

Sins of the Father 1

Ethan heard about the job the way he usually did, through word of mouth. Someone was looking for a sorcerer and was willing to pay. He did a little sleuthing to try to determine who was behind the offer but wasn't able to turn up much.

He agreed to a meeting. Ethan sat in a booth in the back of the bar and watched the door. Two men in conservative suits screaming Watcher walked in. A small part of Ethan, the part he acknowledged as the wiser part, knew he should just walk. Anything the Council was behind had to be trouble. But the rest of him, the part of him that loved trouble, was insatiably curious.

As they sat down in a booth, Ethan waved his fingers in the air and spoke a short incantation. Their voices became clear to him.

"So, where the bloody hell is this sorcerer?"

"Relax, George, he'll be here."

"I don't like it. I don't like using someone from the outside."

The other man sighed. "It doesn't matter what we want, you know that."

"Yeah, well why doesn't Mr. Giles just do the magic. He's supposed to be this all powerful sorcerer."

The man hissed at George. "Shut up. Don't mention his name."

George sneered. "Why? Are you afraid he's listening in? That he's going to turn us into toads? Jesus, Zack, I don't think he can do magic at all."

Zack knew differently. "Just keep it down."

At the mention of a Mr. Giles, Ethan's eyes narrowed and he sat back in his booth. Mr. Reginald Giles. Ripper's dad. Ethan let out a short quiet laugh. It didn't take long to sum up how Ethan felt about most people. He hated them. People existed, for the most part, for Ethan to take advantage of. He'd had a few friends here and there, and he'd loved someone once, still did love him, and hated him. But if he had to name one person he hated more than anyone else in the world, it would be Ripper's dad.

Too many years of watching over Rupert when they were kids, picking up the pieces after the elder Giles had beaten Rupert again and again, using his magic so there'd be no physical traces of the abuse. Watching over Rupert as

he tried to catch naps during the day between classes, too afraid to sleep in his own house at night. And he'd watched as Rupert's older sister, Eleanor, had died in her bed. The sister that both Rupert and Ethan had adored.

The doctors said it was a heart attack, despite the fact that they were mystified that she'd been afflicted so young. Seventeen years old. But Rupert and Ethan knew. That next night they'd both run away. Rupert ran because he had to; it didn't matter that he was only thirteen. He couldn't stay in that house one more night, not now that his sister was dead. Not now that his mum was dead, and his father's Slayer was dead, and it would just be him and his father. So he had gone to Ethan to tell him goodbye. Ethan had no intention of letting him go by himself so he had packed a bag and shimmied down the tree after Rupert, and neither of them had ever looked back.

But being free hadn't made the hate go away. Rupert continued to hate his father fiercely and Ethan had absorbed it through all the years they were together. And the hate was still strong.

Ethan made his decision. If Ripper's father was involved in this, Ethan wanted to be as well. Because then he could throw a little chaos in the mix. Smiling, he got up and joined the two Watchers.

##

Paul was brooding. He knew he shouldn't be brooding; he should be enjoying himself. He was in Las Vegas, at a conference for police chiefs, that was in reality just an excuse to drink, gamble and be rowdy. But he couldn't snap out of his mood.

Part of it was just being away from Buffy and Giles. Cordelia constantly teased him about his mother hen tendencies, but he couldn't help it. He hadn't been this far away from them since he'd been let in on their secret. He took a swallow of beer and then blew out a long breath. He knew he was being a bit ridiculous. After all, Giles had been taking care of himself for a long time. And he was far from helpless. Between his knowledge, his fighting skills and his magic, he was a formidable adversary to anyone who might try to take him on.

But, Paul also knew that since he'd learned about Giles' life as a Watcher, that one catastrophe after another had befallen him, and it was hard to get past that. He was afraid that something would happen while he was gone. While he was leaning over a craps table, or tossing back a beer, or watching a show. Afraid that he'd call home and find out that something had gone terribly wrong.

He knew Spike was looking after things, but he was still nervous. Buffy was spending the weekend with her dad, Roger was pulling extra shifts in the ER, and Linda and Kevin were visiting with her sister for the week. That left Giles on his own, with no one to watch his back. Paul's heart clenched at the thought of anything happening to Giles. He blew out another breath and tried to relax. He reminded himself that he wasn't completely alone. Spike would keep an eye out for him. And Willow, Xander, Tara, and Anya were around.

Paul tried to shake off the impending sense of disaster he was feeling. Part of his anxiety was due to Angel. He and Buffy had gone down to see him after she and Giles had gotten home from their honeymoon. Even Paul had to admit that Angel had not acted suspiciously. He'd understood their unease, gotten angry at the allegations, but conceded that their concerns about him were well grounded. And somehow he'd convinced Buffy that he hadn't been in Sunnydale, that he hadn't had anything to do with that week from hell before the wedding.

