you?"

Finally Giles shook his head. "How could I want that?"

Again, his answer failed to satisfy her. "But do you anyway?" She needed to know the worst, she needed to know what damage had been done.

Giles shook his head again. "Not her."

Buffy moved even closer, close enough to feel the heat from his body. His answer this time gave her a little hope. But now, those same insecurities made the next question stick in her throat. Instead, she reached up her hands and laid them on his back. Giles groaned and she could feel him trembling underneath her fingers. "Giles?"

Giles didn't respond. He just moved forward, away from her hands, and rested his forehead on the wall, not wanting to turn around and face Buffy, not wanting her to see his desire for her, afraid she would run.

Buffy began to think that something was seriously wrong. "Giles, talk to me. What did she do to you?"

Giles let out another pained laugh. "What did she do?" He moved then, and started pacing around the inside perimeter of his flat, prowling.

Buffy watched him. She was reminded of a visit to the zoo when she was younger. She had stood in front of a black panther's cage, captivated. Captivated by the softness and thickness of its fur, the quiet pacing around its cage. Buffy longed to get in there and bury her face in its thick fur, to play with its long tail. But she had also seen the danger, and the desperation, in its eyes. They'd haunted her, long after her mother had dragged her away. They had been pleading with her. Let me out, let me out, and let me have you.

Giles was touching everything he passed, the need for tactile fulfillment driving him.

Buffy stayed where she was, watching him, feeling the need for him grow inside of her, feeling her own body start to tremble. She asked again, angry that she feared to approach him. "What has she done to you?"

Giles stopped and turned to face Buffy. And he told her. He wasn't even sure

why he told her, but he found the words tumbling from his lips. "She's in my head, Buffy. She knows everything I've ever done, every partner I've ever had. She knows what I've liked; she knows what I want. She gets in my mind with pictures of us, of her and I, having sex, of her touching me just the way I like. She lies in bed next to me, touching herself, talking to me, speaking my fantasies and longings out loud until I can't even think. Until I'm so crazed with desire that I'm afraid I might drown in it, in my own bed."

Buffy was horrified, and yet her own arousal increased. Giles' voice was thick with a combination of his own frustration and need, and it sent shivers up and down Buffy's spine. She found herself walking toward him. As she got closer she could see the light sheen of sweat on his skin, and that he had an erection. Buffy wanted it, she wanted it inside of her.

Giles watched her as she walked to him. She ran her hands up his chest, leaving one resting over his heart, while the other continued its exploration until she reached the back of his head. She could feel how incredibly tense he was. Buffy pulled his head down to kiss him but he pulled back. "Don't."

Buffy tried again.

Again, he stopped her, not trusting himself. "Buffy, you mustn't."

"Giles, I want you." As soon as the words passed her lips, Buffy knew they were the wrong ones to say.

Giles reached up and grabbed her wrists, pulling her hands off of him. "Why? Because of Faith? Because you want to prove that you can make me want you?" His eyes pleaded with her. "Don't do this, Buffy. Don't play games. I can't stand for you to do it too."

Buffy let out a cry, hurt that he would think that of her. Her eyes filled with tears. She pulled her wrists free, and headed for the door, needing to get away.

Giles moved quickly and grabbed her arm before her hand reached the doorknob. "I'm sorry. Don't go."

Buffy just stood there, her body still facing the door, refusing to meet his gaze. A tear fell down her cheek. She was so tired of hurting.

Giles spoke again. "I don't...I can't distinguish what's real. I'm feeling so many things and I don't know what their source is. It makes everything even more confusing. I didn't mean to hurt you. Please, don't go."

She did look up at him then. Another tear slid down her cheek. "It's been so awful."

"I know."

"I hated not being able to see you. I hated not being able to help." And she confessed, knowing that she deserved part of his suspicion. "I feel so bad for the way I've treated you."

Giles brushed her tears away with his thumbs. "Ssh. It's all right. Neither of us understood." He sighed. "And part of what we're both experiencing now is the magic trying to pull us together."

Buffy gave him a soggy grin. "Is that the part of me that wants to crawl on your lap and stay there forever?"

Giles smiled softly back at her. "Most likely." He ran his hand lightly down her arm until he found her hand. "Let's sit down." They moved together to the couch and Giles sat down, Buffy sitting down next to him. He surprised her by putting his arm around her and pulling her close. When she made as if to speak, Giles shook his head. "Don't say anything. Just be here with me."

Buffy could feel the peace already creeping over her so she snapped her mouth shut and snuggled happily against him, one arm thrown over his chest, her hand again resting over his heart. She closed her eyes.

They sat there like that for a long time. They didn't talk, they didn't move, they just felt. And while Giles could identify it more specifically, they both could feel the ties between them grow stronger, becoming deep and rich. He was, after all, the Watcher, the one assigned the responsibility of taking care of her. Giles keenly felt the blame that he had allowed things to get to this state. And he felt a surge of anger at the Council that sufficient knowledge of this magic wasn't taught, that he hadn't even known the danger of letting it fade. Because of his ignorance, he and Buffy might have slipped away entirely, from each other and from themselves. He made a silent vow to make sure it never happened again.

Buffy could have fallen asleep if she had been willing to waste a second of being with Giles. Which she wasn't. She snuggled in a little deeper and let out a happy sigh when Giles adjusted his arms to hold her close. Her only unhappy thought, and it was a big one, was Faith. She spoke her concern. "When is she coming back?"

She could feel Giles shake his head. "I don't know."

"What is she doing? Can you tell?"

Giles didn't really want to know but he let down the block for a moment. A dozen sensations coursed through him. Pounding music, flashing lights, a darkened hallway, Faith on her knees in front of a man, her lips around his cock, the need for sex spiking through her. Giles flinched in response and slammed the block back up. Even though it had been only a few seconds, Giles could feel the want scorch through him again, could feel himself hardening, his breathing growing rapid.

Buffy sat up, feeling the changes in his body, his tenseness, his heartbeat pounding under her fingers. And she could see he was hard again. "God, what is she doing?" She could barely keep her fingers from exploring him, wanting to feel the shape of him in her hand. But she also wanted that hardness to be because of her.

Giles rested his head back on the couch, letting out a long breath, trying to calm himself. "Giving someone a blow..." He blushed. "She's engaged in..." He gave up.

Buffy grinned a little at his embarrassment. "I get it." Then the grin came off her face to be replaced by a look of pure torment. "I hate it. I hate that she's in there. That she's in your head, that she can do this to you. I hate that she knows everything about you. That she...that she...that the two of you..." Buffy couldn't finish her sentence. She couldn't say out loud that Faith owned Giles, that he was Faith's Watcher, that the two of them were bound together. That Buffy would always be on the outside, looking in.

Giles shook his head. "She is in my mind, and she knows many things about me. But she doesn't know me. She doesn't care about me. She simply takes that knowledge to use me, to hurt me." He took Buffy's hands. "No matter what knowledge she's privy to, you know me better than she ever will."

Nothing happened. Giles shook his head. "It's no use, Buffy, it's not working."

Buffy had been so sure it would work. Disappointment shot through her and she started to cry. "Then you...you really are her Watcher. And she...she's your Slayer."

Giles slid off the couch to the floor, to take Buffy in his arms. "No, no, she isn't. You're my Slayer. You'll always be my Slayer."

Buffy shook her head, inconsolable. "No, I'm not. She's the one that's bound to you. She made you her Watcher."

Giles spoke fiercely. "I'm not. It means nothing. I'm yours, Buffy. I always have been." He placed a kiss on the top of her head, and then on her temple.

She looked up at him. "You're mine?"

"I am." Giles kissed her cheeks, tasting her tears. Then he wiped them tenderly away with a few strokes of his thumbs. "Only yours."

Buffy put her hands on his cheeks. "And I'm your Slayer?"

Giles grasped her hands, holding them as he moved his head to kiss one palm and then the other. "You are."

Buffy dropped her hands to his chest and pressed her cheek against his, whispering in his ear. "So I belong to you?"

Giles found himself kissing her neck. "To me and no other."

It felt as if he were reciting romantic poetry to her. "Say it again."

He held her tightly and then shifted his head back, cupping her face in his hands. "You belong to me, Buffy. You're mine."

Buffy could almost feel the words entering her body, reshaping her, molding her so she fit him perfectly. As if she were made for him. She let out a groan. "Oh, God, Giles." She started pressing kisses across his face, along his jaw. She shifted her body until she was pressed against him.

Suddenly it felt so clear to Giles. She was his. He was hers. No matter what Faith had done. No matter how life had intruded. Cradling the back of her head in one hand he caught her lips with his own.

Buffy's hands fisted in his hair as she kissed him back. She touched his lips with her tongue, wanting to taste him, needing all of him. Giles opened his mouth to her; they started exploring each other with their lips and teeth and tongues. They kissed, over and over again, their positions changing to find a way to be closer, to let their bodies be as close as their lips.

Giles tried to keep himself in control but the events of the past days conspired against him. The wanting still burned within him, but now it was entirely focused on Buffy. And this was no fantasy. She was here, in his arms, as willing and as fevered as he was. The heat began to build, and pushing the coffee table out of the way, he laid her back, covering her with his body, his mouth and hands frantic to touch her.

Buffy could feel the shift in him. She could feel the pace pick up, feel his need, and she met him full on. She felt as if she could eat him alive. She couldn't touch him enough; she couldn't cover enough territory with her hands and her lips. Buffy ripped his shirt open, sending buttons flying. He growled at her and started yanking on her top, wanting her naked.

Buffy sat up a bit, helping Giles pull her top off. She pushed his shirt off his shoulders, and then ran her fingers through his chest hair. Giles moved to take one of her breasts in his mouth, wanting to taste the pebbled nipple. Buffy wanted to nibble on him. They both were too eager and they got in each other's way. Finally Buffy used her Slayer strength to take control. She flipped them and pushed Giles down on the floor, her hands on his shoulders. Giles frowned at her, even while he enjoyed the strength of her. "I don't think that's entirely fair." Not willing to concede, his hands started moving to her breasts, trying to move her up his body so he could suckle.

Buffy grinned. "Too bad." For a minute she complied with Giles' wishes, letting out a moan as he feasted on her nipples, but then she crawled back down and started licking his, smiling at his panting cries. Her position left her in a perfect spot to rub her center against him, so she did. And decided that he still had too many clothes on.

Buffy sat up and started working on his belt. Pulling it out of his pants she threw it across the room. Then she undid his button and began unzipping him. Giles hadn't stayed idle. He started working on unfastening her pants, inching his hand in to cup her bottom. Buffy grabbed his arms and lay down on top of him, forcing them above his head. Giles wrapped a leg around her, pushing up into her, groaning with his need.

Buffy diverted him with more kisses. She let his arms go and they held her tightly as he savored the taste of her, his lips slanting across hers. After a while he started trying to push her pants down as she lay on him. Buffy again stopped him. "Me first."

Giles didn't agree. He tried to flip them over.

Buffy held them still, her foot braced against the couch. Giles found his arms over his head again, held in place by her hands. She undulated against him and grinned. "I'm the Slayer, I go first."

Giles shook his head. "I should go first, I'm the Watcher."

Buffy grinned again. "You may be bigger, and you may be smarter, but I'm stronger."

Giles tried to get free but she just held him more firmly. He groaned. "And using your strength is, as I've already pointed out, hardly fair."

