

The Family 1

Giles turned his key in the lock and opened the door. He put his suitcase down by the side of the couch and sighed, glad to be home. He called out, "I'm home." A squeal came from the kitchen and he smiled as Dawn flew around the corner and into his arms.

"Dad, you're home!" She hugged him tightly and he hugged her back. She pulled away. "We weren't expecting you until tomorrow."

Giles nodded. "I know. I got the job done faster than I expected and I couldn't wait to get here so I just hopped on a plane."

"I'm so glad. I've missed you." Dawn hugged him again.

After the hug he took her by the shoulders and held her at arms length looking at her. "You are getting more beautiful every time I see you." He gave her a stern look. "Any young men I need to threaten off with a sword?"

Dawn blushed, smiling, delighted at his words. "Maybe a couple." She was thrilled he was home even if it was just for a few days. She yelled for Buffy, snaked her arm around Giles, and walked him to the kitchen.

In answer to Dawn's yell, Buffy came running down the stairs and into the kitchen. "What's up? Where's the fire?" She saw Giles and shrieked. She threw herself into his arms and squeezed him so hard he protested.

"Ouch. Can't see that your strength has started going away yet." She pulled out of his arms and shook her head.

"I don't think it has. I still feel just as strong." She shrugged and smiled at Giles. "You're here early."

Giles nodded. "I was just telling Dawn I finished early and I was missing you both so I decided to come straight back."

Buffy hugged him again. "I'm so glad." She moved over to the oven and put the kettle on for tea. "Although it's a good thing you didn't get here yesterday." She and Dawn exchanged a grimace.

"Why?"

"Hank was here." Buffy never referred to Hank as her father anymore, not since she had come back from the dead for the second time. She watched Giles' eyes darken and she suppressed a grin. There was no love lost

between Hank and Giles. It would be an understatement to say that they hated each other. The last time Hank had shown up she thought she'd have to get in between the two of them. Buffy knew that if she had needed to choose who to defend it would have been Giles. As far as Buffy and Dawn were both concerned Giles was the one they wanted and Hank could go screw himself.

Hank showed up a couple of times a year although he called more often. He inevitably ended the phone calls by yelling at Giles for taking his daughters away from him.

Joyce had made provisions in her will to have Giles assume guardianship over Dawn until Hank showed up, and to maintain it in the event that he never bothered to show up at all. When Buffy had died Giles had been a wreck, but he had never faltered in his responsibility. He had moved in with Dawn and taken her on. Things had been awkward for the first few weeks until Hank had called one night. Buffy remembered what Dawn had told her about that first call.

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When the phone rang Giles picked up the cordless. "Hello?"

"Who the hell is this?"

"Rupert Giles, who the hell is this?" Something about the man's tone had gotten immediately under Giles' skin. Dawn looked up in alarm at Giles' response.

"Hank Summers. Where is my daughter?"

"Ah, Mr. Summers." He watched as Dawn shrank into the couch, shaking her head. "Uh, Dawn isn't here at the moment. May I take a message?"

"Yes, you can tell her that I'm her father, not you. I don't care if you are her temporary guardian. Who the hell are you, anyway? How did Joyce know you? As soon as I finish up this deal I'm working on I'll be coming up to get her."

"Yes, well, I'll certainly believe that when I see it." Giles winced at his own words. He couldn't believe how rude he was being.

"Fuck you. I'm her father, and don't you forget it." Hank slammed the phone down and Giles jerked the phone from his ear at the noise.

Giles stood up, incensed. He looked at Dawn and without thinking he started yelling. "How can he even say he's your father? What kind of father is he? He's already lost one daughter, how can he not want to be with you every moment? How can he not want to see what an extraordinary young woman you're becoming? What kind of bloody pillock is he, anyway?" He paced around the living room.

Suddenly he stopped short as he realized that he was maligning Hank to his daughter. He looked at Dawn and sent her a wan smile. "Sorry Dawn." He threw himself into the chair and sat there in a funk. He looked over and saw that Dawn had tears in her eyes. He sighed, got up and went to sit next to her on the couch drawing her into his arms. "I'm really sorry. I shouldn't have said any of those things. I'm sure your father loves you very much."

Dawn just wrapped her arms around Giles and cried. After a while she asked a teary question. "You really think he's stupid not to want me?"

Giles let out an exasperated sigh, still having a hard time holding his tongue. "Yes, I do. I'm sure he has his reasons but he just doesn't understand what he's missing out on." He squeezed Dawn.

Dawn asked another teary question. "So you want me to be here?"

Giles sat up and held Dawn by the shoulders, looking her in the eyes, seeing the sadness and confusion there. If Hank had been in the room Giles would have carved his heart out. He nodded his head. "Yes, Dawn, I want you here with me."

A few more tears leaked out. "Can I call you Dad?"

Giles' eyes widened and then he softly smiled at her. "I would be honored if you would call me Dad." He held her again and let her finish her cry.

##

She had called him Dad from then on and had never looked back. She was reasonably civil to Hank when he visited, never spoke to him on the phone when she could help it, and she and Giles took to each other like fish to water. They helped each other cope with Buffy's death and together they coped when Buffy came back.

Buffy had been taken aback when she first heard Dawn call Giles Dad. She, however, had no intention of calling him that. Rather, she made it clear, that it

would be she and Giles together taking care of Dawn. They formed a partnership of sorts. Giles was introduced as Dawn's dad and vague comments were made as to his relationship with Buffy and they all left it at that. To all intents and purposes they were a family, and a happy one at that. Buffy and Giles ran the household together, and over time, assumptions were made by acquaintances that Dawn was Giles' blood daughter, and Buffy was his young wife. None of them ever bothered to correct anyone unless they crossed the line from acquaintance to friend. The people who needed to know, knew.

They all had separate rooms. And Buffy and Giles' relationship was completely platonic or at least that's what Buffy and Giles told themselves and they believed it, on and off. Giles felt lucky to be connected with Buffy so strongly and he loved them both as much as if they were his own family.

Hank called periodically, threatening to be there as soon as the next deal was done but he never made good on his threats. He showed up to visit but then would leave just as suddenly, usually after an altercation with Giles. Soon after Dawn turned eighteen and was free of any threats from Hank, Giles lashed out at him the next time he called and told Hank just what he thought of him. Hank hadn't called again, or at least hadn't asked to speak to Giles.

Giles grimaced when he realized how close he'd come to having to deal with Hank. He watched the girls watch him and he rolled his eyes. "Did you make him sleep on the couch?" He grinned.

They grinned back and nodded. Buffy spoke as if sharing a secret. "We never let him sleep in your room. It pisses him off so much." She bit her lip, knowing she was being bad.

Giles laughed and put his arm around her. "Good." He didn't know why but Hank brought out the worst in him. The kettle started to whistle and Buffy started pulling out mugs as Giles turned the burner off.

After dinner the three of them settled in the living room. Buffy watched Giles as he looked through the mail. After a couple of minutes she spoke. "So, how's my famous Watcher, anyway?"

He looked up smiling. "It's all so silly, really."

She grinned. "You're loving it, aren't you?"

He grinned back. "Yes, all of it, I'm ashamed to admit."

"Are you excited about actually getting to teach?"

He nodded. "Yes, working on the digs has been exciting but I am looking forward to spending time in England and seeing what if any changes I can make with all those new student Watchers. I'm sure I'll be considered a terrible influence."

Buffy watched his face glow. She was so proud of him. "I doubt it. They all think you're a hero. I'm sure they'll lean on your every word, hoping they can be as successful with their Slayers as you were with me."

Giles smiled tenderly at her. "Buffy, one of the reasons I was so successful is because you were my Slayer. They seem to forget that."

Buffy shook her head. "I was successful because you were my Watcher, and my friend, and, well, my family. I never would have made it this long with any other Watcher. I know it, and you know it."

Giles blushed, warmed through and through by her words. "Well, let's say it was a team effort." He looked at Buffy closely. He had noticed 'something' about her all evening. He finally put his finger on it. "You look especially happy."

She smiled and blushed. Dawn leaned forward and whispered loudly, "She has a new boyfriend."

Buffy blushed more and glared at Dawn. Dawn just grinned, unrepentant. Giles was a study in nonchalance. "Who is he?" Before Buffy answered he said in a fierce tone, "I swear if another man breaks your heart I am ripping his head off." Buffy stared at him. Giles blushed. He hadn't meant to actually say that out loud. He sighed to himself and repeated his question. "Who is he?"

Buffy was still looking at Giles with an odd look on her face. "I don't think I should tell you. Just in case. I'd hate to have to visit you in jail."

Giles scowled. He looked at Dawn. "Who is he?" He and Dawn had had numerous conversations about Buffy's continually abysmal taste in men. Dawn knew exactly who she wanted Buffy to be with. She didn't want any strangers mucking up her happy home. Buffy and Giles belonged together even if she hadn't gotten far convincing them of that. She could see the looks, but the two of them were blind as bats. She felt like she was finally making headway with Giles and she could have screamed when Buffy got this new boyfriend right before Giles was due home.

"Some butthead Xander introduced her to." Dawn could have killed Xander.

The two of them had had a long talk after that.

Buffy glowered at Dawn. "He's not a butthead. He's an engineer." She glanced nervously at Dawn and made a little whiny noise. "You really think he's a butthead?"

Dawn rolled her eyes. "You're dating him. He's a butthead."

Giles tried to suppress a smile but he didn't do a very good job. "Well, I'm certainly looking forward to meeting him." Which was a lie, of course. "You should have written me."

Dawn smirked. "Right, and address it to Rupert Giles, third Incan ruin to the right, Mexico. Besides, I didn't know. Buffy never tells me anything. I still wouldn't know if Xander hadn't asked how things were going." She looked at her sister with disgust. How she could even look at this Butthead when she had Giles was beyond her. She could just scream.

Giles reached for his tea and a magazine. Dawn went back to plotting how to get rid of Butthead and Buffy thought back to almost a year ago when the three of them had been sitting much the same way. Buffy had been approaching her 25th birthday. So much had happened that year - they'd averted another apocalypse, Xander and Anya were expecting their second child, and Willow and Tara had broken up and then gotten back together, more committed than ever. Giles, Dawn and Buffy were spending a quiet evening at home, well deserved after the hell they'd been through. Giles had insisted that Buffy skip patrol that night. He wanted her home, safe and sound.

