

The House 1

Roger sat in his car and looked at his new house. He had only been living there for a month. He had loved it when he first saw it and he still loved it. It was the perfect house for him. Well, almost perfect. He frowned and looked at the house next door. He was really starting to hate that house. There was something very wrong with it. A pathologist at the hospital named Linda and her 10-year-old son Kevin had been living in the house up until about four months ago. He and Linda had been dating pretty seriously.

He sighed and leaned back against the headrest in his car. The last time he had seen her she had come into the ER with her son. Kevin had hurt his arm. Roger had determined that it was just a bad sprain and he had splinted it to keep Kevin from using it for a while. Linda had been upset, almost frantic, quite out of keeping with her usual character, despite her son being hurt. She had acted terrified. And Kevin had barely said a thing. Usually you couldn't shut him up. He had just sat there, almost unresponsive as Roger had worked on him.

The next day Linda left town. She called the hospital to say she was leaving and when Roger had heard and had gone by the house it had been empty. He had just looked in the window and stared at the empty living room for a long time. That had been four months ago and he still missed her.

When he bought his house he hadn't been concerned that the house next door sat empty. He had been sure it would sell soon enough; it was a great house too. But, the realtor rarely even showed the house anymore. People just walked in and after a minute they walked out. Roger had gone in there a few days ago, curious. He still had the key that Linda had given to him while they had been dating. He had walked in the house and had felt something bad. Something hanging in the air, something that made your skin crawl. He'd seen a mark on the wall, almost like a large dirt smudge. The longer he'd looked at it the more it looked like a face, screaming. It had completely creeped him out. He had left right away and hadn't been back.

Roger wanted Giles to look at the house. He actually wanted Giles to buy the house and be his next-door neighbor. He figured it would be handy for Giles and

Buffy to live next door to their doctor. Mostly he just wanted Giles nearby for purely selfish reasons. He loved the guy. Giles and Buffy were looking for a house. They wanted a place of their own, without all the bad memories. Buffy wouldn't even use the master bathroom anymore and it was driving Giles crazy. Plus they wanted room for all of his books and they needed training space.

Roger stared at the abandoned house for another minute. Giles could fix the house with a spell or something and then he could buy it cheap. The realtor had told him that the owner was quite anxious to sell. Roger noted the time and started his car. He was supposed to be meeting Paul and Giles for a beer and he was already late.

As they started on their second round Roger brought the subject up. "So, Giles, what's the news on the house buying front?"

Giles snorted. "You'd think that on the Hellmouth that real estate prices would be reasonable but that doesn't seem to be the case. Every place that suits us is much too expensive." He sighed.

Roger nodded his head and made a sound of commiseration. He waited another minute. "I have the perfect house for you. You can get a cut-rate deal on it."

Paul and Giles both looked at him suspiciously. Paul glanced at Giles. "Don't fall for it, he's trying to hustle you."

Roger barked out a laugh. "That's right. I've decided that being a doctor doesn't pay enough to support my drug habit so I've gone into real estate." He turned crazed eyes to Giles. "Man, you have to buy this house. I need a fix." He looked at Paul and crossed his eyes. Paul grinned and took a swallow of beer.

Giles hesitated but finally gave in. "Okay, I'll bite. Why is the house so affordable?"

Roger scrunched his face up and paused a moment. "I think it's haunted."

Giles' eyes widened as he stared at Roger. "You don't think I have enough evil

in my life, now you want me to live in a haunted house?"

"No, no, no. I want you to...what's the word..." he narrowed his eyes and lowered his voice. "...cleanse it." He wriggled his eyebrows and grinned at Giles. "Then you buy it at a bargain basement price. They're desperate to unload it."

Giles was interested despite his reservations. "How exactly is it haunted?"

Roger shook his head. "I have no idea. I just know that it sure creeped me out. There's just a feeling of...I don't know...sadness or fear or something." He mocked a shiver running down his spine. "It's just creepy."

Paul was curious. "Is this Linda's old house you're talking about? The one next door to you?" Roger nodded.

Giles raised his eyebrows. "Linda?"

Paul answered. "Roger's old girlfriend. She just up and vanished one day. I tried to figure out where she'd gone but it's like she fell off the face of the earth."

Roger's eyes darkened at the memory. That had not been a good day. Giles saw his eyes and cocked his head to the side looking at Roger. He seldom saw Roger upset about personal issues. "What happened?"

Roger shook his head. "I don't know that either. One minute things are going great, then her son gets hurt, I fix his arm, I drop over the next day and poof, she's gone."

Giles was even more intrigued. "Do you think the house had anything to do with it?"

Roger and Paul had both been working with Giles in his watcher capacity for two months now. Despite the things they had seen and heard they were still unprepared for some of the questions he'd ask. They both bit their lips to hold back a laugh. Giles rolled his eyes at their reaction to his question. "I'm

serious, maybe whatever went wrong with the house went wrong while they were there and it frightened them. Most people are ill-equipped to deal with supernatural occurrences."

Roger looked thoughtful for a moment. "I never thought of that. Maybe it did. She was almost hysterical when she brought Kevin in and Kevin was definitely not himself." He looked at Giles. "Will you look at it?"

Giles nodded. "I'm quite curious. Hauntings are actually fairly rare." Roger grinned as he saw that look in Giles' eyes. He knew Giles was hooked.

Giles agreed to meet Roger there the next day after the shop closed. Paul volunteered his services in case something needed to be shot. Giles would bring Buffy in case something needed to be slayed. They figured that way they would have their bases covered.

The next day Giles and Buffy pulled up to Roger's house and looked at the house in question. It looked perfectly normal to them. Buffy leaned towards Giles. "I don't know. I was expecting something more Norman Bates like."

Giles grinned. He lowered his head to hers and kissed her. She licked her lips. "Mmmm." She grinned and kissed him back. She ran her hands down his face. She turned his head a little to the side and looked at the scars that were barely visible on his cheek, temple and forehead. She grimaced.

He grabbed her hand and kissed her palm. "Buffy, you have to stop that."

She made a face. "I know. I just can't believe how close I came to killing you. I know it wasn't my fault but it still scares me that I could have lost you so easily."

He smiled gently at her. "But you didn't. Just like I didn't lose you." He chose not to mention that he was still having nightmares about that. He reached across her and opened the passenger door. "Come on. We have a ghost to meet." She grinned at him and hopped out of the car.

Paul and Roger were waiting in front of the door to Linda's old house. When

Giles and Buffy reached them Roger used his key and unlocked the door. He swung it open and they walked inside.

They could all feel it immediately. Buffy made a face as if she smelled something really bad. "God, what is that?" Giles just shook his head and started walking around. Buffy took Paul and they did a walk through making sure that there was nothing threatening in the house, either human or demon. When they returned Giles was still in the living room staring at the dirt smudge on the wall.