Paul wasn't buying it for a minute. He knew he had issues with Angel, hell, he hated the guy, and he knew it made him biased, but he'd been a cop for a long time, and his instincts were telling him that Angel was in this up to his fanged teeth. No one was listening to him anymore, though. With Cordelia, Wes, and Buffy sure that Angel hadn't been involved, Giles was insistent about letting it go.

Angel hadn't asked about Drusilla, so neither Buffy nor Paul had volunteered the information that she had been staked. Buffy told Paul on the way home that she'd tell Angel that later, another time when they weren't accusing him of trying to kill Giles.

To top it off, Paul missed Cordelia. He'd tried to get her to come with him, but she hadn't wanted to be away from the agency that long. Paul was tired of only seeing her a couple times a month. He let out a long sigh and took a swallow of his beer.

##

Ethan paced the small suite, unsuccessfully trying to access his magic. Whatever the old man had done to bind the room he was currently held prisoner in was beyond his skills to identify and penetrate. He was disgusted with himself. Ethan knew the man, had known him for years and knew what he was capable of, and yet he'd been caught, immobilized, and imprisoned with such ease it was humiliating.

Ethan was being held at the Giles' estate. He recognized the grounds outside the window. The gardens looked exactly as they had when he'd last been here thirty-five years ago. Same fountain, same topiaries, it was as if time hadn't touched this place. Ethan used to love it here. He'd sneak around and play in the mazes and imagine the animal shaped bushes had come to life. But that was before he met Rupert. Before he realized what the man who lived here was like, what he was willing to do to his own children to advance his mastery of magic.

Ethan indulged in another round of self-deprecation. He should have listened to that warning voice and just walked out of that bar that night. But the opportunity to screw things up for the old man, to exact a bit of revenge had completely overridden what small amount of common sense he had. So, he'd met with the Watchers and agreed to help, while having no intention of doing so. Once outside, the new moon had made him think of a certain spell and exactly how to screw the bastard.

His most audacious act, though, was that he'd naively expected to walk away. Ethan snorted at his delusions of power. Here he was, a prisoner, with no hope of getting out. The old man had no intention of letting him go until he undid the spell he'd cast. Ethan sighed. That was the problem; he didn't know how to undo the spell.

Ripper had created that spell years ago. It was after he'd left Oxford, after an unexpected meeting with his father who had managed to track him down, wanting to remind his son of his duty, wanting to tell his son that he was pleased he'd remembered his place. That was all it took. Ripper was out the door that same day, and once again, Ethan had followed him.

Ripper had been as angry as Ethan could remember him being. He'd mucked about with spells and potions, muttering, slamming things around, and then he'd started writing, word after word, almost as if he were channeling directly from the magic in the air. He'd given Ethan that grin of his and had told him that at the next new moon he'd be giving the Council a bit of a start.

But he never did cast the spell that he had created that day. After he cooled off, Ripper had decided that more than the Council would suffer if he used the spell, and that it wasn't right. Ethan shook his head. That had always been Ripper's weakness. Too much conscience.

Ethan blew out a frustrated breath and once again chastised himself for being so stupid. Stupid for getting caught and stupid for trying to protect Ripper. On any other day he'd have sold his old friend down the river for the right amount of money. He had already, several times. He couldn't seem to help himself. It

helped clear his head
of the nostalgia and the pain of what he'd lost.

But he couldn't do it this time. Not even when the old man had been in his face, threatening to rip him in to little pieces. Ethan had refused to tell him whose spell it was. He let out a short laugh. That had been a mistake. He should have made up a name, he should have sold out another friend, anything would have been better than silence. Because Reginald Giles had seen through the silence for what it was, and had recalled the young boy who had tried to protect his son so many years ago. And he had known that Ethan was doing it again.

Now Ripper was going to end up getting involved, despite Ethan's best efforts to keep him out of it. Ethan felt it was deeply ironic that his first attempt in years to do right by Ripper had completely backfired. Because of him, his old friend would have to deal with his father again. And no matter how powerful Ripper had become, he wasn't as powerful as his father, because he hadn't been willing to sell his soul.

The closest he'd come had been that fateful night that they'd conjured Eyghon and everything had gone wrong. Ripper had discovered the potential within himself to become his father, to become the man he hated more than anything. So, he'd walked away, back to the Council, back to a structure that would support him as he tried to find the man he wanted to be. He'd walked away, and left Ethan behind.