Giles had picked up a large envelope that had come in the mail that day from the Watcher's Council. He'd shown the envelope to Buffy before opening it and Buffy had grimaced at the Council's emblem. She and Dawn had watched as he'd opened it.

##

Giles sat there and slowly read through the lengthy letter. He closed his eyes, and then opening them, he read it again. As he started reading it a third time Buffy snapped her finger against the letter to draw his attention. "Giles, you're making me crazy, what does it say?"

He turned stunned eyes to her and she started getting a nervous feeling in her stomach. He opened his mouth to speak and then shut it again. Buffy started to feel a sense of panic coming on. "Giles, talk."

He nodded. He clutched the letter in his hand, crinkling it. "Buffy, you know that you've lived a lot longer than expected?" Buffy nodded, wincing. Giles didn't usually talk about this. He continued, "Apparently you'll be only the third Slayer in recorded history to make it to her 25th birthday." She waited for the other shoe to drop. He saw her expression and hurried to explain. "You'll get to retire."

Her jaw dropped. "What?"

"Apparently another Slayer will be called when you turn 25. It's not generally known because it's so rarely happened, and hasn't happened for over 200 years."

Buffy just stared at him. He stared back. Dawn looked at them both. She looked worried now. "What happens to Buffy?"

Giles turned to look at her and smiled. "Nothing. I mean nothing bad." He turned back to Buffy. "The letter says that over time your powers will fade, but that it takes a few years. They want to hire you as a consultant, to work with the new Slayer and Watcher that will be assigned here on the Hellmouth." His heart soared as he realized that the chances of Buffy living to be a ripe old age, maybe getting married and having children of her own, might come true after all. He looked at Buffy and noticed that she still looked completely dumbfounded.

She finally spoke. "I get to retire?" Giles nodded. "I don't have to die so a new Slayer can be called?" Giles shook his head. "They're going to pay me?" Giles smiled and nodded his head. She looked at him for a few seconds longer and then she let out a squeal and threw herself in Giles' lap, holding him tight. She laughed for a while and then started to cry and Giles held her until she rode it out. She sat back and looked at him and then looked back at Dawn motioning her to come closer. Dawn came and perched on the other arm of Giles' chair. Buffy smiled at them both. "I get to retire." They all sat and grinned at each other.

Buffy got a concerned look on her face. She looked at Giles. "What happens to you?"

Giles pursed his lips. "They want me back in England. Apparently I'm something of a celebrity - as the only Watcher alive who's kept his Slayer around until her 25th birthday. They want me to teach at the Council and help re-examine the way they train the Watchers, perhaps make some big changes. They also have a few projects they need my assistance with."

Buffy watched Giles' face and saw the excitement there. She knew how much this meant to him, after all the time Giles had been considered somewhat of a bad seed of a Watcher. As far as she was concerned it was about time they understood how amazing he was. And she knew that he could make significant changes that would make things better for future slayers. She hugged him again, delighted for him.

Dawn gave a sad sniff. "Does that mean you have to go away?" She didn't like that idea much.

Giles snuck his arm around her. "If I agree to what they want, then yes, I'd have to go away. But I'd be back for holidays, and you'd come and visit me, and I'll call every week." He looked at them both with love shining in his eyes. "We're family. Nothing can keep us apart." He squeezed Dawn tighter. "No gloomy faces now. It's still a couple of months away. We have plenty of time to talk about it." He looked at Buffy and she saw the determination in his eyes. She knew he was committing everything he was to making sure she made it to her 25th birthday. She put out her hand, her fingers touching the letter.

"Can I read it?" He nodded and relinquished it to her. Buffy and Dawn sat on either side of Giles as Buffy read the letter out loud.

##

That had been almost a year ago and Giles had yet to make it to England. The Council had him traveling all over the world looking at ancient artifacts, writings and prophecies. Suddenly he was the expert they couldn't do without. They flew him first class and he got the royal treatment no matter where he went. He was embarrassed at how much he was enjoying it, but Buffy was thrilled for him. In between missing him. A lot.

He had made it home every couple of months and twice he had flown Buffy and Dawn to where he was for a few days. Once he'd even flown Willow out and she had been beside herself. He would have brought out Xander and Anya as well, but between managing the store and taking care of one child with another on the way, they had their hands full.

Giles would soon be heading to England and his first term of actual teaching. Buffy suddenly sat up straight. "Oh, oh, I forgot to tell you. Oh my God, you'll be so excited." Giles looked at her, prompting her to continue with a circular motion of his hand. She obeyed his silent order and said, "Willow got accepted."

Giles' eyes widened. "She's been accepted to train as a Watcher?"

Buffy nodded grinning. "She worked like crazy all semester getting her prerequisites done. When she told the Council, they sped up her application and told her to come."

"She's already gone?" Giles started to smile.

Buffy nodded. "She'll be there when you get to England. She and Tara both went. Tara's always wanted to live overseas, so off they went. Willow cannot wait to see you and plans to sign up for all your classes."

Giles sat back, still grinning. He was thrilled that Willow had been accepted, and very glad that she'd be there when he arrived. It felt as if a piece of home was waiting for him. It almost made up for not having Buffy and Dawn with him. Almost, but not quite. The thought of Buffy's new boyfriend made Giles scowl.

Buffy looked at him. "What's the scowl for?"

Giles shook his head. "Nothing."

Dawn grinned. "We think Spike went there too."

Giles dropped his jaw but Buffy nodded, enjoying the look on his face, and finished the story. "He vanished at about the same time Willow did. He's been threatening to go. He and Willow have become good friends, and he and the new Slayer haven't exactly hit it off. Besides, he always sort of liked you and I think he missed you." She sent him a mischievous grin.

Giles rolled his eyes at her. "How am I going to explain Spike to the Council?" He actually had to bite back a smile at the thought. He figured he'd be setting them back on their ears anyway so why not throw Spike in the mix. He might be the first vampire most of the established Watchers had ever seen, let alone the students. Spike could prove useful.

Besides, Spike had grown on him and the two of them had sort of become friends. About three years ago, Spike had reconciled himself to working with Giles and Buffy and had become a reliable part of the team. Giles thought perhaps it was because Spike had finally come to realize that he was never going to get the chip out of his head.

Giles looked at both Buffy and Dawn. "Life in England just got interesting." He began to laugh and Buffy and Dawn joined in.

End Part 1

The Family 2

Giles had been in England for a full day but hadn't connected with Willow yet. He'd just visited the small suite she and Tara were sharing on campus but neither of them had been there. When he had gotten back to his office he had found a young man waiting for him, a Watcher in training that had been assigned to him as an apprentice. He was tall and slender, hair almost black, in a short cut that did nothing to hide a tendency to curl. His eyes were astonishingly blue and distinctly annoyed. Giles bit back a smile as he took in the sullen young man before him.

"Benjamin Stoddard?" The young man nodded his head. Giles thought for a moment. "I assume your father is Benjamin Stoddard as well?" The young man nodded his head again. Giles cocked his head to the side. "Your father doesn't like me very much."

"I know."

"I assume he's told you stories about me."

The young man nodded, his brow furrowed. Giles suppressed a wince. He could only imagine the stories the man had told his son. Stoddard had been one of his most scathing detractors when Giles had been fired and biggest protester when he had been rehired. "I see. So, you've already tried and sentenced me, have you? Like father like son?"

Benjamin looked up to find Giles' eyes looking at him and he had the grace to blush. Benjamin looked down at the floor, unsure of what to say.

Giles spoke again. "Does your father know you've been assigned to me?" Benjamin looked up again, his eyes rueful. He nodded. Giles softly laughed. "I'm sure he's thrilled."

"Not exactly."

Giles nodded. "Watcher training is hard enough. If you would like me to, I can arrange for you to be reassigned. I don't mind." Benjamin looked back up at Giles. He expected to see anger in the Watcher's eyes but instead only saw compassion and humor.

Suddenly he was ashamed of himself and his father. He knew that the other

apprentices were green with envy that he'd been assigned to Mr. Giles. He decided that maybe there was a reason for that. He shook his head and said, "No, I'll stay."

Giles smiled and the warmth in both his smile and his eyes warmed Benjamin. "Good man." Giles clapped him on the arm. "Tell you what. We'll give it a few weeks and if you aren't happy I'll arrange for a transfer. All right?" At Benjamin's nod Giles looked at him. "What do I do with you, anyway?"

Benjamin looked startled. "Anything you want." His eyes widened and his face began to turn red as he realized how that had sounded. "I mean, not anything, I mean, you know, papers, or errands, or that kind of anything." He closed his eyes, appalled at his babbling, expecting to get yelled at. Most of the Watchers yelled. He opened his eyes again when Giles chuckled.

"You'll have to work harder than that to bother me. I've spent the last 10 years raising a pack of teenagers. If I could have a pound for every time the wrong words came out of their mouths I'd be retired right now." He grinned at Benjamin and was relieved when Benjamin grinned back. "So, Benjamin, do I teach you as well?"

Benjamin nodded. "Whatever you think I need to know."

Giles nodded. "Ever met a vampire?" Benjamin's eyes widened and he shook his head. Giles nodded. "Come on then. Let's have your first lesson." He stood up and opened the top left drawer of his desk. He withdrew a couple of stakes and handed one to Benjamin, who took it as if it were alive. Giles saw his expression and let out a half laugh. "Just put it in your pocket. Hopefully we won't need it." Giles picked up a crossbow as well and a couple of crosses.

Giles led Benjamin outside and they started walking. Benjamin felt nervous when he saw where Giles was heading, as they'd been warned to avoid certain areas in his orientation material and this was one of them.

They walked deeper into the darkness and suddenly found themselves face to face with three vampires. Benjamin couldn't believe how quickly they appeared. He saw his death in each and every vampire visage, especially when he saw them start to grin. Giles brought around his crossbow and shot one of the vampires so quickly Benjamin didn't even realize he'd done it until he saw him explode into dust. Then Giles pulled his stake out of his pocket looking for all the world as if he were about to use it to stir his tea. Without looking at Benjamin he said, "I would recommend removing your stake from your pocket."

