

Conjuring 1

Ethan was sick of Giles' brooding. He slammed into his apartment only to find Giles once again sitting by the window, staring out into the darkness. "Ripper, get up, let's go. There's a gathering tonight."

Giles turned to look at Ethan. "Ethan, why would I go to a gathering with you?"

"Because it's better than sitting here in this flat night after night."

"No one's asking you to sit here. I'm perfectly fine."

"No, you're not. You're brooding."

Giles shot Ethan an exasperated stare. "Ethan, just go away."

Ethan grabbed Giles' coat. "Come on, it will do you good."

Giles stayed put. "Those gatherings are nothing but a group of frustrated bitter old men trying to pretend they're young and powerful again."

"Maybe it's escaped your attention but you are a frustrated bitter old man. And no matter how little you've practiced I know you still have your power. I can feel it. Time to dust it off and take it out for a run."

Giles just looked at Ethan but he didn't respond. He turned his head to look back outside.

Ethan let out a frustrated noise. "Rupert. You never go out. You don't see any of your friends anymore except for me and that's just because I'm a stubborn son of a bitch. You haven't even looked for a job. Ever since you arrived from Sunnydale you stay locked up in your flat, instead of enjoying your freedom." Ethan moved to sit on the coffee table across from Giles. "If you miss her so much go back. Although why you would want to is beyond me. All she did was make your life miserable. Good riddance to bad news is what I say."

Giles' voice was full of warning. "Ethan."

Ethan didn't care. "Come on Ripper. You need to get out. You need to stretch your wings a little. What's a little magic between friends? It will distract you."

"It's the wrong kind of distraction Ethan, you know that."

"No, you know that. It always works for me. And you need some distraction

before you wither up and die." He held out Giles' jacket. "Come on, let's go."

"Ethan, I mean it. Go away. I don't want you here. I didn't ask for your help."

"If I waited until you asked it would be too late." He looked at Giles with annoyance and spoke a short incantation.

Giles looked up at Ethan, his eyebrows high and a look of amusement on his face. "Are you trying to compel me to go?"

Ethan grinned. "Only a little. It's nothing you can't resist if you really don't want to go but if you're at all interested it will make it easier to say yes. Come on, let's go have some fun."

Giles pursed his lips and let out a long breath. Then he stood and grabbed his coat from Ethan. "If I go tonight will you leave me alone?"

"If that's what you want."

"Fine, let's go." Shutting the light off behind him Giles followed Ethan out the door.

##

Giles groaned as the sun hit his face. His head was pounding and he thought he might throw up. He muttered. "God, I wish I was dead." As he heard those words out loud he laughed bitterly. There was a little too much truth in them.

He opened his eyes and saw that he was back in his flat. He had no idea how he'd gotten there. For his peace of mind he was going to assume it had been Ethan who had brought him home. Giles had done too much magic too fast and after his long hiatus it had gone right to his head.

Giles groaned again when he thought of how he'd spent the evening. And with whom he'd spent it. He hated that he felt lonely and vulnerable enough to have allowed Ethan to drag him out. And he hated that the magic still held such allure for him, even after all this time. Thoughts of Willow filled his mind. He understood what she was going through all too well. Magic called to magic, it called to one's blood, like the sirens of Greek myth sang to sailors causing them to leap overboard to their death.

He had spoken to Willow of those with power; of those who also could have brought Buffy back from the dead. Of those whom she would not want to meet. He had spent time with a couple of them last night. Trust Ethan to have created a group of extraordinarily powerful magicians of very questionable

ethics. That he had partaken of rituals with men such as these made Giles feel soiled. And yet the power had been heady, and a part of him had been gratified to see that he was by no means the weakest of the group. His power had sung strongly last night. And even now it was pulling him.

Using magic to save Buffy or to fight evil hadn't woken this longing in him. The focus had been altruistic, not for his own pleasure. But last night had been just about pleasure. Getting lost in the rush, losing inhibitions, feeling free of all the emotional baggage that cluttered his mind day in and day out, feeling free of his desperate feelings for Buffy.

Giles groaned again as he thought of her. He had only been away from Buffy for a couple of months but it felt like years. All he wanted was one day when he didn't think of her. One day when he might feel as if he could actually build a life without her, find a way to get past the misery in his heart.

The news he kept hearing from Anya didn't help. Buffy was still unhappy, still not coping particularly. Things weren't quite patched up between Buffy and the rest of them. Dawn was still skidding towards juvenile hall and Anya was sure that Buffy was sleeping with Spike. And Buffy never spoke with him. Nor would she take his calls. She never answered the phone at home and he could sometimes hear her in the background instructing Dawn to tell him that she wasn't home.

He had gone too far this time by leaving her. He didn't think that going back was even an option. She hated him now for leaving her and he couldn't even blame her. Giles knew the real reason he had left and it had very little to do with wanting her to learn how to live on her own. It had to do with him surviving.

In a way her death had been easier. He could grieve and move on, only half of what he had once been, but still, he could move on. But then she had come back and once confronted with her all his longings and feelings for her had grown exponentially inside of him until they started taking him over.

In the short time they had spent together he had felt himself changing. He had felt himself allowing her to rule him, his decisions controlled by his need to be with her, to make her happy, to be what she needed him to be. And who he was, the man he was, was shrinking inside. In time he'd have become little more than one of Glory's minions, worshipping Buffy from afar, willing to accept whatever little dregs of affection she chose to send his way.

So he had run. He had run as fast as he could and even 8000 miles away, it didn't feel far enough. She called to him, just like the magic did and he felt ragged inside. Giles was beginning to feel that too much of him was hers now

to ever get it back, to ever feel whole again.

The nausea surged and Giles ran for the bathroom. Sitting on the bathroom floor he muttered again. "God, how I wish I were dead." And he knew that too much of him really felt that way.

All day long he tried to stay busy. He tried not to think about Buffy and he tried not to think about magic. He cleaned his flat, and read the newspaper, even the want ads, and he went for a walk. Giles was determined to move on, to build a life for himself. But when Ethan showed up at his flat again that night, Giles picked up his coat and went with him.

##

Every night he went with Ethan and every day he hated himself more. But the magic was the only thing that made him forget about Buffy and thinking about her hurt too much. Especially as she still wouldn't talk to him. And the visuals that accompanied his thoughts about her and Spike being together were tearing him apart.

They had done some conjuring last night. And for the few minutes that Giles had been possessed he had felt truly free. Free of the responsibility of his life, of making decisions, of slogging through every day as if it meant something to him. Giles knew this was dangerous ground. It was this that had gotten Randall killed, this that had allowed Eyghon to kill so many people and almost kill Buffy. But Buffy was safe and out of reach and Giles was finding it hard to care about the rest of it.

And he was deciding that the few minutes of last night had not been enough time. Giles sat at his kitchen table drinking a cup of tea flipping through a book that he had pilfered from Ethan. This was the book Ethan always used for conjuring. The spell for Eyghon was in here, as was the spell from last night. The trick, Giles was sure, was in doing research. Knowing a little bit about the demon, more than what this book told you. Giles had a sizable library that would help him do just that. A small part of Giles, the part of him that was staid and sensible was screaming at him, but Giles ignored it and kept turning pages.

##

Ethan could sense the magic brewing before he even opened the door. He grinned. Ripper was back in full force. Opening the door he stuck his head in. "Ripper?"

"Ah, Ethan, just in time."

"Planning on skipping the gathering tonight?"

"I thought we'd work on our own. You don't mind, do you?"

Ethan walked over to where Giles was drawing sigils on the floor. He scowled when he saw what they were. "What the fuck are you doing?"

Giles looked up from the floor. "Why are you asking me that? You know what this is."

Ethan crouched down. "Yes, I do. And again I ask, what the bloody hell are you doing?"

"I find that question amusing coming from you."

"I agree, it is somewhat ironic that I'm being the cautious one here but even in your most adventurous days as Ripper you'd never try this without at least five of us, one to be the vessel and the other four to guard the four quarters. And you want to do this with just the two of us?"

"I've put up wards. We'll be safe enough."

Ethan snorted. "We'll be safe enough?" He leaned a little closer. "What's going on with you?"

Giles rolled his eyes. "You're the one who said I needed a distraction."

Ethan's eyebrows rose high on his head. "From life? You need a distraction from being alive?" Ethan might not always act like it, but even he had learned a few lessons after Eyghon, especially after that débâcle in Sunnydale. That had been a little too close for comfort. Giles didn't answer him or look at him. Ethan put out a hand and turned Giles' face towards him and he blanched at the emptiness he saw there. He tried again. "Rupert, even I know this isn't something to take lightly."

Giles just shook his head. "I know what I'm doing. I'm stronger than I was back then; you are too. And I haven't chosen anything particularly heinous." He turned the book so Ethan could see what he was intending. "We can do this."

Ethan sat down, frowning. "This is my book and I don't remember loaning it to you." Glancing at Giles he was surprised to find that he felt a little out of his depth. "I see I've created a Frankenstein." He let out a breath. "She hasn't called, has she?"

Giles tightened his lips and tersely shook his head. "I haven't spoken to her at all."

"God, she's a bitch, isn't she?"

Giles looked up at that, his eyes angry. "Don't speak of her that way."

"Oh, come on, Rupert. What kind of friend was she? See, that's the problem, she wasn't ever a friend. She was your Slayer; it was a business relationship. And as far as she's concerned, out of sight, out of mind. You left, you're out. That's not friendship and you need to stop fooling yourself. She doesn't give a shit."

Giles looked away but not before Ethan saw the sadness there in his eyes. "She's young, she's troubled."

"You mean, she is trouble." He put up his hand to stop Giles from responding. "Okay, I'll stop badmouthing the poor little thing." He tapped the book. "How far do you think you can run with this? You'll still be here; you'll still be Rupert Giles when it's done. This is only a temporary solution."

Giles turned his bleak eyes on Ethan. "It's more than I have now."

"Will you stop calling her if I stay?" When Giles didn't answer he asked again. "Will you at least think about it? Every time you call she hurts you again, ripping off the scab. You'll never get past this if you keep calling. It's time to let go."

Giles glanced at Ethan and he gave a brief nod. Ethan wasn't sure if Giles had agreed to not call Buffy, or to simply think about it but it was enough for him. Ethan stood and shrugged off his jacket then took his place on the floor. "I assume you want to go first?"

Giles nodded. "I think I'd better. Just in case I've miscalculated." He gestured to the chair across the room. "If things go wrong..."

Ethan looked over and saw the crossbow. "I'm not killing you."

"We killed Randall."

"That was different. I'm not killing you." He leaned back against the couch. "Just don't fuck up or we're both dead. Clear?" Giles nodded. Ethan tried one more time. "We can still go, we can still join the others."

Giles shook his head. "I can't. It's not enough, not for me, not anymore."

Ethan let out a long breath. "Right then. Get in the pentagram, I'll close it behind you."

##

The demon was far from heinous. Actually Ethan found that he was enjoying himself. The demon didn't even try and get out of the pentagram but rather seemed perfectly happy sitting there in Giles' body and just chatting, getting caught up on what was going on in the world, discussing historical events and even sharing a killer recipe for baklava. Ethan was almost sorry to banish him when the time was up.

Giles experienced the momentary disorientation when the demon left his body. After it passed he grinned at Ethan. "I knew we could do it."

"How did you know he'd be safe?"

"That's where my Watcher training comes in handy. Many of these demons aren't evil. But this book was written by someone who didn't know the difference and just assumed anything not human had to be evil."

