

## Eye of the Storm 1

It had happened so easily that Giles still didn't trust it. But he had been so in love with her that he'd been powerless to be the voice of reason.

Shortly after Joyce had died Buffy had asked Giles to move in. She had felt so lost and overwhelmed and he was there almost every night as it was. Dawn had seconded the request and Giles had allowed himself to be persuaded. Buffy needed financial assistance and part of his salary had always been to help support his Slayer, so moving in and picking up the bills seemed the easiest and certainly the most economical of ways to achieve that. It also allowed him the reassurance of her safety every night, being there when she got in. And if it also allowed him to simply be near her, he kept that to himself, just as he had for a long time.

He put most of his belongings in storage and moved into Joyce's bedroom with essentially his clothes, his books and a few of his favorite knick-knacks. Living with Buffy accounted for almost everything that was truly important to him so the rest of it didn't matter. Buffy and Dawn both seemed relieved to have him there. He and Dawn found their stride with one another fairly easily. Having a real adult in the house had calmed a part of Dawn that she hadn't even realized was so out of whack. Her life felt back in control, as in control as her life could be.

They lived this way for several months. And the longer Buffy and Giles lived together the more the lines blurred. In addition to talking about the latest demon and if Buffy was still lifting her shoulder when she threw a left punch, they now discussed who was picking up the milk on the way home, if they should repaint the living room, and who was best suited to help Dawn with her latest homework assignment. Giles was also able to help Buffy with an occasional class assignment, care for her wounds every night, wake her up from her nightmares, and help her work through her ongoing frustration with her life. He'd also been there to pick up the pieces after Glory. The fight with Glory had been fierce. Dawn had almost been sacrificed, and Buffy had been seriously injured. Buffy's physical hurts had healed but she was having persistent nightmares.

This particular night, the three of them were watching a video, an old Fred Astaire musical, Giles on a chair and Buffy and Dawn curled up on the couch. As the credits started to roll Giles looked over and saw that Buffy was asleep. Her sleep had been scanty at best lately because of the nightmares and Giles was grateful for any peaceful moments Buffy found to close her eyes and rest.

Giles caught Dawn's attention and put his fingers to his lips. Dawn nodded and carefully rose from the couch so as not to awaken her sister. Dawn had heard the cries, and seen the dark shadows under Buffy's eyes as well. She walked over to Giles and whispered. "Should we leave her down here?"

Giles considered for a moment and then he nodded. "I hate to move her, I'm afraid she'll wake up. I'll get her settled in down here." He looked at his watch and started. "Good heavens, it's late, go on up to bed." He gave Dawn a kiss on the forehead.

She nodded and headed upstairs after giving Giles a smile and casting one last glance at Buffy. Giles reached for the blanket that was draped over the back of the couch and gently covered Buffy with it. Then he went back to his chair and just sat there, watching her, committing her to memory again as he had a thousand times already. He loved her so much it frightened him sometimes, a part of him always fighting the fear of losing her. Losing her to her slaying, to time, to another man.

Giles smiled at the irony in that thought. He felt as if he was married to Buffy, that is if the fact that their relationship was still platonic was overlooked. Which was not the way he wanted it but he had no intention of forcing his attentions on her. He was not without hope. Sometimes he thought he caught her looking at him, or felt her hesitate as they headed up the stairs for bed, as if a part of her felt that she belonged at his side at the end of the day. But she had yet to make that move, and Giles was prepared to wait. He was also prepared for her to never make that decision. Living this way was almost enough. Assuming she didn't start dating. Giles didn't think that he could endure watching her with someone else.

Buffy stirred and Giles tried to will her back to sleep. Suddenly she let out a cry and Giles moved to sit next to her, near her head. He gently stroked her hair. "Sshh. It's all right." Buffy settled back down. Giles stayed where he was, now that he was touching her hair he didn't want to stop. He softly stroked her, marveling at the silkiness of her curls, laughing at himself, at how infatuated he was, as if he were a schoolboy.

Buffy let out another cry and jerked herself awake. Giles was stroking her hair and speaking softly to her. She felt his calm, and she found herself overwhelmed with a need for it. Buffy sat up and threw her arms around Giles.

Giles let out a yelp. "My God, Buffy, you startled me. I thought you were asleep." He pulled his hand away from her hair.

Buffy leaned against his chest and let out a small moan. "Don't stop. It felt so

good."

Giles smiled down at her and lifted his hand again to continue stroking her, glad that she was enjoying it, relieved that she hadn't minded. "I was hoping you'd sleep a little longer."

Buffy let out a long sigh. "This is good. Waking up from a nightmare to this is...I can live with this."

Giles chuckled silently and Buffy felt his chest vibrate. "I'm glad." He shifted back against the couch and Buffy snuggled in even closer. "Why don't you try and go back to sleep."

He felt Buffy's nod against his chest and listened to her sigh again. He waited for her to move away but she seemed quite content to rest there in his arms and Giles was elated to have her there. As long as Giles was able to stay awake he continued to stroke her hair, but eventually sleep claimed him and they both slept the night away.

Buffy woke up first. She felt a little stiff and realized she was not in her bed. Slowly she remembered the events of last night and it slowly sank in that she was currently sleeping in Giles' arms. Then came the thought that she had slept the entire night without a single nightmare, for the first time in a long time. Buffy recognized that she felt safe and warm and protected and that she didn't want to move. So she didn't.

In time, Giles woke up as well. He had no idea how to extricate himself from Buffy's arms without waking her but after a glance at his watch he knew he had to try or he'd be late to work. His shifting woke Buffy up for the second time and when she felt him leaving she let out a protest. "No, don't get up."

Giles smiled but he continued moving. "It's late. I have to go and open up."

Buffy reluctantly let him go. She stretched and smiled up at him. "You must have some anti-nightmare karma or something."

"No dreams last night?"

She shook her head. "No dreams."

Giles smiled at her. "Good, you needed the sleep." He gestured up the stairs. "I'm going to go take a shower and get ready." At her nod he headed up the stairs. Buffy's gaze followed him until he got upstairs and rounded the corner.

That night Giles was waiting for her, as he always was, when she got home

from patrol. He put down his book and she filled him in on the evening's activity. They spoke for a few minutes more and then Giles rose. "Well, I'm tired. I think I'll head up to bed."

Buffy rose too. "Me too."

They headed up the stairs together. As Giles turned towards his bedroom, Buffy followed him. He looked down at her in surprise. "Did you need something, Buffy?"

She smiled up at him. "I think I'll sleep with you tonight. I want another dream free night." Suddenly she squinched her face up. "Sorry, I guess I should have asked. Do you mind?"

Giles couldn't stop the short laugh that escaped him. "No, I don't mind."

Buffy smiled and then she looked down at herself. "Oops, let me get in my pajamas. I'll be right in."

Giles nodded and headed into the bedroom. He picked up his own pajamas and entered the bathroom to change. His heart was slamming in his chest and he needed to get himself under control. Giles looked at himself in the mirror. "She said sleep, so behave." He let out a sigh and slipped out of his clothes and into his pajamas.

When he opened the door she was already in his bed. Giles blew out a breath and walked over. She grinned up at him and flipped down the covers. "Which side do you like to sleep on?"

He pointed to where she was laying. "This side."

Buffy scooted over. "Then I claim this side." Giles gave her a shy grin and he got into bed. An awkward silence reigned. Buffy spoke again. "What do you usually do now?"

Giles looked at her with startled eyes. "I beg your pardon?"

"You know, do you read, or watch TV, or do crossword puzzles? What do you do once you're in bed?"

"Ah, well, I...I usually read."

"Well, don't let me stop you." Buffy lay down and curling up on her side she closed her eyes.

"All right." Giles opened the drawer of his bedside table and drew out a book. He settled back with two pillows behind him and he started reading. He had a hard time concentrating knowing that Buffy was lying next to him. After a while he gave it up and shut off the light. Sure that he would lie awake all night he was surprised when he woke and saw the sun peeking in the window. Looking at the sleeping figure beside him, he smiled. Getting quietly out of bed Giles took his clothes in the bathroom, showered, dressed and left without waking her up.

They spent the next two weeks like that. Every night after Buffy got home they'd chat for a while and then they'd head up to bed. Buffy would crawl in on her side and he on his and they'd go to sleep. Giles often found himself waking with Buffy in his arms, or her arms around him, the two of them having gravitated towards one another while sleeping. His longing for her kept growing, especially now that she was so physically close to him every night and yet still beyond his reach.

She came home from patrol and it had been particularly busy, she had staked several vampires and had to deal with a few demons as well. Spike had shown up and had assisted her. Buffy seemed to have an overflow of adrenalin and she paced the living room as she shared her exploits. She would look up every now and then and find Giles watching her, his eyes dark, as she crossed the room over and over. Buffy found her body warming under that gaze.

After she was done with her report Giles filled her in on Dawn's latest crisis and they'd chuckled softly over it. Finally he rose to head for bed, softly smiling at her. "You don't seem at all tired, but I'm afraid I am. I think I'll go to bed. Just come up when you're sleepy."

Buffy shook her head. "Nah, I'll come up now."

Giles smiled at her. "All right." Once they got in their pajamas Giles picked up his book and began to read. He had found it easier to read with her beside him as the days had passed and he expected nothing different tonight. Giles kept feeling her gaze on him and he looked at her several times and she'd just smile at him. Disconcerted but determined to finish his chapter he went back to his book. After he'd read the same paragraph for the twentieth time he looked over at Buffy. She was staring at him again. His eyes widened. "What?"

"Do you want to make love to me?"

Giles' heart slammed in his chest. He thought about lying but then he didn't see the point. "Yes, yes I do."

"Then would you please?" Giles just looked at her, disbelief in his eyes, not moving a muscle. Buffy moved first, inching over until she was right next to him. "Kiss me?"

That Giles could do, and he hoped the rest of it would naturally follow. He reached out a hand and cupped her cheek, his thumb brushing over her bottom lip. Lowering his head he caught her lips in his and let out an involuntary groan at the contact he had fantasized about for so long.

Buffy wrapped her arms around his neck and gave herself up to his care, feeling that for once, she was in the right bed, with the right man.

##

And just that easily this part of their relationship changed as well. She slept in his bed from then on, and every night they made love. Dawn was thrilled, although she teased Giles mercilessly. He was much more fun to tease than Buffy, who just grinned and shrugged at her comments.

Buffy was publicly affectionate with Giles and that surprised him. Somehow he'd have thought she would want to keep their relationship a secret, but she didn't. She kissed him at the store, and held his hand as they went shopping. Some nights Giles would lie awake with Buffy sleeping in his arms, and wonder what had happened. Wonder how something he had wanted so much had actually come true. And he wondered when he would lose it all.

Giles had no idea how Buffy really felt. It was quite apparent that she enjoyed being touched by him and she clearly was choosing to be with him, but she never spoke about her feelings. So, Giles didn't either. He didn't want to scare her away by his professions of love. Whatever this was to Buffy she seemed comfortable with it and that was enough for him. He got to hold her at night, and touch her and taste her, and he had the right to claim her as his, at least for the time being.

##

Buffy watched Giles as he cleaned up after dinner. He was chatting with Dawn about her day and smiling at her theatrics, as she wailed about the perfidy of one of her friends. Suddenly Buffy realized that she loved him. Two emotions slammed through her at the same time. The first was the love she felt. How amazingly right she felt with him.

The second emotion was sheer terror. She looked at him again and at Dawn and she saw the part she was playing. It was as if she was suddenly a middle



aged woman, married to a middle aged man, and with a teenage daughter, but somehow she had missed the intervening years, the years of discovering herself, the fun and careless years. And it pressed in on her, leaving her with the fear that she was too young for this, too young for him, too young to be a part of something that felt so permanent.

Buffy stood so suddenly her chair fell. As Giles and Dawn stopped their conversation in surprise Buffy stammered out a sentence that also provided her with an excuse to leave. "I've gotta go patrol." With that she practically ran from the kitchen. Dawn watched her go, puzzled, but then she shrugged and picked up the thread of her conversation. Giles turned his attention back to Dawn as well as he finished putting the leftovers away.

Buffy got home very late from patrolling. Giles, as usual, was sitting up waiting for her. For some reason it annoyed her tonight. She yawned and told him that not much had gone on and then she just headed upstairs. He came upstairs a few minutes later and found her already in bed, seemingly asleep. Giles quietly got into bed and he just watched her for a minute, knowing that something was wrong, but not wanting to disturb her if she really was asleep.