Benjamin hurriedly reached into his pocket, but before he could retrieve it one of the two remaining vampires attacked. Benjamin swallowed a scream as he saw Giles jump into action.

Before the vampire even knew what hit him Giles had plunged the stake into his heart. He turned into dust in front of Benjamin. Giles flashed a grin at the sickly look on Benjamin's face. Then his eyes widened as the last vampire wrapped a hand around his neck. Giles elbowed him in his gut and when the vampire staggered back, Giles staked him. He brushed the vampire dust off his jacket. "One thing about the vampires in this area, they're not used to anyone fighting back. Makes them absurdly easy to kill."

Suddenly, two more vampires arrived. Giles glanced around, looking for more. "However, there do seem to be an awful lot of them." Giles swore. "Damn, I wish I had my sword." He looked at Benjamin. "Next time remind me to bring my sword." He reached into his pocket and brought out a couple of crosses, which he handed to Benjamin. "Here, put these out in front of you and keep them busy while I reload the crossbow." Benjamin was afraid he might throw up but he put his arms out, each hand armed with a cross, and watched in amazement as the vampires hissed their displeasure and backed away.

Benjamin thought they might actually make it out of there when one of the vampires moved in and with a kick sent one of the crosses flying. He let out a warning and Giles raised his crossbow, preparing to shoot the one heading for Benjamin when another vampire appeared in their midst and staked him first.

"Watcher. Having fun?" Giles grinned at Spike, then pointed behind Spike as another vampire charged. Spike spun and threw a high kick that connected with the vampire's jaw. The vampire went flying. Spike turned back to Giles. "I've been looking for you. What took you so long?"

"I went home to see Buffy and Dawn."

"And how is the Slayer and the little one?"

"Wonderful. Although Dawn is hardly little anymore, as you well know. She's as tall as you. Did you know that Buffy is dating another butthead?" He grinned. "Dawn's words, not mine." This had been a regular topic of conversation with Giles and Spike as well.

Spike's eyes widened. "Bloody hell." That statement was in response to a punch from a vampire. "I'm trying to have a conversation here." He lunged

forward and staked the vampire. While he was doing that Giles staked the last one.

Benjamin stared at them both, incredulous that Giles had been chatting as vampires tried to kill them all. And chatting with a vampire to boot. He finally wrestled the stake out of his pocket.

Spike turned back to Giles. "Yes, I threatened to kill him if he hurts her."

Giles laughed. "I told Buffy the same thing. She made a point not to let me meet him." He looked at Spike and they grinned at each other. Suddenly Giles remembered his manners. "Ah, Benjamin, this is Spike, Spike, Benjamin Stoddard, my apprentice."

Spike gave Benjamin a long appraising look. Then he pointed in Giles' direction. "This one's a good one. Stick with him and you'll be one of the best." Giles smiled at the praise.

Benjamin's jaw dropped. "Spike? Spike, the vampire who killed two Slayers?" His voice came out as a squeak.

Spike rocked back and forth on the balls of his feet, hands in his pocket. He smiled, pleased that his reputation had preceded him. "That's me." Benjamin looked like he might faint.

Giles rolled his eyes and smacked Spike on the arm. "Put the game face away, you're scaring him."

Spike grinned but complied and his human face replaced his vampire visage. He started to stroll and Giles fell into step beside him, Benjamin following behind. Benjamin watched them talking and laughing. He started to recall some of the rumors he had heard about Giles. Most of it had been from his fellow students and he had discounted most of it as wild, unsubstantiated legend. As he watched Giles and Spike walk along Benjamin began to wonder how much else he'd been told might be true. He started to smile. Whatever else this year might bring, it certainly wouldn't be dull.

As they were walking Spike noticed another vampire trailing them. Spike turned to Benjamin. "Ever kill a vampire?" He had noticed the young man's death grip on his stake.

Benjamin shook his head, his eyes alarmed. "No."

Spike walked over to him. "Come here." Benjamin looked at Giles in alarm but Giles encouraged him. Spike adjusted his grip on the stake and then he

showed him on his chest where he needed to strike. "You're not a Slayer, so you need to use speed and your weight to thrust it through as you're still having to get through bone." Holding on tight to Benjamin's hand he spun him and lunged at the vampire Benjamin hadn't even known was there. Spike guided the stake into the vampire's heart. Benjamin let go of the stake in surprise and then watched as the vampire turned to dust. He stared at the dust on the ground in stunned disbelief and then he looked at Giles and then at Spike. "I did it. I staked a vampire."

Spike rolled his eyes. "With a little help."

Giles slapped Benjamin on the back. "You've just killed one more vampire than most of the Watchers in the Council."

They strolled a little farther but in time Spike and Giles parted ways and Spike strolled off into the darkness. Giles headed back to the Council building. He seemed lost in thought and Benjamin stayed quiet, not wanting to disturb him. Finally he spoke. "Mr. Giles?"

Giles looked at him, eyebrows raised. "Yes, Benjamin?"

"Do you think I can stake a vampire on my own some time?" Benjamin wasn't sure if he wanted him to say yes or no.

Giles smiled. "Yes, that can be arranged. We'll go find some gravesites and try and catch one newly risen. They're generally awfully stupid and disoriented when they first rise. All they can think about is feeding so they don't pay much attention, although the hunger does make them quite lethal."

"How many vampires have you killed?"

Giles thought for a moment. "I have no idea. Hundreds I would imagine."

"Why haven't you killed Spike?"

Giles glanced at Benjamin. "Spike? Well, Spike is special. He's, well, he's a friend. It's complicated." He didn't think that Spike's chip was anyone's business unless Spike wanted it to be.

Benjamin could tell that he wasn't going to get any more out of Giles about Spike, at least not tonight. As they started up the sidewalk to the entrance to the building, something jumped on the ground and Benjamin startled back. When he saw it was a frog he laughed at himself and then looked up at Giles and saw that Giles was looking all around at the ground. Benjamin looked as well and saw that there were frogs everywhere. They all looked to be the

same shape and size. Giles' brow was furrowed. He looked at Benjamin and Benjamin just shrugged.

Suddenly, the doors opened and a couple of people ran out yelling. Giles picked up his pace and walked inside. There were frogs everywhere inside as well. Hundreds of them. They all seemed to be coming from one direction. Giles started walking against the flow, carefully avoiding stepping on any of the creatures. Benjamin followed closely behind him.

As the flow of frogs got thicker Giles suddenly halted. His eyes closed and he concentrated, feeling for magic. Benjamin watched him, wondering what he was doing. Suddenly Giles' eyes opened up and Benjamin watched in amazement as Giles shook his head with a smile on his face. Giles started walking purposefully up the corridor. He stopped before a door in the students' apartment wing. Pushing the door open he revealed a panicked young woman in a room full of frogs. The woman saw him and sagged in relief. "Giles."

Giles took one look at the room and at Willow and the pot on the floor from which more frogs were trying to escape and he started to laugh. He laughed until he was doubled over with it and had to lower himself to the floor. Benjamin stared at him and then he stared at the young woman in the center of the room who was blushing a deep red. Finally Giles stopped laughing. He inched his way over to Willow. She looked at him. "Make them stop. I can't make them stop. I don't understand what I did wrong."

He tried hard not to laugh again but he couldn't help it. In between his laughter he said, "What spell did you do? And why on earth are you conjuring frogs?"

Willow blushed again. "I ran into a young boy outside who was crying because he'd lost his frog. I thought I could get him another one."

Giles shook his head at her. "It never occurred to you to just try and catch one?" She grimaced and he took mercy on her. "What spell did you do?" Willow told him. He bit his lip to keep from laughing and she smacked him on the arm.

"Stop laughing at me."

Benjamin couldn't believe she'd hit him. No one hit a Watcher.

Willow looked around the room and shivered. "I hate frogs."

Giles started to laugh again. "God, I've missed you." Willow just grinned at

him and then poked him.

"Just help me, and if you laugh again I'll turn you into a frog."

"You wouldn't like me as a frog. I'd be a big frog. And I'd haunt you."

She rolled her eyes and pointed to the pot as another frog leapt out. She let out a cry. "Hurry."

Giles put his hands over the pot and incanted a few words. Benjamin could feel a small jolt of power shake the room. The frogs all disappeared. Giles looked at Willow and asked, "Why were you willing to conjure a frog if you hate them so much?"

"He was unhappy. I thought I could conjure one and he'd stay in my pot and I could carry him downstairs. Who knew there'd be so many and they'd be so leapy." Giles bit his lip hard to keep from laughing again. Willow saw him and smacked him again. "Okay, so I'm stupid girl." She scowled at him and looked around. "Where'd they all go?"

"I was able to send them back because you had just conjured them. If they'd been here much longer I wouldn't have been able to." He looked at Willow. "Can you guess what you did wrong?"

She had listened to him say his spell. She grimaced. "I'm thinking I shouldn't have used the word for duplication." She looked at him. "Right?"

He nodded. "I can see where you might use that because you wanted to duplicate the image in your mind but the word in this spell means something quite different, as you clearly saw." She nodded and then she noticed Benjamin.

Giles introduced them. Then Benjamin asked Giles, "Are you really a sorcerer?" That had been one of the rumors too. Willow nodded her head emphatically.

"Yes, and he's really good." She looked at Giles with admiration and he rolled his eyes.

"I've had to be to keep you out of trouble for so many years." He smiled lovingly at her.

Benjamin gaped at the redhead. "You're that Willow?" He looked at Giles. "She's that Willow?"

Giles looked at him. "Well if by 'that Willow' you mean Buffy's best friend, then the answer would be yes." Giles looked at Willow again. He was tickled to see her and pleased that she'd be underfoot even if it included magic spells gone awry. Giles glanced up at Benjamin and asked, "I trust you can keep this incident in confidence?"

Benjamin nodded, but then he spoke, hesitantly. "I felt something when you did that spell. What was that?"

Giles looked surprised. "You could feel that?"

Benjamin nodded.

"Any magic in your family?"

Benjamin shook his head no.

Giles pursed his lips. "Maybe there is now. We can do some testing later if you'd like."

Benjamin grinned. "I might have magic?"

Giles hastened to caution, but there was a twinkle in his eye. "It's possible. Most people can't sense magic unless they have some."