Buffy went over to stand by Giles. She looked at the marking on the wall and cocked her head. She took a couple of steps back. "You know, if you look at that just the right way, it almost looks like a person." She grimaced. "And not a very happy one." She moved closer to Giles trying to get him to put his arm around her. This house was giving her the wiggins. Without even being aware of it Giles pulled her close as his arm got around her shoulder. All of his attention was on the wall. He realized Buffy was talking to him.

"Hmm? I'm sorry, what did you say Buffy?"

She pointed at the wall. "What is that?"

Giles shook his head. "I don't know but I'm sure that our answers lie with it." He reached out a hand to touch the mark. As he touched it Giles let out a loud groan and almost fell to his knees. Only Buffy's strength kept him from falling. Paul and Roger hurried over, Paul grabbing Giles' other arm. He helped Buffy lower him to the ground.

Buffy stood and put out her hand to touch the wall in the same place that Giles had touched but when her hand made contact nothing happened to her. She pulled her hand back and looked at it. She crouched back down to check on Giles. He was starting to sit up. She spoke. "Giles, what was that? Are you okay?"

Giles blinked his eyes a couple of times and then shook his head as if to clear away the cobwebs. He tried to stand and was only marginally successful. Paul and Buffy assisted him again, this time to rise. He looked at the wall and started to move his hand as if to touch it again. Buffy pulled him back. "Do

you think that's such a good idea?"

Giles took a deep breath. "I have to. I'll be okay." Buffy didn't look happy but she braced Giles as he reached out to touch the wall again. As he touched it his face winced in pain and he let out another groan but he stayed standing this time. Buffy watched Giles, watching the pain on his face, watched as tears started to run down his cheeks. After a minute she couldn't stand it anymore and she grabbed his arm. As soon as she pulled his arm away they could hear it, the sound of a young boy crying. The sound filled the house and then slowly faded away.

Giles wiped the tears from his face. "I could feel what he's feeling. He's so lonely and afraid."

Buffy had heard the sadness in the boy's cries and she could see it on Giles' face. "What happened to him?" Giles shook his head. He didn't know.

Roger had gone and placed his hand gingerly on the mark on the wall but he didn't feel a thing either. He walked over to Giles seeing the sadness on his friend's face. He put his hand on his shoulder. "Are you okay?"

Giles smiled softly at his friend. "Yes, I'm fine. It just overwhelmed me for a moment." He slowly turned. "I can feel his presence now so clearly." He closed his eyes and sent out a tendril of magic, searching for answers. Suddenly his eyes flew open and he stepped back. "He's not the only one here."

Both Buffy and Paul moved closer to Giles as if to protect him. Buffy looked at Giles. "Help us out here. You're being all spooky. Who's not the only one here?"

Giles ran a hand over his face. "The boy, the boy who was crying. Somehow his essence has been locked in this house. Something attacked him, something that split him in two. I think whatever did this to the boy is here too. I can feel a demon presence. But it's trapped as well. It and the boy."

Buffy looked horrified. "A boy is trapped here with a demon?" She started to pace. "How do I get him out? How do I save him?" The boy's cries had been

heart wrenching.

"You don't Buffy. This will take magic. I'll need to get Willow and Tara, and some supplies."

Roger kept looking at the face on the wall. He turned to Giles. "Is it Kevin? Could it be Kevin?" The thought horrified him. "What would that do to someone? What will happen to him?"

Giles moved over to Roger. "I don't know if it is Kevin. All I could pick up is his emotions. I could try and reach him again." He started to raise his hand.

Buffy stopped him. "No. Twice was enough. We know he's there. We know we need to get him out. I don't want you to get zapped again."

Giles reluctantly nodded. "Whoever it was I imagine his body is slowly dying. We need to free his spirit and then get him back to his body." He looked at the face again, eyes closing as he remembered the boy's pain. "It's possible his body is already dead. He may have been trapped here for years."

Roger couldn't turn his head away from the face on the wall. "I don't think so. This didn't used to be here. I think something happened to Kevin. I think it happened when he hurt his arm. He was so quiet, so not like himself." He touched the wall again wishing he could comfort the boy. "Damn it. I wish I knew how to get a hold of Linda."

Giles turned to Buffy. "We'll need to get in touch with Willow and Tara. We have a lot of research to do. I'd like to try and do this as soon as possible, hopefully tonight. I can't bear to leave him like this."

Buffy nodded and asked to borrow Paul's cell phone. She started making the call as they moved out to their cars. They headed off to the Magic Shop.

End of pt 1

Willow and Tara had joined them and they all sat around the table at the Magic Shop flipping through books. Paul kept getting stuck on all the pictures. It was times like this when his new life felt the most surreal somehow. The group was silent as they searched. The silence was broken as Willow snapped her fingers and looked over at Giles.

"Giles, I just thought of something." He looked at her, patiently waiting for her to finish. When she didn't speak he raised his eyebrows. She realized he'd been waiting and startled. "Oh, right. Okay, how about that book you have, the one that's all brown with the angels all over it." At Giles' puzzled expression she rolled her eyes. "You know, the one you keep locked up in..." Her eyes widened and she stopped as she realized that she was in trouble again. She looked up to see Giles' glare. She hastened to reassure him. "Honest Giles, I haven't gone in there once since I almost lost my magic. I saw it before." His glare didn't soften but she gamely finished. "Isn't the whole book about stuff like spirits and well...you know, spirits?" She smiled hopefully at him.

He glared at her a little more and then thought about the book in question. He got up and headed upstairs. He unlocked the cabinet where he kept his most dangerous spell books but he couldn't find the one Willow was talking about. He walked to the railing and looked down at Willow. "Any idea where you put it when you were done looking at it?" He glared at her again.

She winced and headed upstairs. She crouched down and pulled a bunch of books out and pointed at the one Giles had been looking for. It was on its side; the other books she had removed had hid it. Giles looked at her. "New filing system?"

She blushed. "Sorry, you came back earlier than I thought so I just sort of crammed them all back in." She winced again at the glare he was still sending her.

Then he started to laugh and he shook his head. "Come on." He reached out a hand and helped her up. He held out the book. "This was a good idea." She beamed at him and she headed down the stairs. He followed her down already

flipping through the pages.

After that it didn't take Giles long to find the spells they needed. He sent Willow a smile. She grinned back and assisted him in pulling together the supplies they would need. They loaded up and headed back to the house.

Willow was thrilled. Giles was letting her do the spell. She had been working with him every week and he thought she was ready to handle a spell of this magnitude. Roger and Paul were grinning at her. They couldn't help but respond to her sparkling eyes. She leaned closer to them, as if to tell a secret.

"Just between you and me I'm glad that Giles is going to be here. He's handy to have around if things start going wrong." They solemnly nodded at her and smiled. Then when she wasn't looking they looked at each other and they both knew they were thinking the same thing. They were both very, very glad that Giles was going to be there.

Giles watched as Willow finished drawing the symbol on the floor. All the candles were lit and Giles was satisfied that Willow knew the correct incantation. The plan was to first bring forth the demon and banish him and then call forth Kevin's spirit. They still weren't sure it was Kevin but they had all started referring to him by that name.