"Oh, right. Like you wouldn't use your smarts to get me to do something? Please." Buffy looked down at him, looking at his face, finding herself almost mesmerized by the look of him, how good looking he was, how the desire in his eyes created a responding flash fire in her own body. She shook her head. "Where have my eyes been?"

Giles didn't want to take the energy to figure out what she was talking about. He used her distraction to manage to get his arms free. He ran his fingers through her hair, bringing her lips down to his. Buffy began pressing kisses on his jaw, down his neck and then she started working her way down his body again. When she got back to his zipper she put her mouth over the thickness of him, through his pants. Giles groaned and pushed against her. "Buffy." He put his hand down by her mouth, wanting to feel her lips as she tried to determine the size of him through the fabric.

Buffy suddenly found herself thinking of Faith, and thinking of Giles' last vision of her. She lifted her head. "How was she doing it?"

Giles moved his gaze from her lips to her eyes. "What?" His ability to think seemed to be quite compromised.

"Faith. You said she was giving someone a blowjob. How was she doing it?"

Giles shook his head. "What...why?"

"Because I want to get that picture out of your head. What were they doing?"

Giles thought for a moment. "He was standing against a wall, she was on her knees in front of him."

Buffy had him on his feet in a matter of seconds and was pushing him against the wall. "Did she have his pants off?"

Giles pressed his hands on the wall, to keep his balance, both physically and mentally. He shook his head. "No, just open."

Buffy got down on her knees in front of him and she finished unzipping him, freeing him. She looked up at him, as she encircled him with her hand. "Like this?"

Giles looked down at her, barely able to nod, his body thrumming with ill concealed excitement.

Buffy licked up the side of his shaft, one of her hands cradling the soft sacs beneath. Then she surrounded him with her lips, with the warmth of her mouth. Giles moved one hand to her hair, and the other moved again to her lips. Her tongue flicked out and licked his fingers, and then she gave her complete attention to tasting every inch of him.

Giles watched her, enthralled by what he was seeing and feeling. There was no thought of Faith in his head, this reality having completely overridden any lasting image the other Slayer had left in his mind. All he saw was Buffy tasting him, licking him, taking all of him in her mouth, over and over again, until the pressure began to build to an almost unbearable crescendo inside of him. He gasped out her name. "Buffy. I'm going to..." He let out a groan, not even sure he could stop himself.

Buffy just held him tighter, her arm around his hip, holding him steady, keeping him standing. She took him deeper, again, and again. And then he was coming, the orgasm wrenching a cry from him as he shot his seed into her mouth. When he was done, Giles lost the ability to stand and even Buffy's arm around him didn't help. Buffy laughed as she helped him to the ground. While he was recovering she pulled his pants off the rest of the way and divested herself of hers as well. She looked down on him as he lay there with his eyes closed. "You're not going to sleep are you?"

Giles opened his eyes and looked at her, sitting naked beside him. He growled and pushed her down, nuzzling her neck, his hand sweeping down her body. Giles didn't feel close to sated, despite the amazing orgasm he'd just had. "I haven't even started yet." He pulled his head up and grinned at her. "My turn." This time he pulled her up, and put her against the same wall, turning her around, her back to him. He turned her head, bending his, and kissed her, his tongue pressing for entry.

She pulled back. "You don't mind kissing me, after that?" Riley had hated it, and he was the only one that she had done that to.

Giles licked her lips. "What? Tasting me in your mouth? Tasting us together? Buffy, that's what sex is. The two of us being together, in every way. You in me, me in you."

Buffy let out a moan at his words and kissed him, hard. Then she started letting out little whimpers as his hands started to explore. Giles pulled away from her lips and kissed her shoulders, slowly moving down her back. He kneaded her round bottom, tasting the curves, taking little bites, following them with kisses. Then he stood and pressed against her, feeling her naked body against his, while his hands moved around her to touch her breasts.

Buffy put her hands behind her, to touch him but he took her hands and placed them back on the wall. He covered her hands with his and pressed harder against her, nibbling her ear, whispering. "Watcher's turn."

Buffy pressed back into him, rubbing her bottom on his cock, which was starting to rise again. Her center was burning, aching. Giles reached down and spread her legs a little. He moved his hand, as if he could read her mind, and touched her. Feeling her wetness he inserted a finger, then two, inside her core. He pulled his fingers out and brought them up to his mouth. She watched as he tasted her. "Hmm. You taste wonderful." He looked at her. "Have you ever tasted yourself?"

She shook her head no.

He looked at her carefully. "Do you want to?"

She hesitated and then nodded.
He smiled. "On my fingers, or my mouth?"

Moaning at the implied offer Buffy spoke in a whisper. "Your mouth."

Giles smiled again and nodded. He again made his way down her body until he was on his knees. Ducking under her he turned and softly lapped at her with his tongue. At her approving cry he opened her up with his fingers so he could fully explore her, tasting every fold.

Buffy kept one hand on the wall to hold herself up. The other moved to run through Giles' hair. "God, that feels so good."

Giles just smiled and he put his fingers back in her, while his tongue found her clit. He sucked gently at it, as his fingers moved in and out. He added a third finger, stretching her. She gasped at the sensation and then she exploded into his mouth. Giles kept his mouth on her, tasting her juices, his fingers reveling in the pulse of her release. When she stopped he slowly withdrew his fingers and stood. Giles tasted his fingers again. "You taste like honey."

Buffy stood on her toes and darted out her tongue, touching his fingers, touching his lips. Making sure it was still all right with her, Giles moved to kiss her. Buffy met his lips willingly. When she tasted herself on him, she moaned, the knowledge of what she was doing sending another warm flush through her. She couldn't seem to get close enough to him. Buffy braced herself on his shoulders and jumped to wrap her legs around him, to get closer to his lips, to press closer to his body. Giles used the opportunity and moving his hand down between them he guided himself to her still wet center and

entered her, in a single thrust.

He took advantage of her mouth opening at the sensation to invade her mouth as well. Giles pressed her against the wall, as he continued to thrust, his hands on her hips, maneuvering her to take him more fully. Giles pulled Buffy away from the wall and moved to the couch. He laid her down, pulling out for a moment, and then he lay on top of her. As she wrapped her legs around him, he drove inside of her again.

Buffy clung to him, demanding more, crying out to him to push in deeper, to thrust harder. She'd never felt such a need clawing her insides. Giles did as she asked. He drove into her with all his frustration of the last weeks, with his longing for her, totally caught in the experience of having his Slayer underneath him, on fire for him.

They came together, their bodies pressed close enough together to be as one. The pleasure of it almost consumed them and they clutched at each other as they rode out the sensation. Then they lay there, exhausted, Giles trusting that Buffy could handle his weight on her.

Giles felt completely relaxed, satiated, happy. It had been a long time since he had felt this way, and he was loathe to move. Giles was even too tired to keep the block up. He wasn't concerned that Faith would sense him with Buffy. He knew she would assume he was simply fantasizing again and dismiss it, never believing for an instant that Buffy would actually be here. So he just held Buffy tightly, loving the feeling of his body against hers, and filled with an ineffable joy that Buffy was his again.

##

Faith was strolling through the cemetery, making her way back home. She was feeling better than she had all week. She'd had a few drinks, danced, had sex, a couple of times, and she'd dusted a vampire. All in all, a good night. This whole thing with Giles was starting to be a drag. Once they got the Hellmouth closed, she was gone. Goodbye Sunnydale. Goodbye Watcher. Thinking of Giles made her wonder what he was up to. Faith focused on him, hoping his block was down. She grinned when she connected and then she frowned when she felt his mood. Feeling annoyed that he was happy she shook her head. "Can't have that." She struck at him with her mind.

Giles let out a cry as the pain lanced through him. His body instinctively tried to curl up and he fell off the couch to the floor. Buffy tried to grab him, to keep him from falling but all she was able to do was slow him, cushioning his head. And then she was on the floor cradling him. "Is it Faith?"

Giles nodded tightly. He had found that it was harder to block once she was in his mind, but he knew he could do it if he concentrated. Giles closed his eyes and pressed back. It felt as if he were pushing a boulder uphill. Buffy watched as he started to sweat, not knowing how to help, but desperate to. Finally Giles successfully pushed Faith out and he slammed the block in place. He lay back, panting with the exertion. Anger grew in him. "God damn bitch." He sat up, leaning against the couch.

Buffy moved to sit next to him. She felt so helpless. She couldn't kill Faith. She couldn't run her out of town. And she couldn't get her out of Giles' head. She rested her head against his shoulder. "I'm sorry."

Giles put his arm around her and pulled her close. "What are you sorry for, Buffy? You can't be held accountable for Faith's actions."

"It's all my fault. If I'd agreed to go back to the Council none of this would have happened."

"Do you really believe that? It might have got Quentin out of our hair, but Faith wasn't going to let an opportunity like this pass her by. She'd have done the spell, regardless of what you'd done. And probably enjoyed it more, knowing she was taking me from you after you'd capitulated."

"I wish I could stop her from hurting you."

Giles let out a short laugh. "You and me both." He stretched his neck, the residual pain not entirely gone.

Buffy pulled back and turned him so she could massage his neck and shoulders. She smiled at his groan of pleasure, and found herself admiring his back, loving the feel of his skin under her fingers. Tears came to her eyes at the thought of losing him, at the thought that she had come so close to doing just that. "I love you so much."

Giles turned and held her tightly. "Oh, Buffy. I love you too."

She lifted her eyes to his. "What are we going to do?"

Giles let out a sigh. "I don't know. Close the Hellmouth, hope Faith leaves." He sighed again. "You need to go. She'll be back soon."

Buffy buried her face in his chest. "I don't want to leave you."

"I don't want to be without you either, but you must. And as much as it pains

me to say, you must stay away until the Hellmouth is closed."

Buffy shook her head. "No, I have to see you." She couldn't imagine an hour without him now, let alone four days.

"I know it will be hard. But we can't afford to alienate Faith."

"What difference does it make? Won't she know we were together? Won't she see it in your mind?"

Giles shook his head, looking down at the floor.

Buffy stared at him. "What?"

"She...she won't think you were really here."

"What do you mean? What will she think?"

"She'll think that...well...she'll just think...I've..." Giles was embarrassed, unable to tell her. He covered his face with his hand and groaned.

It took Buffy a minute but she figured it out. She pulled his hand away from his face. "You think about me when you...?" At his tight nod, Buffy blushed too. "And Faith knows that?"

Giles nodded and then covered his face with his hand again.

"And you did it enough that she...that she would just think that it was the same?"

Giles nodded again. "I'm sorry, Buffy."

Buffy pulled his hand away again. "What are you sorry for?" She smiled. "It's kind of...well...a few weeks ago this would have creeped me out big time but now..." Buffy ran her hand up his thigh, resting her fingers on his hip. "Now it's kind of a turn on."

Giles glanced at her in surprise. "Really?"

Buffy nodded but then a look of concern crossed her face. "Was I...did I...?"

Giles deciphered her stuttering. "Oh, Buffy. You put my fantasies to shame."

She grinned shyly at him. And then Buffy moved her hand to close around him. The fact that he'd wanted her that way thrilled her. "Can I watch you

sometime?" The idea of it, the thought of watching him touch himself while he thought of her made her feel hot, made her heart pound.