##

Giles sat back in his chair and picked his book up again, a newly made cup of tea sitting by his side. The house was so quiet. It felt odd to be alone. Nice, but odd. Between Buffy, Paul, Roger, Spike, and the rest of them, he never seemed to be alone these days. Not that he was complaining. Giles glanced down at his left hand and with his thumb he touched the gold ring encircling his finger. Married. To Buffy. He still couldn't believe it sometimes.

They'd been married for almost seven months now and it still caught him unaware. He would occasionally wake up at night, his heart tripping in his chest, sure that it had all been a dream. Then he'd feel her lying at his side, snuggled close, the way she liked to sleep. He'd feel for his ring, reach out and touch hers, and then, shaking his head at his own foolishness, he'd fall back to sleep.

It was especially odd to not have her here. This was the first time they wouldn't be sleeping together since their honeymoon. Giles found himself

missing her with a longing that took his breath away. How he loved her. Giles smiled softly as he took a sip of his tea. Sending out thoughts of love to her, he hoped she was enjoying this time with her dad.

Giles suddenly thought of his own father. He felt the familiar tightening in his gut. Then the phone rang and Giles almost dropped his teacup. Laughing at himself, and expecting it to be Buffy, he answered the phone. "Hello."

"Rupert. It's your father."

Giles felt his gut tighten again. "What do you want?"

He could almost hear his father shaking his head in dismay. "Rupert, is that any way to speak to your father?"

Giles came close to slamming down the phone. "What do you want?"

"I have your friend Ethan here."

Giles went very still. "Excuse me?"

"Your friend Ethan did a spell. He says it's one of yours. I need you to come and show him how to undo it."

Giles listened to his father's voice. It was so calm, so civilized; you'd never know that every sentence was full of threats. "Is he all right?"

"Of course he's all right. He's a guest."

"Let me talk to him."

"There's no need for that. He has assured me that it is your spell, and that only you know how to counteract it."

Giles knew his father was lying. Ethan, had, over the years, caused Giles extraordinary misery, but Giles knew that Ethan would never sell him out to his father. "Let me talk to him."

There was a pause. "Very well." Giles waited on the phone, listening. He could almost picture the house as the sound of his father's footsteps changed as he crossed over hardwood floors and expensive carpeting. Giles heard the jangling of keys and then a door being scraped open. "Ethan, Rupert would like to speak to you."

Ethan got up out of the chair and gingerly reached for the phone. He could

feel the magic in the air surrounding the older man. "Rupert?"

"Ethan, what happened?"

"It doesn't matter, stay away."

"What's he doing to you?"

"Nothing. Giving me time to think about how stupid I am. Just stay away."

"How did he get you?"

"I wasn't careful enough. And you won't be either." Ethan glanced up at the man. "He's stronger than he was."

"What spell did you do?"

Ethan didn't want to say anything, even though Reginald knew. He still didn't want to implicate Rupert.

Giles smiled softly at the silence. "He knows. And I know you didn't tell him. I trust you in this, Ethan. So, tell me, what spell did you do?"

"Remember that day, the day you left Oxford?"

Giles' eyes widened. "Good Lord, Ethan. You did that spell?"

"He wanted a Slayer." Ethan glanced up at Rupert's father, a look of vindication in his eyes. "That was the only spell I knew that would make sure he didn't get one."

Giles sighed. "There is no counter spell. You know that. I wasn't even sure it would work. I was going off half-cocked when I made that up."

"I told him there wasn't a counterspell." Ethan let out a short laugh. "For some reason he doesn't believe me."

Giles sighed again. "Let me talk to my father again."

Ethan hissed in the phone. "Stay away. I mean it. I'll figure something out." Then he handed the phone back and sat down in his chair.

"Yes, son."

"Don't call me that."

There was a brief silence. His father's voice was a bit less civilized. "I think it's time for a visit, Rupert. It's been a long time since you were home."

"That place is not my home."

"You need to develop a counterspell, and then Ethan must perform it. Then he still owes me a spell. I believe your presence will help persuade him to be more helpful."

Giles could hear the door scraping shut, and the keys jangling as they relocked the door. "Let him go. I can do what needs to be done from here."

"No, I think it would be best for you to come here." The voice carried a clear threat now. "I'd hate for anything to happen to your friend in your continued absence."

Giles wanted to reach through the phone and throttle his father. He decided it would be much more satisfying to do it in person. "I'll be there."

"Good. I've already booked you a ticket. If you leave immediately, you might just make it in time."

"You haven't changed a bit, have you? Still can't abide making things easy on anyone."

"Don't be absurd. It's simply a matter of timing. And I would have thought you'd have outgrown the need to fling accusations in my face. Every father makes mistakes."

The anger pulsing through Giles pushed him out of the chair. "Mistakes? My mother is dead. Eleanor is dead."