Ethan pursed his lips. "So, there are a bunch of these characters in this book?"

Giles nodded. "Many demons have been banished who never should have been. Many who deserved to live, who would have lived good lives, lives of meaning if someone filled with fear and ignorance and a little power hadn't come across them."

"So, why have I never heard of them?"

"These that I've chosen are a little tame for a gathering. There's not much written about them, nothing that might pique your interest if you were looking for an evening of hedonistic fun and mayhem." He looked at Ethan. "Your turn?"

Ethan shook his head. "No, not tonight. I want to go try out this recipe." He grinned. "I love baklava." He cocked his head to the side. "Could you hear? Were you there?"

Giles nodded. "Just barely. Just enough to know I didn't need to worry." Just enough to know that he didn't need to care, that he could check out and embrace oblivion for a short period of time.

Ethan caught something in Giles' voice that he didn't like but he couldn't put his finger on it. Giles' was up to something. "You won't do this without me, right?"

Giles shook his head. "I can't. I need you to close the pentagram."

Ethan looked at Giles not believing him. If Giles wanted to do this on his own he'd figure out a way. "Don't do this on your own."

"I won't."

"I mean it."

"I won't." He grinned at Ethan. "You sound like me."

Ethan snorted. "I know. I feel like an old woman." With that he stood. "Tomorrow night?"

Giles nodded. "Tomorrow night."

End of Part 1

Conjuring 2

The phone rang and Buffy looked up from the dinner table. She didn't move to answer it. Dawn rolled her eyes and got up. "Hello?" She paused. "Oh hey Jennifer. Can I call you back? We're in the middle of dinner. Okay, bye." She hung up.

Buffy pushed the food around on her plate. Dawn sat back down. "It wasn't Giles, just in case you didn't guess."

Willow looked concerned. "He hasn't called in a while, has he?"

Buffy scowled. "A month, he hasn't called in a month." Thirty-two days to be exact.

Dawn rolled her eyes again. "You told me to tell him to stop calling."

"Yeah, but that didn't mean he was supposed to stop calling."

Willow scrunched her face up. "Maybe he didn't know that. Maybe he thought stop calling meant stop calling."

Dawn brandished her fork at her sister. "Besides, why do you care? You never spoke to him, even when he was calling every other day. For two months he called and you never talked to him. I had to be the bad guy and tell him you weren't here when I know he could hear you talking. I'm not doing it anymore."

Willow was still concerned. "Maybe we should call him. Maybe something's wrong. I mean if something happened to him how would we know?"

Buffy slunk down lower in her chair. She had depended on his calls. Even if she didn't speak to him, his calls made her feel connected to him. His calls brought him into the house for a few minutes. She had known that if she wanted to she could speak to him the next time he called. It never crossed her mind that he would just stop. She'd just been trying to make sure he knew she was good and hurt. Which she had been. But now she was miserable. Now it felt like he was really gone.

Willow asked again. "Buffy, have you tried to call him?"

Buffy shook her head. "I know Anya talks to him. She'd find out if something happened to him."

Willow looked at Buffy with some surprise. "Don't you care about him anymore?"

"Of course I care. I was just answering your question about how we would find out. Anya would find out. That's all I was saying."

"So, why haven't you called him?"

Buffy shook her head. "I don't know what to say. I want him here; he wants to be there. End of discussion."

"Well, it might make him feel good to know that we were thinking of him." She looked at her watch and frowned. "It's the middle of the night there now. Maybe I'll call him later." She sat back. "A month? He hasn't called in a month? I had no idea that much time had gone by. I hope he's okay."

Dawn chimed in. "He's okay. I talked to him last week."

Buffy glared at her. "He called? He called and you didn't tell me?"

"He didn't call here. He called the shop. He calls there once a week to talk to Anya. I just made sure I was there. I miss him." She glared at Buffy. "Unlike

some people I know."

Buffy got up quickly and left the room afraid she might break down and cry. Willow had seen the sheen of tears, though. She looked at Dawn. "She misses him, Dawn. She misses him more than the rest of us put together."

"Well, she sure has a funny way of showing it."

"He hurt her when he left. It's weird when you love someone and hate them all at the same time. It does weird things to your head."

"Well, I just wish he'd come back. She was better when he was around."

"I think he made her feel safe in a way none of us do. She's just floundering a little right now. She'll be okay."

Dawn looked dubious but she didn't respond and just finished her dinner.

##

Buffy sat out on the back porch. A month. Somehow it broke her heart that everyone was talking to him except for her. Even though she knew it was her fault, that she had driven him away, again. Permanently, it looked like. Maybe she should call him. She wanted to. She wanted to hear his voice, to hear his soft chuckle, to hear his concern for her. Now that she couldn't hear it, she longed for it. She longed for him. She heard footsteps and she rolled her eyes. "Not now, Spike."

"You always say that, and then before you know it, it's now, Spike, now." Spike grinned.

Buffy scowled at him but she surprised him when she patted the step next to her, inviting him to sit down. "Can I ask you a question?"

"Sure." He sat down.

"You know a while ago when I told you that I kissed you because I was missing Giles?"

"Yeah?"

"And you said that you wondered about the two of us?"

"Yeah?"

"What did you mean by that?"

"Why do you want to know that?"

"Does it matter? Just answer the question."

"Okay, don't get your knickers in a twist. All I meant was that the way you two acted around each other, I wouldn't have been surprised if you'd been shagging."

"What do you mean? The way we were together?"

Spike scowled. "I don't know. Like one picked up where the other left off. Like you could finish each other's sentences, like he always knew when you were down and out. I don't know, stuff." He scowled again. "Not to mention how he almost pushed me through a bookshelf when he thought I was coming on to you." Spike had to admit that he had been glad when the Watcher had gone. It had left things a bit more open for him.

"I wish he had. I wish he had pushed you through that bookshelf right into daylight."

"Well, fuck you too, Slayer. You know you have this annoying habit of blaming everyone else for the decisions you make. I didn't rape you, you know."

"Go away, Spike."

Spike looked at her and his face softened. "What's the matter, Slayer?"

"I miss Giles." Her voice was thick with the tears she was trying not to spill.

"Well, I can fix that. The last time you were missing him you kissed me, remember? So, come on, I'm willing to go again."

She looked at him, too distraught to be disgusted. "It won't work this time." She rested her head on her knees.

Spike watched her for a minute and he could see that indeed, it wouldn't work this time. She was too far-gone in her misery. He stood up. "Well, when you finally figure out that he's gone for good, you know where I'll be."

Buffy lifted her head at that. "Spike, I won't be back. It's done."

Spike pursed his lips. "You know, I've heard that before." He grinned. "You'll be back." With that he sauntered off.

Buffy shook her head and spoke softly. "No, I won't." She reached into her pocket and pulled out a piece of paper. It had Giles' telephone number on it. Buffy had been carrying it around for two weeks. She'd almost called him a dozen times a day. Buffy just couldn't imagine what she would say. She wasn't ready to forgive him; the pain of his leaving her was still too sharp. But she couldn't bear to not have him be a part of her life. So how do you have a conversation like that? Tell him that he needed to call so she could make sure that he knew she was still hurt? She couldn't just chat with him, she couldn't pretend it didn't matter that he was choosing to live so far away from her. She didn't want to hear about his new life, about how he was moving on.

What she wanted to tell him he didn't want to hear. He needed to come home. He needed to be with her. She thought about what Spike had said. That where Giles had left off she had picked up, or vice versa. Buffy had never consciously thought about it but that was a good way of putting it. The problem was that now where she left off there was no one to pick up the slack. She was just incomplete. And now, without his calls, she was adrift. She wrapped her arms around her knees and laid her head down again. As she sat there all she could think about was how much she wished he were there.

##

Over the next month Ethan and Giles conjured eighteen demons and during that time Giles just stopped calling Buffy. Some of them were banished quickly because they were utter bores, or not as benign as they had thought. But the majority of them had been good company. Giles had quizzed Ethan at some length as to who his favorite had been. Now that he knew, Giles was planning on reconjuring him tonight.

Ethan had gone along with the conjuring mostly because he didn't know how to stop Giles from doing it, and because while they were doing it Giles had stopped calling Buffy. It's not that he didn't enjoy it but he couldn't shake the idea that Giles was up to something but he couldn't figure out what it was. Giles had been right, the conjuring had been easy and the two of them were handling it fine. But as the days ticked by Ethan found himself getting nervous. Call it intuition or just their long years of friendship but Ethan knew something was up.

Nothing seemed out of order tonight. The sigils on the floor were the same. Giles seemed a tad distracted but nothing that couldn't be explained by too much magic and not enough sleep. Ethan watched him closely as he stepped into the circle. "Maybe we should not do this tonight."

Giles looked at Ethan, a flash of alarm crossing his face before he could school his expression into one of studied indifference. "Why? Do you have someplace to go?"

Ethan had seen the flash of alarm. "What are you up to?"

"Nothing. Nothing. I just thought you would like to visit with Zurvan again. Was I wrong?"

"Maybe we should just take a break. You know, just go do something, maybe get dinner, see a movie."

"If you don't want to stay Ethan, you don't have to."

Ethan looked down at Giles' hands. They were clenched tightly at his side. He didn't know what to do anymore. It was as if his friend was slipping away. "Rupert..."

Giles interrupted him. "Just tonight. Just one more time. Then we can stop. All right?"

Against his better judgment Ethan nodded his head. "One more time." After closing the pentagram behind Giles he began the incantation calling Zurvan forth.

Ethan didn't speak with him long. He knew Giles wouldn't be happy about it but Ethan wanted this last time over. As he reached for the book that held the spell that would banish the demon again, Zurvan spoke. "The owner of this body wishes to speak with you."

Ethan sat up straight, his eyebrows high. "Rupert?" In a moment Ethan could see that Giles was back in control, the familiar gaze staring at him. "What is it?"

Giles smiled softly. "We've had a good run, haven't we? You and I."

Ethan let out a half laugh. "That we have, Ripper, that we have."

"We've been friends a long time and in some ways you know me better than anyone."

Ethan's heart started to beat a little faster. "What is this about?"

"I'm tired Ethan."

"So, let me end this, you can get some rest." Giles shook his head. "No, that's not the kind of rest I need. I'm tired to my bones, I'm tired of my life."

"Rupert..."

"Thank you for trying to help. I just think he'll do a better job with it. Maybe he'll do a better job making something worthwhile out of it." He softly smiled again. "And at least I know he'll keep you entertained, probably better than I could."

Ethan's heart was racing now. "What the hell are you doing?" Giles began an incantation. Ethan let out a cry and lunged for his book beginning his own incantation, the one to banish Zurvan.

Giles finished first and Ethan watched as the familiar gaze of his friend vanished. Ethan finished his incantation but it achieved nothing. Giles' body was still there but Zurvan looked out of his eyes. Ethan stared at him accusingly. "Where the hell is he? What did you do to him?"

Zurvan lifted his hands to look at them. "This was unexpected. He has bound me. Bound me to this body."

"Bring him back." Ethan moved closer and yelled. "God damn it, Ripper. What the fuck are you doing?" He looked at Zurvan, his eyes desperate. "Where is he? Is he still there?"

Zurvan closed his eyes for a moment. "His essence is still here, it is tied to this body, but he is not consciously aware."

Ethan covered his face with his hands. "Fuck." He stood. "Fuck. How could I be so stupid?" He crouched down right outside the pentagram so his eyes were level with Zurvan. "Wake him up. Make him listen."