Buffy didn't know what was wrong with her. Her life suddenly felt like a prison, with a lifetime sentence. And yet the only person she could think of to talk to, the only one she believed could give her good advice about this situation was the one person she couldn't turn to. As she lay beside him, a part of her hoped that Giles would reach out for her and another part of her wished he would just go away. She stayed on her side, facing away from him, working on keeping her breathing slow and even. Finally he shut off the light and for the first time they lay in the bed facing away from each other, distance between them, instead of falling asleep in each other's arms.

##

The next night there was a science fair at Dawn's school. Buffy was supposed to meet Giles and Dawn at the school after she got out of class. Giles looked at his watch for the tenth time in the last thirty minutes. The evening was almost over and Buffy had yet to make her appearance. He had called home several times hoping she had just forgotten, and was trying not to worry. When you lived on a Hellmouth and when the woman you loved was the Slayer, absences were never taken lightly.

##

Buffy had forgotten, because she was still freaking out. She walked around campus for a couple of hours, trying to work her way through her fears and her doubts. Trying to let her love for Giles eradicate her rampant desire to just run away, run as far as she could, away from him, away from Sunnydale.

Finally she headed for home. She unlocked the door and was confused at the silence that greeted her. Then she remembered. "Shit." Buffy glanced at the clock on the wall and realized that even if she left now that she'd never make it in time. The doorbell rang and she opened it, her eyes opening wide when she saw who was standing there. "Riley?"

He smiled at her. "I'm back." He walked across the threshold and swept her into a hug.

##

Giles whipped through the streets, anxious to get home and make sure Buffy was all right. Dawn had taken Buffy's absence in stride. When it came to school stuff she preferred having Giles around anyway because he was always interested. The entire drive home she babbled about the praise her project had received. Giles smiled at her. "I'm very proud of you, Dawn. You did an excellent job."

Dawn grinned and started in again. When they reached the house Giles frowned when he saw an unfamiliar car in front of the house. He looked at Dawn. "Whose car is that?"

Dawn shook her head. "I don't know."

Giles pulled into the driveway.

##

Buffy was too startled to protest when Riley drew her into his arms. When the hug grew protracted Buffy did finally pull away. She stared up at him. "When did you get back?"

"Just now. I haven't even checked out my new place, I wanted to see you." He cupped Buffy's cheek. "I'm sorry I left the way I did. I've missed you so much."

Buffy smiled tightly at him. "You know I came that night, I ran as fast as I could but I missed you. I was right beneath the helicopter screaming at you but you didn't hear me."

Riley's eyes lit up. "You came for me? You were going to ask me to stay?"

Buffy nodded. She continued to stare at him, not believing he was back. Buffy saw the flash of desire in his eyes and she thought of Giles. And suddenly Riley seemed to be everything Giles wasn't. Young, unpredictable,



impetuous, and it all felt so attractive to her, a route to freedom. Which is why, when Riley swept her into his arms again and kissed her, she didn't stop him.

End Part 1

## Eye of the Storm 2

Giles and Dawn headed up the sidewalk. Suddenly Giles stopped. Dawn looked at him and grew concerned when she saw how pale he had gotten, how much pain there was on his face. "Giles, what is it?" Giles couldn't take his eyes off the window. Dawn followed his eyes and she saw them. Buffy and Riley, kissing. They both just stood there and watched as the kiss went on and on.

Finally Giles tore his eyes away. He closed his eyes and tried to breathe through the tightness in his chest. Giles looked down at Dawn. "Do you have your keys?" Dawn nodded. "Go on in, then. I'll wait and make sure you get in all right."

"Where are you going?"

"I just need to take a drive."

"No, I think you need to come in. We need to find out what's going on."

Giles smiled sadly. "I think it's pretty obvious what's going on. I knew it was just a matter of time. I've been a haven of sorts for her, but I didn't really expect it to last."

Dawn saw her home life falling apart before her eyes. "I don't want you to leave."

"I'll be back. I just need...I just need to be by myself for a little while." He gestured her up to the house. "Go on."

Dawn reluctantly walked the few remaining steps up to the house and put her key in the door. Giles watched, as Buffy and Riley broke apart in response to the noise. When Dawn got the door open he quickly turned and headed back to his car.

Buffy and Riley were several feet apart by the time Dawn got the door shut behind her. Buffy smiled. "I'm sorry Dawn, I completely forgot about tonight." She held a hand out indicating Riley's presence. "Look who's back." Her brow

furrowed and she looked at the door. "Where's Giles?"

Dawn glared at Buffy, as angry as she could remember being. "He saw you." Tears formed in her eyes. "How could you? How could you do that to him?"

Guilt raced through Buffy and then fear. "Where is he?"

"He left. He said he wanted to be alone."

Buffy ran to the door just in time to see Giles' car disappear around the corner. "Where did he go?"

Dawn hissed at her. "Why do you care?"

"Dawn, it's not what it looks like."

"No? You weren't just kissing Riley in the living room, with his tongue in your mouth?"

Riley looked at Buffy and Dawn. "I don't understand. Why would Giles care if Buffy and I kissed?"

Dawn glared at him too. "Because they're together. Or they were." She glared at her sister again, brushing a tear angrily off her face. "I hate you, you ruin everything." With that Dawn burst into tears and she raced upstairs.

Riley stared at Buffy. "You...you and Giles?" He let out a short incredulous laugh. "She's kidding, right?" Buffy covered her face with her hands and let out a groan. Riley put a hand on her shoulder. "The two of you? I don't understand."

Buffy dropped her hands and looked up at him. "Sit down, Riley." Riley followed her to the couch and they both sat down. "Yes, it's true. Me and Giles. He moved in here after my mom died..."

He interrupted. "I'm sorry about that. I'm sorry I wasn't here to help."

Buffy shrugged. "Giles was. He helped. He helped a lot."

"So you slept with him?"

She shook her head, frustrated. "No, it wasn't like that. It just happened. We were living here and it felt like we belonged together, the three of us, like a family. It just happened."

"So it can unhappen?" He touched her arm. "Buffy, I want to be with you. I want us to be together again."

Buffy inched away from him. "I have to talk to Giles." Buffy looked out the window, wishing he was back, horrified at what she had done to him, at what he had seen. No matter what, he didn't deserve that.

"Can I call you?"

Buffy nodded and then she shook her head. "No, let me call you. Do you have a number yet?"

Riley pulled out his wallet. "Yes, it's right here." He got up and found a piece of paper and wrote it down. "Call me tomorrow." He cupped her cheek again in his hand. "Buffy, I love you. I never stopped loving you." He moved in to kiss her again but she jerked her head back.

"I can't...I'm sorry. I can't. Not right now." She stood and walked to the door. "You better go."

Riley slowly got up. "Will you call me? I'm not willing to just give you up. If I don't hear from you I'll come back."

"I'll call, I promise."

Riley stared at her for a moment, as if he might be able to see the truth behind that promise but whatever he found didn't satisfy him. He headed for the front door. "Call me."

Buffy nodded and shut the door behind him. She slid down the door until she hit the floor and lowering her head to her knees she started to cry.

##

Giles drove for a long time. His thoughts were scattered and his heart was breaking. A part of him wanted to immediately go back and beat Riley to within an inch of his life. The other part of him didn't see the point. It wouldn't get Buffy back if she still loved Riley and wanted him again now that he had returned. All it would do is drive a deeper wedge between them, and regardless of what happened, he was still Buffy's Watcher.

Giles knew he couldn't compete with Riley, not really. Riley was young with a young man's body and stamina. He had his whole life before him. And Giles didn't want to have to compete. His life was too uncertain as it was. Living on the Hellmouth, dealing with evil, the last thing he wanted was a home life

where he needed to fight for someone's affection. Home was where things should be sure, calm, and peaceful, a refuge from the craziness of the rest of the world. All he had to give Buffy was his love, constancy, and tenderness, and if that couldn't keep her at his side then he had already lost her.

Despite his misery, his weariness eventually brought him home, as he grew afraid that he would fall asleep while driving. He parked in the driveway and slowly walked up to the door, hoping that Buffy had already gone to bed. He didn't have the strength to deal with her right now. He needed sunlight and some sleep to back him up.

His eyes closed for a second as he saw her sitting there, waiting for him. She spoke softly but her voice was thick, as if she'd been crying for a long time. "Giles?"

"Yes, it's me."

She raced to him and threw her arms around him. "I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. I don't even know what happened."

He pushed her gently away. "Buffy...I...I'm tired. Can we talk about this in the morning."

"Do you hate me?"

He shook his head. "I could never hate you, Buffy." He looked at the couch. "Why don't you go on up to bed. I'll just sleep here."

Buffy looked at him, misery on her face. "I want you to come to bed with me."

"Not tonight, Buffy. Please."

Buffy fought back her tears. "Then you take the bed, I'll sleep here or in my old room."

He didn't even argue. "All right." He smiled sadly at her. "I'll see you in the morning then." Turning his back on her he walked upstairs, his tread weary.

Buffy felt so young and unsure of herself. She didn't know what to do, how to make him feel better, how to turn back the clock and make what happened not have happened. Feeling helpless, she fell back on the couch and just started to cry again.

##

When Giles awoke after a relatively sleepless night he made Dawn her breakfast and got her ready for school. Dawn had no idea what to say so she didn't say a word, just throwing a worried look at Giles every now and then. Finally as she was about to leave she gave him a hug. "Are you all right?"

Giles tucked some of her hair behind her ear. "I'll be fine, Dawn."

"You'll be here when I get home?"

"I'll be at the shop. Why don't you come by there?"

"Did you guys talk last night?"

Giles shook his head. "It was too late. We'll talk this morning when she gets up."

"Then you'll tell me what's going on?"

Giles touched her cheek. "I'll tell you."

Dawn hugged him again. "I hate her for this."

Giles took her by the shoulders. "Don't, Dawn. Don't hate her. She's your family."

"I wish you were my family. I mean for real. Like my real dad."

Giles hugged Dawn this time. "I'm flattered. I'll always be around, Dawn. I'll always be here for you."

They both heard the steps on the stairway and Dawn shot an angry look up at Buffy. She spoke quietly to Giles. "I'll come by the store after school."

Giles nodded and shut the door behind Dawn. He braced himself and turned to look up at Buffy. "Good morning. Would you like some tea?" Buffy just nodded, her eyes huge and shadowed. She followed Giles into the kitchen. Giles decided to start the conversation. "So, when did Riley get back?"

"Just last night." Buffy watched as Giles slowly moved around the kitchen, his tea-making activities soothing even to observe. "He came here first." She blurted out the rest of it. "I didn't mean to kiss him, I don't know what happened. One minute we were standing there and then he kissed me and..."

Giles looked up at her. "And you kissed him back."

Buffy nodded, her eyes confused.

"Do you still love him?" Giles was pleased that even as his heart was being shredded his voice sounded so calm.

"I don't know." She ran her finger down the middle crack in the table. "I don't want to lose you."

"Buffy, you can't...lose me. I'm your Watcher."

"That's not what I mean."

Giles brought over the mugs and he sat at the table, taking a sip. Giles let out a long breath. "Buffy, I love you, and I don't want to lose you either. But I don't want you to stay with me if you don't know whether I'm what you want."

"It just feels like..." Buffy's eyes grew bright with tears.

"It feels like what?"

"Like it's too much. You and Dawn and the whole family thing. It suddenly made me feel...old or too young, or something. It scares me. One minute I was just a kid in college and then Dawn showed up, and then Glory came, and then my mom died and everything got so serious so fast."

Giles let out a soft, pained laugh. "I'm not exactly the charming, handsome, daring young man that you were expecting to end up with, am I?"

She gave him a lopsided smile. "Not exactly. Which is not a bad thing. I don't know what I would have done without you, and the past few weeks have been wonderful. My head is just all messed up with thinking."

Giles took another sip of his tea. "Perhaps we need some time apart, so you can be sure." As Buffy started to protest he stopped her. "Buffy, I don't want to be someone that you choose because you don't know what you would do without me. You deserve more than that. I deserve more than that. You're a young, beautiful woman who has the right to any man she wants. I want you to be happy; it's all I've ever wanted. Well, that and having you stay alive."

Buffy shook her head. "I don't want to be apart."

"I think it's best. I think you should spend some time with Riley, see if you still love him."

"Giles, it was just a mistake."



Giles put his hand on her hand. "Buffy, it wasn't a mistake. Or maybe it was but it wouldn't have happened if you were truly happy with me, with us. If it makes you feel any better I expected this to happen, sooner or later. I didn't really believe that you would..."

"That I would what?"

"That you would find me enough."

"You are enough, Giles. You're just what I need."

"I believe you mean that. I think I am just what you need. I just don't think that I'm what you want."

A few tears rolled down Buffy's cheeks and her lips trembled. "So what happens now?"