Giles could feel himself hardening again. "You can watch me do anything you want." Buffy moved against him, kissing him, wishing they had time to make love again, her body already craving him, missing him more than she would have believed possible. The kiss deepened, fueled by their impending separation. Finally Giles pulled back. "You have to go."

Buffy sighed, but then rose, and slowly began to pull her clothes on. Giles watched for a minute, admiring her and then he rose as well, pulling on his boxers and pants. He picked up his ruined shirt off the floor and held it up for her inspection, grinning.

Buffy grinned back. "I can't help it. I wanted you naked."

Giles pulled her in for another kiss. Then he looked down at her. "Buffy, I'll need you that night. I'll need you to help me keep Faith from trying to leave. I can get her there, but if things get busy I might get distracted, and I fully expect her to run."

Buffy nodded. "I'll be there."

Giles hesitated, and then spoke again. "I'm afraid that the evil will pull in more evil, that there will be vampires, and possibly other demons, as well to deal with. Will you ask...will you ask Riley...?" Suddenly his eyes widened, as he looked at her, alarmed. "Are you and Riley...?" Giles hadn't given Buffy's boyfriend a thought. A pang of jealousy went through him just at the idea of him.

Buffy shook her head, running her hands over his chest. "History. He was history before I came over here." She grinned. "But even if he hadn't been, he sure would be now."

Giles smiled at her in relief. Then another thought struck him. "Oh, God, Buffy, we didn't use any kind of birth control."

"I'm on the pill."

Giles let out a relieved breath. "Good. I can't believe..." He looked at her and gave her a rueful smile. "Yes, I can. When you touched me, I'm afraid I lost any ability to think."

Buffy grinned in delight at the compliment. She nuzzled his chest with her nose. "Considering how good you are at thinking most of the time, that makes

me feel pretty good." She frowned. "Would it be that bad, though?"

Giles was lost. "Would what be that bad?"

"Me, being pregnant, with your baby?"

Giles looked down at her, astonished by her question. "I...I..." He shook his head. "No, no, it wouldn't. In fact, it would be a miracle. And one day, I'd love to think that you might be. But I'm not ready to share you with anyone, even a child."

Buffy wasn't sure why she was arguing. "But it would connect us, right?"

Giles smiled sadly at her, her fears clear to him now. "Buffy, we are connected. I love you and you love me. Our hearts and our bodies were made for each other. You are the other half of me."

Buffy looked sadly back. "I hate it. I can't stop hating it. Even with all of that. Even though I know you love me and that I love you, and with tonight being so wonderful. I can't stop remembering that she...that you and her..." Buffy bit her lips, trying not to cry.

"Will it ruin this, Buffy? Will it keep you from loving me?"

She shook her head, letting out a soft cry. "No, nothing can do that. Not anymore."

"Nor will it keep me from loving you. That's all we need. Faith will leave and it will be as if it never happened."

"Unless she decides to check in like she did tonight and hurt you, or until she dies. How can I keep you safe, how can I protect you from that?"

Giles shook his head. "I don't know. Hopefully she'll live a long time."

"I hate it." Buffy let the tears fall then. "I hate it and I hate her."

Giles just held her, having no words to say. Finally, concern that Faith would be arriving at any time forced him to step back. He sighed. "Buffy, will you ask Riley to help? Ask that the Initiative be there?"

Buffy pulled herself together. "I can try. I'm not sure they'll come. I'm not their favorite person right now."

"Try." He walked her to the door. Looking down at her, he could barely stand

to open the door. He wanted nothing more than to take her upstairs, hold her all night, never stop touching her. "Be careful, Buffy. Please. I wouldn't survive if anything happened to you."

"I will. And you be careful." She stood on her toes and kissed him. "I love you."

"I love you, too."

"I'll see you in four days."

Giles nodded, but he didn't move. Finally Buffy turned the doorknob and slipped out the door.

End of Part 12

And It Shall Come To Pass 13

Buffy went to the Bronze. She knew Faith wasn't there anymore and she didn't want to be by herself yet. Being by herself would make the being without Giles feel even worse. She sat at a table and alternated between heavy brooding and sheer giddiness. Buffy could still feel Giles' lips on hers, his hands touching her. It was all she could do not to run back to Giles' place and start all over again, after chaining Faith in the bathtub.

She let out a sigh. Four days. She frowned. Four days, assuming Faith and Giles were able to do whatever it was they needed to do. Four days, assuming they weren't all dead. Buffy let out another sigh. She heard someone sit down and she looked up expecting it to be Willow or Xander. It wasn't.

"Hey, Buffy." Riley smiled at her uncertainly.

"Riley." Buffy couldn't imagine anyone she wanted to see less. Unless it was Faith. Or Travers. "Hey."

"You looked sort of sad."

Buffy sighed. "Just imagining all the ways I can't kill Faith."

Riley smiled sadly at her. "I'm really sorry I couldn't help you with that, Buffy."

Buffy realized he didn't know about the new information, about the fact that if

they had killed Faith, that Giles would be dead now too. She supposed she should be grateful. And yet, perversely, she still felt a sense of sharp betrayal. "It's all right. I understand." She glanced at Riley and felt as if they had broken up years ago. Buffy could hardly believe that it had actually only been a few short hours since she had made it clear that they were through. She couldn't even muster up a shadow of her affection for him. Remembering Giles' request she scrunched her face up and spoke. "Riley?"

He glanced at her. "What?"

"You know this prophecy thing is happening in four days, right?"

"Yeah?"

"I need you there. I need you and the Initiative there."

"Why? I thought Faith and Giles were taking care of it. I thought that was the whole point of this binding thing."

Buffy scowled at the thought. "Giles is afraid that the evil will attract other evil, you know, like vampires. He's nervous that they'll be there to help create a distraction to keep him and Faith from doing whatever it is they need to do." Buffy had to force the words out. The thought of it being him and Faith was almost unbearable.

Riley lifted his eyebrows. "You saw Giles?"

Buffy's eyes widened. "Oh. Yes. I saw him tonight." At the memory a bolt of liquid heat shot from her belly to her core. She had to work hard to not squirm in her seat. "We...talked."

Riley gave her a soft smile. "So, that's good, right? I mean, if you talked to him, then Faith must be getting more reasonable."

Buffy smiled tightly. "Oh, yeah. She's my new bestest friend."

Riley was confused, her tone clearly negating her words. "I thought you said you saw him."

"I did see him. I had to sneak around to see him. Giles. My Watcher. I had to make sure she was gone and then sneak over there and then leave before she got back." A spurt of anger flashed through her at the wrongness of that.

"Is he all right?" Riley had been uncomfortable with the thought of Giles being hurt.

Buffy just nodded, afraid if she spoke that she might give something away, that the words she spoke might be coated with her longing for Giles. She sighed again. "Will you help?"

Riley touched her hand. "Buffy. Surely there must be some way we can make this work."

Buffy misunderstood. "There is. Be there. Kill vampires."

"No. I mean you and me. I'm not ready to walk away. Let's start over. It can just be the two of us, no Initiative, no Council. Just us."

Buffy was tempted to encourage him, just to get him to agree to help, but she couldn't. She couldn't do that to Giles, and she couldn't do that to Riley. She covered his hand with hers. "Riley. I can't. I'm sorry. I know this all happened really fast. And I know it isn't fair. But, I just can't."

"But why? I don't understand. Everything was so great. And then just because Faith shows up everything is different now. Explain it to me. Help me understand how you could just stop loving me."

Buffy had no idea what to say. Now that she had been with Giles, now that their relationship had re-established itself and then so much more, she wondered if she'd ever loved Riley. If she'd ever loved anyone but Giles. "I don't know what to say."

"Say it isn't over. Tell me that you'll at least think about it. That when this prophecy thing is over that we can talk." Riley was sure that Buffy was just in crisis. That when everything calmed down that Buffy would snap out of it, come back to the Initiative, come back to him.

"Riley."

"No, Buffy. I don't want to hear it. I don't believe it. Feelings don't just go away like that. I get that you're upset right now. I get that this feels like pressure, that you need to be spending your time trying to figure out what to do with Faith, and how to help Giles. I get that. But I wasn't willing to not have you be mine when I met you, and I'm not willing to not have you now."

Buffy felt a flash of anger at being considered something that Riley could have. She took a deep breath. And then she thought about Giles, and about the Hellmouth and about the vampires and everything that could go wrong that night. Buffy decided that maybe she could do it after all. "If you help me, if you help us, then we can talk. I'm not making any promises, but we can

talk." Buffy thought that maybe that wasn't too much of a lie. They could talk. But she felt guilty at the look of hope on Riley's face. Buffy opened her mouth to take it back and tell the truth, when Willow, Tara, Xander, and Anya walked up.

Xander looked at the two of them, looked at Buffy's hand on Riley's. "Hey guys. What's up?"

Buffy pulled her hand away. "Nothing."

Riley gestured at Buffy. "Buffy saw Giles tonight."

Willow's let out a high-pitched noise. "You saw him? Is he all right? Did Faith see you? Did she get mad?" Willow winced at the thought of Faith mad, of Faith trying to hurt Giles again. She was sick to her soul of it.

Buffy nodded. "Yeah." At their alarmed looks she shook her head. "I mean, yeah he's all right. No, Faith didn't see me. I waited until I saw her leave."

Willow let out a sigh of relief. "That's good." She smiled softly at Buffy. "Was he glad to see you? I know he misses you."

Buffy grinned. "Yeah, he was way glad to see me." Another thrill went through her body.

Xander looked at Riley. "So, haven't seen you around much."

"No. I've been busy."

Xander pursed his lips. "Yeah, well, nice to know we can count on you when the chips are down."

Riley's eyes darkened. "There was nothing I could do. Faith's human. And the Initiative doesn't believe in magic."

Xander nodded. "Sure. I get that. Because everyone believes in vampires, and demons, and trolls, but the magic, that's a toughie."

Buffy sent a pleading look Xander's way. "Xander."

Xander looked like he was going to acquiesce. "Sorry, Riley." Then he kept talking. "It's just that for the past year and a half everywhere we turn we're tripping over soldier boys, but then, Giles gets hurt, we get terrorized by a psycho Slayer and bam, you're gone."

Riley held his temper. "I was given orders not to interfere."

Xander stared at Riley, a mocking look on his face. "Oh, well that makes it all right." He gestured at Buffy. "I mean, it's not like Giles is important to Buffy."

Buffy gasped at his comment. "Xander, he is. Don't say that." She was horrified.

Xander shook his head and patted Buffy on the arm. "I didn't mean it that way. I just meant that you should matter more to Riley than his orders."

Reassured, Buffy gestured surreptitiously at Xander. "Not now." She didn't want Xander making Riley mad, not when she needed him to agree to help. Buffy looked at Riley. "I think you better go."

Riley nodded. "You're right. I have to report in anyway."
 Buffy grabbed his arm as he stood. "Will you help?"

Riley looked at her, and then he looked at Xander. "Yes, I'll help. But I don't know who else I'll be able to get. I can't make this an official order. But I will ask around and see who's willing."

Xander made as if to speak but Buffy stopped him with a look. She smiled at Riley. "I appreciate it." Guilt swamped her again. "But, Riley..."

He put his finger over Buffy's lips to stop her from saying something he didn't want to hear. "We'll talk. That's all I'm asking."