Zurvan shook his head. "He has already chosen." Again he lifted his hands. "He has given me his body. He has given me life." Zurvan accessed Giles' memories. "He had no further use for it."

Ethan cursed and stood again. "How do I unbind you?"

Zurvan stood as well, slowly, as if to familiarize himself with his new vessel. "You cannot. Only he can."

"So, how do I speak with him?"

"You cannot, unless he chooses to speak with you. And he is not aware

enough to do that."

"How do I make him more aware?"

"I do not know the answer to that. Why do you fight this? It is what he wanted. Do you not wish to honor the choice your friend has made?"

"No, I do not wish to bloody honor the choice he made. It was a bad choice. He wasn't right, he wasn't thinking right."

"His thinking was quite sound. He knew what he wanted and he set out to achieve it."

"This isn't what he wanted. This is just how he chose to cope."

"He seemed to believe that you knew him well."

"Not well enough, obviously." Ethan could have kicked himself. He had known something was up.

"People do get weary of life. But instead of ending his he has simply passed it along. Where is the harm in that?"

"The harm is that he is my friend and I am not ready for him to pass his God damn life to anyone."

Zurvan shrugged. He looked down at his shoulders and shrugged again.

"This movement, it seems to fit with the occasion but what does it mean?"

"It can mean many things. Why?"

"I would like to understand how to use this body."

"Don't get too comfortable."

"It would seem that despite your unhappiness with the situation that your friend has made his decision quite clear." He looked down at the floor. "Will you remove the pentagram?"

Ethan shook his head. "No. You're not going anywhere."

"This body has needs. It cannot stay in here indefinitely."

"Well, when that body starts getting uncomfortable enough maybe he'll start to notice."

Zurvan looked down at the lines surrounding him. He closed his eyes and his body began to shimmer. Ethan backed away. Still shimmering Zurvan simply stepped over the lines. Once across the lines his body firmed up again. Ethan stared at him. "How the hell did you do that?"

"I was a destiny demon when I was alive. I controlled many roads. I simply chose another road where I was not contained."

"You could have done that at any time?"

"Yes, but this body had not been given to me at that time. I would not have presumed to use it in such a fashion."

Ethan went to stand in front of the door. "You can't leave. I won't let you leave." If he left, his friend was as good as gone.

"You cannot stop me but I will not leave quite yet. I have much to learn before I venture outside. The world has changed greatly." He walked slowly to the window and looked outside. "It has been a thousand years since I have been free to walk the earth." He continued to stare out the window. "This body has much knowledge. It will be useful."

"This body belongs to my friend. You'll have to give it back."

"I do not understand why you cannot accept what has been done. He has simply chosen another road."

Ethan gritted his teeth as he spit the words out. "He is my friend. He is important to me. Can't you understand that?"

"I understand the words but I am unfamiliar with the concept. Perhaps when I have reviewed this body's memories I will be more able to understand your distress."

Ethan didn't want to talk to him anymore. His mind was racing furiously trying to figure out what to do. He had no idea how long he had until Zurvan felt ready to leave and he had no idea how he could stop him. It would probably be just as easy for him to do that shimmery thing and choose a road where Ethan wasn't blocking the door. "Fuck." Ethan slumped against the door and let his head fall back, hard, against the wood.

##

Ethan was pouring through every book Giles had hoping he would find

something he could use. Zurvan was still at the window. Every time Ethan looked at him he could feel his frustration rise again. He could barely stand to see his friend and yet know that it wasn't him, that it might never be him again. If it came to that he supposed it would be easier to just let Zurvan go.

Ethan lifted his eyes from his book and ran a hand through his hair. He was still sick at the thought that he had missed it. He'd known how unhappy Giles had been. But it never crossed his mind that Giles would do something desperate like this. And Ethan felt that he should have known, that he should have figured it out in time to stop him.

He saw Zurvan start to move. "Where the hell are you going?"

Zurvan turned to look at him. "I seem to want...some tea. I have reviewed the procedures and I feel that this is a task I can perform." He headed slowly into the kitchen. Zurvan stood there for a moment getting a sense for everything and then he lifted the kettle and shook it to ascertain how much water was in it. He added some more and then put it back on the stove, turning on the burner. He turned to Ethan. "I must say, this method of heating takes much less effort than the way it used to be." As he opened the cabinet he spoke again. "Would you like some tea?"

Ethan closed his eyes. It felt obscene to watch this being in Giles' kitchen, making tea, asking the same question that Giles had asked Ethan thousands of times, but have it not be him. His voice was thick when he answered. "No. No tea." He cleared his throat. "Zurvan?"

Zurvan looked at him. "Yes?"

"Will you fight me on this? You know that I am going to try and find a way to unbind you. If I find it, will you fight me?"

He shook his head. "No, I will not fight you. If it is my destiny to remain in this body then I will. If it is not, then I won't. I will assist you if I am able. I begin to understand this term friend. You were also his friend." He frowned. "Your relationship was quite complicated."

Ethan barked out a laugh. "That's a good word for it, complicated."

"There are many emotions inside of this body, many emotions regarding you. Much of what I feel inside is disappointment. Disappointment that you two drifted apart, that you chose different paths. You were quite important to him."

Ethan felt an unexpected prick of tears behind his eyelids. He spoke softly. "He was important to me too."

The kettle began to whistle and Zurvan returned to his task. Moving slowly and carefully he poured the hot water in the teapot and placed the tea within to steep. "This is a soothing ritual, is it not?"

"Rupert thought so." Ethan sighed. "I guess I will have tea." He paused. "Seeing as you're so willing to help, do you have any suggestions?"

Zurvan thought for a minute. "No, he is even farther away now. I can barely sense him. I do not know what it will take to bring him back." He shook his head. "This emotion, this heaviness in the heart and body. This is sadness?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Because he felt so much of it. It is all around his memories."

"You've never felt sad before?"

"Emotions were of little use to us in our duties."

Ethan moved into the kitchen as well. He gestured towards the teapot. "You better check that. He doesn't like it to steep too long."

"Ah, thank you." Zurvan turned back and opened the teapot to investigate. He looked to Ethan for a second opinion.

Ethan nodded. "That's good." He leaned against the counter. "What was he so sad about?"

"So many things but mostly a young woman. I believe her name is Buffy."

Ethan slammed his hand down on the counter. "Buffy. Jesus, it always comes back to her, doesn't it? I wish he'd never met her. I always knew she'd kill him one way or the other." Suddenly his eyes widened. "Buffy." Ethan ran to Giles' desk looking for an address book. When he found it he flipped through it but she wasn't in it. He looked all over the desk looking through scraps of paper, anything that might indicate how to reach her. When he came up empty he picked up the phone. Working with an international operator he was finally connected with information only to find out that Buffy Summers' phone number was unlisted. He slammed the phone down and sat back in his chair. After a moment he spoke. "Zurvan?"

Zurvan walked around to hand Ethan his cup of tea. "You like it plain, I think. Is that correct?"

"Yes, thank you. I need your...his wallet. It's in your back pocket."

Zurvan reached behind and wrestled with the object. He handed it to Ethan. "Is this what you require?"

Ethan took it. "Yes." He started pulling all the contents out and finally he let out a cry of triumph. He looked at a clock. Midnight. Perfect. Middle of the afternoon in Sunnydale, the store would still be open. Pulling the phone closer he began to dial.

End of Part 2

Conjuring Part 3

A man answered the phone. "Hello, Magic Box."

"I need to speak with Buffy."

"She's not here. Who is this?"

"Ethan Rayne. I have to speak with her. Do you know where she is?"

There was a pause. "Ethan Rayne? As in the focus of the Sunnydale We Hate Ethan Rayne Club? That Ethan Rayne?"

"Your humor leaves me breathless. Yes, that Ethan Rayne. How can I reach her?"

"You can't." Xander hung up. He rolled his eyes and looked at Willow. "That guy just said he was Ethan Rayne."

Willow grimaced. "What does he want? Do you think it was really him?"

Anya walked in from the back. "Who was that?"

"Ethan Rayne."

Anya nodded her head absentmindedly and then she spun around. "Ethan Rayne?" The phone rang again. Anya went and answered it. "Magic Box."

"Look, I know you don't trust me but Rupert..."

"Listen buddy. This is my store now and you can just stop calling here."

"Damn it, Rupert is in trouble and I need to talk to Buffy."

Anya snorted. "I just spoke with Giles yesterday and he's fine. So, whatever you're up to, it's not going to work with us." Anya slammed the phone down.

The phone started to ring again. They all ignored it. Anya flicked the answering machine off. They all started to shift a little impatiently as the phone kept ringing and ringing. Anya picked up the phone again and huffed into it. "What?"

"Just give me her home number. It's unlisted."

"Why would I give you Buffy's number?"

"Please, this is important. If you won't give me her number ask her to call Rupert's. I'll be here. I have to talk to her."

"She won't call you. She won't even call him."

Ethan clenched his jaw. "I know that. This is all her bloody fault. Tell her to call if she ever wants to see her Watcher again."

"She doesn't have any money if you're holding him for ransom. And I'm not giving you any of mine."

"Tell her to call. Soon." He hung up.

Anya looked at Xander. "I think Ethan Rayne has kidnapped Giles."

Xander's jaw dropped. "What?"

"He just told me to have Buffy call if she wanted to see her Watcher again. That's a classic kidnapping line. I see it all the time on TV."

Xander just looked confused. "So, what's Buffy supposed to do?"

"Call Giles' place."

"Ethan kidnapped Giles and is holding him at his own home? Seems to me that's the first place anyone would look." He shook his head. "I'm not buying it. I think it's a joke."

Anya considered that. "Maybe Giles is trying to figure out how to get Buffy to call him."

Willow spoke up. "I don't think so. He doesn't even call the house anymore." She looked at Anya. "Did he sound okay on the phone yesterday?"

Anya hesitated. "He said he was sending some stuff in the mail for me to sign. And then he said that he knew I'd do fine and not to worry." She looked indignant. "Of course I'll do fine. I don't even know why he said that. Then he just said that he was tired. He asked if Buffy was around and I said no and he said to send his love to everyone and he hung up."

Xander looked at his fiancée. "So nothing about an impending kidnapping?" Anya responded with a snort.

##

Buffy walked in about an hour later. They all turned to look at her. She slowed down at the looks on their faces. Anya volunteered the information. "Ethan Rayne's kidnapped Giles and is holding him for ransom."

Buffy's jaw dropped. "Excuse me?"

Xander waved his hand. "No, we don't know that for sure. All we know is that Ethan has called three times looking for you and..."

Anya glared at Xander. "And he said that you needed to call if you wanted to see your Watcher again. And then he said it was all your fault." She looked at Xander. "I forgot about that part."

"Ethan Rayne did something to Giles?" Buffy's voice was dangerous.

Willow hesitantly volunteered the rest of the information. "He said for you to call Giles' place. That he'd be there."

Buffy was already at the phone. "He is so dead if I ever see him again."

The phone hadn't even rung once when it was picked up. "Buffy?"

Buffy's face grew hard. "Where's Giles?"

"Buffy, listen to me."

"Put Giles on the phone, now."

"It's not him, that's what I've been trying to tell you."

"Shut up, and put him on the phone."

Ethan let out a sigh and handed the phone to Zurvan. "She wants to speak to you." Buffy's brows furrowed as she listened to Ethan talk. "No you put this part up to your ear and talk in this part."