Benjamin was in seventh heaven. "Wow." He looked at Giles, remembering how just a few short hours ago he'd been appalled that he had to be his apprentice. Now it felt as if this was the luckiest day of his life. "Wow."

Giles looked at him and grinned back. "I think you've had enough excitement for one night. I'd like to speak with Willow, so I'll see you in the morning."

Benjamin just nodded and walked off in a daze. Willow looked at Giles and laughed. "Another addition to the I Love Giles fan club." Giles shook his head, gently dismissing her words.

He sat on her couch. "So, tell me what's going on apart from frog conjuring? And where's Tara?" She started chatting, filling him in and he sat there listening to her words, soaking them in, glad she was there. When Tara showed up an hour later, the reunion continued late into the night.

End Part 2

Giles was feeling concerned. He looked out on the class of student Watchers before him and wondered what it would take to jolt them out of their reserved natures. Giles knew he had been reserved, still was, he supposed to a certain extent, but he had always been passionate about his work.

These students were very quiet. They hardly asked questions. They just sat and stared at him as he taught. He wondered if it was his reputation that had them acting like this. Maybe Benjamin had been talking and they were all afraid he would turn one of them into a frog. He bit his lip to keep from smiling remembering Willow's escapade. He had not had any time to spend with her or Tara since that night as he'd been in instructor meetings every night for the past five evenings.

She was out there too with the rest of the first year students, being as quiet as the rest of them. That disconcerted him, as he wasn't used to Willow being quiet. He had been hoping that she could loosen up some of the students, but instead they seemed to be affecting her. He looked at her and saw that she wasn't paying any attention at all. He was discussing various methods of killing vampires and supposed, as she probably knew more about it than the rest of the students combined, that he could understand why her thoughts were wandering. Giles decided to get her mind back on class.

He picked up where he had left off, keeping an eye on Willow. "It's important to remember that cranberry juice is an effective vampire repellent. And bug spray. And if you're ever really in a jam you can use your cell phone. Just turn it on and point it at them. The frequency makes them dizzy and they're easier to kill that way." Giles noted some incredulous stares from his more knowledgeable students, but no one had the temerity to correct him. Others, he saw, hiding a grin, were furiously taking notes.

Willow was daydreaming but her eyes lit on the notebook of the young man sitting next to her. She absentmindedly read what he had written. Her eyes started to widen as the words sank in. She sat up straight and yelled out without thinking. "Hey, hey, you're not telling it right."

Giles bit back a grin. "Ah, Ms Rosenberg, back with us, I see. What exactly am I saying that's incorrect?"

The class as a whole took a breath, waiting for her response and then his backlash. No one corrected a Watcher. Willow stood, uncertain. But then she saw the notes again. "Cranberry juice? You know cranberry juice won't kill vampires. It might make them really angry and then they'd just try and kill you faster. And bug spray? That would really, really make them mad. And the only

thing you could do with a cell phone is maybe throw it at them."

As she spoke Giles started grinning and towards the end of her speech she began to realize that he had set her up. Before she could complain about it Giles interrupted her. "So, perhaps you can tell the class the best way to kill a vampire."

"A good staking, right through the heart. But it's harder than it looks. All their bones and stuff are still there so it helps to have a very pointy stick unless you're the Slayer. Oh, and you want to hold onto it because if you let it go it goes poof with the vampire and if it was the only stake you had, that would be bad if there are other vampires."

Murmuring swept through the classroom. Giles spoke up. "For those of you wondering how Ms. Rosenberg knows these things, allow me to introduce her. This is Willow Rosenberg, best friend of the Slayer, Buffy Summers, and someone whom I've had the pleasure of knowing and fighting vampires with for the last 10 years." Willow blushed. Giles wasn't done. "Willow has killed more vampires and other demons than you can imagine."

Willow shook her head. "No, I mostly just throw holy water on them and get out of the way so Buffy or Giles can kill them." She pointed at Giles. "He's the one who's killed a bunch of vampires. You should see him with a sword in his hand. He can decapitate more vampires than Buffy can stake." Willow grinned at Giles, whose turn it was to now feel uncomfortable at receiving praise.

He pushed on, wanting to use this opportunity. "Get to know her, use her as a resource. She's been researching for me for years, can recognize most demons on sight and has been in more battles and shown more bravery than most anyone I know." He looked around the audience. "Let's see who else we have here. Has anyone else killed a vampire or any other kind of demon? Or seen one?" Several hands went up. And Giles began to call on them to let them tell their stories.

His classes starting getting very full after that. Giles was sure that there were more people showing up than his roll sheet could account for. Most of the classes were standing room only, especially his evening classes, as Spike often came to those. And Spike brought guests. Most of the time they were benign demons because Giles wanted to get across the idea that not all demons were evil. But every now and then he'd bring someone dangerous. The class lived for those nights.

Spike paid the demons to come, and extracted promises from them not to hurt anyone. Most of the time things went without a hitch. Spike, Giles,

Willow and sometimes Benjamin would surround the demon, all holding crossbows, as the class observed and got to ask questions. Every now and then a demon would act up. And if they couldn't be subdued, they'd end up dead. That only happened a couple of times. After that, the demons figured out that if they wanted their money, they'd answer the stupid questions and then leave. Even Watchers began to come to Giles' evening classes.

What Giles wanted was for Buffy to be there. Yes, it was important to train this generation of Watchers to understand what was out there, to let them see and touch a vampire and for them to understand that they could have demons for allies. But what he really wanted was for them to understand the Slayer. That she was as human as they were, with the same hopes and fears. That she was not an instrument, but rather someone who would become stronger with a personal relationship with their Watcher.

Of course, he also wanted her there because he missed her. This last year had been wonderful in so many ways, but he missed Dawn badly, and he longed for Buffy. He'd almost given up hope that she would ever see him as anything but a friend, but it seemed beyond his abilities to stop wanting it.

Dawn knew, of course. Dawn didn't miss much. But he had asked Dawn not to interfere. And it seemed as if she was honoring that request, although she was always more than happy to trash Buffy's latest beau when she spoke with Giles on the phone. Giles sighed. There was no shortage of men who wanted Buffy. Sooner or later she would meet one that swept her heart away, and his dreams would turn to dust.

##

"What do you mean you have a date?" Dawn wanted to throw something at her sister.

"I have a date. Four words that mean the same thing they've always meant."

"With who?" Dawn tried to keep careful track, as she had no intention of letting Buffy get serious about anyone. It was true that Giles had asked her not to interfere, but she couldn't help it. They were both a pair of doofuses.

"With Kevin."

Dawn relaxed. "Oh, that butthead."

"Will you stop calling everyone I date a butthead?"

"I will when you stop dating buttheads."

Buffy sighed. "Look I can't help it if I live on the Hellmouth and every eligible, worthwhile guy has been eaten, sucked dry, or sacrificed to some slimy purple acne'd demon."

"Not every guy," Dawn mumbled.

"What? Stop mumbling."

Dawn threw her sister a disgusted look. "Never mind." She got up and stomped up the stairs to her bedroom. Something had to be done. Giles was already old, but he'd be ancient by the time Buffy figured anything out. She could see the wedding, Giles holding on to his walker as Buffy walked down the aisle. Dawn rolled her eyes. Something had to be done and now.

She threw herself on her bed and eyed her alarm clock. Dawn pursed her lips, as she tried to figure out what time it was in England.

##

Willow and Benjamin strolled along a tree-lined street, keeping an ear out for vampires as they talked. Benjamin wanted to learn all he could about magic and Willow loved to talk about magic. Giles had told him that under no circumstances was he to participate in any spells with Willow, but he hadn't said he couldn't talk to her.

He couldn't believe what had happened to his life. And although it was true his father was barely speaking to him anymore, everything else about his life was beyond great. He was the envy of the other apprentices having Giles as his mentor. It was amazing how much power he had, now that it was his word that would get a student into one of Giles' classes. He was enjoying a popularity he'd only dreamed of.

Even more amazing was that he did have magic. That in and of itself seemed a sort of magic. And he knew two witches. Willow and Tara. It was Tara who was teaching him. Giles had hired her to teach elementary magic to all the students, and asked her to give Benjamin private lessons. He'd actually levitated a pencil the other day.

He knew Willow had been a little annoyed that Tara was the one doing the teaching, but Benjamin had been around Willow enough and seen enough of her spells go wonky, to get the big picture. Besides, he liked the way Tara taught. She was so sensible about it. Just like Giles. And Willow hadn't stayed angry long. She was too in love with Tara to let something like that get between them.

Benjamin had been disappointed when he'd figured out that Tara and Willow were lovers. It would have been perfect if either one of them had ended up his girlfriend. They were so much fun, and knew what being a Watcher was all about, and they'd tie him to Giles. Benjamin wanted to be tied to Giles. If his father had any idea how much he thought of his mentor, he'd be booted out of the house.

He realized that he had totally zoned out on whatever story Willow had been telling him. He began to listen.

"And then he ended up being this little tiny demon, and Buffy just squashed him, flat like a bug." Willow smiled, grimaced, and then smiled again.

He was trying to figure out how to get her to tell him the story again because the ending sounded great, when they both heard someone approaching. Benjamin felt inside his jacket for his stake. The adrenalin rush when a vampire attacked still overwhelmed him, but he'd staked enough at this point for it not to paralyze him.

Willow grinned in relief. "Spike."

Benjamin dropped his hand. "Hey, Spike." He thought it was so cool that he could be friends with a vampire.

"Red, MG."

Benjamin didn't even care that Spike had given him a nickname. MG. Mini-Giles. He liked it. He thought it was very cool that a vampire had given him a nickname. Everything about his life was cool now.

"You talk to Niblet recently?"

Willow slugged Spike in the arm. "You know she hates it when you call her that."

Spike grinned. "Why do you think I do it?" He lit up a cigarette. "Anyway, you talk to her?"

Willow sighed. "Yeah. Those two so need to wake up and smell the roses."

Spike took a long drag. "I think she's the only one who's in need of convincing."

Willow's eyes widened. "Really. You mean Giles is already sweet on her?"

Benjamin's ears perked up. "Sweet on who? Giles is sweet on who?" How had he missed this?