Buffy nodded tersely. "We'll talk." Riley nodded and stood to walk away. She called after him. "Be there at sunset." Buffy slumped back in her seat.

Xander looked at her. "I'm confused now."

Buffy looked back at him. "You know that if Riley had helped, if the Initiative had helped to kill Faith, that Giles would be dead right now."

"I know that, but it still doesn't make it right. And what's he helping with if he's not helping?"

"Giles thinks that there'll be more to deal with than just the prophecy."

Xander rolled his eyes. "You mean all the little demons will be on hand with their popcorn and blood soda to watch the show?" Buffy nodded. Xander blew out a breath and then he looked in the direction Riley had walked. "So, what's with the we'll talk stuff?"

"I broke up with him."

Willow sat up at that. "You broke up with Riley?" Every time they'd gotten together at the Bronze since Faith had shown up, they'd talked about the situation. No one had really been in the mood to talk about anything else. "When? When did that happen?"

"Today." Buffy again felt as if it had been years. "I mean, things have been bad ever since Faith, ever since Giles..." Buffy shook her head. "Anyway, it's over."

Xander frowned. "So, what's he want to talk about?"

"He doesn't want it to be over."

Willow watched Buffy. "Is it over?"

Buffy nodded. "Way over."

"Why? I mean, why? You guys were so couply."

Xander nodded. "To the exclusion of everything, and everyone."

Buffy sighed. "Xander, how many times do I have to apologize for that?"

"Until it doesn't bother me anymore."

"And when's that gonna be?"

Xander shrugged. And then he grinned at her. "Until I've milked it for everything it's worth."

Buffy rolled her eyes, but she grinned back, just for a moment. Willow looked at her again. "Why did you break up with Riley?"

Buffy let out a long breath. "You know that magic thing? That magic thing with me and Giles?" Willow nodded. "Remember when I told you that I felt it, that day at the shop, the day Faith showed up? And that it made the Initiative seem not so good to me?" They nodded and she continued. "Well, it's just been, kind of growing in me. And after a while I sort of stopped wanting to be with Riley. I just wanted to be with Giles, and with you guys." She shook her head. "I can't explain it. I just sort of found me again. And that me isn't in love with Riley."

Anya narrowed her eyes as she listened to Buffy, her ears picking up the unspoken part of that sentence. "So, who are you in love with?"

The word popped out before she could stop it. "Giles." Then her eyes widened and she slapped her hands over her mouth. Four sets of eyes stared at her. Buffy let out a moan and dropped her head to the table.

Willow squeaked. "You're in love with Giles?"

Buffy nodded, her cheek still pressed to the table.

"Does Giles know?" Willow's voice kept rising in tone. Buffy was sure she had gone up at least two octaves.

Buffy nodded again.

"What did he say?"

Buffy sat up, her hands over her face. All she could think about was how Giles had touched her. How he had felt when he was inside of her. How he had tasted. She took her hands down, knowing they would see it, knowing that at the very least that Anya would see it. It seemed easier this way, like jumping off the deep end into a cold pool, rather than slowly wading in.

Anya did see it right away. "You had sex."

Willow let off another squeal that couldn't have been human. Xander laughed. "Come on, An. Reality check here, please. Giles?" He shook his head. Then he glanced at Buffy, saw her face, and his jaw dropped. "Giles?" She nodded. Xander was speechless.

They all were, except Anya. "Was it good sex?"

Buffy couldn't help but grin. She nodded at Anya. "It was great sex."

Xander covered his ears. "I can't even tell you how much I didn't want to hear that. It's like hearing about my dad having sex." He let out a shiver. He glanced at Buffy again. "Giles?"

Buffy nodded again. Then she looked at Willow. "Are you okay with this?" She looked at them all. "Can you deal?"

Willow looked at Buffy seriously. "Do you really love him?"

Buffy nodded. "I love him so much." Her voice grew shaky with emotion.

"And this isn't a Faith thing?"

Buffy shook her head. "It isn't. Well, it is because it's what made me get it, but it's real, Willow. I love him. And he loves me." Her voice grew fierce. "And we're gonna be together."

"He loves you too?"

Buffy nodded, and then she folded her arms around her middle. "He loves me more than anything." She wished he was here with her, that he was holding her

. "So he's happy?"

Buffy nodded. "He seemed pretty happy."

Willow had one more thing to say. "He's been hurt enough, Buffy. You know that, right?"

Buffy met Willow's eyes, her own bright with tears. "I know that. I won't hurt him. I promise."

Willow let out another squeal and came around the table to give Buffy a big hug. Buffy hugged her back, relieved. Then she lifted nervous eyes to Xander. Xander was still speechless.

Willow smacked him on the arm. "Be happy. Be happy for them. Giles is happy. He loves her."

Somehow that registered with Xander. Giles was happy. Giles was in love. As much as Xander loved Buffy, it meant more to him coming from the other direction. He wanted Giles to be happy; Giles deserved to be happy. He looked at Buffy. "You're not gonna just fall out of love with him, are you? The way you did with Riley?"

"I didn't just fall out of love with Riley, I fell in love with Giles. I need him. He needs me. It's like the magic went kablooey and made us realize that we belong together."

"And he's really happy?"

Buffy scowled. "Well, as happy as he can be with my evil twin Slayer stuck in his head and a Hellmouth to close in four days."

"Yeah, but besides that?"

Buffy grinned. "Yeah, he's really happy." She opened her mouth to say more but Xander stopped her.

"I don't want any more details. Please."

"So, can you be okay with this?"

"I'll let you know tomorrow."

Buffy looked at him, her brow furrowed. Then she got it. "You want to talk to him?" Xander nodded. "I want to talk to him."

Buffy nodded sadly. "That's fair. Just don't do it in front of Faith. We don't want her to know."

Xander shot her a look. "I could have guessed that. Remember, we're the ones who've been with him every day." Buffy flinched at his tone. Xander relented and touched her arm. "I'm sorry, Buffy. I'm feeling a little protective of him. It's been just us and him for a while." He paused. "But if he's really happy, I'll be happy for you guys. Okay? I just need to talk to him first."

Buffy nodded, fighting off tears. She glanced at Anya and Tara. "You guys okay?"

Anya shrugged. "Just don't make him sad."

Tara smiled at Buffy. "I think it's great, you know, that you guys are in love."

Buffy gave her a shaky grin. "Thanks, Tara."

The five of them sat there for a minute, no one speaking. Finally Willow whispered something in Tara's ear. Tara grinned and nodded. Willow got up and took Buffy's arm, pulling at her. Buffy looked at her, wondering what she wanted. Willow grinned. "I want details, now." Buffy grinned in return, and got up, following her friend to another table.

##

Giles had changed to sweats and was sitting on the couch reading when Faith got back. She let herself in and looked at him. "Miss me?"

Giles didn't even look up from his book. "Not in the slightest."

Faith frowned. She tried to read his thoughts but only got the briefest look before he blocked her. It was enough. "Jesus, Giles. Again? Didn't anyone ever tell you that you could go blind doing that?"

Giles turned a page. "Thank you for your concern."

She looked up at the loft. "Let's go upstairs. You need a taste of the real thing."

"Faith, go to hell."

Anger swept through Faith. She stood there trying to think of something she could do to hurt him, but his blocks were up, and he could still read her like a book. Before she could get to him, she'd be out cold. She muttered. "Gladly. It'd be a hell of a lot better than this." Then she stomped upstairs.

Giles watched her go, grinning.

End of Part 13

And It Shall Come To Pass 14

Faith felt as if she were back in prison. For four days Giles hadn't let her out of his sight. Faith knew he could read her intention to run. That's all she wanted. She wanted out. She wanted away from this man who could read her as if she were made of glass. She wanted away from the Scoobies, away from Sunnydale, away from anything that would remind her of this place.

But he wouldn't let her go. Giles stayed awake all night watching her, and slept in the shop, leaving her under the watchful gaze of Anya, who was just hoping she'd try something. If she tried to go out on patrol he simply accompanied her, even going to the Bronze. Giles was never farther than a few yards from her.

The only thing that made it bearable was that Giles kept the blocks down so he could read her all the time. So, she used that to make him as miserable as she could. She'd part her legs in the alley behind the Bronze and let some guy stick it in her just to feel Giles' reaction. She sent him quick pulses of pain a hundred times a day. Not enough to make him retaliate, but enough to pique his anger, until now it was always there, this lovely slow steady burn that she fed on.

But the best part was she kept him away from Buffy. Faith could feel how much he wanted to see her. Every now and then Faith would catch a glimpse of her, usually outside Giles' apartment. Faith just knew that Buffy was hoping she would leave Giles alone, allowing Buffy the chance to talk to him. When that happened Faith was glad that when she went out that Giles just followed along behind her, like an obedient puppy dog. Knowing she was out there, Faith would move in close to Giles, and weave her arm through his, acting for those few seconds as if they were a couple, instead of two people circling each other in hatred.

Giles would read it in Faith's mind that Buffy was around and he would look for her, but Buffy was always gone. Faith grinned. Gone to lick her wounds.

##

Buffy thought she would go insane. She had to see Giles; she had to touch him. She had to hear him reassure her that he loved her, and that he hated Faith. Buffy knew Faith was playing games but it was killing her every time she saw her Watcher out with Faith, on patrol with Faith, at the Bronze with Faith, at the Magic Box with Faith, sitting in his living room with Faith. Buffy felt like a stalker but she couldn't help it. Seeing him at least let her know that he was alive. So, she kept following, and kept watching, hoping for an opportunity to talk to him, to kiss him, to hold him tightly enough that the feel of it might last her until the next time.

Willow and Xander had explained to Buffy what Giles was doing. Explained that he knew that Faith wanted to leave, wanted to leave them to deal with the Hellmouth on their own, so Giles was sticking close. But it didn't make Buffy feel any better. Suppose they all died when the Hellmouth opened. Suppose they all died and she never got to touch him again. And despite the fact that she knew it was ridiculous, or at least hoped it was ridiculous, suppose he decided he wanted Faith, suppose in a weak moment he turned to her in the middle of the night.

Buffy heard a noise and whirled, thrilled to have the opportunity to kill something. The vampire never knew what hit him. Neither did the next four. But the sixth one got used as a Slayer punching bag for a long time before he found the merciful release of a stake through his heart.

##

Giles knew she was around and it was like a cruel jest for her to be so close and yet completely out of reach. He could see it in Faith's mind, and he could sense her. Or he thought he could sense her. He was aware that it might

simply have been that he wanted to see her so badly that he was imagining she was there. They had spoken once on the phone but it almost made it worse. There were no words to say that made up for being parted and they had both hung up feeling even more alone.

Having to stay in Faith's mind all the time made him feel soiled. He longed to be free of it, and to lose himself in Buffy, in her love for him. He needed it. He needed the reassurance that it hadn't been a dream, that she had burned for him the way he burned for her, that the words of love he was clinging to in order to get through these last four days had actually passed her lips. He wondered what she was doing, and as much as he tried not to, thoughts of her and Riley crossed his mind. He shook himself, trying to dispel these images from his mind, and focused on Faith.