Zurvan held the phone as shown and spoke. "Hello?" He spoke cautiously.

"Giles?" It was definitely his voice but he sounded odd.

"No, that man is no longer here. This is Zurvan." Zurvan looked at Ethan. "Who is this? Where is she located? This is amazing. She sounds as if she is right here."

"Giles, this isn't funny. What's going on?"

"Ah, Ethan has just informed me that you are Buffy. I have many memories of you."

Buffy was starting to get severely creeped out. "Giles? What's going on? What did Ethan do to you?"

"No, you misunderstand. Ethan's friend, Rupert Giles, the man who used to inhabit this body bound me into it so he could depart. He felt it was time to choose a different road."

Buffy slid down the wall until she was sitting on the floor. "Put Ethan back on."

"She wants to speak with you again. Shall I make us some more tea?"

Ethan took the phone from Zurvan. "No, I need a drink. Buffy?"

"Ethan, talk to me. What was that?"

Ethan blew out a long breath. "I didn't know he was going to do it. I swear. I'd have stopped him if I'd known. I knew he was depressed. I knew he..." Ethan hesitated and then he blew up. "You couldn't have fucking called him? One fucking time? Was that too much to ask? I kept trying to tell him to move on, that you didn't give a shit about him, that while he may have thought that what the two of you had was special that it was obvious that you didn't, but he kept hoping." Ethan let out a short bitter laugh.

Buffy's hand was over her mouth. "What happened? What did he do?"

"He conjured a demon, a pleasant demon I'll grant you, Rupert's learned to do

his homework. And then he did a binding spell giving control of his body to Zurvan and then he checked out."

There were tears running down Buffy's face. Xander, Anya and Willow were all watching her, deep concern on their faces. Buffy thought she might throw up. Swallowing down bile Buffy spoke. "How do we...is he...oh God." Guilt and misery swamped her and she started to cry.

Ethan was impatient. "Buffy. It might not be too late. Zurvan says his presence is growing weaker but it's still there. Rupert can undo this but only if he chooses to, only if we can make him aware enough to convince him to. I've tried, Zurvan's tried. He's in too deep."

Buffy felt a small flicker of hope and she clung to it tightly. "You think I..."

Ethan interrupted her. "I don't know why after all the pain you've caused him but for some reason he loves you and you're important to him. Trust me, it kills me to ask you to help but I don't know what else to do. Maybe he'll want to talk to you. Not talking to you made him give up so maybe talking to you and seeing you will bring him back."

"Ethan, why do you care?"

"Fuck you. He's been my friend for thirty years, don't you dare presume to know anything about how I feel."

Buffy almost recoiled at the anger in Ethan's voice. Buffy cleared her throat. "What do you need me to do?"

"Come here. I've secured you a seat on the off chance you might agree to come. There'll be a ticket waiting for you at the airport." Ethan gave her the details. And then he spoke again. "And Buffy, when you get here, if you bring him out and then you do anything to hurt him, Slayer or not, I'll push you out the bloody window."

Buffy started to get angry. "What, so you can hurt him, but no one else can?"

"Something like that."

"He left me. He. Left. Me. I didn't want him to go. I wanted him to stay here. He left. He broke my heart."

"Yeah, well you bloody well broke his first." Ethan let out a sigh. "Just get on that plane. I'll pick you up outside." Ethan hung up.

Buffy handed the phone to Anya who hung it up. Xander spoke first. "What is it? What's happened to Giles?" His stomach was churning.

Buffy attempted to stand but her knees felt wobbly. Xander assisted her up. Buffy looked up at him. "Giles has been taken over by a demon."

Willow gasped. "You mean he's a vampire?"

She shook her head. "He did a spell and bound a demon inside of him, to take over his life."

Xander's eyebrows rose. "Why? Did Ethan do something to him?"

Buffy's eyes filled with tears. "No, I did." She fought back a sob and looked at Xander again. "I need a ride to the airport. I have a plane to catch."

"You're going to England?"

"I'm going to Giles." She brushed her tears away and looked at Willow. "You'll watch Dawn?" Willow nodded. "I have to stop by the house and get some stuff."

Xander just nodded. "Let's go." He kissed Anya on the cheek and he and Buffy headed out.

##

Ethan was there just as he'd said. He popped the trunk so Buffy could put her bag in but he did not get out of the car to assist her. She slid into the passenger seat. "Ethan."

He just nodded at her. "Buffy." Ethan put the car in drive and he drove to Giles'. Neither of them spoke for the duration of the ride. When they arrived Ethan parked the car in the garage and turned the car off. He turned to Buffy. "Look, I know you can't stand me and the feeling's mutual. But, this isn't about either of us."

Buffy looked up and saw the unhappiness in Ethan's eyes. "I'm here, aren't I? I came. I never wanted anything..." She turned away. Letting out a long breath she turned back to him. "Just take me to him."

Ethan nodded and then he let out a short laugh. "It's sort of ironic."

"What is?"

"You and I. We're probably the two people Rupert cares the most for and we've both completely fucked him over." He got out of the car. "He'd have been better off not knowing either one of us."

Buffy just stared at him for a minute not wanting to believe his words. Then she slowly got out of the car and followed him in. As they stood outside the door they both paused. Buffy looked up at Ethan and to her surprise he looked at her with some kindness in his eyes. "Don't let it throw you. He takes some getting used to. He looks so much..." His lips tightened and he shook his head. Unlocking the door he pushed it open.

He was standing there by the window. Buffy headed over to him, hoping that it had all been some huge mistake, or some gross practical joke. It looked just like Giles. Buffy almost threw herself in his arms but then he turned and looked at her. And she saw that whatever this thing was, it wasn't Giles, not anymore.

Zurvan smiled. "Ah, you must be Buffy. I have been trying to access all the memories this body holds about you. There are quite a few and I haven't yet finished." Buffy just stared at him, a chill going down her spine. His voice sounded the same, except the emotion was gone. This wasn't the voice Giles used when he spoke to Buffy, his tones filled with concern or compassion or annoyance. He looked at her and nodded. "I can see that this distresses you much as it distresses Ethan."

Buffy's voice was tight. "He is my friend." She didn't know if she could stand this. She could feel Ethan standing a little ways behind her.

Zurvan nodded. "I apologize then." He cocked his head just a little to the side the way Giles always did and Buffy's heart clenched. "I did not choose for this to happen."

"Why did it happen?" She turned to look at Ethan and then back at this thing that looked like Giles. "Why? Why did he do it?"

Zurvan frowned. "Humans are so complicated. Perhaps we should have some tea." He headed for the kitchen.

Buffy looked at Ethan again and the two of them exchanged a similar look. The tea was too much a part of Giles. Both she and Ethan hung around the periphery of the kitchen watching Giles' body make tea. He made both Ethan and Buffy's tea just the way they liked it and then he poured his. He smiled as he took a sip. At the look on their faces he sighed. "It is difficult for me to understand all of what he was experiencing. I am not human. I have spoken at some length to Ethan about it to try and make some sense of the human

experience. You seem to have difficult and convoluted lives."

Buffy was frustrated. "I just want to understand why he did it."

Ethan glared at her. "Because of the way you treated him."

"Ethan, that's not fair. I had a right to be angry with him. He left me."

"Only because you drove him to it."

"Oh, and you never did anything to him. Just tried to kill him and me or somehow screw with his life every time you came to Sunnydale."

"That was different."

"How was that different? Explain that to me."

"I never meant..."

Buffy interrupted. "Oh, you never meant to hurt him? You never meant to turn him into a demon, or back into a teenager, or kill me by putting that tattoo on me? You didn't mean that? I feel so much better."

"But he survived all of that, didn't he? Look at him now. You did that."

"It wasn't my choice for him to leave."

"It wasn't my choice either."

"He didn't leave you."

"Yes, he did. He left me for you." Ethan slammed his hand down on the counter. "Damn." He was feeling too raw to have this conversation.

Buffy's heart clenched again. "What does that mean? Were you two...?"

Ethan rolled his eyes. "No, we weren't. We were friends, the best of friends until he went back to become a Watcher. It changed him."

"So all that stuff in Sunnydale is because you were mad at him? Because you were angry that he left you?" Buffy moved close to him. "Because you felt he abandoned you?"

Ethan snapped at her. "Yes."

"Well, get in line." Her eyes were flashing. "I was angry too. And maybe you were right, what you said downstairs, maybe we both have fucked him over but you know what? For the two people he cares about the most he did a pretty good job on the two of us, didn't he? He doesn't quite get the squeaky-clean friendship award. He left us both. He abandoned us both." She pointed at Zurvan. "And now he's done it again."

Ethan just stared at Buffy, somewhat disoriented to suddenly find himself standing on the same side of this argument as she was. He let out a half laugh. Buffy was a little taken aback when Ethan flashed her a grin. "Well, I suggest we not let him get away with it this time."

Buffy saw the humor and determination in his eyes and for a second she saw the man that Giles had chosen to be friends with. The man Giles still chose to be friends despite all that he had done. She smiled tightly back. "You've been seeing him, then, since he's been back?"

"Almost every day." He pointed to the window. "He'd be sitting there, staring outside, staring at nothing. I'd drag his ass out. I made sure he ate. He was a mess."

"Did you see him after I died?"

Ethan nodded. "He was a mess then too, but I could get that. I could imagine what he was going through. But I didn't understand this. He wouldn't talk about it. All I knew was that you wouldn't talk to him and he was lost."

Buffy felt the need to defend herself again. "I..."

Ethan didn't let her finish. "No, you don't need to say anything. I understand, really I do. You just had the power to hurt him more than I did. He didn't like that he and I had parted as friends but it didn't tear him apart. But whatever happened between the two of you, it was obviously more than he could deal with."

"So what happened?"

"I got him back into his magic. I thought it would distract him." He snorted. "Well, it did, a little too well." He shook his head. "We've been conjuring for weeks but I had no idea what he was planning. We'd conjured Zurvan here a couple of times and both Rupert and I had spoken with him. Rupert had obviously already come up with the idea and was searching for the right demon." He looked at Buffy, the misery clear on his face. "He told me that he was tired. That he was tired of this life, that he needed a rest. He told me that Zurvan would keep me entertained." His eyes grew angry again. "Bloody

entertained." He looked around for something to hit.

Buffy moved closer to him. "Hit me. You can't hurt me and it will make you feel better."

Ethan needed no encouragement. He let one fly and Buffy found herself on her butt. Ethan grinned. "Thanks, I do feel better." He reached down a hand to help her up.

Buffy shifted her jaw and smiled ruefully at him. "You're welcome." She looked at him. "You're stronger than you look."

At a noise from Zurvan they both turned. He had been watching their argument with fascination. Now, his eyebrows had risen. "That got his attention. Just for a second but I felt it."

Buffy got excited. "You mean when he hit me?" She turned to Ethan. "Hit me again." Ethan complied. Buffy got up and looked at Zurvan. "Anything?" Zurvan shook his head. Buffy gestured at Ethan. "Come on, make this look good."

The two of them went at each other. They crash landed on one of the end tables. It shattered underneath them and the lamp went flying. Buffy pulled her punches the best she could but Ethan went for it. He put every inch of his anger and frustration at her and what she represented into each of his punches and kicks, wanting it to look real, wanting Giles to think that maybe she could be in danger. She accidentally walloped him with a kick and he flew across the room.

He lay there, momentarily stunned. Buffy ran to him. "Oh God, I'm not very good at pulling that one. Are you all right?"