"The Slayer."

Willow qualified Spike's answer. "His Slayer. Buffy."

Benjamin's jaw dropped. "He's sweet on Buffy?" He thought about it for a minute. "I thought he was like her dad or something."

Spike let out a snort. "No, he's Dawn's dad. He's never been Buffy's dad. She wouldn't let him. They've been more like husband and wife for the last four or five years. Ever since she came back from the dead."

Benjamin loved that story. Everything about Buffy and the Scoobies and Giles fascinated him. "Is she sweet on him?"

Spike took a last drag and threw his cigarette to the ground, smashing it beneath his black boot. "That's the problem. She hasn't quite worked it out yet."

Willow sighed again. "Dawn wants us to figure out a way to get them together. She's running out of ideas."

Benjamin knew an easy solution to this problem. "We just need to make her jealous. She'll figure it out fast enough if she likes him or not."

Spike scowled at him. "With who? Giles isn't exactly working his way through the ladies."

"We make someone up. I mean, Buffy's in America, how is she going to know if Giles' new girlfriend is real or not?"

Willow stared at him. Then she smiled. She turned to Spike. "We make someone up. We can both talk to Buffy and let things slip." She let out a squeal. "I love this plan. It doesn't involve bloodshed or spells or anything evil." She turned to Spike. "What do you think? It won't work unless you do it too."

Spike looked scandalized for a moment. "You want me to lie to Buffy?" He grinned. "I think I can do that."

Willow linked her arms with Benjamin and Spike and wiggled her eyebrows at them. "Now, what should this mystery lady of Giles' be like?"

End Part 3

The Family 4

"Guess what?"

Buffy looked up from her bowl of cereal. "What?"

"Giles went out on a date." Dawn kept a close but covert eye on her sister.

Buffy's spoon stopped half way to her mouth. "My Giles? I mean, our Giles?"

Dawn barely kept a grin off her face. She was so going to give Spike and Willow a smooch when she saw them - and this new guy, Benjamin. "Yeah. Her name is Rosalind. Isn't that a great name? Don't their names go great together? Rupert and Rosalind." Dawn let out a satisfied sigh. "I'm so happy for him."

Buffy frowned. "This one date didn't involve a trip to Vegas, did it?" At Dawn's blank look, Buffy rolled her eyes. "You know, chapels, flowers, instant wedding?"

Dawn snorted. "As if. It was just one date, Buffy."

"Right, just one date. So, stop making it sound like they're ready for his and hers towels."

"Boy, you got grumpy all of a sudden."

Buffy pushed her bowl of cereal away. "I'm not grumpy."

Dawn gestured at her bowl. "Not hungry anymore?" She was crowing inside. "All I'm saying is that Giles deserves to have someone nice in his life."

Buffy's forehead creased. "I'm nice." Her index finger waved between her and Dawn. "We're nice."

Dawn rolled her eyes. "Not that way, Buffy. You know, someone who cares about him."

"I care." Buffy sounded affronted.

Dawn decided she'd done enough damage for one morning. Just one more warning shot. "I'll bet he has better taste than you. I'll bet she's not a butthead." With that, Dawn put her bowl in the sink and left to go get dressed.

Buffy scowled and sat staring at her own bowl for quite a while.

##

Buffy picked up the phone and then put it down. She scowled at it. She picked it up again, and again put it down. Finally, her jaw tightening, she picked it up and dialed. Despite what was on her mind, she smiled when her friend answered. "Hello?"

"Willow!"

"Buffy. How are you? When are you guys coming to visit?" There was barely time for a breath. "You can meet Giles' new squeeze."

Buffy scrunched her face up. She'd been trying to figure out how to bring the subject up, and Willow had just shoved it in her face. "Yeah, Dawn told me Giles went on a date." Buffy chewed on her fingernails for a second. "Must have been a good date if she's already graduated to main squeeze."

"Oh, well, that's just wishful thinking on my part. I just want Giles to be happy."

"So you don't actually know how the date went?" Buffy's voice was much too casual.

Across the sea, Willow grinned. She did her best to keep it out of her voice. "Well, it's not like he's gonna give me details. But I do know they're going out again, tonight." There was a decided silence on the phone. Willow grinned again. "Buffy? You there?"

"What? Oh, yeah, I'm here."

"Good. For a minute there I thought we'd lost our connection." Willow decided it was time to change the subject and attack from a different front. "So, Dawn tells me you're dating someone new."

"Uh huh." Buffy's voice sounded distracted.

Willow kept pressing. "What's he like?"

There was a long sigh. "Just some butthead."

Willow couldn't help the snort that escaped. "Usually you don't start calling them that until after they break up with you."

Buffy's eyes widened as she realized what she'd said. She forced some life in to her voice. "I have got to stop discussing my boyfriends with Dawn, she calls them all buttheads and it's starting to rub off."

"Maybe that's because they are buttheads. What you need, Buffy, is a genuinely nice guy, maybe someone a little older, a bit settled, who can take your life in stride, someone who understands you, and thinks you're special."

Buffy rolled her eyes. "Are they having a sale of those anywhere? Cause Sunnydale seems to be fresh out." She refused to think about the man Willow's words immediately brought to mind. The man who now had a second date planned with some woman. "Is she pretty?"

"Who?"

"Rosemary, or Rosa-whatever. Is she pretty?"

"Rosalind. And yes, she's very pretty. I mean she's a bit older than us, but she's stylish, and has the prettiest clothes." Willow didn't mention that she was also about sixty, with gray hair, and the cutest little dimples. She was the library receptionist at the Council, and Willow adored her. Other than Giles, she was the fount of all knowledge, having worked there forever.

"Oh."

"What's the matter, Buffy? You sound like you don't feel well."

"No, I'm fine." Another long sigh came over the phone. "You think he really likes her?"

"You want me to ask him?"

Buffy's eyes widened. "No, God, no. I was just curious."

"You sound a little, well, you know, jealous. Are you?"

There was a long pause. "No, of course not. I just, I mean, if he gets serious about someone it could change things. He might not come home as much, and if he did he might bring her, and would she expect to stay here? In his room?" A whine escaped her. "She might want them to stay in a hotel so they could have some privacy. I mean, Dawn could really get her feelings hurt."

Willow nodded, wishing Buffy would just figure it out and get her butt to England. But she'd known Buffy for a long time, and it sometimes took things a seriously long time to get through Buffy's denial colored glasses. "I'll be glad to keep you updated, at least as much as I know. You could always talk to Giles about it. Let him know what your concerns are." Willow was able to make that offer fearlessly, knowing it would be the very last thing Buffy would do.

She was right. Buffy's answer was instantaneous. "No, I can't do that. I wouldn't want him to not be happy on my account." Buffy tightened her lips. Actually, that wasn't quite true. She'd be perfectly happy for Giles to be unhappy if it meant that Rose-whatever got dropped off on an uncharted desert island somewhere. "Well, I better go."

"Okay. I'll call you next time."

"Okay. I love you."

"Love you, too." Willow hung up and let out a squeal. "It's working. She is so jealous." Willow did a happy dance across the floor.

##

Buffy lay in bed, staring at the ceiling. She glanced at the clock and saw that it was two in the morning. Sleep was eluding her. Every time she closed her eyes she saw Giles with somebody. It always started as a stranger, a beautiful stranger, kissing Giles, laughing with him, having long conversations with him. But the woman always ended up with Jenny's face, or Olivia's face, the only two women Buffy had seen Giles with.

Both beautiful, sophisticated, smart women. And then she'd see one of them in bed with him, touching him, being touched by him, and Buffy would let out a muted scream of frustration in her pillow and get out of bed and stomp around the room before finally lying down again.

The main thought going through her head was: why did I leave it so long? He was here for years, just down the hallway. It was like we were married, but I never took that last step. And now, it might be too late. Now, Giles had a girlfriend. Well, a going on a second date type of girlfriend, but that could grow into a third date, and a fourth date, and a would-you-marry-me sort of thing.

And Willow liked her. The least Willow could do is hate her. Say she was skanky, or had no sense of humor, or that she was really a demon in disguise,

a gross disgusting demon that oozed something horrible out of its pores. But Willow liked her. And she didn't seem to be a demon.

But that didn't mean she wasn't a demon. She could be. Not anything that would put Giles in danger, just something he would rather not wake up and find in his bed. Buffy let out a loud sigh. She needed more information. Damn, it was hard to spy on someone when they were thousands of miles away.

Buffy punched her pillow, and even though her Slayer powers were slowly waning, the pillow exploded. Spitting out feathers, she glared at its remains. Finally she reached for the phone and dialed Giles' number. Sometimes he chose to do some reading at home before heading in to work.

"Hello?"

"Giles?"

"Buffy, how lovely to hear from you. I was just thinking about you."

Buffy grinned, suddenly glad that she had called, that she could hear his voice. Then she frowned. "Are you alone?"

Giles furrowed his brow and looked at the phone, wondering why she was asking that. "Yes, I'm reading term papers."

"Oh. Well, alone is good."

"It certainly is quiet." There was a pause. "Was there a reason you called? Not that there needs to be, of course."

"No, no reason. Just wanted to see how my favorite Watcher was doing." Buffy stared nervously at the drifting feathers. "So, how is he doing?"

Giles let out a near silent laugh. "I'm fine. I miss you, you and Dawn both. When can I talk you into a visit? There are so many people I want you to meet."

Buffy scrunched her face up. "Like who?"

"Well, too many to name, really."

Buffy grimaced. "Like Rosalind?"

"Rosalind?"

"Yeah, does she want to meet me?"

Giles wracked his brain for a moment, wondering who Rosalind was. Then he remembered, the receptionist at the library. "Oh, Willow must have mentioned her. Yes, I'm sure she'll be anxious to meet you."

Buffy scowled silently. "Why don't you come here and visit." She finished the sentence to herself. Alone. Completely alone.

"I can't right now, Buffy, it's the middle of the term. No summers off here, I'm afraid."

"Well, I'll talk to Dawn and we'll figure something out. She's been busy applying to colleges."

"I know, she's been keeping me apprised. Very exciting."