"I'll find another place to stay, at least for a few days. I know it's selfish of me but I don't really want to see you..." Giles cleared his throat and he stood, moving to straighten up the already clean kitchen.

Buffy stood and moved over to him. "Giles, I am so sorry. I don't want you to leave." She wrapped her arms around him. "Tell me what to do to make it better."

Giles held her for a minute, the knowledge that this might be the last time he got to hold her this way like a knife thrusting in his gut. Finally he moved away. "You need to work out what you want. But, I can't stay in this house and watch you. I love you too much. I can't have just a part of you, not anymore, now that I've had all of you. It would hurt too much. So, I'll leave."

"No, Giles. I don't..."

"Buffy, you don't know what you want. I understand. You can see me at the shop and we can still train together, and if you need to talk I'm always available."

"So, it's over, just like that? You just walk away and don't even fight to make things work?"

"I don't want have to fight to make someone love me and make them want me. I fight too many other battles in my life. I want a woman who knows that I'm the one for her, or I'd rather be by myself."

"I do want you, I do love you."

"Buffy, look me in the eyes and tell me that you know that your place is with me, in my bed, for the foreseeable future, and that you have no doubts about it. Tell me that you aren't wondering what it might be like to be with Riley again, to see if you can be young and carefree for a while. Can you do that?"

Buffy couldn't meet his eyes. She reached for one of his hands. "If I...if I find out that..." She let out a frustrated breath and tried again. "Will you wait for me?"

Giles just gently touched her cheek. "I'm going to pack a few things. Perhaps we can skip training today. I'll give my new number to Dawn. Maybe you could call me when you get home from patrol so I know you're all right. Would you do that?" Buffy nodded, her eyes still on the floor. He spoke one last time. "It'll be all right, Buffy. Just be happy, that's all I ask." With that he left the kitchen and she could hear his steps as he quickly headed up the stairs.

End Part 2

### Eye of the Storm 3

The weather had taken an unusual turn for southern California and it was actually raining. Xander had the afternoon off because of it and he was in the shop sitting next to Anya, watching Giles move around the store listlessly. He spoke softly to his girlfriend. "What's up with Giles?"

She shook her head. "I don't know. He's been gloomy ever since he got in. Every time I ask him about it he just says he's fine."

The bell rang and Dawn came in. She headed over to Giles and spoke to him. Whatever Giles said in response made her start to cry and he held her for a few minutes. Then she pulled back and started arguing. Both Xander and Anya moved a little closer. "Let me come with you."

"Dawn, you know that's not possible. You need to stay with your sister."

"I don't want to stay with her. I want to stay with you. You know how to take care of everything."

"I'll just be a phone call away." He reached into his pocket and pulled out a piece of paper. "Here's my number. You can see me here every day at the shop, and I'll still come to all your events, all you have to do is let me know

when they are."

Xander had to know what was going on. "What happened? Where are you going?"

Giles turned and saw Xander and Anya standing right behind him. He rolled his eyes in exasperation at their eavesdropping but he didn't respond. Dawn did. "It's Buffy. She kissed Riley last night and now Giles is moving out."

Giles glared at Dawn. "Dawn, that was private."

"They're gonna find out anyway. It's gonna be pretty obvious something's up if you have a new address." Dawn's eyes filled with tears again.

Xander's brow furrowed. "Riley? Riley's back in town?"

Giles let out a long breath. "Yes, he got back in town last night."

"And Buffy was kissing him? I thought you two..." Xander stopped as he saw the pain on Giles' face.

Dawn explained, her voice angry. "We came home last night and we saw them through the window. She is such a skank."

Giles' voice was sharp. "Dawn."

"Well, she is. She's with you. She's so stupid.

" Xander scrunched his face up. "I gotta go with Dawn on this one."

Anya nodded. "I could put you in touch with a vengeance demon who revenges scorned men if you want. He could make her really fat, or give her boils."

Giles let out a short laugh. "I appreciate the thought, Anya, but I don't believe that will be necessary." He looked at Xander. "She's a little confused. She needs to work things through, that's all."

Xander looked at him nervously. "So, why are you moving out?"

"She needs some space. I don't want to influence her." And he couldn't bear to see her wanting someone else. He couldn't bear to be in the same house with her at night and have to sleep apart. Giles knew he would die a little bit every time she turned from him, or looked at him with doubtful eyes. So, best just to stay away. Giles left them standing there and walked into the back.

Dawn looked at Xander and Anya. "I hate her."

Xander ran a hand through his hair. "Let me talk to her. I'll come over tonight. Maybe this is just a lover's spat or something. Maybe Giles is confused too." He looked towards the back. "I'm gonna go talk to him for a minute."

Xander walked into the back and found Giles standing by the window, staring out, his eyes unfocused. Giles looked over at him when he entered. "Did you need something?"

Xander scuffed the carpet with the toe of one of his boots. "I just thought you might want to talk, you know, like to a friend."

Giles smiled softly at Xander. "Thank you, Xander, but I'll be all right."

Xander shook his head. "No, I don't believe you. If this is for real and Buffy and you are splitting up, I don't think you'll be all right at all."

Giles moved away from the window and ran his hand down the punching bag. "It...it will be hard, but I'll get through it."

Xander pursed his lips. "You've had to get through a lot since you moved here, haven't you?"

Giles lifted his eyes to Xander, startled. "Excuse me?"

"You, your life. It hasn't been easy."

"No one's ever guaranteed an easy life. For that matter none of us has had it particularly easy."

"I suppose that's true enough." Xander moved into the room and leaned against the vault horse. "Who do you talk to?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well, when my life sucks I talk to Anya, or Buffy, or Willow, and I talk to you. But you never talk to us about bad things going on in your life, you never have. So who do you talk to? I mean, do you call home and talk to family, or do you pour your heart out to the bartender down the street? Who do you talk to?"

Xander had no idea how his questions were slamming into Giles. If he did, he would have stopped. Giles closed his eyes and tried to relax. "Xander..." He

opened his eyes and glanced quickly at Xander but he had no answer to any of the young man's questions. Shaking his head he just headed for the back door and left.

Xander almost recoiled at the look in Giles' eyes. There had been so much sadness and loneliness there. Xander was appalled that in the close to five years that he had known Giles that this was the first time he had ever wondered who Giles turned to when his life was bad. And now that he was thinking about it he was afraid that the answer was no one. That Giles would struggle with this on his own, just as he had every other time his world had fallen apart. Xander found himself fighting back tears and then he felt a surge of anger sweep through him at Buffy's actions. Determined to speak with her he headed back into the main part of the shop.

He stopped when he saw Buffy standing by the counter, Anya and Dawn sullenly glaring at her. Xander walked over to her. "What's going on? What's going on between you and Riley?"

"Giles told you?" She could hardly believe that.

Xander shook his head. "No, he never would have said anything. Dawn spilled the beans."

Dawn was furious. "He's moving out. He's moving out because of you."

Buffy sent her sister a pleading look. "Dawn, I asked him not to go. I told him to stay. I told him I was sorry."

Xander pursed his lips. "So, why's he leaving?"

Buffy let out a frustrated noise. "He wants me to be sure. He doesn't believe that I really love him."

"Do you? Has this whole thing with him been a lie?"

"No. None of it's been a lie. I do love him."

"But...?"

She shook her head in frustration. "I don't know. I...I saw Riley and I got confused."

"Do you still love Riley?"

Again she shook her head. "I don't know. You know what I was like when he left, how I tried to stop him. It's like it never really got to end for me."

Xander remembered the look of pain on Giles' face. "You never should have started this with Giles if you weren't sure. Not with him. It wasn't right."

"It just happened, Xander. I didn't plan any of it. Me being with Giles, Riley coming back. It just happened." The others glared at her, and she defended herself again. "I didn't want him to leave. He could have stayed; he could try to fight for me. He gave up so easily. If he loved me, he'd try, he'd try and make it work."

Xander scolded her gently with his eyes. "Buffy, he does love you. He loves you more than anything. He's given up his whole life for you."

"I know that. I already feel guilty enough without you making it worse. I know he's been nothing but wonderful to me." She took a deep breath and sent a look of entreaty towards Xander, begging him to understand. "But you said the same thing to me about Riley, that he gave up everything for me." She hesitated for a second and then started again. "Look, Giles wants me to be sure and he's right. I should be sure. He deserves for me to be sure. So, I'll go and find out what I'm sure about." She looked at Dawn. "I still need to patrol. I don't want to leave you on your own."

"I'm fine on my own. I'm fifteen."

Xander stepped in. "I'll come over tonight Buff. I can stay with her."

Dawn rolled her eyes. "I so don't need someone to stay with me."

Buffy touched Dawn's arm and tried not to care when Dawn flinched away. "Just humor me, okay. First night without Giles, it may help to have someone with you."

"First night without Giles because of you."

"I know that, Dawn, and I'm sorry. But I can't stay with Giles just because you want me to."

"Why not?"

"Because it wouldn't be fair to me and it certainly wouldn't be fair to Giles."

Dawn swung away, disgusted with her sister. Buffy followed her with her eyes and then she looked at Xander. "Will you take her home?"

"Where are you going?"



"I just need to think. Will you take her home?"

Xander nodded. "Make the right decision, Buffy. Don't jerk him around."

Buffy just looked at him sadly and left the store.

##

Giles went back to his hotel room. He needed to regroup before he went back to the shop. If he couldn't get it together, if he didn't stop falling apart every time someone spoke to him, he'd be less than useless. Although he didn't know if he could feel less useless than he did right now.

Giles rose and looked out the window. Xander's questions were still painfully tumbling around in his mind. All they had done is make him realize just how alone he was. He had no one to talk to. No friends, no family, no one. He knew he could have spoken to Xander, had in fact been tempted to, but Xander was Buffy's friend and Giles didn't want to put him in the middle. They were all Buffy's friends. And then, secondarily, they were his. The only person who was undeniably on his side was a fifteen year old.

Giles let out a painful exhalation. All his friends were dead or distant, either by geography or philosophy. His family as well, all dead except for a few cousins he'd lost track of years ago after moving to the States. The only people he ever socialized with were these young people. He shook his head, annoyed with how pitiful his life seemed to him now. How short his obituary would be, how small the impact of his life. He felt an overwhelming desire for Buffy, to be holding her, touching her, thrusting inside of her. He let out a low groan and rested his forehead on the window.

##

Buffy started spending time with Riley. She ignored her sister's barbed comments. She knew she had to figure out what she wanted. The first night the two of them went to the Bronze and Buffy had to admit she really enjoyed herself. It was wonderful to dance and be with a guy who would get out there with her and just cut loose. Giles had taken her dancing once but it had been to someplace elegant, where the dancing was more controlled. Not that she hadn't loved it, she had. It had made her feel so special. But it was great to just let go and be crazy.

It was also nice to be with a guy that didn't generate looks. Giles and she always got looks. Not bad looks, necessarily, but looks. They were the cliché? It was ironic, given her own father's activities and her disapproval of them. Here she had been walking around doing the same thing but from the other

side. The trophy girlfriend. Proof of her man's midlife crisis. Buffy knew that the cliché wasn't true for them, the connection between them made them different. However, no one else knew that and so they got looks. But, no one thought twice about her being with Riley and it was nice for a change. When he brought her home that night he kissed her again and she kissed him back.

They saw each other every day that week. They went on picnics, and to the beach, throwing a football or a Frisbee around, telling silly jokes and eating junk food. Buffy felt like a teenager again.

##

Things were tense at the shop. Nobody knew whose side to take. Anya was staunchly behind her boss and expected Xander to be as well. Xander and Willow both felt torn, they had both liked Riley before and they had actually joined Buffy and Riley at the beach the day before and had a reasonably good time. Except for the guilt, the feeling that they were betraying Giles. And except for the fact that watching Riley and Buffy together somehow left them both feeling that Buffy was making the wrong decision.

Every time Giles walked into the main room the conversation stopped. Finally he couldn't stand it anymore and he walked over to the table and sat down. "You need to stop this."

Xander looked at Giles, all innocence. "Stop what, big guy?"

"I want you to feel free to talk about whatever you need to talk about. I know Buffy is spending time with Riley. I would imagine, if she hasn't already, that she will ask you to join them. You need to. Buffy is your friend, I expect you to support her in this. You can't worry so much about protecting me. It makes it awkward for everyone."

Xander scowled. "We're your friend, too, Giles. Not just Buffy's."

"I know that, and I appreciate that. But, you became my friend largely because of Buffy. You have the right to be friends with Riley, and do things with the two of them and to talk about it here. I'll survive. I'd rather have you do that then look guilty every time I walk in the room."