Ethan just lay there and let out a cynical laugh. He looked at Zurvan. "Anything?"

Zurvan frowned. "No, he is more present but still largely unaware and making no attempt to communicate." He looked at them both. "I am sorry."

Buffy threw herself down on the floor next to Ethan. She leaned against the back of the couch, closed her eyes and covered her face with her hands. Finally she spoke. "What do we do?"

Ethan pulled himself up so he was sitting against the wall as well. "I don't know." He gestured at Zurvan, calling him over. "Talk more. See if we can figure something out." Zurvan lowered himself to the floor and sat with them.

They sat there in silence for a while and then Buffy finally spoke. "Can you tell what he's thinking?"

Zurvan shook his head. "No, he is too distant for that. He cannot think thoughts that way. The thoughts in this head are mine."

"Can you remember what he was the most upset about? What was bothering him the most? I mean exactly? Maybe that would help."

"As I said before I haven't had time to access all his memories and feelings about you. I would suggest you both sleep. I understand that these bodies need time to recuperate. This body must rest as well. While it rests I can sift through all the memories and we can talk tomorrow."

Buffy frowned but then she paid attention to her own body. She was exhausted from the trip and the fight with Ethan hadn't helped. A rest would be good. She looked at Ethan. "Where do I sleep?"

Ethan looked at her for a moment. "Rupert's room. I'm in the guest bedroom. Zurvan can take the couch. It's where he slept last night."

Zurvan nodded. "I find it quite acceptable." He stood. Buffy stood and reaching down a hand she pulled Ethan up. "Where?"

He pointed towards a closed door. "Bathroom's attached."

Buffy nodded and she looked at Zurvan, taking the time to see Giles, see the curve of his cheekbones, the cleft in his chin, the way his hair fell over his forehead. Resisting the temptation to hug him close and never let him go she turned quickly, picked up her bag, and going into the bedroom she shut the door behind her.

End of Part 3

Conjuring 4

Buffy just sat on his bed for a while. She was glad Zurvan had suggested a rest. She needed a little time to regroup. It was difficult to believe that she was in England when just a little while ago she had been in Sunnydale with no plans to go anywhere. She was also having a hard time dealing with what had happened to Giles. A part of her wanted to go in the other room and crawl on the couch with that thing and just have him hold her. She missed his body,

his size, and his strength. Buffy had wanted to hold him for so long that the desire in her for his proximity was like this live presence inside of her.

The other part of her wanted to run. Because that thing, it wasn't Giles. And she missed that part of him more than anything. His humor, and view of the world, his experiences of being her Watcher, of knowing her better than anyone had ever known her. She missed his sarcasm, and eye rolling and the way he took his duty so seriously. She missed everything about him, the inside part. The mind and heart and soul of him.

It was disconcerting to be allied with Ethan, even more disconcerting to find herself understanding him a little. And she was angry with Giles, still angry with him for leaving her in the first place and even angrier that he had done this. It was as if he had killed himself. And it hurt to think that he would do that to her. And it hurt to think that she had contributed to his feeling so hopeless that he saw no other way out. Buffy understood hopeless. She understood wanting to be dead. But she didn't understand it for him. It was essential for her that he be alive.

Buffy stood and walking across the room she looked out the window, wondering how often Giles had stood here and done the same. Looking with some inner vision across the Atlantic Ocean, across the United States, all the way to Sunnydale, all the way to her.

She looked back at the bed and realized that the last time it had been slept in was when Giles was still Giles. Buffy walked back over to it and lay down, reaching for his pillow. She laid her head on it; imagining she could smell him, sense him there. Again, a longing for him suffused her. She let out a cry, holding the pillow close to her face to muffle the sound. What would it take to bring him back? What did he need from her? She felt so lost. What could she offer him? More of the life they had had? More death and suffering? She couldn't stay here with him. And he clearly didn't want to be there. What could she give him, what would bring him back?

Getting up again she went to his closet. She looked at his clothes, running her hand over the fabrics. She had brought some pajamas but she took out one of his shirts and taking off her clothes she put it on, rubbing it close to her body. It almost covered her to her knees. Buffy went into his bathroom and touched his things there. She held his razorblade and squirted some of his shaving cream on to her hand. Finding his aftershave she sat on the toilet and just held it under her nose, her eyes closed, the smell making him feel so present to her.

Finally she walked back into the bedroom and looked around. He had done very little with the room. There were no pictures up, and there were several

unpacked boxes still against the wall. She lay back on the bed and rolled over to the other side and the bedside table that was there. Opening the drawer she started poking around inside. There were a couple of books, and a handkerchief. She took that out and held it in her hand. Then she fished around some more.

She found an envelope and pulled it out. It wasn't sealed so she opened it. Inside were several pictures, and all of them were of her. They were a little worn as if he looked at them all the time. They were a mix. One was of her at the prom, one a family portrait of her with Dawn and her mom. A couple looked as if they had been cut out of pictures of a larger group, one was even her yearbook picture, torn from the yearbook. Eight in all. She carefully opened up a small piece of newspaper. It was her obituary.

Buffy held them a little farther away as tears began to fall. The first few tears had caught her unaware and they had splattered on a couple of the pictures. It seemed so sad, that after all they had been through, after all they had meant to another that this was all he had. Eight lousy pictures. He should have scrapbooks of all their years together. Scrapbooks filled with mementos of all the silly times, and happy times, and scary times, and angry times, and make up times, and him and her times. Pictures of the two of them.

Buffy didn't even think she had one picture of Giles. Not one. Suddenly it all seemed so stupid. So stupid that they were apart. So stupid that they had ended up here, a million miles apart in every way. She needed pictures of the two of them and for that they had to be together. And that meant he had to come home. Buffy snorted. That would be sure to work. She spoke softly. "Come on out Giles, come out and live again. Come home with me so we can have our picture taken together. So we can build a scrapbook of our lives together. You and me. Like a family." She let out a sad laugh and shook her head.

Buffy put the pictures back in the envelope and replaced them in the drawer. Her heart was aching. She went back into the bathroom and retrieved his robe from where she had seen it hanging on the back of the door. Crawling back into bed she held it in her arms, wishing it were him. Buffy finally drifted off into an uneasy sleep.

##

In the morning Ethan went in to get Zurvan some clean clothes. He stood there and watched Buffy sleeping. She was curled up on the bed in one of Giles' shirts, one of his handkerchiefs held in one hand and his robe tucked tightly against her. Against his will he felt a moment of compassion for her. Moving quietly he opened Giles' closet and pulled out an outfit. Then he went

into the bathroom and retrieved some of his toiletries. Zurvan had wanted to try and shave but Ethan had dissuaded him. Having Giles bleed from a dozen spots on his face seemed an inauspicious way to start the day.

Buffy's eyes opened as Ethan was creeping across the room back to the door. "What are you doing?"

Ethan turned around. "Just getting him some clothes. He's been wearing the same thing since he...well...he needs to take a shower and change."

Buffy looked down at the robe she had clutched against her and she blushed. "Do you need..."

Ethan shook his head. "No." He gave her a small grin. "It looks pretty happy where it is."

Buffy's eyes unexpectedly filled with tears. "I missed him." She covered her face with one of her hands. "I'm sorry." A sob escaped her.

Ethan let out a sigh and moved to sit on the side of the bed. "I never thought I'd ever say anything like this to you but I'm sorry I..." He paused and tried again. "I know this is hard for you and I'm sorry if I've made it harder."

"I never meant to hurt him so much."

"I know you didn't." He stretched out his legs in front of him. "I wish I hadn't been so blind. I wished I'd understood how much he was hurting."

Buffy put out a tentative hand and touched Ethan's arm. "He wasn't exactly share guy." She let out a soggy giggle. "Willow called him the emotional marathon man." Ethan barked out a laugh. Buffy spoke softly. "Did Zurvan say anything about him?"

Ethan shook his head. "No. I didn't really want to ask."

Buffy sat up. "We'll figure it out, Ethan. We'll get him back." Her voice was shaky and still thick with tears as if in denial of her own words.

Ethan patted her hand and stood. "I hope you're right." He looked at Buffy. "Just so you're prepared...Zurvan went out this morning and bought you jelly donuts."

Buffy let out another sob and ran for the bathroom shutting the door behind her. Ethan just stared at the closed door for a moment. Zurvan had shown up with Ethan's favorite kind of scone as well and Ethan had had to fight off

some of his own tears. Heading back out Ethan shut the door to Giles' bedroom behind him.

##

Buffy took a long hot shower and cried herself out. Finally she shut the water off, dried herself and got dressed. She wore her own clothes, a pair of jeans and a T-shirt but she covered the whole ensemble with another one of Giles' shirts. Ethan had already seen her at her worst. Between wearing one of Giles' shirts to sleep in and holding his robe she knew she must have looked about as pathetic as she could be.

Ethan noticed the shirt but he didn't say anything. Zurvan was bustling around in the kitchen. He looked up when Buffy came out. "Ah, you're awake. I have finished accessing his memories. He seems to know many of your preferences." Zurvan pointed at the box on the counter. "I have bought you donuts, jelly ones."

Buffy was grateful Ethan had warned her. She was able to give him a small smile. "Thanks."

Zurvan nodded. "It was an interesting task. I have tried several tasks this morning. I believe that I have been successful at achieving the appropriate end result." He ticked off a list on his fingers. "I have shopped and spent money. I have taken a shower and gotten dressed. And of course, I have made more tea." He looked down at himself. "Have I dressed correctly?"

Buffy looked at him. He was wearing jeans and a Henley that was not tucked in. His feet were bare. Somehow it made his attire seem so intimate. Giles was rarely this casual. Buffy blushed. "You look fine."

"Good. This type of clothing is unfamiliar to me. So much of this is unfamiliar. It will take me some time to sort it all out."

Buffy felt a surge of anger and she had to fight to keep her mouth shut. She wanted to hit him for even talking as if he was here to stay, as if he had a right to experiment with this life. Buffy glanced at Ethan and saw the anger there in his eyes as well. For a second their eyes held and then he looked away.

Zurvan pushed the box closer to her. "Have one. I have eaten two already." Buffy reluctantly took one and she nibbled on it. Zurvan opened the refrigerator door and pulled out some orange juice. "I believe you like this as well. Shall I pour you a glass?"

Buffy lost it. "Stop it. Stop acting like you're him. You're not."

Zurvan just looked at her. "Ah, this distresses you. I understand. I thought you would find it comforting." He looked at the juice in his hand. "However, despite your distress, perhaps you would still like some juice. Would you? Shall I pour you a glass?"

Buffy let out a sigh and nodded. "Sure."

Zurvan nodded in satisfaction and poured her a glass. "I like these kitchen activities."

Buffy rolled her eyes. "Great, Emeril's taken over."

Ethan let out a snort. Then he got everyone's attention. "Let's get back to the problem at hand. I'm afraid the longer he's gone the less chance we have of getting him out."

Zurvan moved to sit at the table. "I think you are right. I have not sensed him at all since last night."

Buffy let out a long breath. "What made him do it? What pushed him? Was it me? Was it because I wouldn't talk to him?" Buffy felt it had to be more than that. She and Giles had gone through other times of not talking, of being estranged from one another, and he'd been all right. He hadn't been happy about it but he'd been all right.

Zurvan pursed his lips, again looking so much like Giles that Buffy closed her eyes. "His feelings for you were quite complex."