Buffy, Paul and Roger were standing out of the way, allowing the magicians in the group to work undisturbed. Giles checked everything again and then he spoke out loud. "Kevin, if you can hear me, we are going to summon the demon...the..the...bad thing that's been living in this house with you." He glared at Buffy when she grinned at his choice of words. "You may feel as if you are being called as well but I need you to try and not come out right now. We'll come and get you next." There was no answer but Giles hadn't expected one.

He turned to Willow and asked her to begin. Willow started the incantation and they all turned their eyes to the pentagram on the floor. An unexpected breeze blew through the room making the candle flames flicker. Then a bad odor began to fill up the house. When Willow started to falter because of the smell Giles motioned to her to continue.

Giles sensed something and he turned to the wall behind him. He felt as if the marking on the wall was calling to him. Giles started walking towards it, feeling the need to be close.

Willow kept her eyes focused on the symbol on the floor. Something was materializing inside of it. As the figure solidified, the smell became stronger. Her eyes were watering. The demon fully materialized and tried to get out but the pentagram held him prisoner. He snarled and turned slowly trying to see if there was some escape. Willow took a step back. Everything about this demon was repulsive from his breath-catching odor to his bad teeth and fashion sense.

The demon had completed his circle and faced Willow again. Paul had gone over to stand by Giles. Giles had put his hand on the wall and Paul had seen the pain once again cross his face. He stood ready to support Giles if he needed any assistance.

Willow was starting to get a little nervous. The demon was staring at her, very intently. She tried to look away and found that she couldn't. She took a step closer to the pentagram. Roger frowned. He wasn't sure if she was supposed to be doing that. She took another step and Tara moved over to her and put her hand on Willow's arm to keep her from moving any closer. Without taking his eyes off of Willow the demon snarled at Tara and spoke in a voice that sounded as if it was half lion, half human. "Do not interfere."

He turned his attention back to Willow and continued trying to compel her. She shook off Tara's hold and took the last step that brought her right up to the symbol. Tara grabbed a hold of her in earnest and at the same time she turned to Buffy. Buffy moved up and grabbed Willow's other arm.

Without taking his eyes off of the demon or Tara and Willow, Roger reached back and smacked Paul to get his attention. Paul put his hand out just in case Giles fell and then he turned his head to see what Roger wanted. When Paul saw the demon his eyebrows lifted. He quickly turned back to Giles. As he turned he heard the demon speak again. "You cannot stop her. She is under my control." Then he laughed.

Before Paul could touch him Giles lifted his head and removed his hand. He almost lost his balance but Paul steadied him. Giles listened to the laugh and his eyebrows rose. He rolled his eyes. "Good Lord. I thought you were dead." He walked over to the pentagram.

The demon saw Giles and stepped back. Then he moved back up and continued with his threatening. "You are too late. She is about to free me."

Giles rolled his eyes. "Oh stop. You know you were always lousy at this." He placed his hand in front of Willow's eyes breaking off the eye contact. Willow shivered and shook her head. She looked up seeing Giles' hand in front of her face and she looked confused.

"What happened?"

Giles smiled at her. "I'm sorry Willow. I got distracted." He gestured with his thumb over his shoulder. "He tried to compel you to open the pentagram."

Willow gasped. "Was I going to?"

Giles shook his head. "No, you would have been able to resist in another moment. He's not very good at it."

The demon stood up straight and put his hands on his waist. "Hey, I am so." His voice was whiny now.

Giles turned around to face the demon. "No, you're not. You've never been good at that or anything else you've tried to do."

Everyone was staring at Giles as he conversed with the demon. Roger was laughing and Paul was struggling not to join him.

The demon looked outraged. "I scared you plenty when I first met you."

"Quite true, however, I was twelve at the time. What I mostly remember about that occasion was watching my father's slayer beat you senseless." Giles

grinned at the memory. "I'm afraid the luster went out of your fear techniques for me that day."

The demon was fit to be tied. "I scared everyone out of their wits the day I showed up for that birthday party."

Giles snorted. "That must have been a proud moment for you, terrifying 15 eight year old girls, besides you were hired to scare them." He waved his hand back and forth in front of his face. "God, you stink. What is that?"

By this time the rest of them had all stepped closer. They all felt more comfortable about being nearer to the demon but they still stayed pretty close to Giles. Except Buffy. She just glared at the demon. Then she turned to Giles. "Why don't you just let him out? I'll be glad to take care of him."

The demon's eyes widened as he took in Buffy. He started to shake his head looking back at Giles. Before he could open his mouth Giles spoke sharply to him. "What did you do to that boy?" Giles glared at the demon.

The demon recoiled from his look. "It wasn't me. I got caught in it. I've been stuck here with him trying to get out. I swear." Giles frowned, not sure whether to believe him or not. The demon continued. "Honestly, I was just getting ready to jump out and give the kid a good scare when something hit us both and the next thing I knew I was stuck in this house." He put his fingers in his ears. "I've been listening to that brat cry for months. Jeez, what a crybaby."

Giles' eyes hardened. He turned to Willow. "Ready for the banishment spell?" As Willow nodded the demon gasped.

"Rupert, buddy, we're pals. Let's talk about this. I won't hurt anybody." He continued with his entreaties as Willow and Giles both said the banishment spell and the demon slowly disappeared from the pentagram. Everyone took a deep breath tremendously relieved that the awful smell had vanished with him.

Giles shook his head. "Really, you meet the most appalling sort of demons." He looked up at everyone and saw that they were all grinning at him.

Buffy came up to him and wrapped her arms around him. "You've known him since you were twelve?"

Giles made a face. "Yes, awful sort of fellow, wasn't he?"

Buffy grinned. "I am never going to know all there is to know about you, am I?"

Giles just shrugged. "Really, Buffy, there's not that much to tell."

Buffy rolled her eyes and let out a laugh. "I thought my childhood was weird."

Paul and Roger looked at each other. They had thought their childhood was weird. As if they could read each other's minds they both started to laugh. Willow walked over and spoke softly to them. "See, this is why it's a good idea to have Giles around for stuff like this." They both nodded at her and the three of them started to laugh.

Giles started making a few changes to the markings on the floor. He looked back up at Willow. "Ready for the next one?" Willow made a face. Giles knew what she was thinking. "Willow, you did fine. You did the spell perfectly. If you'd known what kind of demon it was you would have known not to look at his eyes."

"You looked at his eyes."

"Yes, well, I'm a bit stronger than you are. And now that you know of him he'll not be able to do it again." He smiled gently at her. "You did the spell fine. You'll do this one fine as well." Willow hesitated and then nodded her head. Giles moved up to stand next to her. He looked at her. "I promise I'll stay right here this time, all right?" She nodded again, smiling.