Willow pouted. "It's not fair. We want the two of you to still be together."

Giles smiled sadly. "Well, so do I, but we can't always have what we want."

"How's Dawn holding up?"

Giles had taken her to dinner and a movie last night. "She's still quite unhappy. I don't know how to make her feel better about the situation."

Anya responded to that statement. "Well, seeing as she's only been alive for about a year, her life's been pretty unreliable so far."

Giles nodded. "Yes, I suppose it has."

Anya continued. "I read some where that when two people get divorced, and that's sort of what's happening to you and Buffy, that all the friends usually drift away because no one wants to choose sides. Everyone has to start over."

Giles winced. "Well, we have strong ties keeping us all together. Hopefully that won't happen."

Anya looked at him defiantly. "Well it won't happen to me. I'm on your side, despite my vengeance background. You pay my salary."

Giles let out a short laugh. "Anya, I appreciate your loyalty but I don't want you to have to choose. I don't want any of you to have to choose. But if you do, I'll understand."

Xander looked at Giles, a flash of anger on his face. "Listen. No one's choosing. We may have become your friend at first because you were Buffy's Watcher, but now we're friends because we choose to be. Buffy isn't the hub that keeps us all together. If anyone's the hub it's you."

Giles smiled softly at Xander. "Well, thank you for that. But my initial point remains the same. I don't want any of you to feel that you can't say what you want, that you have to edit your conversations when I'm around. All right?"

They all nodded reluctantly at him, and with a sigh he got up and headed for his office. Closing the door behind him he sat at the desk and lay his head down on his arms. He missed Buffy so much he could hardly stand it. He hated the fact he was hiding behind. He hated how awkward their estrangement had become for everyone and he knew that the conversation he'd just had with his young friends had probably done little good.

He'd barely seen Buffy. She was avoiding him. There'd been no training. She hadn't come by the shop all week and while she was doing him the courtesy of a call when she got home from patrol they were short and to the point. He supposed he should be grateful she was at least calling. Not that knowing she was home safe was making it any easier to sleep. Giles was exhausted, and it just made him less able to withstand the loneliness he felt.

Hearing voices raise in the other room he walked to the door of the office and cracked it open. Dawn was there and she was crying. Giles was about to go out when he heard what she was saying.

"She slept with him. I got home last night and they were in her bedroom, all groany and stuff. How could she do that?"

Giles had thought he had already experienced the full gamut of pain but he was discovering he was wrong. He lost the ability to breathe and his heart hurt so badly he thought he might be dying.

Willow tried to console Dawn. "Well, it's not like she didn't sleep with him before when they were going out."

"I know but it makes it so real. If they're together like that it means that Giles will never come home. She's completely ruined it."

Xander shot a nervous glance at the office door, hoping that Giles wasn't hearing any of this. "Maybe we should take this conversation elsewhere."

As one, they all looked at Giles' door and they all nodded. Everyone but Anya got up. She frowned at them. "I have to stay."

Xander nodded and kissed her on the cheek. "I'll be by later." Xander and Dawn, followed by Willow and Tara, left the shop.

Anya got up and cautiously approached Giles' office. She knocked on the door and then pushed on it to open it. He was back behind his desk but she could see it in his eyes. "You heard?"

He barely nodded.

"Are you all right?"

He nodded again.

"Do you need anything?"

He shook his head.

"Do you want me to shut the door?"

Giles nodded and closed his eyes. Reluctantly Anya pulled back and closed the door behind her. The pain in his eyes had pierced her heart and her own

eyes were stinging by the time she got back to the counter.

Giles sat there for a little while longer and then finally he couldn't stand it anymore. He got up and shrugged into his jacket. Without a word to Anya he just walked out the side door, knowing that she would be fine without him.

When he got back to his hotel he paced. Giles couldn't get the image of Riley and Buffy having sex out of his head. And unfortunately, considering how much they used to touch each other in front of him, he had no trouble supplying the mental images. He had truly lost her. Despite her ongoing absence Giles had still hoped that she would come back to him. But now his hope was gone.

Giles needed someone to talk to. He was afraid of how he felt, afraid of what he'd do if he wasn't able to talk about it. Giles eyed the phone nervously. He knew he was out, he knew that somehow he'd gotten away from the Initiative, and he knew how to get hold of him. What he didn't know was if he should. Finally his need to speak to someone overcame his apprehension. Picking up the phone he began dialing the international number that would connect him to Ethan.

##

Buffy was patrolling the next night with Riley. Sex with Riley had been...okay. Not great, not the fireworks she'd been expecting, almost hoping for. The fireworks that might help her decide that Riley was the one for her. He still seemed the more predictable path and she wanted proof that he was the one, proof that would erase her confusion, and rid her mind of constant, painful, and wishful thoughts of Giles. Instead she had touched his firm young body and wished it had been Giles. Giles with his slow hands, and experienced touch. Giles who could somehow set her body on fire so easily.

Somehow she had never given it a thought. She had just taken Giles' skill in bed in stride, along with all the other things he did so well, the things he turned his mind to. Even though she'd slept with Riley before, somehow she'd forgotten how it had been, and now that she had slept with him again, it was so clear to her that Giles was the far better lover.

They walked through the cemetery, not talking. They didn't have much to talk about when it was quiet and there were no distractions about. They were both too focused on the here and now. Riley had tons of stories about fighting demons in South America but Buffy didn't want to hear them. Her life was about demons. She didn't want to spend her spare time talking about them as well. Somehow she and Giles always had things to talk about. He knew so much about everything. And he could elicit information from her and

encourage opinions about things she didn't even know she cared about. They completed their rounds and then walked back to Buffy's. She gave him a kiss but she didn't invite him in. As Buffy closed the door behind her, Riley just stood there and stared at the door, wondering what she was thinking.

##

Giles didn't go into work the next day. He called early in the morning, before Anya would be there and left a message on the answering machine. He couldn't face her; he couldn't face any of them. He stayed in bed, the shades drawn, the Do Not Disturb sign on the door to his room.

He'd spoken to Ethan for a long time last night. And Ethan had been his usual sarcastic, biting self, but Giles had actually felt better when he'd hung up. Just talking about it helped. Early in the afternoon the phone rang. Giles considered not answering it but he decided no one would be calling him here unless it was important. He groped for the phone. "Hello?"

"Let me guess, you're still in bed."

"Ethan."

"The one and only."

Giles snorted. "Why are you calling?"

"I think I'll come and visit. Meet me in LA. We'll have some fun."

Giles' immediate response was to say no, his survival instincts on full alert. But then he realized that he needed this, no matter what mischief Ethan might be up to. "All right."

There was a stunned silence on the other end of the phone. "All right? You mean you'll meet me?"

"That's what I said."

"Ripper, I'm shocked. There might be hope for you yet."

"Shut up, Ethan."

Ethan chuckled. "Get a pen, write this down."

Giles sat up and looked for the pad and pencil lying by the bedside. He wrote down Ethan's flight information. "I'll leave here first thing in the morning. That



should leave me plenty of time to get there before your plane arrives."

"Olivia wants to come too."

"Ethan, I don't think that's a good idea."

"Yes it is. It'll be just what you need. A couple of old friends to take your mind off your troubles."

"Or get me in worse trouble."

"If all goes well."

"I should probably just hang up and stay here in bed."

"Probably."

Giles looked at the piece of paper in front of him. "I'll be there."

Ethan chuckled and hung up.

Giles couldn't help the small smile that formed on his face. Assuming he survived, Ethan was probably right, this was just what he needed. Deciding to emerge from his cocoon he headed for the bathroom and turned on the shower.

##

Buffy slammed the door in Riley's face that night after patrol. She hadn't even wanted to talk to him after how stupid he'd been. He yelled through the door that he'd be by early the next day.

##

Giles called Anya at home in the morning and told her that he was leaving town for a few days, wanting to make sure that she didn't mind watching the store while he was gone. It took a promise of a bonus, several reassurances that he was all right and a protracted sermon on the ultimate uselessness of suicide, before she reluctantly agreed. Giles started throwing his clothes in a suitcase.

End of Part 3

Riley was balancing two coffees and a bag of donuts when he knocked on Buffy's door first thing in the morning. Buffy opened it and let him in. Silently they walked to the kitchen and sat at the table.

Riley started. "I don't understand why you're so upset."

"Riley, you're not the Slayer and you're not super boy anymore. You can't take those kinds of chances."

"I can take care of myself, Buffy. I knew what I was doing."

"You got lucky."

"No, I didn't get lucky. I've been fighting demons down in Belize for months, demons you've never even seen before, and I survived."

She glared at him. "You could have died."

"But I didn't. What's with the anger thing anyway? It seems to me that if you were afraid I almost died that you'd be hugging me and being glad that I'm alive."

"I'm the Slayer. I have to know that I'm calling the shots when we're out there. You could have gotten me killed too."

"Is that what this is about? Do you feel like you're in a competition with me? Are you threatened because I know how to fight? Because you aren't the only one who can kill a demon? I like feeling powerful, I like the killing. Just because you're around doesn't mean I have to act all docile and let you be the boss, the way Giles does. I'm not your Watcher. I'm not going to just watch. I like to fight. I like to win."

Buffy stared at him and everything clicked into place. She suddenly found herself completely sure about who she wanted to be with. She'd had this conversation so many times with Giles. Asking him to be safer, to let her be the Slayer, to stop setting himself up to get hurt or killed. He always argued with her too, but the reason was because he wasn't about to sit by and watch her get hurt. Whatever it took, even if it was his death, she came first. She always came first.

Buffy shook her head. How could she have been so stupid? How could she have even considered throwing that away, throwing him away? For this? For this self-centered, testosterone laden idiot? Giles loved her; he loved her completely. He loved that she was the Slayer, and he never felt threatened by it. There was no one in the world that knew her as well as Giles did, or that

could love her more.

She looked at Riley. "I'm sorry. I've been so stupid."

Riley sat back, a satisfied look on his face. "That's a little harsh. You've just been used to getting your own way all the time. Giles gave in to you too much."

"No, I mean I've been stupid about you."

Riley's expression grew guarded. "What do you mean?"

"I want Giles. I don't want you."

"You want...what do you mean you want Giles?"

"I want to be with him. He's who I belong to."

"Why, because he lets you have your way?"

"No, because he gets who I am, and he loves me that way."

"Buffy, I get who you are too. I just think you could be more."

"No, you don't. You think I should be less. You think you should be more. And you'll keep trying to make me less and make me doubt myself to make yourself feel better."

"So what are you saying?"

"I don't want to see you anymore. I'm going to call Giles and beg him to take me back."

"You'd rather be with him, with that old man, than with me?"

Buffy grinned. "That old man, he's better than you'll ever be, in every way." She leaned forwards toward Riley. "In every way."

A flash of anger passed over Riley's face and he took a deep breath, trying to patch things up. "Look, I'm sorry I got so angry with you. Maybe I shot my mouth off a little too much but that's no reason to break things off." He reached out and took Buffy's hand. "Come on, let's go to bed. Let me hold you, things will be better."

"I don't want you to touch me. I don't anyone to touch me but Giles."

"Buffy, I don't like to lose."

Buffy barked out a laugh. "Is that a threat? Are you threatening me? Because I am so not scared." She pointed to the door. "You need to leave, and you need to not come back. Go back to South America and get your jollies fighting your demons."

"This isn't over."

"Yes, it is. Leave."

Without another word, Riley got up and stalked out of the house. He stood on the front stoop for a minute and spoke out loud. "I don't like to lose, not anymore." Pulling out his cell phone he hit a button and headed to his car. When someone answered he spoke quickly. "I need someone pulled in. Make it look like an accident." There was a pause. "Rupert Giles." Riley nodded and hung up. He got in his car and drove away.

Buffy stared at the phone for the longest time. She vacillated between knowing that Giles would inevitably forgive her, he'd always forgiven her, to wondering how on earth she could ever expect him to. Finally she worked up her nerve and she called the store. Anya answered. "Anya, it's Buffy, is Giles there?"

There was a pause. "Why do you care?"

Buffy took a deep breath. "Anya, is he there? I need to speak with him."

"No, he's not. He's gone out of town for a few days."

"What?"

"He's gone out of town. He needed to get away."

Buffy looked at the phone, stunned. "He went away?" She hadn't expected that.

"Yes, are you happy now?"

"Look, I don't blame you for being mad at me, I don't blame any of you, but I get it now. I want him back. Where did he go?"

"I think you should just leave him alone. You've done enough damage. And he didn't tell me."

"When's he coming back?"

"He didn't tell me that either."

"Do you have a number where he's staying?"