As he paused Buffy opened her eyes. "Tell me about them. I need something to go on here. I need to know what to do."

Zurvan hesitated. "It is difficult. If it was just thoughts it would be easy for me to communicate them, but all his thoughts are coupled with strong emotions and I do not understand them all."

"Just try."

"Very well." He thought for a moment. "His strongest emotion is hard for me to explain. It is surrounded by sadness and other emotions I haven't identified yet."

"So sadness isn't his strongest emotion?"

Zurvan shook his head. "No." He stared at Buffy. "Let me try and describe it. It

centers here." He touched his chest, over his heart. "It makes it ache but in a different way than sadness does. It makes it feel full." He thought for a moment. "He called it love."

Buffy's eyes grew bright. "I loved him too." She caught herself. "I...I love him too."

Zurvan frowned, not at her but at his memories. "You loved him as well?"

Buffy nodded. "Yes, why?"

"He did not believe that to be true. It is why he left."

Buffy let out a cry. "He didn't think I loved him? He left because of that?" She turned to look at Ethan. "That doesn't make any sense. He knew I loved him."

Zurvan looked puzzled. He sat there at the table thinking. Finally his eyes lit up in comprehension. "This word love, I see that it gets used in many ways." He pointed to the box on the counter. "He loved jelly donuts, he loved to learn, he loved the rain." He glanced at them both. "Is that normal? To love in so many different ways and to love many different things?"

Ethan nodded. "It is an overused word. It is used for affection, for preference, for exclamation. And occasionally it is used to describe someone who has extra meaning for you, someone who is very important to you."

Zurvan looked at Ethan. "He loved you."

Buffy watched as Ethan struggled to keep his composure. He blew out a long breath and nodded. "Go on."

Zurvan looked at Buffy. "His love for you was another kind of love." He looked frustrated at his inability to adequately explain.

Ethan was the one who guessed. "He was in love with her, wasn't he?"

Zurvan considered the phrase. Then he nodded. "Yes, that is the way to say it. In love. He was in love with you." He looked at Buffy. "Is that phrase significant to you?"

Buffy opened and closed her mouth a few times. "I...he..." She shook her head feeling completely flummoxed. "He never told me, he never did anything..." She glanced at Ethan and at the look on his face she felt defensive. "How was I...how...?" She finally looked at Zurvan. "How long had he felt that way?"

Ethan again was the one that guessed. "I think he figured it out after you died. He kept talking about it being too late but I just assumed he was talking about the fact that you were dead. Which he was, but he obviously was speaking of something more. And it would explain why he's been the way he's been since he left you."

Buffy was still grappling with the idea. She looked at Zurvan. "Why didn't he tell me?"

"He did not believe it possible that you would return his feelings, and he did not think you were in the right state of mind to even discuss it."

"If he loved me so much why did he leave?"

Zurvan had to think again but finally he spoke. "There was too much sadness. He couldn't stand being so near to you, being with you every day, having you treat him like he was your..." He looked confused for a moment, "...I do not understand. A mother is a female, correct?" At Buffy's nod he continued. "Why does he think you thought he was your mother?"

Buffy waved her hand. "Long story. Finish what you were saying."

"All right. He couldn't stand to be with you and not be able to touch you. He wanted to engage in mating rituals with you."

Buffy's jaw dropped but then she thought about the short time they had spent together after she had been brought back. To his reaction to first seeing her, to his repeated attempts to touch her, to take care of her, all the way to his announcement that he was leaving her, that he had to leave because he couldn't say no to her. She'd been so blind. And she'd looked to Spike to make her feel alive when all the time...Alarmed at where her thoughts were going Buffy stood so fast her chair fell. She looked at Ethan. "I gotta go take a walk."

Ethan looked at her, wondering what was going on in her head. Finally he nodded. "Don't get lost and don't be long."

"I won't be long. I just need to..." She shook her head. "And I won't get lost. I always know where I am. It's a Slayer perk."

He gestured towards the door of the flat and with that as encouragement Buffy headed towards the door. She turned before she left. "Do I need a key?"

"One of us will be here. But if it makes you more comfortable take his." He pointed to the keys sitting on the table by the door.

Buffy took them mostly because they were his. Scooping them up she crammed them in her pocket and she left.

End of Part 4

Conjuring 5

Buffy just ran at first, as if she could run away from the entire situation if she could just go fast enough or far enough. Finally she slowed down and just walked quickly, no particular destination in mind, not that she could have had one even if she wanted one. She had no idea where she was, what there was around to see.

Finally she found a small park and finding a bench she sat down. Giles was in love with her. And he had found it so horrible that he had essentially chosen not to exist any more. The Buffy Summers charm continued. She thought Riley had gone far away but he was an amateur compared to Giles.

She didn't know where to start. Nothing about this felt good to her. It would be different if Giles were waiting for her in his apartment. If she could hold him and rest her head on his chest while she worked this through. If she could feel his arms hold her closely, listen to him breath, his chest rising and falling. Have him try and stutter his way through an explanation. It would be so easy then. They'd work it through, eating their jelly donuts, him making them tea. But he wasn't. The only one making tea back from where she had just fled was Zurvan.

Buffy tried to remember the last time she had really touched Giles. Certainly when he had first returned from England. Those few minutes while he had held her had been the safest she had felt from the time she had been brought back to now. She certainly hadn't felt safe in Spike's arms. She hadn't been able to let her guard down for a second. Buffy hadn't felt safe at all except that night, and the night she'd been with him and he'd given her that money. The night she had told him that having him around was like having her mom back. Buffy let out a rueful laugh. If only she'd known.

But what if she had known? What if that night he had told her that instead of being a rakish uncle that he wanted to be her lover? Buffy felt a moment of sadness when she had to honestly admit that it would have made her angry. It would have felt like one more expectation, one more thing that somebody

wanted her to do, to be, when all she wanted was to rest, to be in heaven again, to be free of all responsibility.

Giles had been right. She hadn't been in any shape to discuss it, to even hear it. And yet, nothing had made her more desolate than him leaving. Was it just about being safe? Is that all he meant to her? She knew the answer to that was no, but she wasn't sure how to define what he was to her. She wasn't sure what he could be.

And he'd know. He always knew when she was off. There was no way she could go back and tell him that she loved him and she wanted him and for him to come out, not unless she meant it. Besides, if she did that and it was a lie, and she hurt him like that, she'd throw herself out the window and save Ethan the trouble. That would be beyond cruel.

She knew she longed to touch him. Ever since he had held her that night in the Magic Box, a part of her had wanted to be in his arms. And after he had left she thought about it all the time. Buffy tried to imagine him touching her. Engaging in...mating rituals. Buffy blushed but she stuck with it. It was easier than she thought it would be. It was much easier than imagining herself with Spike again. It would be weird but it wouldn't be bad. In fact, it might be nice. It might be nice to have someone touch her that knew her so well, someone who accepted her for what she was.

She felt an unexpected warmth pool in her lower body as she thought of Giles' hands and what they might do to her, and as she thought of him lying on top of her. She felt a longing to be next to him, to be as close to him as she could be. To feel his gentleness coupled with his strength, to see a smile on his face, to see him smile at her, for her. To see him happy.

But would it make her happy? Would this be enough for her? Could she take him home and commit to him, deal with what the gang might say, what Dawn might say? With a flash of anger she realized that she didn't give a shit what any of them said. If this were what she chose to do they'd have to deal. Besides Buffy was pretty sure that Dawn would be secretly delighted to have Giles back. Of course, Giles would need to deal with Dawn. But that didn't really concern Buffy too much, not now that she knew why he had really left. Taking care of Dawn had been a convenient excuse but she guessed that he'd probably resented it more because Buffy had treated him like her personal slave because somehow she had known she could. Which she still might, but now he'd get something out of it.

The whole thing felt so cold and clinical to Buffy for a minute. Is that all there was to it? She'd offer him what he wanted and he'd come home with her? For that he'd choose to live again? She shook her head. She was missing

something. Buffy reviewed Zurvan's words. Giles was in love with her. Love.

Suddenly it all snapped into place and Buffy almost laughed out loud. There had been something else she had felt when he had held her. It wasn't just about being safe. It was about being loved, and loving back. Giles loved her, and she loved him. That's what it was about. With that thought came the emotion, rich and pure, cleansing her, filling her with hope and faith in a future she could believe in. Energized beyond belief she started running back, as fast as she could.

##

Buffy burst back into the apartment. She sought out Ethan and when she saw him she smiled at him, really smiled at him. "I can do this."

Ethan was taken aback at her smile, at the genuine affection and delight on her face. "What can you do?"

"I can love him. I love him." She laughed.

Ethan felt some hope begin to rise within him. "You mean...?"

She nodded. "I mean." She walked over to Zurvan and she frowned. Somehow she had forgotten. Somehow a part of her had been thinking that Giles would be here. Buffy had forgotten that any declarations of love would have to be made to, well, to Zurvan. Hesitating she glanced at Ethan. "I..."

"Tell him."

She grimaced. "I can't. Not with you watching." She gestured at Zurvan. "I can hardly bear to do it with him watching." Buffy grabbed Zurvan's hand. "Come on."

"Where are we going?"

"In the bedroom. I need some privacy for this."

"Buffy."

Buffy turned back to Ethan and she smiled softly at him. "I'll call for you. If he comes out I'll tell you right away, I promise."

Ethan let out a breath and nodded. He watched her as she dragged Zurvan into the bedroom and then he went and fixed himself a drink.

##

Buffy turned to Zurvan and screwed her mouth up, thinking. She pushed him down to sit on the bed. Then she pulled him back up. She stepped up close to him and then she backed away. Letting out a small mewl of frustration she stared at him, trying to find a way to pretend this was Giles. Finally she told Zurvan to get on the bed and lean against the headboard. Buffy got on the bed too and sat near him, facing him. Zurvan watched her, his face curious. She looked at him. "Is this weird for you, knowing that if I do this, if I bring him out, that you won't be here anymore?"

He shook his head. "No, do not worry about distressing me. Please proceed."

Buffy scrunched her face up. "You have to shut your eyes." Zurvan complied and Buffy felt better immediately. It would be much easier to pretend this way. Buffy decided she better explain. She touched him and he opened his eyes. "I'm going to talk as if he's here. I'm going to tell him things, and maybe I might...I might touch him. I need you not to say anything. I need you not to touch me back. I need to know it's him touching me if that happens. Okay?"

"How will you touch me?"

Buffy blushed. "I might...um...lean against you, or touch your hands or your face, maybe kiss you. I mean him."

"I understand. Are you planning on telling him that you are also in love with him?"

Buffy nodded. "Yes."

"Ah, well perhaps I can also try and communicate that, inside, while I remain still for you."

Buffy's eyes grew bright and her voice was shaky. "Thank you."

Zurvan just nodded. "I will close my eyes again now."

Buffy closed her eyes for a second too, willing herself to just see Giles. When she opened them she reached out and took Giles' hands in hers. She brought them to her lips and she kissed them and then opening them she pressed them against her face. "Giles. I need you to come back to me." She blew out a breath, trying to get past the lump in her throat. After a few moments she spoke again. "I just discovered something. I just discovered that I don't want to live without you either."

She looked at his face. And she loved him. Buffy pulled his hands from her

face and brought them down. Keeping one of his hands in hers she began to trace his face with her other. She touched the crinkles at the sides of his eyes; with feather light touches she ran her fingers over his eyelids and down his nose. "Giles, I wish I could let you see inside of me. I'm so bad at this stuff. I'm so bad at saying what I mean. And it's never been so important for me to make someone believe what I'm saying." She ran her fingers over his lips. Leaning forward she very softly pressed her lips against his. "I want to kiss you, but I need you here for that. I want to hold you but I need you to hold me back."