Buffy hadn't been keeping close tabs on it, just writing out checks for Dawn to accompany her applications. She had no doubt that Dawn would get in everywhere she applied, and she didn't even want to think about Dawn moving away and leaving her more alone. It made her avoid the entire subject like the plague.

Two miserable subjects. Dawn leaving, Giles having a girlfriend. Her life sucked. She decided to make herself feel worse. "So, did you have fun last night?" On the date, the second date, the second date before the third date.

"Did Willow tell you about that as well?" Giles smiled. He, Willow and Tara had gone to a local theatre production of Twelfth Night. He had quite enjoyed it. "Yes, we had a lovely time, thank you. We plan to do it again, as soon as possible."

Buffy thought she might barf. "Well, don't rush in to anything. Okay?"

"Excuse me? Good Lord, look at the time. Buffy, I have to go. Let's chat later, all right?"

"All right. Bye, Giles."

"Good bye."

Buffy looked at the phone receiver, listening to the dial tone. Going, going, gone. She hung up the phone and plopped down on the bed. Feathers rose all around her and she furiously batted them away from her face. Finally she got back up, and attempted to brush all the feathers off her bed. They had a

mind of their own and fought back, as if they were thousands of little demons sent to make her crazy.

After a few minutes, she realized the futility of her task and gave up. The only thing that would work on this mess was the vacuum cleaner, and two in the morning was not the time for that, despite the fact that she was wide-awake and likely to stay that way.

She thought about her choices. She could lie in the bed and spit feathers out all night. She could go downstairs and watch TV and try to sleep on the couch. She could go for a walk. Buffy gave her options some thought and decided that none of them sounded appealing.

Opening the door to her bedroom, she looked up and down the hall, as if expecting to see a hall monitor. Then she tiptoed out of her room, as if to evade said monitor. She snuck down to Giles' room, and opened the door, sneaking one last peak down the hallway. Assured that no one was paying her the slightest bit of attention, she entered his room and shut the door behind her.

She sat on Giles' bed, and touched the comforter. It made her miss him so badly her chest grew tight and she felt the sting of tears. Crawling under the covers, and snuggling up to his pillows, she lay there, pretending he was there, or that he was coming home soon, and would be climbing up the stairs any moment, that he was hers and not some faceless woman's in England who would be delighted to meet her.

It took a while, but she finally fell asleep.

Dawn looked for her in the morning, and after exhausting all the usual house spots, poked her nose in Giles' room. When she saw Buffy fast asleep, she grinned, and backed out, shutting the door behind her.

End Part 4

The Family 5

Benjamin waited until they found Spike to talk about what was on his mind. "We have a problem."

Willow frowned. "What problem? What kind of problem do we have?"

"We've hit a snag in the making Buffy jealous using Rosalind scenario."

"Why? It's a perfect scenario. Dawn says that Buffy's eating herself alive with jealousy. All we have to do is get them here, and come up with a way to get them to actually talk, and well, I haven't worked out that part of the plan yet, but I'll think of something."

Spike lit a cigarette and took a long drag. "What's the matter, MG? What's got your knickers all in a twist?"

"It's Rosalind. Remember I told you that Giles' secretary had to quit because her dad got sick and she's the only one who could take care of him?"

Willow nodded, and Spike gestured impatiently for him to get to the point.

"Well, guess who he just hired to take her place?"

Willow winced. "Rosalind?"

Spike scowled. "I told you it was a mistake to use a real person. If you'd made someone up, this wouldn't have happened."

Willow wrinkled her nose at him. "Yeah, but if we hadn't used someone Giles knew, he'd have given it away already. This way, when Buffy brings up her name, because Giles knows her, it makes it all more real."

Benjamin sighed. "Until she calls and finds out she's his secretary."

Spike snorted. "That's a little too cliché even for Giles. Getting a leg over with the secretary."

Willow thought about Rosalind. "Ewww." She shivered. "So don't want to go there." Willow thought about it for a minute. "Buffy usually calls him at home, it might not be a problem."

Benjamin gave her an unhappy look. He really didn't want this plan to backfire and have Giles end up mad at him. "All it will take is once, and Buffy asking the wrong question."

Willow got a determined look on her face. "All we have to do is hold out for another few weeks. Dawn has a surefire way to get them both out here before much longer."

Spike let out a biting laugh. "And won't Buffy be surprised when she finds out what Dawn's been up to?"

Willow grinned at Spike.

Benjamin felt left out. "What, what's she doing? How is she getting them out here?"

Willow leaned closer to Benjamin, looked around, and whispered in his ear. Benjamin started to laugh. "Every one?"

Willow nodded. "Every one."

Benjamin let out an admiring whistle. "She is a clever one, isn't she?"

Spike crushed his cigarette butt under his heel. "She's always been the smart one."

"I'm looking forward to meeting her."

Willow gave Benjamin an appraising look. She thought Dawn and Benjamin would look perfect together. Keeping that idea to herself for the time being, thinking that one matchmaking scheme was all she could handle at a time, she just smiled.

Spike gave her a look. "What are you up to, Red?" Willow flashed him an innocent look. Spike rolled his eyes. "Well, as nice as it's been to chat, I'm in the mood for some carnage." He rubbed his hands together in anticipation. "You two in?"

Benjamin shook his head. "I've got two exams tomorrow."

Willow sighed. "I've got three."

Spike gave them both a disgusted look. "Bloody wimps." Without another word he vanished into the darkness.

##

Buffy gave Dawn a hug. Despite her avoidance of the topic, she couldn't help but be proud of her sister. "You got in to every school you applied to?"

Dawn grinned. "Every one."

"That is so cool." Buffy smiled at Dawn. "I am very proud of you. Mom would be, too."

"Thanks, Buffy."

Buffy sat down and looked at all the packages on the table. "So, what are the choices?" She grabbed the one closest to her and frowned when she saw the address. "Hey, this one's in England." She grabbed another one. "This one's in England, too." Buffy started flipping through them all. "They're all in England."

"Yup."

Buffy sent her sister an unbelieving look. "You only applied to schools in England?"

"Yup."

"Why?"

"Because they have good schools, and I'm tired of Sunnydale."

"So, what's wrong with Santa Barbara or San Diego? You hate Sunnydale, so you choose England?"

Dawn sat back in her chair. "I want to be near Dad, Giles Dad, not Hank Dad. I miss him. I want us to be together again, like a family."

"Does he know you've applied to schools in England?"

Dawn nodded. "He wrote all my letters of reference."

"Why didn't I know?"

Dawn rolled her eyes. "You didn't want to know. You were hoping if you ignored it all, I'd pick UC Sunnydale."

Buffy stuck her tongue out at her sister, and then looked at all the packets. "But England? How do you know Giles even wants us there? Wants me there? He seems to be having a whale of a time with Rosa whositz." She sat there with a disgruntled expression on her face.

Dawn had a hard time keeping back the grin. "Of course he wants us there. He's totally jazzed with the idea of me going to school there."

"That doesn't mean he wants me there, too. Where am I supposed to live? How am I supposed to find a job and support myself?"

"He said the Council would give you a job, and that we'd live with him."

Buffy's lips tightened. "When was the last time you had this conversation with him?"

"A few weeks ago."

"Yeah, well, things might have changed. I'm not sure his girlfriend will want us underfoot."

"He loves us first and most. All we have to do is show up, and you'll see that everything will work out fine." Dawn started making a pile of some selected packets. "We need to go over there soon so I can check out the schools. Dad gave me some dates that would work, when he'd be free to take me around."

"It still seems weird that you call him Dad."

"Why?"

"Cuz I'm your sister and he is so not my Dad."

"I know that. Besides, you've been more like my mom, anyway." Dawn grinned impishly at Buffy. "Mom."

Buffy pretended to smack her sister. "When you get married and have kids, if you have them call me Grandma, I'm staking you."

Dawn started laughing.

Buffy glared at Dawn but ended up joining in the laughter. Looking affectionately at her younger sister, she tapped the pile of packets. "Call Giles and make the plans. Just let me know when I need to pack." A part of her couldn't wait to see Giles, another part of her was sick at the thought of seeing him with her.

##

Buffy looked at the tickets. They'd be leaving in four days. Four days until she'd see Giles. Four days until she'd see her for herself. See how this Rosa-person and Giles were together, whether she'd really and truly missed her chance.

She glanced at the bedside table. Two o'clock again. Too many sleepless nights. And too many bad dreams, not the kind she wanted to have where she and Giles snuggled together and kissed, and touched, and got all naked under the covers.

Buffy reached out her hand and touched the comforter. She'd taken to sleeping in Giles' room. That next day after she'd slept there for the first time, she had expected Dawn to give her grief about it, but Dawn seemed to think it sensible as it had the bigger bed, private shower, and no feathers free floating. Buoyed by Dawn's reasons, she'd crawled in his bed again that night, and the next night, until now, she considered it her room. She only wished it had been their room. That when she got into bed that he would be there.

Sighing, she wondered if she might get lucky and catch him at home again. She reached for the phone.

"Hello?"

"Giles?"

"Buffy. I was just thinking of you."

"You were?"

"I was. I'm looking forward to seeing you."

"Yeah, me too."

"Have all the arrangements been made? Do you need anything?"

"Nope, you and Dawn took care of everything."

There was a moment of silence from both ends. Finally Giles spoke. "I really do miss you."

Buffy wished she could reach through the phone and hug him. "I miss you too."

There was another moment of silence. "Well, I suppose I should be on my way to work. One of these days you might try calling a bit earlier. You might even try getting some sleep. I've heard it's very restorative."

Buffy blurted it out before she could stop herself. "How's Rosalind?"

"She's fine. Better than fine. I don't know what I'd do without her."

Buffy's heart ached. "You like her that much?"

"I never knew someone could make such a difference. I don't know how I survived up to now."

Buffy tried to keep the hurt out of her voice. "Were you that unhappy?"

"Oh, not unhappy, Buffy. I love it here, but things seem easier with her about, everything seems to work better. You know how it is when you find that perfect person."

Buffy couldn't stand the conversation anymore. "I forgot, I have to drive Dawn to_ to somewhere. I gotta go."

"Oh, all right. I'll meet you at the airport on Sunday."

"Okay. Bye."