Giles could feel Faith's anger as she worked out in the training room. As he watched her, his mind wandered again, this time to his talk with Xander three days ago. Giles had been surprised to find that Buffy had told them what had happened. While he had been somewhat disconcerted to find his private affairs to be public knowledge, it had also helped him be sure that it had really happened. And whenever it began to feel too much like a dream Giles just had to look at Xander and remember that conversation. He had felt like Xander's son for a few minutes, an odd sensation indeed. It had quickly become clear to Giles that Xander wanted to make sure that he was all right, that he was truly glad that this shift in his and Buffy's relationship had happened. Giles could see that a part of Xander was afraid that Buffy had hurt him again. Xander's protectiveness warmed his heart.

Giles had spoken honestly to Xander, even though Xander had probed a bit more than Giles was comfortable with. The young man deserved at least that. Giles had finally convinced him that indeed this was what Giles wanted, and while it had been unexpected, he now couldn't imagine being parted from Buffy. Xander had given him a grin and a hug and Giles interpreted that as receiving his blessing. Despite the disparity of their ages, and the seeming role reversal, Giles appreciated the approval, more than he could say.

Giles pulled himself from his reverie and focused again on Faith. If, after tonight, Giles never saw the Slayer again, it would be too soon. He was tempted to buy her an airline ticket to the farthest destination possible, just to get her away faster. Giles wanted her far enough away so that even if he wanted to touch her mind, he wouldn't be able to reach it.

##

They all met outside the school just before dusk. Buffy was there, standing

with Willow, Tara, Xander and Anya. Faith stood apart from them, Giles at her side. They all had weapons. Stakes, holy water, crosses, swords and crossbows. They had come to do battle. Riley was there as well, with ten commandos, most of them men that Buffy had fought with routinely. She smiled her thanks at them and noticed that they were all armed with high tech weaponry.

It was the first time she had been this close to Giles since that night at his apartment. It took every ounce of her self-control to not run to him. But she couldn't stop herself from looking at him. And almost every time she looked at him, he was looking back and it was getting harder and harder to look away. His gaze felt like a caress, his eyes dark and filled with need.

Giles looked away to turn his head to speak to Faith. Buffy felt an all too familiar surge of anger sweep through her, as she remembered once again that Giles would be fighting this battle with Faith, and that she was merely there to help keep things from falling apart.

As night started to fall they crept inside. The place was like a tomb. They made their way, stepping over debris, to where the library had once stood, and to the crack in the floor that still remained from the time when the Vahrall demons had attempted to open the Hellmouth. Everything was still. They spread out, watchful, waiting.

An hour later they were still waiting. Xander looked around. "Okay, should I be relieved, or completely terrified that nothing's happening?"

Giles shook his head. "I wish I knew."

Buffy looked around as well. "There's something going on. When I patrol over here there are always vampires around. They love this place. But I can't sense a single vamp right now. So either whatever's going to happen has frightened them away, or it's happening someplace else.

Giles glanced at the floor. "If the Hellmouth is going to be opened, it will be here."

Xander clapped his hands together. "Then I'm going with the terror behind door number two. That okay with everyone?"

Willow and Anya nodded their heads. Willow spoke, her voice nervous. "I can feel something weird."

Giles nodded. "As can I."

"It's like a really, really bad magic." She took a step away from the crack on the floor. "Really, really bad."

Tara let out a moan and put a hand out to balance herself. "Whatever it is, it's coming closer."

Buffy moved a little closer to Giles, wanting to protect him. Riley moved a little closer to Buffy. Giles kept Faith next to him.

There was a small tremor. Everyone broadened their stance to keep from falling, exchanging nervous looks. Xander cleared his throat. "I don't suppose this would be a good time to just run, would it?"

Giles sent Xander a small smile, and then his eyes caught Buffy's. They stared at one another for a moment, equal longing in their gazes, hating that they must still stand apart.

Xander let out a sigh and whispered to Anya. "Just once, I wish he'd say, run, run." Then the earth shook again and he wrapped his arms around Anya.

Buffy kept looking around. Her Slayer senses were tingling but she couldn't identify what was setting them off.

Riley had fought with Buffy long enough to know that expression on her face. He moved to stand next to her. "What is it? What are you picking up?"

She shook her head, frustrated. "I don't know, I can't figure out where it is, what it is." Buffy looked over and saw Faith looking around as well, equally wary.

Willow and Tara had their hands pressed to their temples. They moved closer to Giles. Willow spoke. "Giles, it hurts. Why does it hurt?" Both of their faces were tight with discomfort.

Giles knew he looked much the same. "I don't know. I imagine that we're picking up the magic residue of the evil trying to break through." Giles felt a bit nervous that it was already affecting them this much, when there was still no sign of their enemy. It didn't bode well for its actual appearance.

Faith took a step away, nervous that there wasn't anything for her to punch or to stab. It was taking too long and the wait was stretching her already shortened temper. She glanced towards the door, or what remained of the door, still her way out. Giles turned to her. "Faith, don't even think about it."

"How are you gonna stop me, Giles? Knock me out? That won't be much help

when the evil comes to play."

"I don't need to knock you out, as you well know."

Buffy took a step towards Faith. "I'll be glad to knock you out."

Faith sneered at Buffy. "I'd like to see you try." If she didn't get to hit something soon, she thought she'd snap, and knocking Buffy around suited her perfectly.

Giles put his hand up to stop them both as a hissing noise swept through the room. It sounded like steam escaping. Giles twisted his neck, looking everywhere, up at the ceiling, down the decrepit hallways.

Buffy let out a frustrated groan. "I wish it would just get here already. I hate the bad guys who have to make an entrance."

A light flickered deep within the crack on the floor. Giles took a step towards it to get a closer look. Buffy grabbed him and pulled him back. "Giles, bad idea." At that very moment a flame shot out of the crack forcing them all back. Buffy sent Giles a look. "Very bad idea."

Giles nodded, his eyes wide. "Perhaps you're right." He could feel Buffy's fingers curled around his arm and he closed his eyes for a moment, savoring her touch. Then he shook himself, knowing he couldn't afford the distraction, and reluctantly he stepped away.

Everyone in the room had unconsciously started to hover closer together, the illusion of safety easier to believe in with people close by. The silence was oppressive.

Tara noticed it first. She pointed at the crack. "Giles."

Giles followed her finger and saw it as well. A thick greenish haze, like smoke, was oozing out of the crack. Everyone took a step back. It crept along the floor, seemingly without purpose or direction. Giles looked at Willow and Tara to see how they were holding up. His own head had started to pound.

Giles started to feel angry, and then resentful. For a moment he couldn't imagine why he was here, with these people, putting his life on the line. All he wanted was a drink. He looked down and noticed that the green mist was around his ankles. Something in the back of his mind knew it was important and he tried to concentrate. He looked around the ruins and his eyes lit on Anya.

Something was wrong with her eyes, and her skin. It was taking on a mottled look, parts of it starting to thicken. Giles' eyes widened and he saw that the green haze was around her ankles as well. And then he realized what was going on. The Hellmouth was already open and the beast had gotten out. He moved away from the mist as best he could and turned to Xander. "Get her out of here."

Xander looked at him, surprised. "What?"

"Get Anya out of here. Look at her. It's turning her back into a demon, she was one for too long." When Xander still hesitated Giles yelled at him. "Go! Now!" Xander grabbed Anya's hand and dragged her out of the room, away from the smoke. Giles knew if left unchecked that the evil would take over them all, but he would give his friends what time he could.

Giles spoke to them all. "Try to stay clear of the mist. This is what we're here to destroy. It's calling to the darkness within us, you must fight against it." Giles understood now why he, Tara and Willow had felt it so strongly before its appearance. Magic had its dark side, regardless if one used it for good. Because of their own magic they had felt its presence, felt the darkness of their magic pull at them. Everyone shifted, looking for clear ground, but it was vanishing quickly. The mist was still coming up through the crack and settling around the room. Giles gave everyone else a cursory glance and saw that no one else seemed to be unduly affected yet.

Giles turned to Faith, speaking. "We need to try to use our bond." He looked at her and the malevolent gleam he found in her eyes caused him to take a step back. And then he felt her in his mind. She had turned into something so foul it almost took his breath away. Giles looked down and saw that the mist was up to her knees. He yanked her towards him, trying to get her free, needing to get her free, to have her connect with him to fight this presence before it destroyed them all.

Faith fought back and tried to drag him into the haze. He could feel its effects; he could feel the cynicism and anger of his past trying to take over. Enough of him remained to call out to Buffy, needing her help to control Faith.

When she didn't respond he turned to her. Riley was holding her arm, speaking to her. Giles' anger grew as he heard Riley's words. "You said we'd talk, so talk. I'm not losing you. You belong to me." There was no love in his voice or on his face. It had all boiled down to his need to have her in his power, and rage that she had thought to spurn him.

Giles' eyes moved to Buffy, wondering if everything she had said to him was a lie. His anger grew again, suspicion gnawing at him, as he wondered if it had

all been a ploy to get back at Faith. If this had been just one more way for Buffy to tear him apart, to prove to him just how little he meant to her, that he was nothing but a one night stand to her. He turned away from her in disgust, fighting the urge to just leave them all here to die. The hate in him grew stronger.

Buffy saw the look on Giles' face and tried to pull away from Riley to go to him, but Riley had her in a death grip. Willow screamed and Giles turned to her to find one of the commandos beating another one to death at her feet. He caught Willow's eyes; they were growing darker, the whites of her eyes slowly vanishing. She pleaded with him. "Giles, do it, you and Faith, you need to try your connection." Tara was sobbing against a soot stained wall.

Giles found a shred of his rational mind and clung to it, pushing through his emotions, his head throbbing. He turned back to Faith to find her standing immediately in front of him, a smile on her face. Again, he recoiled from her presence in his mind but she pushed harder. Her darkness threatened to overwhelm him. He grabbed her hands, trying to get their palms together, trying to pull her to her knees, even though he knew that it would put them in closer contact with the green mist that was steadily growing thicker.

Faith wasn't interested. She was caught in the maelstrom of her dark needs. She wanted sex and she wanted to kill and the man in front of her was going to meet at least one of her needs. Faith pulled Giles to her and pressed her lips to his, her hands running down his body.

Giles almost gave in to the feeling of eager lips and willing hands. His needs were growing darker too. But then he felt the corresponding touch of her in his mind, felt the feral blackness of her desire, and enough of him remained to feel sickened by it. He pushed her away, spitting out the taste of her. He thrust into her mind and coiled around what was left of her will. Giles forced her to her knees.

Faith fought with an animal fury. He might be able to get her on her knees, but he didn't control all of her. Her arms came up and her hands wrapped around his throat. Faith started to tighten her hands, her fingers digging in, choking him, thrilled that he would be her first kill.

Buffy let out an enraged scream when she saw Faith trying to kiss Giles. Only Giles' reaction to her kept Faith from dying right then. Buffy had lost the ability to think rationally, the evil now touching her as well, as it had now touched them all, leaving no one unchanged. She had forgotten that Faith mustn't die, that Giles' life depended on her staying alive. All she knew was that Giles was hers, and that anyone who got in her way of having him, would pay the price.

When Faith started to choke Giles, Buffy pushed Riley away, leaving him sprawled on the floor, the mist almost covering him. Buffy made her way to Giles, her movements almost dreamlike and tantalizingly slow. She finally got close enough to strike and she backhanded Faith across the face.

Faith wasn't feeling picky. She didn't care who she killed. She let go of Giles and latched onto Buffy. Giles tried to stay in her mind, to try to get control of her again, but she was beyond human thought. Faith was nothing but animal instinct and Giles couldn't grab hold of anything.