"No, he said he'd call me later and give it to me when he arrived."

Buffy hung up, frantic. He was gone, out there somewhere, and convinced that she didn't love him.

##

Giles had left mid-morning, leaving himself plenty of time to drive along the coastline before meeting Ethan. With the top down, the wind whistling around him, and the extraordinary scenery he almost felt like he might get through this. A car raced around him and Giles frowned at the driver's speed. This was hardly the sort of road to play games on. There was nothing between one's car and a deadly drive off a cliff into the ocean, not even a guardrail.

Giles didn't notice the car pulling up behind him. He did notice that the car that had just passed him was now choosing to drive slowly, very slowly. Giles rolled his eyes in annoyance. Suddenly he was bumped from behind. He lifted startled eyes to his rear view mirror. Giles realized that the car behind him was right on his tail, and the car in front was slowing down even more.

Giles began to feel nervous. He attempted to pull out and pass the car in front of him but it anticipated his move and blocked him and then stopped, eliminating passage on the narrow road. Giles had no choice but to stop as well. Two men got out of the car behind him and they approached his car. Giles stared at them both, on full alert. "What is this about?"

With a sudden movement, one of the men slapped a saturated cloth over Giles' mouth and nose. He fought, trying not to breathe, struggling to move to the other side of the car to possible freedom, but the two men were too strong for him and prevented him from escaping. As his body slumped into unconsciousness, the two men lifted him up and got him into the back seat of the car in front of his own. Then, they put his car in neutral and pushed it over the cliff. It landed with a spectacular splash, upside down. The men looked at it for a minute and then they got in their cars and drove away.

##

Ethan and Olivia sat at the airport. Rupert was very late. Olivia looked at Ethan. "Do you think he changed his mind?"

Ethan screwed his mouth up, thinking about it. "No, I mean yes, he probably did, but he still wouldn't leave us stranded here. Well, on second thought he might leave me stranded here, but not you."

"So, where is he?"

Ethan shook his head. "I don't know. Call the store. I'd do it but if they catch a whiff of me they'll send in the cavalry."

Olivia pulled out her cell phone and scrolled through the menu until she found Rupert's number at the shop. Anya picked up. "The Magic Box."

"Hello, this is Olivia. Is Rupert there?"

"Olivia, like the Olivia who was here when the Gentlemen were here?"

"Yes."

"Oh. Well, he's not here. He left this morning to go out of town. He didn't tell me where he was going."

"Thank you." Olivia hung up and turned to Ethan. "He left this morning."

Ethan looked up at the clock again. He was starting to feel nervous. "Let's have him paged, maybe he's wandering lost somewhere."

##

Giles came to with a start, and then he let out a moan when his blinding headache made its presence known. He heard a voice he thought he recognized. "Oh, good, you're coming around. I was afraid they'd overdone it."

Giles' hands were bound behind his back, but he managed to sit up. "Riley. What are you doing? Why am I here? Where's Buffy?"

Riley hesitated before answering, knowing that for this brief moment he could still change his mind, he could pretend he had found Giles, that he was rescuing him. But then Buffy's words about wanting Giles came back to him, stinging like barbed wire. His conscience warred with his desire to strike back and his lesser half won the internal debate. "Buffy's fine. I left her this morning, still all cozy in bed. She wanted me to stay and make love to her again but duty called."



Giles closed his eyes. "Why have you brought me here?"

Riley continued, as if Giles hadn't spoken, feeling the need to strike a mortal blow. "She talks about you. She wonders how she could have let you touch her. That's why we had sex the other night. She begged me to touch her, to help her get rid of the memories." He smiled. "I think I did."

Giles closed his eyes as Riley spoke. If his hands had been free he'd have covered his ears so as to not hear the painful words. He gritted his teeth. "What do you want?"

"That's a fair question." Riley paused, marshaling his thoughts. "I saw some stuff down in South America that made the Hellmouth look like a walk in the park. There is so much power down there, so much." Riley paced a little bit. "I met a shaman while I was there, and he taught me a few things. Mostly he taught me that I don't have the sort of power I want. He gave me a spell that would allow me to get stronger but the opportunity to try it out hasn't presented itself until now." This was the irony of Buffy choosing Giles. It would grant Riley his wish and make him strong. If there was one thing he'd learned over the last year it was that you had to act to stay strong, and in this case, acting would make him stronger than he had dared believe possible.

"What are you talking about?"

"Your magic. I'm going to take your magic."

Giles heard the deadly seriousness in Riley's voice and it sent shivers down his spine. "You can't take my magic."

"Yes, actually I think I can. I'm afraid that the spell will probably kill you, but like I said I've never done it before. I had my men follow you when you left your hotel this morning. After they knocked you out they pushed your car over the cliff. Once they find it everyone will think you're dead so no one will come looking for you, just in case you were hoping that someone might come to your rescue." He stood. "I need to prepare tonight so I'll be back tomorrow."

Riley headed for the door. His conscience was bothering him a little. He spoke to someone outside in the hallway. "Untie him and let him get cleaned up. Make sure he gets his meals and make them edible."

When Riley left, three men entered the room. Two kept guns focused on Giles while one cautiously approached him. "I'm just gonna untie you. Stay still." The man spoke with a heavy accent.

Giles obeyed. He knew he couldn't fight all three men, not when two of them

were armed, and besides, he desperately wanted to be untied. When the man was done all three left and closed the door behind them. Giles heard a heavy bolt being rammed shut. He sat on the floor for a few minutes, allowing the circulation to return to his arms, shaking them out. Slowly he stood, trying to ignore all the aches and pains he was feeling. In truth they were the least of his misery. All he could think about was Riley's words about Buffy. His heart felt so battered and his self-esteem so low that he found he didn't have the strength to not believe them.

##

Buffy sat at home on the couch. She had called Anya regularly all day in hopes that Giles would have checked in. All she'd gotten for her trouble was an increasingly annoyed Anya and the news that Giles' old girlfriend was looking for him.

There was a knock on the door and Buffy felt a ridiculous sense of hope that maybe it was him, that maybe he'd forgotten his key, or wasn't sure if he was welcome. Before she could even get up Dawn flew past her, obviously hoping the same thing and threw the door open. A crowd walked in.

Buffy didn't think much about it until the last two entered. Ethan and Olivia. She rose to her feet and glared at Ethan. "What the hell are you doing here?"

Ethan sneered at her. "Ah, here's the little tart."

Buffy turned her angry eyes to the rest of them. "What's going on?"

Xander bravely stepped into the fray. "Giles was supposed to meet them in LA this morning, pick them up at the airport. He never showed up. They just came by the store, looking for him."

Buffy's eyes widened. "He was meeting you?" She could hardly believe that Giles would go meet Ethan anywhere, and she didn't want to think what it meant that he was meeting Olivia.

Ethan just grinned at her. "Yes, interesting isn't it? That when he needed a friend, he called me?" He glanced around the room. "Doesn't say much for any of you."

Xander stepped towards Ethan, angry at his comment. "Just what the hell is that supposed to mean?"

"Exactly what I said. He obviously doesn't feel that he has any friends here."

"He has plenty of friends here. He just didn't want to put us in the middle of things."

Olivia interrupted. "Is he here?"

Buffy shook her head. "No, no one's heard from him all day." She looked at Anya. "Unless he called. Did he call?"

"No, and he said he would."

Dawn turned unhappy eyes to Buffy. "Where is he? What if something happened to him?"

Buffy's eyes were unhappy too. Then she looked at Ethan again. "Maybe he just decided to not meet you. Maybe he decided he'd live longer if he went somewhere else."

Ethan shook his head. "He wouldn't leave Olivia that way." He looked around. "Where's your boyfriend? You know, the one you left Rupert for."

"He's gone. I kicked him out."

"My, my. You do go through them, don't you?"

"Look, it was a mistake. I needed to be sure; Giles knew that. He's the one who told me to..."

Olivia let out a disgusted sound, interrupting her. "So because Rupert gives you permission to break his heart, that makes it all right?"

Buffy glared at her. "You left him."

Olivia shook her head. "No, I didn't."

Buffy looked confused. "You left, you went back to England."

"I asked him to come with me. I love him." She moved in closer to Buffy. "And when he comes back, I'll make sure he comes with me this time."

Buffy's face grew hard. "You're not taking him anywhere."

Anya actually backed up Buffy. "That's right, he belongs here with us." Then she glared at Buffy. "Although you don't deserve him."

Buffy clenched her fists. "I made a mistake."

Xander snorted. "You cheated on him."

Buffy swung her head to face him. "Does the name Cordelia ring a bell?" Xander shut up. Buffy tried again. "I love him. I know that now. And I'll do whatever it takes to get him back."

Olivia glared at her. "And I'll do whatever it takes to get him to leave here."

Tara tried to be the peacemaker. "Maybe we need to figure out where he is first before we worry about where he's going next."

Dawn had turned on the TV in the other room. She let out a terrified cry. "Buffy."

Buffy ran in, and the rest of them followed. Dawn was pointing at the TV. The scene showed a work crew pulling a car out of the Pacific Ocean. Buffy's brow furrowed. "What's the big deal, Dawn?"

Xander got it. "It looks like Giles' car."

They all looked at the television, horrified, as the reporter came on the screen to explain what was happening. She mentioned that the driver of the car was presumed dead but no body had been found and the name had not been released. Efforts were under way to contact family. More details would follow. With one last look at the car suspended from a crane the news show segued into its next story.

Dawn shook her head. "No one called here. I've been here all afternoon. It can't be his car."

Buffy sadly shook her head. "He never got his license changed. He kept talking about how he needed to do it, but he never did."

Xander furrowed his brow. "Then who would they call?"

Buffy's eyes filled with tears. "I don't know. I imagine sooner or later they would find out about the shop and call there." Then she got angry at her own words. "But it's not him. It's not his car. It can't be."

No one said a word. No one knew what to say. When a loud advertisement came on Anya shut off the television set. She finally broke the silence. "So, if it was him, what does it mean? That's he's dead?"

Dawn started to cry. Buffy just stood there, unable to speak. She wanted to deny it again, deny that it had been his car but, somehow, she knew that it

was.

Xander thought he might throw up. "He can't be dead." He pointed at the television. "It's just a coincidence."

Ethan snorted, angry with them all. "Rupert is missing, and a car that looks exactly like his is found on a road that would take him to LA, which was his destination, a destination he never arrived at. Stop dreaming. It's his car."

Anya was still pushing for a different answer. "Why didn't they find a body? I mean, if he was there, his body would be there, right?"

Xander answered that one. "He'd have probably been swept away in the current. They may never find him."

Willow started to cry next. She sat on the couch next to Dawn and took her in her arms.

Buffy finally found her voice, echoing Xander. "He can't be dead. He can't be. Maybe it was his car, but he can't be dead." She started looking at everyone, trying to find someone who believed her. No one would meet her eyes.

Ethan felt an unexpected sense of loss and pain and he walked away from the rest of them and began rubbing his palm, mumbling to himself. As Buffy continued her desperate quest for someone who would tell her Giles wasn't dead her eyes lit on him. She watched as a flash of neon blue light arced across his palm. He turned to her. "He's not dead."

Buffy walked to him. "What do you mean?"

He held up his palm. "He's not dead."

Buffy couldn't see anything. "What am I looking at?"

Ethan looked at his palm. "It's just a stupid spell Ripper and I did, a long time ago, when we first started playing around with magic."

"What was the spell?" Ethan hesitated and Buffy insisted. "Ethan, tell me."

Ethan let out a breath. "We...well...we did a blood bond spell. It doesn't really mean anything, except that we'd know if the other person was dead. It felt very dramatic at the time."

Buffy grabbed his palm and then she noticed the thin scar. "What did you do?"

Ethan mimicked cutting himself. "We both cut ourselves and let our blood mingle, spoke a few magic words and presto...blood bond."

"So, you can really tell that's he's alive?"

Ethan nodded. "I can really tell. If he was dead nothing would have happened when I spoke the words of the spell."

"I saw a blue light."

"That's right, and that means he's alive."

Xander joined them. "Can you tell where he is or if he's all right?"

Ethan shook his head. "No. Just if he's dead or alive. Although it was a strong reaction so I'm guessing that right now he's not seriously injured."

Dawn moved into the circle. "He's alive?"

Buffy put her arms around her. "He's alive."

"We have to find him."

"Yes, we do."

They all looked at each other again. Finally Xander spoke. "So, if his car went over the cliff then he might have gotten swept away but ended up in a cave somewhere, or on an island."

Ethan rolled his eyes. "Right, with girls in hula skirts." He shook his head. "I don't think he's at a luau. If he'd been in that car, he'd be dead and if by a miracle he survived he'd have contacted somebody."