"Good bye, Buffy." Giles hung up the phone and pursed his lips, sure that Buffy had sounded upset. He couldn't imagine why. Determined to talk to Willow about it later, he grabbed his coat and briefcase, and left for work.

##

He found Willow in the cafeteria at lunch and sat down next to her. She glanced up and gave him a delighted smile. "Giles!"

He smiled back at her. "Hello, Willow. Have you spoken with Buffy lately?"

She nodded. "Uh huh. Why?"

"Has she been upset about anything lately?"

"Like what?" Willow was thinking fast, trying to buy time.

"I don't know. We were talking this morning, and everything seemed fine, and then in the middle of talking about Rosalind, she practically hung up on me."

Willow scrunched her face up. "You were talking about Rosalind?"

"Well, she brought the subject up. I simply told her what a difference Rosalind's made to my life, and_" He frowned.

Willow winced, waiting for Giles to figure it out.

"Do you suppose she's upset about Dawn wanting to go to school here in England?"

Willow let out her breath. Giles may be a genius kind of guy, but when it came to relationships, he was as clueless as Buffy. "No, I just think she misses you, and hearing you on the phone maybe gets her sort of choked up."

Giles' face lightened. "Do you really think so?"

Willow nodded. "You know she broke up with her boyfriend." She frowned, "I can't remember his name."

Giles waved Willow's inability to remember his name off as insignificant. "She didn't tell me. Is she all right?"

"Oh, yeah. He was just a butthead, anyway."

Giles let out a half laugh. "According to Dawn, they all are."

"She needs someone a little older, I think. Someone who can understand her better. Don't you think so?"

Giles completely agreed but he gave Willow a suspicious look.

Willow swallowed. He might be clueless, but he wasn't an idiot. She gathered up her books. "I gotta go."

Giles watched as Willow left with undue haste. He suspected that Dawn had been talking to Willow and was trying to do some matchmaking from afar, using Willow as her go-between. That was all he needed, Willow trying her hand at matchmaking. Nervously, he ran his mind through the spells he knew, wondering if there were any Willow might be tempted to try. Giles decided that he might be wise to ward his home against any magic directed his way.

He sighed as he rose. Lately all the conversations he'd been having with Buffy had been all too brief. Now that he was giving it some thought, it was clear that something had been on her mind for a while. It was so like Buffy to ruminate on a problem rather than share it to lighten the load. He wished they were together the way they used to be, then he might have a chance to tease it out of her, or trick her into revealing her thoughts. The telephone was a poor substitute.

At least she was coming; she'd be here in four days. He tried to ignore the quickening of his heart rate at the idea of seeing her. But thoughts of her were too compelling. As was the thought of holding her in his arms, and maybe, just maybe, this time she'd feel as if she belonged there, and her body would soften, and she'd lift her face as he lowered his, and their lips would meet,

and then hers would part, and he could finally taste her the way he'd been wanting to taste her for too long to remember.

Giles walked into someone. Appalled at his absent-mindedness, he helped the student pick up her papers. "I'm dreadfully sorry."

She sighed as she looked up at him. Mr. Giles was so handsome. "That's all right. You can bump into me anytime." She batted her eyes at him.

Giles stood hastily, blushing. "Yes, well, I_I have to go." He pointed in a vague direction. Giving her a small smile, he made his way quickly back to his office, determined to stay focused on his job the rest of the day.

End Part 5

The Family 6

Dawn raced down the jetway, anxious to see Giles. Buffy followed along behind, longing to see him, but deathly afraid that some woman would be standing next to him. She didn't think she could bear that. When she turned the corner, Dawn was already in his arms, squeezing him tightly. Buffy looked around; there didn't seem to be anyone nearby claiming him. She relaxed, a little.

By the time she reached him, Dawn was done with her hug and it was her turn. As his arms closed around her, all Buffy wanted to do was stay there. This was where she belonged. The hug seemed to last forever, and be over much too soon. As she finally let him go, she stayed close and looked up at him.

Giles looked down at her and his heart stopped for a moment. It was as if his fantasy were coming true. She'd been so pliant in his arms, and now she was looking at him, and all he'd have to do is lean down a little, run his tongue over the seam of her lips, and he'd be feeling the smoothness and strength of her tongue, the warmth of her mouth.

Dawn watched as they stared at each other; she was getting goose bumps from the energy flying between the two of them. For the first time, Dawn began to believe that their scheme might work. She sent a prayer to whatever god might be listening. 'Please don't let anything muck this up. They deserve this. I deserve this'.

Someone bumped into Giles. There was a mumbled apology, but the moment

was over. Giles took a step back, checked to make sure that all carry-on bags were accounted for, and began to herd them down to the baggage claim area. Dawn glared at the back of the man who bumped Giles, ineffective though it was, but it made her feel better. She didn't care what it took; if another moment happened, nobody was interrupting them, not until there was major kissage.

Meanwhile, she was here in England, with her favorite dad, and she planned to enjoy herself. Linking her arm through his, she chatted about schools as they collected their bags and made their way to his car.

Giles noticed that Buffy was staying uncharacteristically quiet, but then it was hard to compete with Dawn when she was on a roll. He flashed Buffy a smile, got a small one in return, and had to fight back the urge to hold her again. Instead, he put a hand to the small of her back as he helped her into the car.

Giles was grateful for Dawn's chatter as they made their way to the Council. He was preternaturally aware of Buffy's presence. It was electrifying, and it was taking all his concentration to keep his physical response under control. He snuck a glance at Buffy only to find her staring at him.

Buffy's stomach did flip-flops. She wished Dawn wasn't there, she wished the car didn't have bucket seats, she wished she could just slide next to him, and rest her head on his shoulder, and run her hand over his chest, and have him be hers. Her stomach flipped again, but this time with unhappiness as she thought of Rosalind.

Buffy hoped that when she met Rosalind that she could at least pretend to be friendly. She noticed that the voice from the back seat had finally stopped talking, and Buffy nervously tried to fill the silence. "So, when do we see Willow?"

"She's meeting us at the Council. I thought I could show you around while it's quiet. Benjamin will be there. He's looking forward to meeting you both. I'm afraid he's been deluged with stories of our life in Sunnydale."

Buffy gave him a grin. "And he still wants to meet us? Brave man."

Giles laughed silently. "He is at that. I think you'll like him. And Spike wants to see you both as well, but needless to say," Giles gestured at the sunlight, allowing the movement to complete his sentence.

Buffy nodded. "Got it. Midnight rendezvous with the undead."

"I'm sure you're tired. We'll just visit for a short while, and then we'll go home

and you can both get some rest."

Buffy decided she wanted to know what she'd be facing when she got to the Council. "So, are we meeting Rosalind, too?"

Giles shot her a curious look. "Not today, but if you're anxious to meet her, then I can certainly arrange it."

"She doesn't care if she meets me?" Buffy wasn't sure if she was glad or annoyed.

"On the contrary, she's eager to meet you, but you'll be here for a while, so there's no hurry."

Buffy sighed and sat back, staring out the window.

Giles furrowed his brow, wishing they were heading to his home now so he could find out what was on her mind. When they arrived at the Council he pulled into a parking space.

He led Buffy and Dawn through a side door, and directed them down the hall. They heard a squeal. "Buffy, Dawn." Then Willow was on them, hugging them both. "Gosh, I've missed you both so much."

Buffy gave her a big hug back. "I missed you, too. Sunnydale isn't the same without you and Tara." She glanced at Giles. She didn't say it, but her eyes did. And you, it's not the same without you.

Giles caught the glance, and was captivated by it.

Dawn and Willow exchanged grins. As the four of them started to walk, Willow pulled Dawn back, and the two of them began whispering. "Well?"

"They are so mooning over each other. If I wasn't so glad about it, I'd be putting a finger down my throat."

Willow eyed the two walking ahead of her. "One of them still has to actually open their mouth and talk." She giggled. "Or kiss."

"They almost did in the airport. Honest to God." Dawn held up her thumb and index finger, showing hardly any space between them. "They were this close."

"What happened?"

"Some bozo bumped into them." Dawn rolled her eyes. "He's lucky I didn't

have a stake."

Willow scowled. "Damn. That would have taken care of everything."

Dawn lowered her voice even further. "Where's Rosalind?"

"Don't worry, it's Saturday. She's off."

Giles was pointing out certain areas of interest to Buffy as they walked along. He could hear Willow and Dawn giggling behind him and knew they were up to no good, but there was little he could do about it now. Besides, it meant that he had Buffy all to himself. And although he was delighted to see Dawn, Buffy was, well, she was Buffy. The other half of himself. He smiled down at her.

Benjamin was waiting by Giles' office and he watched the four of them as they came down the hall. He decided that Buffy was the one with Giles. He could see the sparks flying and bit back a grin. Maybe their plan would actually work. Then his eyes were drawn to the girl walking with Willow and his jaw dropped. She was the most beautiful thing he had ever seen. This was Giles' daughter? She was gorgeous. Benjamin couldn't take his eyes off of her.

Giles noticed him. "Ah, Benjamin. I want you to meet Buffy and Dawn."

Benjamin tried to pull himself together. He smiled at Buffy and stared at Dawn.

Buffy elbowed Giles, as she clamped down on a grin. She rose on her toes to whisper in his ear. "I think he's smitten."

Giles glanced at Dawn to see that she was staring just as much. He grinned at Buffy, leaning down to whisper back. "I think it's mutual."

Buffy let out a half laugh, half gasp, as Giles' breath tickled her ear. Her knees felt wobbly and she grabbed on to his arm for balance. Giles' arm went around her and she couldn't stop herself from leaning into him.

Willow watched Buffy and Giles trip over each other, and Dawn and Benjamin make goo-goo eyes at one another, and it made her wish Tara was around. She was just thinking that love was about the best thing ever, when she heard a voice call out to her. "Willow."

Willow's eyes opened wide with alarm as she turned to see Rosalind approaching. She glanced up at Benjamin, hoping to get his assistance, but

he had finally found his voice and was chatting with Dawn, clueless to whatever else might be going on.

Willow took a step toward the woman. "What are you doing here?" She tried to stand between Rosalind and Buffy and Giles.

"Well, I remembered I needed to return a phone call, and I left the number here." Rosalind glanced up and saw the two young women. "It looks like I'm here just in time to meet Buffy and Dawn." She looked at Willow expectantly. "Well, dear, introduce me."