Giles put his hand out to stop her for a moment. He called out. "Kevin, it's your turn. You're going to feel as if something is calling you. Just try and let go and allow it to pull you. You'll end up standing right here." He pointed to the pentagram on the floor. "Don't be afraid. It won't hurt." He nodded to Willow and she started the incantation. The breeze again blew through

the room and the candles flickered one more time.

Roger stepped up closer as a shape started to form in the pentagram. He looked closely to try and see if it was Kevin. When enough of his shape was formed Roger could clearly see that it was. His heart leapt at the sight. He longed to know where Kevin's body was right now, where Linda was. He closed his eyes and sent a fervent prayer up that Kevin was still alive.

Paul noted that Kevin wasn't solid. In fact he could see right through him. Willow had noticed the same thing. She gasped. "Did I do it right? He doesn't seem to be all there."

Giles smiled. "Yes, you did it right. He's not all here. This is only a part of him." He sent an approving glance to Willow and she grinned. Giles looked at Roger and Roger nodded his head. Giles squatted down, looking at Kevin. "Kevin, can you hear me?"

Kevin, his eyes wide, slowly nodded his head in response. Giles continued. "I'm Giles. Could you hear me talking to you before?" Kevin nodded again. "There's nothing to be frightened of, we are all here to help you." Another nod. Giles looked up at Roger. "Do you remember Dr. Erikson?" Kevin looked up at Roger and nodded again, a small smile on his lips. Roger gently smiled back.

Giles paused for a moment. He wasn't quite sure how to tackle this. He pinched the bridge of his nose pushing up his glasses. Kevin just kept watching him. Giles took a deep breath. "Do you have any idea where..." Giles paused again, not sure what word to use. "...the rest of you is right now? Can you sense your body out there?" The spell would be easier if they had some idea of where to send Kevin's spirit. Giles watched as the boy's eyes started to fill with tears.

Giles hastened to reassure him. "It's okay if you don't. I think we can still get you home. You've been very brave." Giles silently let out a relieved sigh when the boy was able to choke back his tears and give him a watery smile. Giles smiled back. "Do you have any questions for me?"

Kevin nodded and after a moment's hesitation he spoke. "Is the monster gone?"

Giles wasn't sure which monster Kevin was speaking about. "Do you mean the monster that was trapped in the house with you?" The boy nodded.

"Yes, the monster has gone away. We made him go away." He motioned to Willow.

Kevin only had eyes for Giles. "What kind of monster was he?"

"He was a demon, a Ceded demon. I'm afraid they like to scare children. It's what they do best. He really couldn't hurt you."

"He was mean to me."

"I'm sure he was. He won't bother you anymore."

"What did you do to him?"

"I sent him home."

"Does he live near here?"

"No, he lives very far away."

"What was he doing to that girl?" He pointed at Willow.

"He was trying to talk her into letting him go."

"Why?"

"Because he wanted to be let go."

"Oh." A brief moment of silence reigned and Giles started to get up to prepare for the spell to send him home. Kevin made a sound of protest and Giles looked back at him.

"I'm not going anywhere. I just need to get some things ready to help send you home. You can keep talking to me."

Kevin nodded and the questions began again as Giles started to move about the room.

"How did I get stuck?"

Giles shook his head. "I don't know. I don't know what happened."

Kevin thought about that for a moment. "How come you don't know?" Everyone grinned at that.

Giles frowned. He hated not knowing. "I didn't see what happened. I don't know what attacked you or how you were split. I don't have enough information." Buffy moved next to Giles and put her hand on his arm. Giles smiled at her. "Kevin, this is Buffy." He pointed out Willow, Tara and Paul and introduced them to Kevin as well. Kevin said a soft hi to them all and then brought all his attention back to Giles. Giles made him feel safe.

"So, what are you doing now?"

"We're going to try and send your spirit back to your body."

"How do you do that?"

Giles thought for a moment, trying to decide if he could explain it so a ten year old could understand it. He decided he couldn't, at least not without taking too much time. "I can't really explain it. It's magic. Will you just trust me?"

Kevin nodded and continued his barrage of questions and Giles answered all of them in his unhurried patient fashion. All of them watched spellbound as Giles and the young boy conversed as if the rest of them weren't even there. After a while the boy's questions returned to the ritual.

"How will you know where to send me?"

"That's part of the magic."

"Oh." The boy paused. "Will it hurt?"

"I don't believe it will. I wouldn't expect it to."

"What will it feel like?"

Giles sat back down on his heels looking at Kevin. "I don't really know. I've never had it done to me."

"Will you go with me?"

Buffy's brows lowered at the question. Giles pursed his lips, thinking. "I suppose I could." He thought about it some more.

Buffy moved and crouched down next to him. "You can't go with him. How do we get you back?"

Kevin shot her a glare and then turned back to Giles. "I'm scared. I don't want to be by myself."

Giles turned to Buffy. "It should be quite safe really. Willow can just pull me back." Willow shook her head. She didn't like the idea of being responsible for pulling Giles back from anywhere. She wanted him right here.

Buffy didn't like it either. "It should be quite safe? I don't like the sound of that." She could feel Kevin's glare again. She looked at him and tried to make him understand. "Kevin, we need Giles here." She turned back to Giles and spoke to him. "I need you here."

He stood pulling her up with him. He gave her a quick kiss. "It will be fine Buffy. It's quite straightforward. You can't blame him for being frightened. And I think that it will be an interesting experience." His eyes were sparkling with the thought of learning something new.

She turned to Roger and Paul. "Maybe you can talk some sense into him."

They looked doubtful about that. Paul, however, took Giles' arm and pulled him aside. "Can we talk for a minute?" Giles nodded and turned to Kevin.

"Kevin, will you excuse us for a moment?" At Kevin's nod they all walked into the other room.

Paul spoke up first. "Is there any risk to you?"

Giles hesitated. "I really think it will be quite safe. Willow can send my spirit to go with Kevin's, I can make sure he gets to his destination and then Willow can call me back. It should be a simple task."

Willow made a face at the thought. Paul just asked his question again. He'd gotten quite used to Giles' amazing ability to dodge questions. "Is there any risk to you?" He made his question clearer. "What happens if things go wrong?"

Giles pursed his lips, thinking about it. His head swung to one side and then the other. "Well, I suppose at worst my spirit might be unable to find its way back." He shook his head. "But, that's not likely to happen."

Paul wasn't finished. "What happens if your spirit can't make its way back?"

Giles frowned at Paul. Paul just frowned back. Giles sighed. He'd never been able to intimidate Paul. "I don't know." As Paul's frown deepened Giles spoke again. "All I do know is that this poor boy has been alone and terrified for months. He's frightened of what we are about to do to him. He may not know what he has to do once he gets to his body. His body may be dead. I can help. I'm the only one here who can. I have to go." Giles didn't understand why but he felt strongly connected to the young boy.

He turned to Buffy. He put his hands on her shoulders. "Buffy, I'll be fine. I promise you." Then he turned to Willow. "Do you understand what you need to do? It may take both of you." He included Tara in his statement.