Willow piped up. "Maybe he lost his memory or something. Maybe he's at a hospital registered as a John Doe."

Ethan shook his head. "I don't think so."

Buffy just watched him. "Why not?"

"I don't know."

Buffy's eyes grew flinty. "What are you thinking?"



Ethan ran a hand over his face. "I don't know. Something about this just doesn't feel right."

Dawn looked at them both. "So what do we do?"

Buffy gritted her teeth. "I call Riley and ask for his help looking for Giles in case he is lost somewhere, or out in the water still." She looked at the rest of them. "And we'll start checking around town, see if there's any news about someone who's been looking for a Watcher."

Xander gave Buffy an incredulous look. "Riley? Do you think that's a good idea?"

"No, but he's the best chance we have of finding Giles if he is lost down there somewhere."

Xander didn't look happy, none of them did, but no one wanted to lessen Giles' chances so they kept their opinions to themselves.

End of Part 4

## Eye of the Storm 5

Riley's answering machine went unchecked. He was preparing himself. The shaman had taught him that one needed to engage in a ritualistic cleansing before attempting spirit work of this caliber and Riley was taking his words to heart. He wanted this to work.

##

They all sat around the living room. They had turned up nothing. Riley hadn't returned Buffy's calls and there was no word on the street about any demon that needed a Watcher for anything big and evil. Buffy had even called Angel but they hadn't turned up anything either.

Buffy couldn't believe it but she offered Ethan and Olivia a place to sleep for the night. She felt she at least owed Ethan that for telling her that Giles was still alive. Olivia slept in Buffy's room and Ethan slept on the couch. Buffy slept in Giles' room, hugging his pillows.

##

Giles was surprised that he had slept. He'd only picked at his dinner but he was quite hungry when breakfast arrived so he ate it all. He still ached a little

but overall he felt fine, physically. His heart was still aching, but Giles didn't expect that feeling to ever go away. He was also feeling quite apprehensive about this ritual Riley was planning on doing. He'd heard of such things but he had always discounted them as magical tall tales.

He had begun pacing an hour ago, trying to pull up in his mind any references regarding the forcible removal of magic. Giles was drawing a blank. He wished he had his books with him. Giles looked up in some alarm when the door opened. The three men came in, two of them with guns drawn again. That's how they always entered. Giles stood still, waiting to see what was going to happen now. The man spoke to him. "Take off your shirt."

Giles furrowed his brow. "Why on earth..."

The man spoke again. "Just take it off." Giles unbuttoned his shirt and slipped it off his shoulders. The man pulled out some handcuffs. "Put your hands out."

Giles longed to just lunge at the man but the two guns continued to stop him. He extended his hands and watched as cuffs were snapped in place. The man grabbed his arm and escorted him out of the cell, down the hall and into another room. His arms were lifted above his head and his wrists were chained to the wall. When Giles got a look around the room he began to struggle. The other two men were there in an instant and held him still as the man snapped additional restraints around his ankles. Testing to make sure the locks were secure the men left.

Giles was in a room designed for slaughtering. He could smell the blood. There was a drain in the middle of the room, the entire floor sloped slightly towards the center, so any liquids would drain away. Giles tested his restraints and then rested his head back against the concrete wall when he realized he wasn't going anywhere.

The door opened again and Riley walked in. All he had on was a white robe and sandals. He carried a dagger in one hand and a piece of paper in the other. "Ah, Giles. Did you sleep well? Did they get you some decent food?" He sounded as if he was really concerned about it.

Giles ignored the ridiculous questions. "Do you really think you can get away with this?"

Riley looked at the knife and he hesitated, now that it was time, at the thought of killing Giles. Then he thought of Buffy, and of Buffy and Giles, and he thought of having power of his own, and his gaze darkened. "I know I can. Well, I know I can get away with killing you. It remains to be seen if I can take your magic away." He held the paper up to show it to Giles. "Are you familiar

with this symbol?"

Giles glanced at the drawing on the page. "No."

"I have to carve this on your chest. I was hoping to memorize it because it looks a little tacky carrying a cheat sheet around but I keep leaving something out when I practice it." He lifted the knife and starting at Giles' collarbone Riley made an incision straight down, stopping above Giles' nipple, making the first marking in the elaborate sigil. As he drew the knife down he spoke an incantation.

Giles hissed in pain when the knife cut him and he attempted to move his body, trying to get the knife to slip, to interfere with the ritual. Riley stopped, and fastened a broad restraint around Giles' waist, essentially immobilizing him. Then he lifted the knife again and after checking the paper he made a second cut, with a second incantation. Giles felt a wave of dizziness go through him.

Riley grew dizzy too and he stumbled, an amazed look on his face. He grinned at Giles in a maddened delight. "I think it's working." Blood was beginning to seep down Giles' chest. Riley started the third cut.

Giles spoke to Riley, his face a grimace of pain. "Riley, it's not too late to stop this."

Riley finished the cut and his incantation and he looked at Giles, puzzled. "Why would I want to stop, now that I know it's working. I can feel your power shifting to me." Suddenly he pulled the knife away. "Although I've always wondered. Why can Willow do all this magic with a flick of her hand or a quick incantation but you always seem to need these major spells out of your books? Do you have different sorts of magic?"

Giles refused to answer.

Riley shook his head, as if disappointed at Giles' behavior. "I can always try this on Willow to get my answer."

Giles answered. "It's the same. Magic is always the same. It's the user who makes it different."

"So, why don't you use yours the way she does?"

"I used to." Giles felt another wave of dizziness. His head sagged down.

"Why did you stop?"

Giles had to think hard to remember what they were talking about, what he was supposed to be answering. "Magic's a trap. It seduces and beguiles but it's made of nothing and leaves you with nothing."

Riley looked momentarily disconcerted. Then he shook his head and lifted the knife making the next cut. Giles found it hard to breath as Riley finished the cut and the next incantation.

##

It was early afternoon and they were all at the shop. They had found nothing. Buffy was going crazy. Finally she looked at Ethan. "Do the spell again."

He rolled his eyes. "I've done it half a dozen times already."

"I don't care. Do it again."

Ethan rubbed his palm and spoke the words. They all watched his hand, waiting for the arc of pale blue light that had shot across his palm every time. Instead there was barely a glow. Ethan frowned. "That's odd."

"What's odd?"

Ethan shook out his hand and tried it again. Only a faint glow appeared on his hand. He looked up at Buffy. "It would appear that something's going on."

"What do you mean?"

"Well..." Ethan opened and closed his hand a couple of times. "Either he's dying or...." He bit the inside of his cheek, as if lost in thought, staring at his palm.

Buffy grabbed his arm. "Or what?"

He looked down at her. "Or something's happening to his magic."

Her grasp got tighter on his arm. "What do you mean?"

He shook his head. "Buffy, I don't know. I don't know anything. I'm just trying to come up with some reason why the spell is starting to fail, some way to account for it other than Rupert dying."

Buffy let go of his arm.

##

Giles hung there, held in place by his chains. The symbol was complete and etched into his upper right chest. It would continue to bleed until the magic had entirely seeped out. Giles' blood was oozing out of him, dripping onto the floor, making its way to the drain in the middle of the room.

Riley stood there for a while, watching Giles bleed, feeling the power slowly build within him. Then he got restless. The ritual was complete. He didn't need to be here for the rest of it. The connection was intact and no matter where he was, the magic would continue to flow into him until there wasn't anymore. At which point, he suspected Giles would be dead.

After fighting off another small attack of conscience Riley left the room, leaving strict instructions with the three men to stay away from Giles. He drove back to his home and made himself a sandwich. He hadn't eaten since yesterday and he was starving. Then he checked his messages. There were several from Buffy. He let out a half laugh at the irony of it all. He hadn't expected to hear from Buffy again but here she was, wanting help from him to find Giles. It gave him hope. If she was calling him, part of her still needed him, and maybe that meant that a part of her still wanted him.

##

Riley tracked Buffy down and entered the Magic Box. Buffy let out a sigh of relief and ran to him when he walked in. "Riley, where have you been?"

"I'm sorry, Buffy. I got busy on a project. I just got your message. What's wrong?"

"Giles is missing. I need you to use your connections to help search for him."

"Why do you think he's missing?"

"His car went over a cliff. Everyone thinks he's dead but we know he's not."

Riley frowned at that. This wasn't going as planned. "How do you know he's not dead?"

"Magic."

Riley looked around, wondering what magic was putting his plan at risk. "Whose magic?"

"It doesn't matter. Will you help?"

"Of course. I just need to find out a little bit more. Do you know where he is? Can this magic help you do that?"

Buffy shook her head. "No, it just tells us if he's alive. But something's happening to him. We need to find him now."

Ethan and Olivia walked in the store. They had gone next door to get some lunch. Ignoring Riley they both started to walk by him. Suddenly Ethan stopped and spun towards Riley. Before Buffy even knew what was happening Ethan had Riley by the throat.

Buffy grabbed at Ethan and started to pull him away. "Ethan, stop it. He can help us."

Ethan ignored Buffy and hissed at Riley. "You've been with him. I can smell his magic all over you. Where is he?"

Buffy let go of Ethan and stared at Riley. "Riley?"

Riley sent an alarmed look at Buffy and tried to bluff his way through Ethan's accusations, his voice squeaking around Ethan's grip. "I don't know what he's talking about. Get him off of me." Riley tried to access Giles' magic, tried to figure out if he could use it to defend himself. He felt it rise within him but he had no experience with its use and no spells memorized so he couldn't focus it and make it obey.

Ethan slammed Riley up against the shelves causing merchandise to crash to the floor. "That's his magic." Ethan pushed him again into the shelves. "What have you done to him?"

Buffy stood next to Ethan and glared at Riley, anger ripping through her. "You took him?"

Realizing that he wouldn't ever get Buffy back, Riley felt a fierce satisfaction that neither would Giles. "I told you I don't like to lose."

Buffy felt a sense of dread building and she focused that emotion and punched Riley in the stomach. "Where is he?"

"He's dead or if he's not, he will be soon."

Ethan let go of Riley, giving him over to Buffy. He rubbed his palm. The sense of relief he felt when the pale glow appeared took his breath away. "He's not dead yet." He motioned to Buffy. "Get him to talk, we don't have much time."



Buffy punched him again. Riley coughed and he shook his head. "It doesn't matter what you do to me. You can't save him, you can't stop this."

Buffy took his arm and wrenched it up behind him. "Talk to me, Riley, tell me where he is, or I'll break every bone in your body."

Riley tried to access the magic again. He found his neck being grabbed by Ethan. "I can tell when you do that. I know his magic as well as my own." This time Ethan could feel something else in Riley, something besides just Giles' magic. Ethan didn't have the luxury to determine what it was right now.

Buffy lifted Riley's arm until she felt his shoulder dislocate and Riley let out a cry. Then she moved in front of him, to face him. Xander came over to watch the proceedings. "Riley took him?" He gave Buffy a weird glance. "What is it with your boyfriends and Giles? They all have to kidnap him and torture him? What's that about?"

Buffy didn't answer Xander. Instead she kneed Riley in the balls, hard. Xander and Ethan winced. Riley's face turned purple and his knees folded underneath him. Buffy let him fall. Then she turned him over and sat on him, holding his arms pinioned at his side with her thighs. "Xander, go get me a knife. I'm cutting his balls off next."

Xander winced again but he went to get a knife. He came back with a selection. "I wasn't quite sure what kind of knife you need for that, nor do I particularly want to know."

Riley felt more magic pass to him. He let out a cry of pleasure at the sensation. Ethan could feel it and it made him livid. Ethan grabbed one of the knives from Xander and stuck it in Riley's crotch and dug in. "Where is he?"

Riley tried desperately to move away but Buffy held him in place. She sneered down at him. "Where are your fighting skills now, Riley? Gosh, there's never a demon around to kill when you need one." She looked around and saw what Ethan was doing. "Press a little harder."

Ethan obeyed and he could tell he was through all the fabric and hitting something. Riley let out a nervous cry. He tried to move again but this time Xander sat on his legs. Riley got defiant, shooting them all an angry glance. "Go ahead then, kill me. Giles will still be dead."

Buffy shot him a poisonous glare. "I have no intention of killing you. We'll just cut off one piece of you at a time. Starting with your balls." She turned to Ethan. "Cut one off."

Ethan kept the grimace off his face and he cut into the fabric so he could see where the knife was going. He changed its direction and began to cut into one of Riley's balls. This time Riley's cry was of real terror. "Stop, stop, I'll tell you."