Willow gave her a sickly smile and got out of her way. "Dawn, Buffy. This is Giles' secretary." She wondered if she could make her escape now.

Giles gave Rosalind a smile. "Ah, Rosalind. Why are you here on a Saturday?"

Buffy's jaw dropped. "This is Rosalind?"

Giles nodded. "Yes. She's been a godsend around here."

Buffy couldn't take her eyes off of Rosalind. Gray hair, old enough to be her grandmother. "You're Rosalind?"

"Yes, dear."

Buffy looked up at Giles. "She's your secretary?"

Giles nodded. "And an extraordinary one at that."

Rosalind blushed. "Now, Mr. Giles, you're embarrassing me."

"Well, it's true." He glanced down at Buffy. "I swear I get twice as much work done now."

Buffy asked again. "She's your secretary?"

Giles began to get the feeling that something was amiss. "Buffy? Are you all right?"

Buffy started running all the conversations she'd had with Giles through her mind, and quickly absolved him of all guilt. Her eyes searched for Willow. "Willow."

Willow let out an eep. "I gotta go, Tara's waiting." Without waiting for a

response, Willow turned and ran.

Buffy toyed with the idea of chasing her, but then it began to sink in that Giles didn't have a girlfriend. He hadn't been out on a date that led to a second date that was going to lead to things Buffy didn't want to think about. A brilliant smile flashed on her face as she took Rosalind's hand. "I can't tell you how nice it is to meet you."

Rosalind smiled back. "Well, I've heard so much about you, dear. I already feel like we're family. I know Mr. Giles here thinks the world of you."

Buffy glanced up and saw guilty looks on both Dawn's and Benjamin's faces now that they had finally stopped their conversation long enough to realize who had joined them. Buffy glared at Dawn. "We are so going to talk."

Giles felt a little lost. "Buffy?"

Buffy took his hand. "Where's your office?"

Giles pointed at a closed door.

Buffy began to drag him in that direction.

Giles allowed himself to be dragged, mystified, but willing. He opened the door and stepped back to allow her to enter first.

Buffy waited until he was inside and then she shut the door, locking it. Before Giles could ask her what she was doing, she stood on her toes and kissed him. She put everything she was, everything he'd help make her be, all of her love, all of her longing, into that kiss.

It took Giles a second to realize what was going on, but he caught up quickly. He wrapped his arms around the woman he loved and kissed her back. Her lips were softer than he had imagined, the taste of her beguiling. Teasing her lips with his tongue, they opened for him, and Giles wasted no time in thoroughly exploring her, wanting to taste every inch of her.

Buffy was on fire. A curling flame licked through her body. She ran her hands down Giles' back, pressing their bodies closer.

Giles walked her backwards the few steps to his desk, and he picked her up and sat her on the edge, bringing her lips closer to his.

Buffy let her shoes drop off and she opened her legs, wrapping them around his, encouraging him even closer. When she felt his erection against her

groin, she let out a moan.

Giles tried to hang onto reason. "Buffy_"

Buffy didn't want to talk. She took her turn plundering his mouth, the heels of her feet pressing on his ass, bringing him closer, until she could rub herself against his hardened shaft.

This time Giles let out a groan. He buried his face in her hair, his hands running up and down her back. "You feel so good. I've dreamed of this for a long time." He had a vision, one that he'd dreamed before, of laying her back on his desk and ripping off her panties, taking her, staking his claim as he thrust into her, as she cried out his name.

"I want you, Giles." She slipped her fingers under the lapels of his suit jacket, pushing it off his shoulders.

Giles looked at her, looked at her kiss-swollen lips, and passion filled eyes. He let his jacket fall to the floor. A part of him still couldn't believe this was happening. He looked down and watched Buffy start to unbutton his shirt. Giles put a hand over hers, to stop her. "Buffy, are you sure? This is so sudden."

Buffy's eyes widened, and she laughed. "Sudden? Giles, this has been going on for years."

Giles could hardly contest that. He found himself touching the skin under her blouse, reveling in how soft she was. "I love you." The words had come unbidden, and a part of him wanted to reclaim them, afraid that it was too much, too soon. But they were the truth.

Buffy placed her hand on his cheek, loving the feel of him, loving that she could touch him. "I love you too. I have for so long, I just_ I don't know, I kept thinking I had time. And then you left, and I thought_" Buffy shook her head. "It doesn't matter. I just love you."

Giles framed her face with his hands and he claimed her mouth again. His fingers raked through her hair, fisting in the blond tresses, keeping her captive. Little moans escaped her lips, and he swallowed them eagerly, every moan a sign of her passion for him. He knew he'd never get enough of it. He pushed against her, wanting her, needing her.

Buffy pulled down his hands, and placed them on her breasts. "I want you now. I don't want to wait another second. I can't wait."

Giles caressed her tenderly, running his thumbs across her nipples. He lowered his head and gently bit the tightened buds through the fabric of her blouse.

Buffy arched back, a jolt of desire racing through her body from her nipples down to her toes, and settling between her legs. Frenzied fingers began to grapple with Giles' belt buckle.

Again, Giles stopped her. "Are you sure you want to do this here?" He would find the strength to stop if that was what she wanted, but the idea of claiming her right here on his desk was like liquid fire in his veins. Not meaning to coerce her, he was powerless as his groin pressed against hers, his cock searching for the hot, wet sheath so temptingly close.

Buffy gasped. "Now." She got his belt unbuckled, and started fumbling with the button of his pants. "Right now."

Giles pushed her hands away. He reached behind her and swept all the paper on his desk to the floor.

Buffy watched the large hand as it cleaned the desk off, and she imagined that hand on her, in her, touching her, pleasuring her, and she thought she might explode with desire.

Giles laid her back on the desk, and looked down at her. "You are so beautiful."

She smiled at him. "I love you."

He slowly pushed the fabric of her skirt up her legs, until his thumbs rested over the most heated part of her. She arched up into his hands. He teased her, and slowly ran his fingers over her, exploring her folds through the silk of her panties. Giles could feel how wet she was. It was all he could do not to free his erection and plunge into that welcoming warmth.

Instead, he looked at her. Looked at the incredibly sexy woman that he'd known for so long, as she lay there, offering herself to him. Never losing eye contact, he slowly pulled her panties off.

Buffy saw the love in his eyes for her. She could see herself as he saw her, lying on his desk, her legs spread open, showing him all her secrets. It made her feel wanton and sexy as all hell. Feeling a freedom she'd never felt before, she wanted to celebrate her body with him. She slowly started unbuttoning her blouse.

Giles watched, entranced, ensorcelled, as Buffy opened her blouse. Her fingers unhooked the front clasp of her bra and like a temptress she smiled as she lay there, her nipples hard as pebbles. Giles ached to touch her, but he waited, caught up in her magic.

Buffy touched her breasts. She had never done anything like this, touched herself, displayed herself for a man. But with Giles she could do anything. He knew her as well as she knew herself, probably better. Buffy saw his eyes darken with desire and it made her braver. She played with her nipples. It surprised her how good it felt. Her eyes closed for a second and she licked her lips.

Giles had never seen anything as erotic as Buffy touching herself to please him. He moved closer, his heart racing, his skin heated, as he watched her flick her fingers across her nipples again. He cupped her soft mound, the curls tickling the palm of his hand, and he slipped a finger into her warmth. He watched as she let out a gasp, and as she arched up, asking for more.

Her hands cupped her breasts and she squeezed. Buffy thrust up as Giles slipped a second finger inside of her. She was aching to be filled. She wanted him everywhere, lying on her, under her, touching her breasts, tasting her, kissing her, filling her with his cock. She was nothing but molten desire.

Giles leaned over her and took a nipple in his mouth. Buffy touched his lips with her fingers, feeling his tongue play over her breast, his teeth teasing the hardened point. Lifting a hand, she ran it through his hair, and realized that she had always wanted to do that. "Giles, now. I need you now."

Giles freed himself, wondering how long he'd last, feeling as if it were a minor miracle that he hadn't simply come in his pants as he watched her lie there. He spread her legs wider, letting his eyes roam over her, her secret curves, her soft skin, her beautiful breasts, and that smile that he loved so much.

Then he captured her eyes, and as they connected, he moved into her, completing their union.

Buffy let out a moan, but she kept her eyes open, wanting to see him, wanting to watch him move inside of her, thrust inside, make her his, and make him hers. Every thrust forced a cry of ecstasy out of her; he fit her so perfectly.

Giles was lost in her eyes, and lost in her body. She fit him perfectly. He ran his hands over her body, over her breasts, down to her slim waist, and the curve of her hip. He held on to her as he thrust into her, her arousal smoothing the way, her flesh accommodating until he knew he'd found his home in her.

Moving a hand, he gently touched her clitoris, keeping the touch soft, just a teasing pressure. Buffy cried out and he could feel the pulse of her orgasm. It triggered his own and he pushed deep inside as he found his own release. Then he was reaching for her, pulling her up, needing to feel her against him.

Buffy showered his face with kisses, whispering words of love, rejoicing in the feel of him still deeply embedded within her.

##

Dawn and Benjamin were lost in conversation. Rosalind had retrieved her telephone number and left, and the two of them had sat down to talk, waiting for Buffy and Giles to appear.

Suddenly Dawn looked at her watch and her eyes opened wide. She glanced at the office door and then at Benjamin. "They've been in there a long time."

Benjamin looked at his own watch. "Well, we wanted them to talk."

Dawn nodded. She got up and approached the door, leaning in to listen. She pulled away, blushing. She walked back over to Benjamin, her face a furious red. "They're, uh, not exactly talking."

Benjamin began to blush as well. Then he began to grin. "I guess the plan worked."

Dawn grinned back. "I guess it did." She found a piece of paper and wrote a few words on it, telling Buffy to call her on her cell phone when they were done, and taped it on a wall where they couldn't help but see it. Then she turned to Benjamin. "Feel like getting something to eat?"

Benjamin stood. "There's nothing I'd like better."

Dawn looked back at the door, blushed again, looked at Benjamin, and grinned. "Let's go." As they walked down the hall, she looked at him again. "I'm gonna love it here."

The End

April 5, 2003