She let her hand drop to his chest, resting it over his heart. "I know that you love me. That you're in love with me. Zurvan told me. What I didn't know was that I love you too. That I'm in love with you too." She lifted the hand she was holding and brought it to her lips again to kiss. "Giles, I need to see you looking at me. I need you to tell me that you love me. Suddenly nothing feels as important to me as that."

She shifted closer to him and she rested her head on his chest. "Please, come back to me. Please hold me. Please don't leave me alone." She rested against him for a minute and then she pulled away.

Buffy felt a moment of hopelessness. She had no idea if he was hearing her, if he was even aware of her. She didn't want to ask Zurvan, she didn't want to stop pretending that this was Giles. Pushing down her despair she touched his face again, this time running her fingers along his jaw. "We belong together, I see it now. I'm sorry I didn't understand before. I'm sorry things got so bad. But I'm here now. We're together now." Buffy leaned in and kissed him again. This time her lips lingered, she gently bit his lower lip, and then pressed her lips full against his.

She pulled back and touched his lips again with her fingers. "Your lips are so soft. I wish you would kiss me." Buffy sighed. "I don't blame you if you are finding this hard to believe. I'm finding it a little hard to believe and I know it's true." She paused trying to find the words, trying to find the way to convince him.

"Remember when I told you that having you around was like having my mom back? I meant that in a way. But, now I get what I really meant. What I meant was that when my mom died that it left a hole in my life that I didn't ever think could be filled again. I missed her so much and I felt lonely and afraid of dealing with my life. But that night, when you gave me that money, when you sat there and looked at me, and loved me, what I felt was the hole filling in. What I felt was not alone, what I felt was that I didn't need to be afraid if you were with me."

Buffy started to cry. "I need you to come back to me now because if you don't then that hole will be back but it will be so much bigger, it will be so big that I can't face it." She leaned again against his chest. "I don't know how to live without you anymore." Buffy just sobbed against him, her tears soaking his shirt. "Giles, come back to me." As he continued to just sit there Buffy's heart began to break and she sobbed even harder.

Buffy didn't even notice it at first. She was too lost in her misery. But then it slowly started sinking in. His arms were around her and he was stroking her hair. Buffy's heart began to race. Was it Zurvan? Had he been unable to ignore her crying? She could hardly bear to look. Buffy lay there for another minute, just enjoying the touch. Finally she had to know. Her voice still hiccupy she spoke his name. "Giles?"

His answer was soft. "Yes, it's me."

Buffy let out a cry and she pulled away, having to see his face. "It's you? You're back?" She could see his eyes; Giles was looking at her. She touched his face with her hand.

He smiled sadly. "Not completely. Zurvan is still bound in this body. He is allowing me to be in control."

"So unbound him."

"Buffy."

"No, Giles, just do it. Don't leave me again."

"I can't...how...?" Giles turned his head away, unable to say what he needed to say.

Buffy said it for him. "How can you know this is real?" Giles nodded, his eyes vulnerable. Buffy smiled at him and then she leaned forwards and kissed him again. He stayed still at first but Buffy persisted. She shifted even closer to him and snaking a hand behind his head she pressed him against her. Touching his lips with her tongue she invited him to open to her. When again he hesitated she spoke softly. "Giles, kiss me. I want you to kiss me."

With a groan Giles' lips opened and he met her tongue with his own. Buffy let out a cry and kissed him with all the love in her heart. Their arms were wrapped tightly around each other and Buffy thought her heart might burst in her chest. She started to laugh.

Giles pulled back looking down at her in some confusion. "Why are you laughing?"

"I'm happy. I'm happy again. You make me happy." It felt like such a foreign emotion to her, like a bubbling well in a desert.

Giles looked at her face, and saw the Buffy he used to know. Before her resurrection, before her death, before Glory. The Buffy who used to be happy, and filled with life. "Oh, Buffy." He touched her face, his eyes filled with wonder.

"Are you back? Are you staying?"

"I still need to say the spell."

"Say it. Do you know it?"

He shook his head. "I need one of my books." He started to rise.

Buffy yelled out. "Ethan, get in here."

Ethan was in the door so fast she wondered if he'd been standing outside. Ethan knew, he knew as soon as he saw her face, the happiness on it. He looked at his friend. "Rupert?"

Giles smiled a small smile and nodded. "I need my spell book, well, your spell book."

Ethan almost tripped over his own feet he turned so quickly. Grabbing the book he brought it back in and handed it to Giles. While Giles flipped through the book Ethan grinned at Buffy and he fought off the urge to hug her. She grinned back. They both looked up as Giles started an incantation. When he was done Giles shut the book and Ethan took it from him. He gave him a second to let his disorientation pass. Then he spoke. "Are you back now?"

Giles nodded. "Yes, I'm back."

Ethan laid the book down on the bed and then hauled back and punched him. "If you ever do anything like that again I will bloody well kill you." Buffy's eyes were wide as she stared down at Giles, now sprawled on the floor. Ethan extended a hand and helped him up pulling him into a hug. Ethan held him so tightly Giles grunted. "You scared the shit out of me. I thought I'd lost you."

Buffy felt like she loved Ethan right then. Giles hugged him back. "I'm sorry, Ethan, I'm sorry."

"You better be sorry." Ethan stepped back and put up an admonishing finger

in Giles' direction. "We are nowhere near done with this conversation."

Giles put his hand on one side of his face as he shifted his jaw from side to side. "Are we done with the hitting part of it?"

Ethan let out a half laugh and shook his head. "Yes, we're done with the hitting part of it."

Buffy interjected. "Speak for yourself."

Ethan laughed again. He turned to Buffy. "Don't get used to it because I'm sure it will fade but I actually kind of like you right now."

"Color me overwhelmed." Despite her sarcastic words she smiled at Ethan and he smiled back.

Picking his book back up he brandished it at Giles. "I'm taking my book back and I'll thank you to leave my magic books alone." Taking another long satisfied look at Giles he spoke one last time. "I'm going home. I'll call later." With one last look at Giles and a wink at Buffy he sauntered out.

End of Part 5

Conjuring 6

Giles looked at Buffy who was still on the bed, giggling. "What's so funny?"

"Ethan scolding you about getting into his magic books. It brings back memories. Willow would have paid money to see that."

"Ha bloody ha." He made a face at her and then grimaced holding a hand up to his jaw again. "Ow."

Buffy came up off the bed. "Come on, let's put some ice on that." She dragged him out to the kitchen. She opened the freezer and pulled out some ice cubes. Finding a plastic bag she placed the ice cubes within and then very gently put the bag against his jaw. "He's stronger than he looks." She touched her own jaw. "Trust me, I know."

Giles' eyes narrowed. "Did he hit you?"

"Only because I told him to. But I don't think he hated it."

"Why did you tell him to hit you?"

"To see if it would get your attention."

Giles' lips tightened. "Buffy, I'm sorry. I didn't mean for you to get hurt."

Buffy glared at Giles. "You didn't mean for me to get hurt? Because Ethan punched me? But it never crossed your mind that letting a demon take over your body might upset me a little?" Giles didn't respond and just looked at the floor, interested suddenly in the tile pattern there. Buffy's eyes filled with tears. "You didn't think I'd care, did you?"

Giles glanced at her quickly and then away but not before she saw the uncertainty and vulnerability there. "You didn't seem to want anything to do with me. You wouldn't talk to me. I knew you were with..." Giles turned his head away.

Buffy looked horrified. "You knew? Oh God. That is so over. It was over before I knew anything had even happened to you." Giles just nodded briefly but he again didn't respond or look at her. Buffy sighed. "Giles. The only reason I didn't talk to you was because I wanted you to know I was mad at you."

Giles let out a sad laugh. "Well, it worked."

Buffy felt a lump in her throat as she heard the sadness in his voice. She needed to do something to make things better. Moving over to him she touched the other side of his jaw. "How's it feel?"

"It's a little sore but I'll live." He smiled a little at his choice of words.

Buffy stood on her tiptoes and brushed her lips against his. "Does it feel good enough for me to do this?" Giles looked at her. Again she rose. "Or how about this?" She kissed him a little more firmly this time. "Or this?" She bit the side of his neck, then soothed it with her lips and her tongue, and then moved up to nibble on his ear.

Giles let out a groan. "Buffy."

She looked up at him and laid a hand on his face. "Giles, what happened in the bedroom, those things I said? They were the truth. I didn't just say them to get you to come back. I said them because I meant them. I love you." She nodded her head at him, her eyes pleading with him to believe her. "You, Rupert Giles, Watcher, older than me guy, book guy, tea guy, I love you. And you're stuck with me. And you're never leaving me again, ever." Pulling his

head down this time she again pressed her lips against his.

Giles threw his bag of ice in the sink and with another groan he wrapped his arms around Buffy and pulled her up tightly against him. He repositioned his head so he could better access her lips. He kissed her with months of pent up passion and Buffy felt her body grow weak with desire. She lifted one of her legs and curled it around him to try and move even closer. Giles cupped her bottom, lifting her and she wrapped her legs around him. Holding her tightly he moved them back into the bedroom. Resting one knee on the end of the bed he slowly laid her down. He stood there watching her, lying on his bed.

She waited for him to join her but he didn't. She cocked her head to the side. "What is it?" She patted the bed. "Come here."

Giles let out a small laugh. "I'm feeling a bit disoriented. You don't know how often I've fantasized about having you here in my bed. And now that you're here I think I'm afraid that I'm still just imagining it." He sat beside her on the bed. "How long have I been gone?"

"Two days, I think, maybe three." The difference in time zones was muddling her.

Giles' eyebrows rose. "Two days? That's all?"

"How long did it feel like to you?"

"A long time, centuries. I don't know."

"Were you aware at all? Could you tell what was going on around you?"

Giles shook his head. "No but then I didn't want to." His lips tightened. "I just wanted to be gone." His eyes took on a distant look.

Buffy got a little nervous. "But you don't feel that way now, right? I mean, your conjuring days are through, right?"

Giles let out a long breath and then he unexpectedly grinned at Buffy. "It's like I conjured you, right to my bed. I said an incantation to lose myself and then I find you in my arms." His grin faltered. "Am I really out? Am I imagining this?"

Buffy prodded him in the jaw, not too hard. "Feel that?" He grimaced. Then she placed her hand over his crotch and caressed his penis. "Feel that?"

Giles thrust against her. "Yes, I feel that." He covered her hand with his own and helped her to stroke him, both of them feeling him grow hard.

Still stroking him she spoke softly to him. "So, you fantasized about me?"

Giles let out a moan and closed his eyes, nodding his head. "Yes."

"What did you fantasize about? What were we doing?" Buffy grabbed one of Giles' hands and placed it between her own legs.

Giles shifted his body so he could fully cup her. He leaned down and bit one of her breasts, teasing the nipple through the thickness of her clothing. He grinned. "Nice shirt."

Buffy grinned back and then put her hand over his to make him press harder. Instead he rolled so he was lying on top of her, and he thrust against her. Buffy groaned. "We have way too many clothes on."

Giles ran his hand over her breast. "I like you in my shirt." He rolled off of her. "Do something for me?"

She looked at him, her brow furrowed. "What?"