Buffy shook her head. "Don't stop, Ethan, not until he tells us what we need to know. Riley, you better talk fast."

Riley couldn't talk fast enough. "Not all of the Initiative was destroyed. There are still rooms there, cells. He's there."

Buffy put a hand out to stop Ethan. "Let's go." She manhandled Riley up and kept a firm grip on him. She turned to Ethan. "Bring the knife, just in case he's lying."

Ethan nodded and made a silent vow not to annoy this particular Slayer again. They loaded up with weapons and crammed themselves and Riley into Ethan's rental car, Anya staying at the store with Dawn. Xander kept a knife to Riley's neck from the back seat, while Buffy kept a painful grip on his dislocated shoulder. When they arrived Buffy spoke to Riley. "How many people are here?"

Xander nicked him with the knife when he didn't immediately respond. Riley choked out the answer. "Three, there's three men guarding him."

Xander continued the questioning. "Are they armed?"

"They have guns."

Buffy dragged him out of the car. "We'll have to use you then. You tell them to stand down when we get in there or we'll be finishing the conversation we started in the shop."

Riley tried to make a run for it. Buffy tripped him and he fell flat on his face. She pulled him up by his hair. "Oh, did that hurt?" She slammed his head back on the ground. "You better hope he's alive."

##

Following Riley's directions they made their way inside. The men put down their weapons when Riley instructed them to and Xander had them quickly tied up and out of commission. There was no sign of any other people. It was clear that the Initiative had been abandoned and whatever Riley was doing here, it was on his own.

Ethan slid the bolt and threw the door open. Buffy pushed Riley into the room and then let out a cry when she saw Giles. He looked dead. There was blood everywhere and she thought her heart would shrivel up in her chest and die. With her hands full of Riley, Olivia got to Giles before Buffy could. She touched him, sliding her hand up to his neck to feel for a pulse. Buffy slammed Riley against the other wall and slapped wrist restraints on him.

Buffy yelled out to Xander. "Look for some keys, we have to..." Before she could even finish her sentence Ethan and Willow were standing before Giles and using their magic, working independently, the restraints fell off of him. As their magic hummed in the air Riley let out a groan, his face lifted up, as if receiving a blessing.

As Giles began to fall Buffy caught him and with Ethan and Olivia's help they lifted him and laid him on one of the counters. Buffy sobbed. "Is he alive?"

Olivia tried again to feel for a pulse. "He's still warm but I don't feel a pulse." She laid her head on his chest. Buffy had to fight the urge to pull her away by the roots of her hair. Olivia pulled her head away, her face in despair. "I can't tell if his heart is beating. If it is, it's slow."

Ethan did his spell again and saw the glow. "He's still alive." He moved closer and took a good look at the cut on Giles' chest. Riley had left the ceremonial dagger on the counter and it was lying next to where they had laid Giles. Ethan picked it up. Then he noticed the piece of paper. He looked at the drawing and then he read over the incantation Riley had used. He turned to Riley, a small smile on his face. "Is this the incantation you used?"

When Riley didn't answer Buffy moved to him and angrily punched him in the stomach again. Riley tried to draw in a breath, gasping out an answer. "Yes."

"You said all of this?" Riley nodded. Ethan asked another question. "Do you know what these words mean?"

Riley shook his head. "Just what they do."

Ethan let out a short laugh. He knew what the words meant. "Still feeling the magic pour in?"

Riley closed his eyes and nodded. "He was so strong." All he could feel was magic. He felt surrounded, supported, inundated by it.

Buffy punched him again. "He is so strong. Is."

Ethan studied the drawing one more time and then he slowly picked up the

knife, looking at his own palm.

Buffy noticed him. "What are you doing?"

Ethan let out a laugh at the ridiculous situation he was in. He shook his head. "As unlikely as it sounds, I'm saving Rupert's life." Following the pattern on the paper he began to cut his hand. He grimaced at the pain but he didn't stop until the sigil was identical. Then he moved over to Giles and he placed his hand over the mark on Giles' chest. Ethan let out a cry as the connection hit him and then the room fell away and he found himself by a gurgling stream, in a wooded forest. He looked around and saw Giles.

Giles looked at him in some surprise. "Ethan? How did you get here?" Ethan held up his hand. The marks he had cut on his hand were glowing. Giles' eyebrows rose. "You found my body, then?"

Ethan nodded. "You're not dead yet."

"Almost though. I can feel it."

"You won't die as long as I'm touching you. I've temporarily stopped the drain. That's what's killing you, not the blood loss."

"You can't keep your hand there forever."

"I can stop it, I can save you."

Giles looked at Ethan, a tight smile on his face. "I know you can. But I'm not willing to be saved that way."

"I can share my magic with you. Where's the harm in that?"

Giles gave Ethan a look. "It's not that simple and you know it. It would bind me to you. I can read that in your thoughts." Somehow in this place, nothing was hidden.

Ethan shot Giles a look of exasperation. "This is not some grand scheme of mine. It's what this spell does, if it's done correctly. I don't know how to save you any other way."

"No, maybe you don't. But it still doesn't change anything."

"Wouldn't you rather be bound to me than to die?"

Giles shook his head. "No. I can't live that way. I can't be with you, Ethan, not

the way you want me to be. It's why I left. You eat people alive with your need for them. You never did learn how to just be friends with someone without wanting to own them too."

"You called me this time, remember?"

Giles let out a short laugh; he couldn't believe his own foolishness. "Yes, I know I did." He looked at Ethan. "Is Buffy all right?"

"She's here." Ethan grinned wickedly. "I'm sure you'll be glad to know that I made a vow to not annoy her anymore when she had me start to cut one of Riley's balls off to make him talk."

Giles' eyebrows rose high on his face. "She did that to Riley? I thought she loved him."

Ethan let that one pass. "Olivia's here too. She still wants you to go back to England with her. Maybe you should think about it."

Giles let out a sigh. "I don't love her that way, I never did." He smiled sadly. "Besides, I don't think I'll be going anywhere anymore."

Ethan ignored that statement too. "But you love Buffy that way?"

Giles nodded. "I really am a fool, aren't I? Loving someone so much for so long, thinking I could finally have it all." He shook his head. "Foolish to ever think she could be mine."

"She says she loves you."

Giles looked at Ethan again. "You don't believe her, though, do you?"

"No, but it doesn't mean she doesn't love you." Giles didn't respond. Ethan looked at his hand and the markings on Giles' chest. "Did you know of this spell?"

Giles shook his head. "No, but obviously you did."

Ethan nodded. "I read of it once. Although Riley changed it, or someone changed it for him. The incantations he used stole your magic." He grinned. "It's going to have some unexpected side effects for him." He lost the grin. "That wasn't it's original intent. The spell allows the magic to be shared, without loss to either one of us."

Giles shook his head. "I won't be bound to you. You'd use it to make me go

with you and I can't leave here. If I get out of this alive, I'm still Buffy's Watcher, whether she wants me or not."

"It doesn't have to be me. Let Willow or Tara do it."

Giles shook his head. "I can't. It wouldn't be fair to either one of them."

"Then who? I'm not just going to let you die." He glared at Giles. "I don't want you to die."

Giles smiled. "I know. I can tell you mean that. A somewhat surprising fact given your actions of the past few years."

"I know. It sort of surprised me too." He let out a frustrated noise as he brought the conversation back to the problem at hand. "Who then? There must be someone with magic you wouldn't mind binding yourself to." Ethan pounced on Giles' thought before Giles even realized it had flashed through his mind. "Buffy? Can you do this with her? Is her Slayer strength a magic?"

"I don't know. But I won't do it with her either. The last thing she wants is to bind herself to me. She's made that quite clear, despite the fact that Riley..." Giles looked around and saw that he was alone. He felt the drain start again and he sat down, waiting for the end.

Ethan took his hand away and grabbed Buffy. "Do you really love him?"

"Yes, I really love him."

Ethan looked at her as if he were trying to read into her soul. Whatever he saw there gave him some hope. "Give me your hand."

Without a thought Buffy opened her palm and held it before Ethan. Olivia moved in closer. "Ethan, what are you doing?"

He took a second to look up at her. "Sorry, Olivia." Picking up the knife he began to make the same incisions in Buffy's palm.

"What do you mean, sorry? What are you doing?"

Ethan ignored Olivia for the moment. Time was of the essence. "Buffy, when you get in there, you'll have some fast talking to do, although I think he'll be able to sense your thoughts. And I'm still not sure this will work. The only thing that will save Rupert now is if someone with magic can give him some power. I'm hoping that being the Slayer is a kind of magic."



Buffy looked at Ethan. "Why didn't you do it?"

"He wouldn't let me." He glanced up at Olivia and then back at Buffy. "This will bind the two of you together. Forever." Ethan let out a short laugh. "I'm sure you find it as unbelievable as I do that Rupert doesn't want to bind himself to me." He held the knife up. "Should I continue?"

End of Part 5

## Eye of the Storm 6

Buffy nodded. "Finish it. Hurry."

Olivia spoke sharply. "What does that mean? Being bound this way."

Ethan glanced up again. "It means you lose Giles. It means Buffy gets to keep him."

"Let me do it, then."

Ethan shook his head. "Sorry, luv. You don't have any magic." He looked at Buffy. "He doesn't believe you love him. And he has no intention right now of letting you bind yourself to him."

Buffy's eyes flashed. "He will when I'm done with him."

Ethan grinned at her. He made the last incision and checked it against the one on his own palm. "Place this against his chest."

Buffy did as instructed. She felt a sharp pain and then she found herself in the woods, a bubbling stream nearby. She heard her name called. "Buffy?"

Buffy spun and when she saw Giles she ran to him and threw herself in his arms. Giles smelled her hair and couldn't help the wave of longing that swept through him. She pulled back and looked at him. "I'm sorry. I can't tell you how sorry I am. But I finally figured it out and I know that it's you I want. I can't believe I was so stupid. Can you ever forgive me?"

Giles knew she was speaking the truth, but the words Riley had said to him still echoed painfully in his mind. He looked away.

Buffy let out a gasp as she picked up his thoughts. "I never said those things. I swear, Giles. I'd already told him I wanted you and that I didn't want him,

that morning you left. I tried to find you but Anya said you were gone." Her eyes filled with tears. "I'm so sorry. I had no idea he'd try and get back at you. Xander was right. All my old boyfriends seem to want to kill you."

Giles was beginning to feel like he was fading. Despite Buffy's presence here, the drain was still occurring, her magic different from Ethan's. He looked down at himself. "I think I'm dying now."

Buffy shook her head, desperate. "No, you can't. Let me do this spell."

Giles smiled softly at her. "Buffy."

She spoke through her tears. "Giles, I love you. I love you so much I can hardly keep it all inside of me. I don't want to ever be with anyone but you. I don't want to ever have anyone touch me but you." She lifted his chin and caught his gaze. "I'm looking you in the eyes, and I'm telling you that my place is with you, in your bed, by your side, forever." She could see that Giles was growing less distinct. She cried out to him. "Giles, tell me what to do."

Giles took her hand, the marks on it glowing in this in-between world. He had seen in Ethan's mind what had to be done but he hesitated. "Buffy, it's too much to ask of you."

"No, telling me to watch you die is too much to ask. I want this. I want us to be together. I don't want you to ever have to doubt me again." A wave of guilt washed through her as she felt his pain of her and Riley sleeping together. "I'm sorry I hurt you so badly. If it makes you feel any better it was only once, and it was so not a good thing. All I wanted was for it to be you." She gasped, as Giles seemed to almost completely fade out for a moment. "Giles." Suddenly she saw what to do from his mind. She slapped her hand over his chest, mimicking what she was doing back in the room where Giles' body lay dying.

##

Ethan watched Giles and Buffy for a second and then he turned back to Riley. Riley had an almost beatific glow to him. Ethan approached him. Xander was watching Riley as well. He pointed to him, addressing Ethan. "What do we do with him?"

Ethan grinned. "I was worried about that at first but magic man here has taken care of that for us."

Xander furrowed his brow. "What do you mean?" Willow moved closer and stood next to Xander. Olivia was in the corner of the room, watching Buffy

and Giles.

Ethan talked to Riley. "Riley? Still pulling in that magic?"

Riley nodded his head, groaning in delight.

Ethan spoke again. "Want to try a little magic? Try it on for size, see what it feels like to control all that power?"

Riley opened his eyes. "Yes."

Xander frowned. "Ethan, what are you doing?"

Ethan ignored him. He spoke a few words, a simple chant. "Can you repeat that?"

Willow gasped. "That will open his restraints. I heard you do that one to get Giles free." She turned to Xander. "Stop him."