He tried to stand, realizing that he was actually breathing in the green vapor. Giles could feel his rational mind slipping away and it petrified him. He spun around trying to find Willow and Tara, hoping that they might know a spell that would keep the mist corralled in the school. They may all succumb to it, but maybe Sunnydale could still be saved.

Giles saw Willow and let out a cry. She was digging at her own face, her eyes black as night, her breath coming out in fevered pants, caught in a nightmare of her own creation. Tara was on the ground. Only Riley and two of the commandos were still standing. And Riley only had eyes for Buffy.

Giles turned back to Buffy. She and Faith were like dervishes, the fight between them ruthless and deadly. Neither one was gaining the upper hand but they were tiring. Suddenly Faith got her hands around Buffy's throat. Buffy tried to rip her hands away but Faith hung on, determined to put an end to this. Buffy struck out and punched Faith, in her gut, in her face, but nothing deterred Faith from her goal of strangling Buffy.

Giles found himself enjoying the fight, enjoying the visceral response in his own gut to the violence. Then he looked at Buffy's face again and he realized something was wrong, that it was important that this woman not die. Giles began to look around for a weapon.

Riley beat him to it. All he saw was that his mate was in danger. And he had the faintest of memories that she had wanted this dark haired girl dead. Riley grinned as he realized that he could save his woman and win her favor at the same time. He brought his crossbow up, took aim, and shot Faith right through the heart.

Buffy felt Faith's hands slip from her neck and then she saw the bolt sticking through her heart. Through the mist it seemed as if Faith fell to the ground in slow motion. Buffy could feel something niggling at the back of her mind. Something about Faith dying, something that was important.

Giles felt as if his mind exploded when the bolt entered Faith's heart. As her

life's energy drained away the connection stole his as well, and he could feel it ripping out of him, stealing his life away. Letting out a wrenching cry at the sensation he fell to his knees and then to his side.

Buffy turned at his cry and then she remembered. She looked down at Faith in horror and then she ran to where Giles had fallen. She waved the mist away with her hands trying to find him, to see him. Her hand connected with his body and she followed it up to his face. Terrified, she looked at him, and found his lifeless eyes staring up at her.

End Part 14

And It Shall Come To Pass 15

Buffy let out a scream and she pounded on Giles' chest with her hands. Riley came over to her and tried to claim her, tried to take her away from Giles and she shoved him so hard he flew across the room. Buffy lay her head down on Giles' chest, looking for some sign of life, but only silence filled her ear, making a mockery of her grief.

Something snapped within her, whatever had connected her to a civilized world gone in an instant, leaving behind nothing but instinct. And she knew instinctively that this man belonged to her. She ripped open his shirt, placed her hand over his heart and pounded again. She grabbed his shoulders and tried to lift him up, trying to make him sit, to talk to her.

Buffy didn't understand why he wasn't cooperating. Every time she let go of him he fell back. Buffy took hold of his hands and stood, bracing herself, planning on pulling him to his feet. She looked down at his hands in hers and felt a tug inside of her. Buffy shook her head, impatient with the distraction. She pulled on him, but even with her strength his dead weight was too awkward and she fell to her knees.

Again, she felt the tug. Buffy looked down at him and then down at herself, on her knees beside him, holding his hands and she felt the words rip from her throat, not even aware of their meaning. "By the power of the Slayer, I bind thee to me."

Giles' essence was arrested mid flight. It heard the call and obeyed. Life poured back into him and he took a deep breath as if breaking the surface after a long dive. Awareness flooded him and he looked at Buffy, stunned to find himself alive. He could feel the bond between them, so different from what he and Faith had experienced. Where that one had been filled with

distrust and hatred, this one was filled with love and a belief in each other so strong that the power of it was palpable.

Giles could still feel the evil all around him. Acting on his own instincts he rose to his knees and shifted their hands so they were palm to palm. Then he called to Buffy with his mind, and when she came to him willingly, with all her love, he closed his eyes and sent that love out.

It shot out in concentric circles, emanating from the two of them, a ring of light that blasted through the room, tearing through the mist, destroying it, and then continuing out in ever widening circles. Evil fell in its presence. The light shot out from the school, shooting down the streets of Sunnydale, vaporizing every vampire and evil demon in the city. It continued past the boundaries of the city and then for a few miles more before it started to lose its strength, gradually fading away.

As it started to fade, Giles and Buffy came back to themselves, their heads cleared of any damage the evil had done. Buffy opened her eyes and saw Giles looking back at her. She let out a cry and pulled him in tightly. "You're alive, you're alive. Oh, God." She began sobbing against his chest.

Giles just held her tightly, sending her thoughts of love and reassurance that he was indeed alive, thanks to her. He finally found his tongue. "You brought me back, Buffy. You brought me back." It seemed the most extraordinary of miracles that he was alive and that the woman he loved so completely was in his arms.

Riley, Willow, and Tara slowly stood, as did the surviving commandos. They had all seen the light radiating from Buffy and Giles and they stared at them both. Xander and Anya came running in, every trace of the demon gone from Anya's face. "Holy Christ, did you see that?"

Tara pointed at Buffy and Giles, still holding each other. "It was them." She had never felt anything like the evil she had experienced tonight, nor seen such an effective weapon.

Xander looked at them both. "It was you guys?" Then he noticed that Buffy was crying, and that neither Buffy nor Giles was paying any attention to anyone in the room. Xander walked a little closer. "Are you guys all right?" He turned to Willow and Tara, his eyebrows raised, and then he saw Willow's face. "What happened to you?" She had scratches up and down her cheeks.

Willow scrunched her face up. "I thought there was something bad in me and I needed to get it out." She shivered at the memory, even though the actual feelings she had felt were out of reach, gone with the destruction of the evil.

Riley was checking on his team. He had three men dead. It looked as if they had killed each other. Riley glanced again at Buffy and Giles, still hardly believing what he had seen. He had no idea how he was going to explain this to Maggie. He let out a sigh. All he wanted to do was get Buffy out of here, go home and worry about Maggie tomorrow.

Buffy finally pulled away from Giles. They were both still on their knees facing each other. Buffy put her hand up and touched him beneath his jaw, over his pulse. The thought of him being dead was still haunting her. He smiled softly at her. "I'm all right, Buffy."

She looked at him and their eyes caught. Suddenly their lives were open to each other. The binding swept through their hearts and minds, stripping away anything the two of them had hidden, from each other and from themselves. Giles remembered being afraid of this, afraid of how Buffy would react to his past, to his thoughts, but he'd been so wrong. All he felt was acceptance, understanding, and overriding all of it, her deep and abiding love for him. It was as if he'd been forgiven for everything he'd ever done, and he felt stronger, and healed of all the pain he'd carried around for years.

Buffy finally saw what Giles had suffered on her behalf, but she also saw just how much he had forgiven her. Joyous relief rapidly followed the guilt that swept through her, and she felt his love for her as an absolution for every mistake she had made. The love he felt for her was humbling and she closed her eyes and let it fill her, chasing away all the shadows that still cluttered her mind.

Riley took a step in their direction, tired of waiting. Xander put a hand out and stopped him. "Wait."

Riley sent Xander an annoyed look and took another step. Anya moved to stand next to Xander blocking his path. "Leave them alone." Riley crossed his arms impatiently over his chest.

Xander grinned. He had a pretty good idea of what was coming next and he wanted to watch Riley's face when he finally figured out that he and his Initiative were totally out of the picture. When he saw Giles reach for Buffy, Xander grinned again and turned to watch Riley.

Giles pulled Buffy to him. He thought, suddenly, that if he wasn't touching her, he might go mad. Oblivious of anything but Buffy he pressed his lips to hers. And with the touch their bond grew even deeper. They both let out groans as it swept over them, setting every inch of them on fire. Their kiss deepened, their need for one another pounding through them as their tongues mated.

Buffy's hands moved down his back, cupping his butt, pressing him even closer. She let out a whimper at the sensation.

Riley's jaw dropped. He closed his eyes and shook his head. He opened them again, hoping that the sight he'd just seen would be gone. It wasn't. In fact, things had gotten worse. He glanced at Xander to find him grinning at him. He pointed at Buffy and Giles. "That's just because of the spell, right? I mean, right?"

Xander shook his head. "Nope."

"You mean...?"

Xander nodded. "Yup." Xander glanced at Buffy and Giles and his eyes grew wide. He was beginning to think that they were just gonna do it, right in front of all of them. Xander watched Giles' hand sweep down Buffy's body, finding himself drawn to the sight. And Buffy's hand...Xander swallowed and found his own pants feeling a bit tight.

Willow pushed him. "Come on, we gotta go."

Xander protested. "Why...?"

Willow punched his arm. "Now." She glanced at everyone. "All of you." With Tara's help she got them all headed out. At the last moment Willow looked back and her eyebrows almost rose off her head. "Wow." Blushing, she raced after her mate.

All Giles and Buffy knew was that they had to complete the connection with their bodies. With their new knowledge of each other there would be plenty of time for long nights of making love, of slow touches, and in-depth exploration but that was not what they needed right now.

Buffy got Giles' pants undone and pulled him free. Then she worked on her own pants, standing to kick them off. Lowering herself, she straddled Giles with her legs. Hands moving together they positioned him and he surged into her. Power coursed through them as the binding was completed. They were connected now, body, mind and spirit. Moving as one they let the pressure build, shifting their bodies just the perfect amount to keep themselves in sync, to ensure a simultaneous release. When their orgasms hit they were blinding, their bond doubling and tripling the pleasure as they fed off each other's sensations.

When their bodies finally quieted, they still clung to each other. Finally Giles pulled back and looked at her, his eyes filled with wonder and love. "Good

Lord, Buffy."

She just shook her head in amazement. "I've never...that was..." She let out a long breath.

Giles grinned at her. "My feelings exactly." And despite her stumbling words, he knew that her feelings and his did match, exactly. Suddenly his eyes opened wide and he turned his head, his eyes sweeping the room. He let out a huge sigh of relief when he saw the room was empty.

Buffy grimaced. "I didn't even think of them. When do you think they left?"

Giles shook his head. "I have no idea." He blushed at the thought that he'd been so caught up in his need for Buffy that he might have had sex in front of an audience. He dropped his head to her shoulder in disbelief.

Buffy laughed this time. "What a pair of exhibitionists we are." Giles was mortified. He'd left his exhibitionist days in his past. Buffy's jaw dropped as she caught his thought and then followed it to his memories. "Giles!" She was shocked and, she had to admit, quite turned on.

Giles caught that thought and as he pulled himself and Buffy up, picking up her pants, and he could tell that he was in trouble. It wasn't that Buffy was put off by any of his sexual experiences she was sifting through. It was that she wanted to try most of them. Wondering if he'd survive the experience, and yet more than game to try, he grinned. Taking her hand in his they headed for home.

##

They didn't speak a word to each other as they walked home. There was no need. Everything they needed to say, or had ever wanted to say was there, being offered. All their thoughts centered on each other, their feelings for each other, and what they had just gone through.

As they walked in Giles' front door Buffy grinned at him. "It's weird."

"Hmm?"

"We might never have to actually talk to each other again."

Giles smiled, although he shook his head. "We can't stay like this, Buffy."

Buffy looked at him with alarmed eyes. "What do you mean?"