"Go in the bathroom and take everything off but leave on this shirt."

She grinned slowly at him. "Something you fantasized about?" He nodded. She looked down at herself. "This shirt?"

"That shirt's fine."

"No, tell me. Was it this shirt you saw me in?"

Rising he went to the closet and after searching for a minute he pulled out a soft gray shirt. "This one."

"I gave you this shirt."

He smiled. "I know."

She grinned again and rose. "I'll be right back." Then she frowned at him. "And I want you out of those clothes, mister."

He looked down at himself. "All of them?"

"All of them. No I take that back. Just take off your shirt. I think I want to get you out of those jeans."

"Then hurry, because they're feeling way too tight right now."

Buffy giggled in delight and took the few steps to the bathroom. "I'll be right back." She shut the door behind her.

Giles stripped off his shirt and lay back on the bed. Another feeling of disorientation swept through him and he panicked for a moment. With almost a sense of desperation he got up and walked to the bathroom, straining to hear her within, almost expecting that he would hear nothing, that she wouldn't be there. When he heard her movements in the bathroom he let out an enormous sigh of relief and with his arms braced against the doorjamb he waited anxiously for Buffy to open the door.

In a minute she did. "Here I come, ready..." She stopped, surprised to see him standing right here.

Seeing her standing there in his shirt, seeing his fantasy of her come alive Giles felt his body flame with passion. He pulled her roughly into his arms and lowered his face to claim her lips. His mouth slanted over hers as he begged her to open her mouth under the onslaught of his tongue. Buffy felt as if he was consuming her and she opened herself up to him, responding to his need. His hands swept under his shirt and he touched her, finding her wet and ready for him.

As he entered her with his finger Buffy let out a cry and parted her legs, allowing him easier access to her. He inserted a second finger and her head fell back against the doorjamb at the sensation. He got down on one knee and as he continued to slowly move his fingers in and out he found one of her nipples with his mouth and began to suckle, the shirt growing dark with the moisture from his mouth.

Buffy had both her hands on his head, trying to remain standing. His head began to move lower and pushing the tails of his shirt aside he tongued her soft curls, teasing her clit with little flicks of his tongue. Buffy let out short cries every time he teased her. Trusting that Buffy could keep her balance Giles removed his hand from her hip and used his fingers to open her more fully so he could taste her.

Buffy parted her legs further, awash in the sensations he was causing in her. And then, as he sucked on her clit again she exploded into an orgasm. Feeling Buffy's vagina pulse around his fingers made him want her even more. He slowly pulled his fingers out and he stood. Taking her hands he put them on the waistband of his jeans. "Take them off. Take them off now."

Buffy had to shake herself out of her daze but when she realized what Giles

was asking her to do she started to work on his jeans. When the button seemed to be denying her access she just ripped it open and pulled down his zipper. She wanted to feel him, get him inside of her and with an almost frenzied haste she backed him up and pushed him down on the bed so she could pull his jeans off.

She crawled up his body and she took him in her mouth. Giles let out a groan and his hands fisted in her hair as she tasted him and used her tongue to drive him crazy. Finally when he could stand it no longer he flipped her over and parting her legs with his he positioned himself and drove himself into her. Buffy let out a cry of satisfaction as she felt his hard length enter her, pierce her. She sobbed his name out and found his lips.

Giles was lost in her. Thrusting his tongue in her mouth he thrust his cock into her body. Pulling back he grinned at her, a fierce look of joy on his face. He slowed his pace down and found her hands. Pulling them to her front he spoke, his voice harsh. "Rip it open. Let me see you."

She let out a moan as he slowly pulled out of her and then entered her just as slowly. "This shirt? You want me to rip it off of me?" Giles nodded. Buffy ran her hand over the shirt, touching her breasts, teasing her own nipples. "You want to see me?"

Giles rammed into her and smiled as Buffy groaned. "Now, do it now."

Buffy fingered the edges of the shirt and taking hold she ripped the shirt apart, buttons flying. She lay there under his gaze, loving the hungry look in his eyes. Giles caressed her breasts, suckling first on one and then the other. As Buffy's fevered panting grew more frantic and her cries increased Giles began to thrust hard again, his pace growing as she began to climax. Thrusting a few times more he found his own release and they clung to each other as they rode out the storm.

In time their heartbeats and their breathing began to calm down. Giles would have moved off of Buffy but she protested so he remained, content to feel her underneath him, knowing her strength could withstand it. She ran her hands up and down his back, making little happy sighs. Giles finally pulled his head back and looked at her. She grinned. "Was that as good as your fantasies?"

Giles let out a half laugh and touched her face. "Buffy, in my fantasies, you weren't here. So I'd say that it would be impossible to compare. But allow me to reassure you that you are better than any fantasy could ever be."

She looked down at herself. "I kind of liked the shirt thing."

Giles grinned. "So did I."

She allowed a mock sad look to form on her face. "I'm afraid the shirt is toast, though."

"I don't mind. I can buy another one."

"You may have to buy a few."

Giles leaned down and kissed her. "I'll buy a dozen of them." He touched her face, reverently. "I love you so much."

Buffy's eyes grew bright. "Say it again."

"I love you."

Buffy let out a happy sigh. "I love you too." Her eyes lit on the bedside table and she frowned. "But I have a bone to pick with you mister."

Giles' eyes opened wide. "What are you talking about?" Buffy rolled them until she was on that side of the bed. She opened the drawer, pulling out the envelope. Giles stilled when he saw what she had. "When did you find those?"

"Last night." She opened it up and pulled out the pictures. Finding the one she was looking for she held it up. "My yearbook picture? Could I look more horrible? You so cannot keep this." She flipped through the pictures again. "And this one, look at my hair. Look." Giles started to grin. She didn't even notice. "The first thing we're doing when we get back is getting some real pictures done. Pictures of you and me." She glanced up to find him grinning at her, this delighted look on his face. "What?"

"It just suddenly hit me that you're really here. In England, with me."

"Because I'm looking at these pictures?"

He nodded. "Never in any fantasy of mine did you pull those pictures out and start complaining about how you look in them." He started to laugh. "Only you, the real you, would do that."

Buffy grinned at him as he lay on his back and laughed. She had made him laugh. The satisfaction of that raced through her. Buffy decided then and there that she'd make him do that as often as she could. It looked good on him. She put the pictures back in the envelope and rolling to her side she replaced them in his drawer and then she snuggled into his side. She ran his

fingers through the hair on his chest. "So, you are coming back to Sunnydale with me, right?" When he didn't answer right away she leaned up on her elbow and glared at him. "I wasn't really asking you, you know."

He smiled softly at her. "I know."

"You need someone to take care of you." She kissed him. "That would be me."

Giles touched her cheek. "The last time I checked you weren't taking particularly good care of yourself."

"I know. But you did. So, I'll take care of you and you'll take care of me, and together we'll do all right." She asked him again. "So, you'll be coming back with me, right?" She nodded her head, encouraging his answer in the positive.

He grinned. "Right." She let out a satisfied sigh and lay back down. Pulling the blanket over them Giles wrapped his arm around her and nestled together they gently fell asleep.

##

Ethan drove Giles and Buffy to the airport. It hadn't taken Giles long to get things ready as he hadn't done much to settle in. They now stood near the security gates and it was time to say goodbye. Buffy, after a moment's hesitation, made herself scarce.

Giles smiled at Ethan. "I don't really know what to say."

Ethan shook his head. "I don't know why I put up with you." They both shared a smile knowing that for the most part it was Giles who put up with Ethan.

Giles continued the charade. "I'm glad you do." He put his hand on Ethan's shoulder. "Thank you."

"It was Buffy who brought you out."

"She wouldn't have if you hadn't asked her to help and I know that wasn't easy for you to do."

Ethan let out a small laugh. "It was worth it."

"Will you come and visit me, Ethan? Will you come as a friend? I'd like to be glad to see you instead of feeling like I need to duck."

Ethan grinned. "You may be sorry you said that."

"Why?"

"I may feel the need to visit quite often."

"You don't know how pleased I'd be if you did." He glared. "If you come as a friend."

"I always came as a friend."

"You know what I mean. No tricks, no danger. Just friends. Old friends."

Ethan gave Giles a crooked grin. "Old friends. I'll see what I can do. Besides we promised Zurvan we'd visit now and then."

Giles grinned. "Yes we did. I'm thankful he found the whole thing so fascinating and doesn't hold any sort of grudge." Buffy had been a nervous wreck but he and Ethan had conjured Zurvan again to thank him and make sure that he was all right. They had used Ethan as a vessel. Neither Ethan nor Buffy could stand the thought of seeing Zurvan staring out of Giles' eyes again.

Ethan and Giles stood there grinning at each other. Then they heard a click. They looked up to see Buffy holding a small disposable camera. She gestured to them. "Stand side by side."

Ethan and Giles both rolled their eyes but they complied. Buffy took another picture. Then she handed the camera to Ethan. "Now take one of us." Ethan took a couple of them and then handed the camera back to Buffy. She looked up at Giles. "I'm starting us a scrapbook. And this is where it starts." She looked at Ethan. "I'll send you a copy."

Ethan finally gave in to his urge and gave Buffy a hug. "Thank you, thank you for coming."

She hugged him back fiercely. "Thank you for calling. Thank you for letting me try." She pulled back out of the hug and looked at him. "I can't believe I'm saying this but will you come and visit? If you promise not to do anything that will make me have to kill you?"

Ethan barked out a laugh. "Yes, yes I think I will come and visit."

Buffy moved over to Giles and put her arm around him. "Good, you can stay

with us."

Giles' eyebrows rose but he didn't say anything, choosing instead just to put his arm around her. He noted the time on a clock on the wall. "We better go."

Ethan nodded. "Let me know when you want it and I'll send on the rest of your stuff."

Giles smiled at him. Moving away from Buffy he gave Ethan a quick hug. "Visit soon."

Ethan smiled at them both, his eyes suspiciously bright and then he spun around and headed off.

Buffy looked up at Giles. "You okay?"

Giles nodded and wrapped his arms around her. "Yes. I am very okay."

She grinned. "Good. Let's go." Picking up their bags they started making their way through the security check.

Buffy asked another question, her voice as innocent as she could make it. "So, have you talked to Anya lately?"

Giles let out a gasp. "Good Lord. I sent her papers to sign giving the shop entirely over to her." He slapped himself on the forehead, appalled that he had forgotten.

Buffy started to laugh. "Don't worry. Xander called while you were out with Ethan a couple nights ago. Fortunately he was the one who opened it and once he saw what it was he called. I told him to burn it. You still own half the shop."

Giles glared at Buffy for teasing him and then he grinned. "Taking care of me?"

Buffy nodded. "Yup."

He laughed. "Good job." He kissed her softly. "I love you."

She sighed. "I love you too."

##

Hours later on the plane Giles had fallen asleep. Buffy was almost asleep

herself. Snuggled in his arms she noticed a flight attendant walking by checking on everyone. Buffy stopped her. The attendant looked at her. "May I help you?"

Buffy nodded and trying not to disturb Giles she rooted around in the pocket in front of her. She pulled out her camera and spoke softly. "Will you take a picture of us?"

The woman smiled and took the camera. Buffy closed her eyes and lost herself in the luxury of being in Giles' arms. She fell asleep right away. The attendant took a picture of the two of them and then gently she replaced the camera in the pocket. Taking another look at the sleeping couple she smiled and then headed on down the aisle.

The End

January 24, 2002