Ethan put his hand up to calm them both. "Just move back. Riley, say the words." Ethan repeated them again for him.

Ethan moved back as well. Riley spoke the words and then he let out a cry of sheer ecstasy. There was a massive explosion of light and when Ethan, Willow and Xander looked up, Riley was gone. Willow and Ethan could feel all the released magic buffeting them.

Xander's jaw dropped. "What the hell was that?"

Ethan picked up the paper with the spell on it that Riley had used. "This spell is a binding spell. Clearly Riley wasn't doing the spell to bind himself to Giles, but he still had to bind himself to something. He had no idea what he was doing." Ethan let out a disgusted sound. "Stupid fool."

Willow prompted him. "So, what did he do?"

Ethan repeated the last two lines of the spell, translating them. "I bind myself to the magic, I bind the magic to me." Ethan grinned. "He wanted the magic, well, he got it, every bit of stray magic he's been around since he finished the spell." He looked around. "He's one with it now."

Willow's eyes opened wide. "He exploded into magic?"

Ethan nodded. Then another flash of light caught his eye. They all turned to where Buffy and Giles were and where her hand touched his chest a dazzling

light was seeping through. Then all around them it seemed as if particles of the air itself began to coalesce and race towards the light to join with it.

Willow grabbed Ethan's arm. "What's that? What's going on?"

Ethan grinned. "An unexpected bonus. His magic, it's going back into him, into them."

"So, if the binding works she'll have magic too, now?"

He nodded. "And he'll have got something from her, I just don't know what."

Her eyebrows rose. "You mean, like some of her Slayer power?"

Ethan just nodded. The light was growing brighter and it was growing difficult to look directly at it.

##

Giles tried to remove Buffy's hand, still concerned that she didn't understand, that she would come to regret this decision, but before he did more than touch her he saw her heart as clearly as his own. He stared at her, stunned at the love he saw there. She smiled at him. "I'm yours, Giles. I belong with you." She closed her eyes as his heart became clear to her. Letting out a sigh she looked at him again. "And you're mine."

Giles just nodded, too overcome to speak, too astonished that she really had no doubts, that she really wanted to be with him, that she was accepting this bond, whatever it meant, with a willing and loving heart. Still not speaking he simply wrapped his arms around her and pulled her close, her hand still pressed to his upper chest, sigil to sigil. He finally spoke. "I love you so much."

She drew back and lifting her other hand she gently touched his face. "I'm sorry, Giles. I never meant to hurt you and I'll never do it again."

He smiled at her. He knew that now. Giles gently nibbled on her lips, and then captured them fully with his own. He groaned as the realization hit him that she was his again now, and forever, to touch, to love.

Before the kiss was barely started the return of his magic startled them both. Buffy let out a gasp. "What was that?"

Giles let out a deep breath. "My magic. It's back."

Buffy closed her eyes, feeling it as it rushed through her, the unfamiliar power making her tingle all over. She grinned at Giles. "I'm liking this."

Giles rolled his eyes. "Don't get too excited. It remains to be seen just how much magic you will be able to do. The drawback to magic is that one has to actually study to learn how to do it."

"Ha ha. You can teach me some stuff, can't you? I mean stuff that might help me when I'm slaying?"

Giles nodded. "Yes, I can. I'll teach you anything you need to help keep you alive."

"Keep pushing that expiration date out, huh?"

Giles hugged her tightly. "Until you're old and gray."

That was when the binding magic hit. Giles let out a cry as Buffy's power ripped through him. It almost made him convulse. Buffy watched him in fear, wondering if it was too much for him, or if it might kill him because he was a man. She even tried to move her hand from his chest but despite her strength she wasn't able to. Suddenly it stopped and Giles went limp in her arms. Holding him tightly she called to him. "Giles, talk to me, are you all right?" She tried again to take her hand away and this time she found she could. Then she found herself back in the room, standing next to Giles who was still lying on the counter.

Ethan, Xander and Willow looked up at Buffy and then down at Giles. Xander moved closer. "Is he all right? Did it work?"

Buffy spoke softly to him. "Giles?" As she waited for him to answer she looked at him. The symbol on his chest had stopped bleeding and was glowing, as it had in that other place. She looked at her hand and noticed that her palm was glowing as well. She started to grow concerned as he continued to lie there, not responding, and was about to put her hand back on his chest when he opened his eyes.

"Buffy?"

"Right here, Giles." He tried to sit up and she assisted him and then moved to sit on the counter next to him. "Are you all right?"

Giles nodded. "Yes, amazingly enough, I feel fine. A little tired but other than that..." He looked down at his chest. He raised his eyebrows as he looked at Buffy. "I'm not sure if it's the magic or Slayer healing but something's

working."

Ethan was curious. "Do you have some of her powers now? Obviously being the Slayer is a magic of sorts, or the spell wouldn't have worked."

Giles pursed his lips. "I'm not sure. I mean, you're right, somehow the spell worked but I'm not sure how much of Buffy's powers I have and how much of my magic she'll end up with. I need to do some research."

Xander snorted at that. "However, he's still mostly Giles."

Giles looked around. "Where's Riley?"

Buffy's eyes darkened as she searched the room for him. Then she turned puzzled eyes to Ethan. "What did you do to him?"

Ethan grinned and handed the paper to Giles. "Read the last two lines."

Giles read them and his eyebrows rose. "He tried to do some magic?"

Ethan nodded. Giles winced. Xander answered the actual question. "Riley sort of exploded. He looked kind of happy while it was happening."

Willow chimed in. "Then your magic zapped back into you, it was so cool." She frowned. "I mean, not the Riley exploding part, but the magic zipping through the air part."

Buffy gave Willow a lopsided smile. "Got it, Will."

Ethan looked out into the hallway and did a double take. The three men were gone, their ropes cut. Ethan decided it was unlikely that they would cause any more trouble for this group and were probably on their way out of state, if not out of the country. "Well, let's get out of here."

Giles was still a bit shaky so Buffy helped him up and stood next to him, supporting him. They all got back in the car, Buffy in the back with Giles, Willow on his other side. Olivia sat in the front with Ethan and Xander, and kept casting unhappy looks in the back seat. Ethan drove them back to the Magic Box.

When they arrived he didn't move to get out of the car. Giles looked at him for a moment and then he squeezed Buffy's hand. "Let me talk to Ethan and Olivia for a moment. I'll be right in."

Buffy frowned and glared at Olivia. Then she pressed her lips against Giles

and kissed him. Pulling back she smiled. "I'll be waiting."

Giles smiled as the three of them got out of the car and headed into the shop. Then, at the last second, Buffy turned around and headed back for the car. She crouched down by the driver's side and looked at Ethan. He looked back at her. "Time for us to have a touching scene?" He gave her a mocking smile.

Buffy held her temper. "Ethan, you're a jerk. But..." She put her hand up to stop him from speaking. "But...I owe you. Big time. As much as it pains me to admit it, I'm glad you were here. He'd be dead if you hadn't shown up." She blew out her breath. "Okay, I'm done. That wasn't as horrible as I thought it would be."

Ethan grinned. "I'll remind you one day that you owe me. Count on it."

Buffy rolled her eyes. "Why am I so not surprised." She put a hand on his arm and, for a moment, was deadly serious. "Thank you." With that she got up and joined the rest of her friends in the Magic Box.

Ethan turned so he could look at Giles. Giles pointed at the shop. "Sure you don't want to come in?"

Ethan snorted. "Quite sure. Causing you no end of trouble in LA was one thing, hanging out with that bunch is more than I can stomach." He glanced at Olivia. "Besides I imagine Liv here could use a drink or two."

Giles glanced at her too; saw the pain in her eyes. He smiled gently at her and then turned his attention back on Ethan. "I don't really know what to say. I've spent so many years being angry with you I'm a bit at a loss as to how to thank you for saving my life."

"Then don't. The anger is much more interesting."

"I'd rather not have to be angry with you." He let out a short laugh. "I suppose it's too much to hope for that you might be turning over a new leaf?"

"Much too much to hope for." Ethan grinned at Giles. "Nothing's changed, you know that. I was just in the right place at the right time. Or the wrong place, depending on how you look at it."

"I think I'll stick with the right place. I owe you my life, and much more than that."

"Don't worry. I'll collect from you too."



Giles let out an exasperated laugh. He had found his shirt and put it on but he looked down at himself, lightly touching where the symbol had been etched into his chest. "What else do you know about this spell? Anything?"

Ethan shook his head, and then he grinned. "With a little Slayer power working for you, I imagine sex will get a little more interesting. You might actually be able to keep up with her."

Giles looked affronted. "I'll let you know I could always keep up with her."

Olivia glared at them both and then turned to Ethan. "Can we go now?"

Ethan laughed wickedly. "I'll be in touch."

Giles winced and then he grinned. "Just remember I'll be stronger the next time I have the opportunity to thrash you."

Ethan pursed his lips. "Then I'll definitely have to do my gloating long distance."

Giles shook his head in mock despair. He got out of the car and looked at Ethan. "You know, you could try and learn how to be an ordinary friend."

Ethan made a face. "I try never to be ordinary, Ripper. You know that."

Giles nodded. "Yes, with that I can agree." He peered into the car and looked at Olivia. "Take care of yourself."

Olivia nodded but didn't say anything. Ethan grinned at Giles and drove away.

##

After a quiet evening back in his home with Dawn and Buffy, after Dawn had finally gone off to bed, Giles and Buffy were lying in bed together. Buffy was grinning at him. "Definitely Slayer stamina." She giggled.

He looked down at himself, almost in amazement. "I don't think I could have done that when I was twenty." Taking in her grin he felt a moment of insecurity. "Wasn't it good before?"

Buffy rolled her eyes and kissed him. "It was wonderful before. You are amazing in bed. But now, you're like bionic guy, on top of the amazing stuff." She shook her head in wonder at him. "How could I have been so stupid?"

He cocked his head at her. "What made you figure it out? How did you decide

that it was me you wanted?"

Buffy thought for a moment. "I was having an argument with Riley, an argument that I've had with you before about taking too many chances on patrol. But his answer was all wrong, it was all...I don't know...it was all about wanting to fight and suddenly I remembered what you had said to me."

Giles shook his head, not sure he was following her. "What did I say?"

"That home should be where the calm is. That home should be a place to be peaceful, a place where you shouldn't have to fight for love and the good stuff. And then I saw what you are to me. You're like the eye of the storm. Everywhere I look my life is crazy, it's all about uncertainty, and wondering what horribleness is around the corner. But here, with you, it's like it's still out there but right here, right now, we're safe from it. You keep me safe from it."

Giles tucked a piece of stray hair behind Buffy's ear. "It's all I've ever wanted to do."

"I know that. I know that now. I just...I guess it scared me."

"What scared you?"

"Admitting that I needed that. I thought it would make me weak, that it meant that I was getting soft, if somehow every part of my life wasn't challenging and painful."

"But you don't feel that way anymore?"

She shook her head and smiled at him. "You make me stronger. I'll be a better Slayer knowing you're there behind me, and I'll be better person, having you here at my side." She looked at him. "What will this binding thing do? I don't really feel that different."

He shook his head. "I'm not really sure, besides the fact that you definitely seem to have some affinity for magic now and I do seem to have some of your powers. We determined that much at the shop before we came home. I imagine that we'll discover more about that as time goes by and as I do more research. Other than that, all I can tell you is what I feel. I can feel you loving me. I have this sense of knowing that we belong together, which is something I never really felt before. I knew I belonged to you but I was never sure of you. I was always afraid that you'd leave me, sooner or later, that you'd find someone new, like Riley. But I'm not afraid of that anymore."

She kissed him. "Good. You don't need to be. Because I love you so much

and it feels completely solid, like a rock, like a mountain inside of me. And I'm sorry I put you through that. I'm sorry I took so long to figure it out, that I caused you so much pain while I was figuring it out."

Giles smiled at her. "Buffy, you had the right to decide, including the right to decide that you didn't want me. I hated it, I've never been so miserable, but I understood. You can't force someone to love you."

"Well, now we're all bonded together and we're staying that way." Suddenly she giggled.

"What?"

"We're a set. Watcher, Slayer; man, woman." She pointed at him. "Eye." Then she pointed at herself. "Storm."

Giles looked lovingly at her. "Well then, let me assure you that this Watcher has no end of admiration for his Slayer. And no man could be luckier than to have this particular woman in his bed." He grinned wickedly as he rolled on top of her. "And this eye is about to put himself in the middle of the storm again."

Buffy laughed out loud and she wrapped her arms around him. "Something tells me it's going to be hurricane season a lot in this bedroom."

Giles chuckled and lowering his head he kissed her.

The End

March 5, 2002