He pulled her in for a kiss and reassured her with a thought, as he shut the door behind them. "Right now, most of our thoughts concern each other. But, think about it, Buffy, think of how much you think every day, about everything, and nothing. I don't want that in my head." Before she could even finish the frown she was starting he continued. "Nor do you want my nonstop thoughts in your head. You can barely stand one of my lectures on demons, can you imagine dealing with that sort of stuff for hours on end as I research?"

Buffy grimaced. "God, no." She thought for a moment. "Besides, now that you mention it, having everyone in my brain when I got that aspect of a demon was not a happy."

"Exactly. Although one would hope that my voice alone wouldn't drive you insane." Giles sank on the couch, exhausted. "I'll teach you how to block my thoughts, and how to block yours. Not as a way to keep each other out, but as a way to not so fully intrude all the time. We'll learn how to let each other know when we need to get in, so to speak. When things are difficult to say, or need clarification, or..." Giles gave Buffy a lopsided grin and sent her the rest of that thought mentally.

Buffy crawled on his lap in response, grinning. "I can't wait. Sex with a guy who really knows what I want. That will be a novel experience. Although you did pretty good the other night. It was like you could already read my mind." Buffy leaned in and kissed him. When they finally parted Buffy just collapsed against his chest. "All I can say is that once I get you in bed, I am never, ever leaving."

Giles silently chuckled, tickling her ear with the vibration from his chest. She smiled at the sensation. He lifted a hand and stroked her hair. "It's so different."

Buffy pulled back, shifting herself so she could get a good look at him. "The bond?"

Giles nodded, still running his hand through her hair, not able to not be touching her. "Like day and night."

Buffy considered him. "Do you think they always did this, you know, the Watchers and Slayers? That at one time, the Slayers always bound their Watchers?"

"I don't know. If they did, I can certainly see the reason it fell out of use."

"Hey." Buffy pouted, although her eyes were lit with mischief. Then she

grinned. "It is so nice not to have to worry about stupid stuff like that anymore, wondering what you meant, if I should be insulted. It's nice to just be able to know that you love me so much."

"And I do, I love you so very much." He pulled her close and kissed her lips softly. Then he leaned back against the couch, bringing her with him, tucking her into his shoulder. "As we saw firsthand, the possibility of things going wrong is enormous."

"So you don't think what happened between you and me would happen to most Watchers and Slayers?"

"I don't know how it could. We already loved each other and wanted each other. That compulsion to have sex with you was unavoidable. I was powerless to deny it, didn't even have the presence of mind to think about denying it. If this was used when a Slayer was first called, that would be..." Giles started thinking.

Buffy prodded him. "Keep talking. You're thinking too fast for me to follow."

"Well, I was just thinking that centuries ago, young woman generally got married as soon as they had their first menstrual period, so the age issue wouldn't really have been a problem. I suppose this might have been a marriage rite of sorts. Nobody would have thought twice about an older man marrying a young girl, and it would easily provide a reason for them to be together all the time."

"So, like an arranged marriage, of the supernatural and creepy kind?" She shuddered, thinking of Merrick.

Giles nodded. "Yes, quite." He caught her thought about Merrick. "Yet another reason the spell fell into disuse. As you know, Slayers haven't often been given many choices about their life, but even for the most conservative of Watchers, this is pushing it a bit far."

Buffy frowned. "Except for someone like Travers."

"Yes, except for someone like him." Giles had a sudden thought. "That compulsion could explain Faith's non-stop attempt to get me into bed. She might have been instinctively feeling the compulsion, and wanting to act on it, not even understanding what it was."

"Not to mention making you Mr. Hot-to-trot guy."

Giles blew out a deep breath, remembering. The desire he'd felt had burned

him inside and out. "And yet, we were able to resist, or at least I was."

"So, maybe the compulsion for sex only happens if there's already an attraction."

"I suppose that's possible but..."

Buffy interrupted him. "Well, think about it. From the moment Faith met you, much to my horror..." Buffy grinned, "...she thought you were yummy."

Giles rolled his eyes. "Ah yes, the eewws are still branded on my brain."

Buffy looked at him in some concern. "Did that hurt your feelings?"

Giles laughed softly. "Of course not. You were young and naturally I seemed old to you. I think my self-esteem was capable of dealing with a few insults from the likes of you." His words were coupled with a sending of his love for her so she chose not to retort.

"But, my eewws aside, she did think you were a cutie." She cocked her head to the side. "Is that why the spell didn't work, I mean, why you couldn't make that light thing with her, because you didn't have sex?"

Giles shook his head. "I don't think so. We didn't feel compelled to touch until after we created the light. I think it was more that we were so mismatched, that I was so unwilling to trust her." He glanced at Buffy. "When our palms met, I knew I had to let go and trust you and I knew I could. Never would I have felt that way with Faith."

Buffy moved her hands and found his. They put their palms together again and slipped off the couch, on to their knees again. Looking in each other's eyes they let go again and the light shot out again. As the light pushed past the walls of the flat they pulled their palms away and Buffy gave him a shaky smile. "That's gonna make patrol a little different."

Giles smiled back. "Indeed. I wish I knew what it was doing to..."

Spike stormed into the flat. "What the hell was that? That's the second time that thing shot through town. The first time I was at Willy's having a perfectly amiable conversation with a few of my mates and poof, this light shoots through and they all just disintegrated. Along with half the demons in the place. The only ones left were the ones I wouldn't waste my time killing because they're a bunch of wusses." Spike didn't mention that he was having the crap beat out of him by those mates of his; he didn't figure it was anyone's business.

Buffy's eyes were wide. "They disintegrated?"

"Like they were dusted. And I've been all over town and there's not a single vampire left, except me." He glared at Giles and Buffy. "And now I just saw it again, and it looked like it came from here.

Giles tilted his head to the side, considering Spike. "But it didn't affect you?"

"Went right through me, both times." Buffy and Giles started grinning at Spike. Spike glared at them. "What are you bloody wankers grinning at?"

Buffy answered him. "That light? It kills off evil. Anything that survives it? Not evil." Buffy left it at that.

Spike drew himself up to his full height and wrapped his leather coat tightly around him. "What the hell is that supposed to mean? That I'm not evil anymore? The hell you say. I'm as evil as they come."

Giles shook his head. "I'm afraid not. However, if you plan to insist that you are, feel free to do so. I feel quite assured that if you truly do become evil again that the light will simply destroy you at that time."

Whatever Spike was, being stupid wasn't part of it. Giles watched him as he put it together. "What am I supposed to kill?"

Giles slid back on the couch, pulling Buffy up along with him. She leaned back against his chest. Giles answered Spike's question. "If what you saw truly happened, then I don't believe there will be anything here for you to kill. You'll need to go outside of Sunnydale to find any demons worth destroying."

Spike stared at them both, and then stared even harder as he saw how Giles' arm was curved around Buffy's body, how she was fully pressed against him, and looking very comfortable being there. Spike shook his head. "I don't bloody believe this." With an angry snort he yanked the door open and stormed back out.

Buffy turned her head so she could look up at Giles, grinning. "What do you think he'll do?"

Giles shook his head. "I have no idea. Not much to stay for unless he admits to how much he's changed. I imagine, though, that if he left, he would find a way to be evil again. If he does, at least we don't need to worry that he'd come back here, now that he's seen for himself what we can do."

"Where does that leave me? A Slayer with nothing to slay?"

"There will always be evil, Buffy. And once the Council gets wind of this, I imagine they'll be requesting our presence all over the world. And, if it makes you feel better we can go out of town and find you some vampires to beat up."

Buffy tightened her lips on a rueful smile. "As appealing as that sounds, I like the idea of no people being killed by vampires even better. Even if it means I have to help the Council out every now and then." Buffy let out a sigh and then grinned shyly at Giles. "So maybe I can become college girl, and job girl, and maybe even wife and mom girl." Buffy could feel his corresponding joy at the thought of her being able to be all those things. She shifted so she was facing him and she slid her arms around him. "Besides if we destroy the danger before we have to get too close to it, it will keep us both out of danger. I'm still not crazy about that if one of us dies, the other one dies part, especially after seeing it come true."

Giles ran a hand down her face. "I am."

Buffy sat up and looked at him in surprise. "What?"

"I know it's quite cowardly of me, but I don't want to try to piece my life together once you die. I can't imagine my life without you. I find it somewhat relieving to think that if you die, that I'll die with you."

Buffy's eyes filled with tears. She searched his mind and found his thoughts. She found the years of living with the fear that she would die, the nightmares that her death would be because he had failed her, and she found his dread of having to live with her loss and the consequences of her loss for the rest of his life. She could feel the weight of the burden he'd just put down for the first time since he met her. Then she tried to imagine living her life without him. Buffy just let him feel her own terror at the thought as she buried her face against his chest, her ear over his heart, listening to the wonderful beat of it, remembering how it had felt when there had been nothing for her ear to hear. His arms tightened around her.

They sat there for a long while, until they both started to relax. Both started to feel, for the first time, the luxury of time. That because of this newfound ability of theirs, that maybe they had some time. Time to be with each other, to love each other, to live lives of some peace and happiness. It seemed extraordinary. Giles pulled back and looked down at Buffy, his eyes bright as he took in her beauty, the love in her eyes for him, the thoughts of love she had for him in her mind. He touched her cheek lightly. "Amazing." He still could hardly believe it.

"Believe it, mister." Buffy stood and pulled him up. She grinned at him. "Time for me to fulfill a few of those fantasies, man o' mine."

Giles grinned. "If you insist."

"I do. I most definitely insist."

"Well, perhaps I could manage to fulfill one or two of yours as well."

"You better." She grinned at him, and then they raced up the stairs.

End of Part 15

And It Shall Come To Pass 16

One week later

Buffy still wasn't very good at it. Despite the fact that Giles was a wonderful and patient teacher she still had a hard time shielding her thoughts. The only good thing was that Giles was much better at resisting the temptation to go mucking about in her mind. Buffy was afraid that part of the reason for that was because, compared to Giles' mind, hers was a bit on the dull side. It probably hadn't taken Giles long to catalog and cross-reference everything in her head.

Giles' mind, on the other hand, was like a mansion with a thousand rooms, filled with everything he had learned, and still wanted to know, and everything he thought about. It was filled with all the amazing people he had known throughout his life, the different kinds of work he'd done, everything from pinching wallets to archeological digs, and it contained all the things he'd experienced. One of her favorite things to do was to just lie there with him, her fingers on his warm skin, and go explore inside of him, opening doors, finding what adventures were waiting there for her to sift through.

Buffy had been afraid she would find it boring at first, but she didn't, ever. In fact, she was surprised to find that it started to create a yearning in her to learn, to know more, and to fill her own brain with things to think about. Giles was so excited about knowledge, and the piecing together of information that it was rubbing off on her. Buffy found herself actually looking forward to school in a way she never had before.

Buffy blushed as she thought about the other stuff she'd found in there. He

had done so much, with so many people, that a part of her felt hopelessly inexperienced and young. She knew he didn't think that way, that he loved her, and Buffy knew, beyond a doubt, that she pleased him way more than any lover he'd ever had. They pleased each other beyond belief, almost beyond endurance on a couple of occasions. The bond could be too much sometimes. But, they were learning, every day they learned.