They both nodded unhappily. Willow spoke, her fears clear in her voice. "Suppose I can't pull you back? What do I do?" Giles was supposed to be here with her to help her deal when things went wrong.

Giles smiled at her. "Willow, you'll be fine. Just concentrate. Give me twenty minutes and then pull me back. Our spirits should be able to travel fairly quickly."

Willow looked nervous but she agreed. Kevin looked up as they walked back into the living room. Willow wandered over to the spell book and reread the words that would return Kevin's spirit to his body. Giles walked over to the pentagram and frowned at it. He turned to Willow. "You'll have to hold the pentagram steady while I open it up and get in with Kevin." Kevin smiled in relief at Giles' words. Giles softly smiled back.

Willow nodded and came over. She put her hand up and started to speak. Giles leaned down and swept part of the marking away, quickly stepping inside. Tara moved forward immediately and closed it back up. Giles tried to touch Kevin but his hand went right through him. Giles looked a little disconcerted but then he grinned. He looked down at Kevin. "Are you all right?" Kevin nodded.

Giles sat down and then he lay down, curling himself up so he'd still fit in the pentagram. Seeing everyone's confused looks he explained. "I imagine that my body will...well...perhaps not be able to stand once my spirit is gone, so this way I won't fall."

At his words Buffy moved close to the markings on the floor. "Giles, don't do this."

Giles just smiled at her. "I have to. I'll be right back." He sent her a look full of love. She just shook her head, her stomach in knots. Kevin did his best to sit down in the bend of Giles' body, wanting to be close to him. He sent Buffy another glare.

Giles looked at his watch and then nodded to Willow. Willow turned to Buffy as if asking her permission and Buffy reluctantly nodded her head. Willow's lips tightened and then she started the spell.

After a few moments Kevin's form started to waver, becoming even more insubstantial. He tried to grasp Giles' hand, fearful of what was happening to

him. Willow could feel his spirit; she could feel the youth and vitality in it. She searched for Giles' and found his as well. Her breath caught at the brightness of it. She concentrated her energies on the two of them, sending them off. Soon they couldn't see Kevin at all.

They all watched as Giles' eyes closed and his body grew lax. Suddenly Willow gasped and her face tightened in fear. She almost stumbled off her feet but Roger held her up. Willow looked at Giles fearfully and they all followed her look. He was starting to fade, the outline of his body growing indistinct. Buffy gasped. She turned. "Willow, what's happening?"

Willow looked fearfully at Giles' body. "I don't know. Something else is pulling him. I don't know how to stop it." Giles' body was becoming more and more insubstantial and they all watched in horror as it just disappeared.

End of part 2

The House 3

Paul swore. He walked up to the pentagram, now completely empty. "This was not what he said could go wrong. Where is he?" He looked at Willow.

She raised her hands in a helpless gesture. "I didn't do it. Someone pulled him; someone pulled him away. I couldn't stop it. It happened so quickly."

Buffy started to pace. "You have to find him. You have to bring him back."

Willow's eyes were starting to fill with tears. "I don't know how. I don't know where he is." She looked at the empty floor and slowly sank to her knees. She looked at Tara. Tara reached for the spell book and started to flip through its pages.

Paul swore again. "Damn it. I hate this part of it." Buffy looked at him, not sure what he meant. "This part, the part where you don't know who the enemy is, there's nothing to fight, nothing to do."

Buffy just looked at him. She let out a sad laugh. "I hate this part too." He saw the sadness in her eyes and he walked over to her and put his arms around her pulling her into his chest. She started to cry and he just held her.

##

Linda sat in her son's bedroom. He was dying. She didn't know how much longer he had. Every breath seemed as if it might be his last. Nobody could figure out what was wrong with him. He'd had every test done imaginable and he just kept wasting away. She had seen a shadow attack her son. How do you tell doctors that? How do you test for that? She just watched him in the darkness from the corner of the room. She had moved over here when she had started to cry again. She hated to cry while she was holding him, in case he could still hear her and be frightened of her tears.

At first she thought it was just a trick of light due to the haze of tears still in her eyes. But slowly something was appearing in the room right in front of her. She gasped and then covered her mouth, feeling the need to be silent. It was a man. A man around her age, very attractive, wearing jeans and a button down chambray shirt. Something shimmered in front of him. She watched as the man looked down.

"Kevin, are you all right?" He spoke with an English accent. Somehow the accent made the whole event seem even more unreal to Linda.

She held back a gasp as she heard her son's voice. "Yeah, that was fun."

Giles laughed. Then he looked at the body on the bed. "There you are, there's your body."

She heard her son's voice. "Why am I lying so still?"

"I imagine you've been ill. You've been missing part of yourself."

"Me, you mean?"

Giles nodded. "Yes, you." Giles looked down at himself. He frowned. He held his hands up and opened and closed them a few times. He leaned over and touched the wall. "I think I'm really here."

Kevin looked up at him. "What do you mean?"

"I think I'm really here, my body, I think all of me came instead of just my spirit."

Kevin nodded. "I wanted you to come with me."

Giles looked at him, a curious look on his face. He let it go for the time being. He spoke. "Are you ready?"

Kevin looked nervous. He looked at his body lying on the bed. "What do I have to do?"

Giles walked a little closer to the bed. He ran his hand over his hair. "Well, from what I understand, all you have to do is touch any part of yourself and your body will take you back in." Kevin held back. Giles encouraged him. He tried to gently push him but his hands went right through him again. Giles let out a small laugh and shook his head. "Go ahead, I'm right here. I won't let anything happen to you."

Kevin looked up, a trusting look on his face. He moved over to the bed and slowly put his hand out. Giles spoke. "That's right, go on." Kevin touched his arm and the spirit vanished. The boy on the bed stirred and his eyes opened.

Linda just watched, tears streaming down her face. Giles smiled at Kevin. He sat on the bed. "Are you okay? Are you all there?"

Kevin lifted up his hands and opened and closed them a few times, mimicking Giles. Grinning up mischievously at him Kevin touched the wall. "I think I'm really here."

Giles reached up and ruffled his hair. "Very funny. It's nice to touch you and

not have my hand go through you." Kevin giggled. Giles looked at him. "Do you know how I got here?"

Kevin nodded. "I pulled you. I didn't want to come alone so I pulled you with me." He looked nervous. "You're not mad are you?"

Giles shook his head. "No, I'm not mad. Astonished maybe. How did you do that?"

Kevin shook his head. "I don't know. I just did it."

Giles thought for a moment. "I don't understand. You'd need magic to do that." He looked at Kevin. "Did you have some magic already?"

Kevin shook his head, confused. "Maybe the monster did it to me." Linda's eyebrows shot way up.

"I suppose that's possible. May I check something?" Kevin nodded. Giles ran his hand over Kevin a few inches above his body. When he was done he just looked at Kevin. "You have magic now."

Kevin grinned delightedly. "I do?" He grinned wider. "Like you?"