She had finally met Ripper, or at least Giles' memories of him at that stage in his life. There was no doubt about it that he'd done some pretty scary things, but Buffy could also feel what had driven him to it, so many of the same fears and needs that had driven Buffy to the decisions she'd made. But Giles hadn't had a Watcher to pull him back, to keep him sane. Buffy couldn't even imagine what she'd have done if she hadn't had Giles when Angel had turned to Angelus. And yet, somehow, at the worst time of Giles' life, he had managed to keep it together, and turn back to a life that would lead him to her. It did frighten her sometimes, to see all the ways that might not have happened. All the places Giles might have dropped away for good, including a time not that long ago. She saw how close he'd come to leaving her and going back to England.

Those thoughts made her cross the store and wrap her arms around him. Giles spoke softly as he looked down at her, his brow furrowed. "May I?"

He always asked now before he entered. She nodded. Giles tapped into her thoughts. He hugged her tightly, sharing a moment of fear with her, knowing how close it had come, how close they had come to losing each other. With the fear, though, came the joy that they were now together. Buffy let his joy soak into her until it washed all the fear away. She glanced up at him. "How did I ever live my life without you in my brain?"

Giles laughed softly. "I can't imagine. It must have been horrible for you."

Buffy rolled her eyes and punched him lightly on the arm.

He just laughed again. A customer walked in and Giles reluctantly let Buffy go. Giles had given Anya, and the rest of them, the week off. They had deserved that at the very least. A week to recover from all they'd been through. A real week off, with no apocalypse pending, no evil lurking around the corner. A week during which they could go out walking at night without fear. Every night, as the sun was going down, Buffy and he put their palms together and sent the light out. In time, Giles knew, the vampires and demons would just stop coming.

After Giles closed the shop each night, he and Buffy roamed the town, making sure that they had been successful. They had even driven to the next

towns, to determine the boundaries of the light, how far it traveled. They were often tempted to keep driving, to keep putting their palms together until they stopped it all. But they had found that each time they did it, over a 24 hour period, the weaker it grew. It always protected them, but after a few tries, the light would only extend a few yards out from where they were kneeling. It needed time every day to replenish, to get back to its full strength.

In a way, they were relieved. Despite the fact that it meant that they couldn't eradicate evil, that evil would always have time to fight its way back. And despite the fact that they would have to choose who to keep safe, just as they always had, and then deal with the pain of knowing that no matter what they did, that people would still die. The reason they were relieved was because it meant they could have a home, and keep their loved ones safe. For if they were to leave Sunnydale for any length of time, the vampires would come back here as well, putting the people they cared about, and the rest of the town in danger. Even with this power, there was only so much they could do, and so they could choose to keep Sunnydale safe.

##

Three weeks later

Xander and Buffy were sitting around the table. Willow and Tara were in class, and Anya and Giles were in the back going through a new shipment. They all still came to the shop, even though there wasn't much to research these days, nothing, actually. But it didn't matter. They were family, and the shop was their home away from home. Xander found himself curious. "Hey, have you heard from Riley?" He grinned again, remembering the look on Riley's face.

Buffy shook her head. "He's gone."

"What do you mean, he's gone?"

"He's gone, the Initiative's gone. Packed up, moved away."

Xander stared at her. "Why?"

"Nothing for them to do."

"So they've moved the offices to another unsuspecting demon infested town?"

Buffy nodded. "I guess."

"Did you talk to Riley before he left?"

Buffy nodded again. "A couple days after what happened at the school." Buffy had still felt badly that she had not made things clearer to Riley, had felt that he at least deserved an explanation. She had told him what she and Giles were capable of now, and her feelings for Giles.

She could tell that Riley didn't believe her, or didn't want to believe her. But, two weeks later she had gone by the fraternity on the way to class and it was completely empty. Buffy guessed that after a couple of weeks of no demons to chase and torture that the Initiative had realized that Sunnydale was a lost cause. So they had packed up from one day to the next, with military precision, and disappeared.

Xander used his toes to push the front legs of his seat off the ground. "So, in one fell swoop you managed to get rid of all the bad guys and the Initiative too." He flashed Buffy an admiring look. "I stand in awe." Buffy grinned at him. Then her eyes widened as Xander slammed his seat back to the ground and his eyes grew dark.

Buffy whipped her head around and she stood, her fists clenched at her side. It was Travers, with two beefy looking bodyguards. "What the hell are you doing here?" All she could feel inside was a furious rage at what this man had tried to take from her.

Giles came running, Buffy's thoughts having rammed their way through the light blocks he had erected. Anger raced through him as well when he saw Travers. He moved to stand next to Buffy. Anya had followed Giles in, moving to stand behind Xander. Giles echoed Buffy's sentiments. "Get out."

Quentin smiled. "Now Rupert, is that any way to talk? I've called several times over the last three weeks but your clerk obviously forgot to pass on the messages." He gave Anya a scathing look.

Anya took a step forward but Giles stopped her with a hand motion. "She gave me every single one. I chose to ignore them. You're not welcome here. You're not welcome in my life or in the lives of anyone here. Get out."

Quentin continued to move closer, ignoring Giles' tone. "Where's Ms. Wilkins?"

"Dead."

"Ah. And the prophecy?" Quentin ran his hand along a shelf, shaking his head when his finger came away coated with dust. He held it up making a tsk tsk

noise. He glanced up at Giles. "Obviously you were successful."

"Quentin, what the hell do you want? You have about thirty seconds to say what you came to say before I loose Buffy on you." Buffy grinned at the thought and looked at her watch. The two bodyguards stepped closer to Quentin. Giles rolled his eyes at them. "Forgive me for forgetting your unwelcome presence. Rest assured, I will loose Buffy on all three of you." He smiled inwardly at the nervous glances the bodyguards shot each other.

Travers ignored the threat. "How did you defeat the evil?"

"Buffy and I did it, just as the prophecy foretold."

"There's been talk."

Giles nodded. "It's true." He walked behind the counter and pulled out a stack of papers, held together by a paper-clip. He practically threw it at Quentin. "Look familiar?"

It was a photocopy of an old Watcher's Diary. One long considered to be the work of a madman. Most Watchers paid it no mind, Giles included, although he had at least read it. And then discounted it, until now. He had remembered it about a week ago. Remembered a Watcher talking about how he and his Slayer had found a way to completely rid the area of demons, by creating a magical light. The Watcher talked about watching his Slayer die of natural causes when she was 53 years old. A madman. No Slayer lives to be 53. The only reason Giles had read it through when he'd first found it two years ago, was something in the Watcher's tone had been so full of love that it had captured Giles, another Watcher who also loved his Slayer. Quentin held the papers in front of him, as if they were infected. "Jeremiah?"

"Yes, Jeremiah. Buffy and I have that connection as well." He saw the disbelief in Quentin's eyes. Giles turned to Buffy and raised his eyebrows in question.

She nodded, realizing it was the only way, although she hated doing anything for Travers, even if it would probably be the only thing that would make him go away. As Buffy got on her knees facing Giles she leaned in. "Maybe he's evil and it will destroy him." She looked quite hopeful about that thought.

Giles grinned and put his hands up. She pressed hers to his and they both closed their eyes and found each other. Quentin let out a gasp as the light shot through him. He'd been around magic long enough to feel the power of it. His fingers clenched around the papers. That it should be these two made him want to scream.

Giles stood and pulled Buffy up. He turned to face Quentin. "Everything in this town that was evil is gone. The light burns through it all, disintegrating evil in its wake. Go back and inform the Council. If there is a great need for us to fight evil in other places, and the Council is willing to transport us first class, we might be willing to assist." He took a step towards the older man. "But not if you ask."

Xander snickered and then clapped a hand over his mouth.

Giles continued. "I will also call the Council and tell them that if we even suspect you are trying to be involved in an attempt to control us, we will refuse to offer our assistance. You have lost any right to be involved in our lives. Faith is dead, so there is now a new Slayer somewhere. Once a Watcher is assigned I will call that Watcher and I will tell him or her what you have done, so that they can be on their guard against you. I firmly believe that if the Council has to choose between you or the power that Buffy and I can now offer them, you will lose."

Quentin was glaring at Giles, his face red and angry. He spit his own words out. "I do what is necessary."

"No you don't. Your goal is to achieve an end with no regard for people's lives. You are cruel, and inhuman and as long as I am alive, you will cause no other Slayer to suffer."

Buffy watched Giles as he spoke to Travers. He had such a dignity to him. Buffy knew if she was trying to say any of this that she'd be babbling by now, and probably frustrated enough to break a few of Travers' bones. But Giles knew just how to hurt Travers. He was taking away his power. Stripping him of it. Buffy found it very satisfying to watch the expression on Travers' face. And she found herself wanting Giles. She couldn't stop the thought from leaking out, along with a few visuals.

Giles turned and sent her a look. Buffy grinned and tried to look contrite but she couldn't help it. Giles casually buttoned his suit jacket up and sent Buffy a stern thought. But he didn't put up his blocks. Buffy, of course, ignored him, and sent some more visuals. She could feel his arousal and it just fed her own.

Quentin tried one more time. "You should be thanking me. If I hadn't brought Ms. Wilkins here and..." He didn't even finish his sentence. Giles hauled back and punched him, and before the bodyguards could even take a step Buffy was standing in front of them, daring them to try something.

Giles glared at them and then pointed at Quentin, lying on the floor. "Get out, and take that trash with you. Inform him when he wakes that if I find out he's here in Sunnydale without an express invitation from either Buffy or myself, that I will assume he means us harm, and I will kill him." As they hesitated he spoke again. "And I have a sneaking suspicion that Quentin is about to have a fall from grace. You might want to find someone else to protect, someone worth protecting."

One of the men looked at Giles. "You need someone?"

Buffy frowned at the man. "Hey, he's got me."

Xander stood. "And me."

Anya glared fiercely at both men. "And me."

Giles smiled at them all and then looked back at the men. "I appear to have all the protection I need." Both men looked down at Travers and then with a shrug they each grabbed an arm and dragged him out of the store.

As soon as the door shut behind them Giles turned to Buffy, that look on his face again. "Buffy."

She just sent him more pictures, pictures of her shoving him against a wall, just like the night they'd first made love, freeing him, and taking him in her mouth. Giles groaned and before she knew what was happening he'd picked her up and flung her over his shoulder. He headed for the training room.

Xander stared at them both as the door shut behind them. "It is so weird when they do that." He winced as he heard Buffy squeal. "I have so got to soundproof that room."

Anya nodded. "And put a lock on it."

"I put a lock on it two weeks ago. It doesn't do any good if they don't remember to use it." Xander had walked in on them the other day and the only thing that made him get rid of the visual was to make Anya do the same thing to him that Buffy had been doing to Giles, as soon as he got home. He was almost tempted to walk in on them again. He and Anya had never tried that position before.

Buffy smiled as Giles carried her into the training room. She could sense his desire mixed in with his annoyance. Buffy could see pictures of herself being turned over his knee, getting spanked. Buffy sent the pictures back but made herself naked. Giles growled. And as he threw her down on the couch and

grinned that grin of his that was all about desire and love and longing, she thought again of that panther in the zoo. She realized that she'd finally gotten what she'd wanted. She'd opened the cage door and set him free. He was just as dangerous as she'd known he would be, but not to her. It had been as Buffy had hoped. All he wanted was for her to touch him. So she did, and she smiled as she listened to him purr.

The End

April 26th, 2002