Giles grinned back. "Yes, like me." He frowned. "I just can't imagine how that happened." He looked at his watch. His brow furrowed. More than 20 minutes had gone by. As he was about to speak Kevin beat him to it.

"Are you married?"

Giles' eyes widened. "Why on earth do you want to know that for?"

"Cuz if you aren't then you can marry my mom and be my dad."

Giles heart tightened. "Kevin, I'm honored that you'd want me to be your dad but I think that your mom might want to have some say in this." He grinned at Kevin. "Besides I'm afraid my heart belongs to another."

"That blond lady?"

Giles grinned. "Yes, that blond lady. Her name is Buffy and I love her very much."

"She was mean."

"She wasn't trying to be. She loves me. She was afraid for me. She was afraid I'd get hurt. You can understand that can't you?"

Kevin thought for a moment and then reluctantly nodded his head. "I guess. But I still think she's mean." He looked sad. "I just wish you could be my dad." Giles reached down and gently ran his hand down Kevin's face. Kevin struggled to sit up and Giles helped him. Kevin thought for a moment and then he asked another question. "Is Dr. Erikson married?"

Giles grinned. "No, and I happen to know for a fact that he likes your mom a lot."

Kevin grinned. "I know. I saw them kissing." He scrunched up his face at the thought.

Giles laughed. "Someday you'll like kissing too."

Kevin shook his head, grimacing. He looked at Giles. "Do you kiss that blond lady?"

Giles laughed again. "Every chance I get." Giles looked out the window and did a double take. "Good Lord, it's snowing." He peered out the window. "Where are we?" He looked at Kevin.

Kevin was trying to get up. His body was still weak. "Let me see." As Kevin pushed the covers aside and tried to stand Linda could take it no longer. She let out a cry and ran to him. When he saw her his eyes lit up. "Mom!" She sat on the bed and took him in her arms, holding him and crying. Giles stood up to give her room. He stared quietly out the window watching the snow come down. He could see her reflection in the window. She was quite beautiful, with

straight dark brown hair that fell below her shoulders and large brown eyes. He watched as she just held her son, hanging on for dear life.

Kevin started to squirm and she loosened her hold. Linda turned to Giles, her arms still around her son. "Who are you?"

Kevin answered. "He's Giles. He's Dr. Erikson's friend. I got stuck and he got me out." He sent a brilliant smile up to Giles and Giles smiled back. Kevin fought to get out of his mom's arms. "I want to see the snow." Linda reluctantly let him go. He stumbled over to Giles and Giles caught him and held him as they both looked at the falling snow.

Giles turned to her. "Have you been here the whole time?" She nodded. Giles looked a little sheepish. "I was hoping that you'd just come in later and find that he was cured." He laughed a little and gestured towards Kevin. "I know this must all seem somewhat confusing to you."

Linda laughed. "I thought I was hallucinating." She shook her head and she looked at Kevin again. "I was sure he was going to die tonight." Her eyes filled with tears again. She looked up at Giles again. "Am I dreaming?" She wasn't sure.

Giles smiled gently at her. "No, you're very much awake and Kevin should be fine now." He looked back outside. "Would you mind telling me where we are?"

She looked at him oddly. "Montana." At his sudden intake of breath she spoke again. "Where did you come from?"

"Sunnydale. The house you used to rent. That's where Kevin's spirit was."

She bit her lips. "You mean I left him behind?" She couldn't bear that thought. "I knew something had happened. I saw that shadow touch him. I knew he wasn't all right but all I could think about was getting him away."

Giles moved to sit next to her, shifting his hold on Kevin so he could still support him while he spoke with Linda. "There is no way you could have known. You mustn't blame yourself." He smiled. "Roger was the one who figured out

that there was something wrong with the house. He bought the house next door. He called me to see if I could do something about it."

Linda just stared at him. "Roger figured it out?"

Giles nodded, smiling at her. She shook her head. "I still don't understand. Who are you? What are you?"

Giles laughed. "I'm just a man. I just happen to know a little magic." Giles looked at his watch and then looked at Linda. "May I use your phone?" Linda nodded and went to her bedroom to get the cordless. She handed it to him. He raised his eyebrows an apologetic look on his face. "It's long distance. Are you sure you don't mind?"

She laughed. "You brought my son back to life. You can call Pluto if you want." She went and stood behind her son. Giles walked across the room and punched in Paul's cell phone number.

##

Buffy was pacing. She angrily brushed the occasional tear off her face. Paul was leaning against the wall by the fireplace. He was watching Tara and Willow as they tried to find a spell that might help them find Giles. Roger was softly brushing the wall where the face had been. It was gone now.

Paul pushed away from the wall. "There must be something we can do. Something like this must have happened before."

Buffy tightened her lips. "It always happens to one of us. Then we have Giles to figure out how to help. This is his job, the figuring out part. He's the brain of this operation." She bit her lip and looked down at Willow and Tara. "No offense."

Willow and Tara both looked up, worry on their faces. Willow spoke. "None taken, I couldn't agree more." She shook her head. "I don't know what spell to do because I don't know what happened. I guess we could do a locator spell and

see if that will tell us anything." She looked at Tara and Tara nodded. Willow started looking through the magical accoutrements they had brought with them and began to pull out what she would need.

Paul squatted down by them. "So this will tell us where he is?"

Willow nodded warily. "Assuming he's still here."

Paul looked puzzled. "Here, like here in Sunnydale?"

Willow frowned. She spoke softly. "No, here like in this universe." Her eyes started to tear up and she went back to her preparations.

Paul stood and exchanged a disturbed look with Roger. He was sick at the thought that Giles might be beyond their reach. He moved back over to the fireplace to resume his watch and leaned against the wall. Suddenly his cell phone rang and they all jumped at the sound. Paul put his hand over his racing heart as he reached for his phone. "Hello?"

"Paul, it's Giles."

Paul stood up straight. "Giles?" Everyone looked up at that. "Where the hell are you? You scared us to death."

"Montana."

Paul's eyes opened impossibly wide. "Montana?"

Giles laughed. "Yes, I know, I can hardly believe it either."

"Are you all right?"

"Oh, yes, I'm fine. And so is Kevin by the way."

Paul turned to the others. "Kevin's fine." They all smiled. Buffy walked over to Paul and waited impatiently. Paul looked down at her. "Buffy wants to talk to you." He paused for a moment. "I'm glad you're okay. You had me worried."

He could feel Giles' smile and smiling back he handed the phone to Buffy.

"Giles?"

"Present and accounted for."

"That's not funny. We've been terrified. We had no idea what happened or what went wrong with the spell."

"I'm sorry Buffy. But I'm fine. And please tell Willow this wasn't her fault. Kevin pulled me here with him."

"How did he do that?"

"I'm not sure. But I can feel some strong magic in him now. I don't know how he got it. Maybe it was from being trapped in that house with a demon for so long."

Buffy thought for a minute. "Or maybe he got it from you when you touched the wall. When you first touched it, it almost knocked you out and it didn't affect any of us that way."

Giles thought about that for a minute. "I suppose that's possible." He looked at Kevin across the room. "I wonder if it's permanent." His eyes gleamed at the thought of trying to figure out what happened.

Buffy grinned. "I can hear you shifting into research mode. Stop it right now and come home." Her voice got nervous all of a sudden. "You can come home, can't you?"

Giles laughed. "Yes, Buffy, I can come home. If Willow and Tara can't pull me home I'll just get on a plane. The American transportation system extends to Montana, I'm sure of it."

"To quote my favorite British guy who is going to be in so much trouble when he gets home, ha bloody ha. I can't help it if I'm being stupid, I was worried about you."

"I know and I'm sorry. But I'll be home soon. Have Willow and Tara do the spell again. Willow should be able to easily focus on me. I'll have Kevin push from this end. Give me about five minutes. If it doesn't work I'll call again and we can make plane reservations."

"Okay." She paused and then spoke again. "I love you."

"I love you too." Giles hung up the phone. He looked at Linda. "I left some very nervous friends back in California. They want me home. They'll be trying to send for me in a few minutes." He looked at Kevin. "Will you help? Will you help send me home?"

Kevin looked sad but he nodded. "Will I see you again?"

Giles looked at Linda. "That's up to your mom. She knows how to get in touch with Roger and Roger knows how to get in touch with me. I imagine she'll want to spend some time with you. I'm sure she's been missing you a lot." He looked at Linda. "Your mom may also feel that it is safer for you here. Sunnydale's not the safest place to live." She watched his face as he spoke and she saw the sadness there.

Linda stood up and put her hands on the sides of Giles' face and just looked at him as if she was trying to memorize him. Part of her was still sure this was a dream. She moved closer and putting her arms around him she hugged him. She didn't even know this man but he had just given her back her son's life and she loved him for it. Giles gently hugged her back. She stepped back and looked down at her son.

Kevin was just looking at Giles as if he couldn't get enough of him. He wrapped his arms around Giles' waist. He hugged as hard as he could and Giles hugged back. He ran his hand through Kevin's hair. He could already feel himself missing the boy.

Giles could feel the magic start to pull him. Linda watched as he started to flicker. Giles gently disengaged Kevin's arms from around him. "Kevin, help me now. Close your eyes and imagine pushing me home." Kevin nodded and closed

his

eyes. Linda watched as Giles became more and more insubstantial and eventually vanished in front of her eyes.

End of pt 3

The House 4

Buffy was sitting right in front of the pentagram and she saw Giles start to appear. She gasped and turned to Willow. "Keep going. He's coming back." Willow smiled and she and Tara continued the incantation. Paul and Roger came over and crouched down watching the space as Giles slowly solidified. He stood there motionless for a moment and then he opened his eyes. The first thing he saw was Buffy. He smiled at her. Willow moved forward and opened the pentagram. Buffy stepped in and she hugged Giles tightly.

She looked up at him to scold him. "Don't you ever do something stupid like that again, you hear me?"

Giles just laughed and picking her up he spun her around. He looked at Roger and Paul and grinned at them. He let Buffy down and turned to Willow and Tara. "Good job, both of you." He grinned at them. Tara and Willow grinned at each other, relief and pride evident on both their faces.

Willow spoke. "So, that thing that I felt, that was Kevin? I just felt it again. Did he help push you back?"

Giles nodded. "Yes, although I have no idea how he was able to do that." Arms still around Buffy he turned to Roger. "I saw Linda."

Roger's eyes widened. "How is she?"

"All right, now. She had been sitting with Kevin. I think she was a bit startled when I just showed up like that in his room."

Roger let out laugh. "Yes, I can imagine she was a bit startled." He shot a

glance at Paul to find him laughing.

Paul walked over to Giles and clapped him on the back. "As usual, you are the master of the understatement."

Roger looked around him, a determined gleam in his eye. He wasn't going to miss this opportunity. Now that Kevin was safe and Giles was back in one piece Roger was back in real estate mode. "Let's look at the house."

Giles rolled his eyes but he laughed. He knew better than to argue with Roger. He knew he'd lose and end up looking at the house anyway. They all trooped along as Roger started pointing out all the selling points. The more Buffy and Giles saw of it the more they liked it. When Roger was finished he raised his arms and spoke dramatically. "Plus I can now assure you that in addition to being available for a song that this house is also clean."

Buffy lightly hit him in the stomach with a backhand punch and Roger playfully grabbed his stomach and doubled over. She shot an excited glance at Giles and snuggled into his side. He pulled her close; he could feel her excitement. He looked at Roger. "Suppose Linda decides she wants to come back. Maybe she'd like this house again."

Roger shook his head. "First of all, if Linda comes back, I can't imagine she would want this house back. Second of all, we don't know that she is coming back, or would even want to." He pursed his lips. "I don't suppose you thought to get her telephone number or her address while you were there."

Giles shook his head ruefully. "I'm sorry Roger, I didn't even think about it."

Paul pulled his phone out and punched in a few numbers. He shook his head. "She has her number blocked." He looked at Roger. "She really didn't want to be found." Paul hadn't called in the FBI but he had looked pretty hard knowing how Roger had felt about Linda.

Giles looked at Roger. "She saw what happened. She saw Kevin get hurt. She said a shadow touched him. She left, wanting to protect him. She didn't realize she had left a piece of him here."

Roger looked down at the ground, imagining how frightening it must have been for Linda. As much as he wished Linda had come to him he knew that at the time he would have been no help. He would have scoffed at her, her and her shadow.

Giles walked over closer to him. "Roger, you saved Kevin's life tonight. If you hadn't brought us over here he would have died." Roger looked up at him and smiled a tight smile.

"It just makes me wonder how many people's lives are touched by the things you and Buffy deal with and then, on top of injury or death of a loved one, have to cope with everyone's disbelief and scorn."

Giles thought about it. "I imagine it happens quite often." He put his hand on Roger's shoulder. "Are you okay?"

Roger nodded. He spoke softly. "I miss her. This all brought it back." He quickly glanced at Giles and saw compassion there. Roger smiled ruefully. "God, if she had any sense she'd never come back."

Giles shook his head. "I don't agree. You're here."

Roger grinned at that. "Even more importantly, everything tonight turned out all right and you're here too."

Paul butted in. "Yes, and while we're on the topic, next time you tell me what could go wrong with a spell I'd like a more extensive list." He smacked Giles on the arm.

Giles grabbed his arm where Paul had smacked him. "Ow."

Buffy just watched the three of them, glad that someone else was giving Giles a hard time. Grinning, she walked over to Giles and rubbed his arm. "Poor baby."

Giles just glared at her. He looked at Roger. "Well, you started this whole thing, you can end it. Talk to the real estate agent and see what kind of offer we have to put in to get this place."

Buffy squealed and hugged him. Giles looked down at her. "You do understand that you'll have to put up with Roger as a next door neighbor, don't you?" He looked at Roger. "I expect that drawback to be factored in while determining a price." He jumped back to avoid being hit by Roger as well and laughed. They all just grinned at each other. Then they started parading through the house again, making plans.

##

Linda woke the next morning and didn't want to open her eyes. It had been such a lovely dream. Her heart began to grow heavy and she opened her eyes to find herself in the bed by herself. She came fully awake and looked around. She was definitely in Kevin's room but he was gone. Her heart started to race and then she heard the television downstairs. Heart still pounding she crept to the head of the stairs and peered down into the living room. He was there, watching TV, his hair all rumpled from sleep. She sat on the staircase and cried.

After wiping her eyes she walked downstairs and over to Kevin. He flashed her a grin. She sat on the floor next to him. She didn't know how to ask him if last night had really happened or not. She ran her hand down his back. He looked at her, frowning, a disappointed look on his face. "Giles said I had magic but I've been trying and trying and I can't make anything happen." He flashed her a frustrated look.

Her eyes widened. "Oh God, it really happened, didn't it?"

Kevin just looked at her. "What?"

"That man, he brought you back. It really happened."

Kevin grinned. "Yeah, cool, huh?" He turned back to his cartoons for a moment and then he turned back to his mom. "Can we go back? Maybe Giles can show me how to use my magic?" He got a sly look in his face. "Maybe we can see Dr. Erikson." He watched his mom.

She frowned at him. "Don't you try and manipulate me young man." She laughed and hugged him. "Let's give it some time. I want you strong and healthy before we make any more big decisions."

Kevin nodded. "My knees were a bit wobbly this morning." He smiled at her. "Don't worry. I'll get better fast so we can go see Giles." He turned back to his cartoons, once again engrossed.

Linda moved back to the couch and drew her legs up under her. She just sat there and watched her son.

##

Roger had been right. Giles had been able to buy the house at a ridiculously low price. The owners hadn't even haggled. Giles had been able to pay cash for it out of his retroactive watcher pay. Buffy was inside the new house with Willow and Xander trying to decide how she wanted the living room arranged. Giles had wisely removed himself and sat on the front porch, Paul sitting next to him. Roger was in his kitchen making some more lemonade to refresh the troops.

Giles grinned at Paul as he heard Buffy's voice rise in irritation at Xander. Paul grinned back. It was much more peaceful out here. Paul noticed the car driving up. He sat up paying a little more attention as the car stopped in front of the house and the driver parked it. He looked at Giles but Giles was starting to get up having seen Roger head over to the house with two pitchers of lemonade.

Paul started to stand as he saw who was getting out of the car. Giles headed off across the lawn to help Roger. Suddenly Giles heard a familiar voice. "Giles, Giles." He turned and saw a young boy running towards him. Giles went to meet him and held out his arms. Kevin leaped and jumped into Giles' arms. Giles arms tightened around Kevin, his heart full of joy at seeing the boy again.

Linda watched Kevin and Giles and smiled. She saw someone approaching out of

the corner of her eye and she turned her head and saw Roger. Her heart started beating faster. He put down the lemonade on the edge of his driveway and walked over to her. He couldn't believe she was here. He kept staring at her expecting her to vanish. But she didn't. When he got close to her she moved to him and his arms went around her. He just rested his head on her soft hair. He breathed in her scent. After a minute he lifted his head and looked down at her. He raised one of his hands from behind her back and touched her face. "I missed you so much."

She touched his cheek in return. "I missed you too." She shook her head. "I was so frightened. I'm sorry I left. I'm sorry I didn't say good bye."

He shook his head. "It doesn't matter now." He slowly lowered his head, still holding her gaze to see if she would pull back. She didn't. His lips touched hers and she moaned and pressed into him wrapping her arms around him.

Paul alternated between watching Roger and Linda out by her car and Giles and Kevin in the middle of the lawn. He couldn't stop grinning. Buffy had come out when she heard Kevin yell, followed by Willow and Xander. They all stood next to Paul. She was thrilled for both Roger and Giles. She knew that Giles had been missing Kevin and despite his concerns for their safety in Sunnydale had hoped that Linda and Kevin would return.

Buffy was a little nervous. She looked up at Paul and leaned in towards him. "He hates me."

Paul looked confused. "Who hates you?"

"Kevin."

Paul snorted. "Why do you say that?"

"Giles told me that he thinks I'm mean."

"You are mean."

Buffy smacked him. "You're not helping."

Paul laughed. "He'll love you when he gets to know you."

Buffy wasn't sure about that. Kevin and Giles drew apart and Kevin looked around for his mom. When he saw his mom and Roger he made a face. "Yuck, they're kissing." He looked at Giles and grinned when he saw the grin on Giles' face. Giles could see that they were indeed kissing. Giles looked over at Paul to see him grinning too.

Giles looked back down at Kevin. "Let's leave them alone right now. I'll talk with her in a little while." Kevin nodded and smiled. Giles stood and held out his hand to Kevin and Kevin happily slipped his small hand into Giles' larger one. As they passed Buffy, Giles stopped. "Kevin, do you remember Buffy?"

Kevin gave her a brief disinterested look. "Yeah, hi." He turned back to Giles and started asking him questions as he pulled him into the house.

Buffy smacked Paul as he started laughing at her. He teased her. "Okay, so it might take him a while." He moved into a defensive position as she smacked him again. "Hey, hey, go pick on someone your own size. Go beat up the kid." He started running at the glare on her face, his laughter slowing him down. She started chasing him and he turned and put his hands up to stop her. "Don't make me shoot you." She started laughing and shaking her head.

Paul walked over to her and leaned down to whisper in her ear. "All you need to do is let him know you're Wonder Woman, and he'll think you're the best thing since sliced bread." She looked up at him grateful for his words.

The two of them walked back up to Willow and Xander and the four of them walked into the house. They could hear Kevin asking Giles questions and Giles softly laughing and answering all the questions patiently and kindly. Willow listened. She turned to Buffy. "He'd be the best dad."

Buffy smiled. She listened to Giles some more. "Yes he would."

Xander looked at them both. "As far as I'm concerned, he was the best dad." His eyes looked softly at Giles, seeing the man who had helped him grow up.

Buffy kissed Xander on the cheek and smiled at him. Then they all walked in to join Giles and Kevin.

##

Later that evening, after all their company had gone home, Linda and Kevin happily ensconced at Roger's, Buffy and Giles crawled into their bed in their new home for the first time. Buffy turned to him. She kissed him and then she ran her fingers through his hair. "Giles?"

"Hmm?" His eyes were closed, enjoying the sensation.

"Do you remember how you said that I helped make your dream come true?"

He opened his eyes and looked at her, a soft smile on his lips. He nodded.

She leaned forward and kissed him softly, capturing his lips in hers, softly biting him and following with her tongue. He pressed in, her kiss arousing him. She pulled back. "Did this dream of yours happen to include any children?" He smiled at her, his eyes bright. He leaned towards her and kissed her lips gently. Then he reached for her and pulling her in he deepened his kiss.

The End