"Ah, still blaming me for that?"

Giles tried to loosen his grip on the phone. He refused to have this argument with his father. It was one he'd never win. "Give me the flight information."

His father complied. "It will be good to see you again, son."

Giles hung up.

End of Part 1

Sins of the Father 2

Giles packed a small suitcase and then called Buffy on her cell phone. He couldn't help smiling a little when her cheery voice answered. "Hello, love of my life."

Giles still wasn't used to the caller ID function. It always surprised him when Buffy knew it was he on the phone. "Are you having a nice time?"

"Yes, I am. We're having dinner in a really swank restaurant."

"Well, I'm sorry to disturb you."

All of a sudden Buffy got a creepy feeling. "What's wrong?"

"I have to go to England."

"England? Why?"

"My father just called. I have some family business I need to take care of."

Buffy was dumbfounded. "Your father?"

"Yes."

"I thought your father was dead." She nodded to herself. "I know you told me he was dead."

Giles let out a sigh. "I know. I'm sorry. He...uh...well he's actually still alive. I...I just don't talk to him."

Buffy could hear how tight Giles' voice was. "Giles, what's going on?"

"Something's come up and I just need to go take care of some business."

"What's come up?"

"I'd rather not talk about it now. I have to leave to catch my plane."

Buffy sat up. "What? You're leaving now? Without me?"

"Buffy, I have to go now. I can't wait."

"But, I'm in LA. I can be at the airport in twenty minutes."

"There's no need. Hopefully I'll be able to wrap things up quickly and be home before you. There's no need to spoil this time with your dad. I know you've been looking forward to it."

"I don't like this. You're not telling me something."

"It's a rather long and sordid affair, Buffy. I promise I'll tell you everything when I see you."

"You'll call me as soon as you get there?"

"I will."

"What's your dad's number? In case I want to call you?"

Giles hesitated, and then he nervously cleared his throat. "I don't know. I haven't called there in a very long time."

Buffy frowned. "I think I should go."

Giles shook his head. He wasn't letting Buffy anywhere near his father. "No, I really would rather you didn't. Please."

Buffy wished she were with him so she could see his face. Something about this felt wrong. "You'll call me the minute you get there?"

"I'll call you from the airport." He looked at his watch and made a mental calculation. "Considering the time difference, that should be about 10:00 tomorrow morning."

Buffy let out a huffy breath. "Okay. But you better call."

"I promise. I love you."

"I love you, too."

Giles hung up and headed out the door.

Buffy stared at the phone for a minute, and then she held a finger up to her father, asking for his indulgence. She hit one of her speed dials.

##

Paul reached for his phone when it rang. "Erikson."

"Paul, it's Buffy."

"I knew it, I knew something was going to happen. What's wrong?"

"I don't know."

That wasn't quite the answer Paul was expecting. "What do you mean?"

"Did Giles ever tell you anything about his dad?"

"Just that he was a Watcher, and that he was dead."

"Yeah, that's what he told me, too."

"Why do you ask?"

"He's about to get on a plane to go to England to see him."

Paul stared at the phone for a minute. "Could it be a step dad?"

"No, he told me that his father was actually still alive, that they just don't talk." She frowned. "And he sounded weird on the phone."

Paul wasn't sure what to do. "Do you need me to come home?"

"No, I just wondered if maybe he'd told you some goods on his dad during one of your male bonding nights at the bar."

"Nope, not a word. Of course, he's not very forthcoming about his past."

Buffy barked out a laugh. "God, you've been hanging around with him too much. You've got the understatement thing going great."

"So are you going with him?"

"No, he didn't want me to."

Paul raised his eyebrows. "He didn't want you to?"

"Yeah. He said he just needed to take care of some business and he'd probably be home before I was." She paused.

Paul could hear the hesitation. "And?"

"When I asked about his dad, he said it was a sordid affair and he'd tell me about it when he got home."

Paul's lips tightened. He couldn't even imagine what would cause Giles to identify something as sordid, especially about his own father. "Maybe one of us should go. Maybe..." He got out his pen. "Where is he going?"

Buffy let out a noise of frustration. "I have no idea. I don't even know where his father lives, seeing as I thought he was dead. And Giles didn't have a phone number to give me."

Paul scowled. "Did he say he'd call?"

"Yes. I made him promise to call as soon as he got to the airport in England. He said it would be about 10:00 tomorrow morning."

That seemed like such a long time from now. Plenty of time for things to go wrong. "Call me when he calls you."

"Will do. Bye."

"Bye." Paul disconnected. "Shit."

##

Giles tried to sleep on the plane, knowing he'd need his wits about him when he dealt with his father. He very much needed to not be sleepy. Before getting on the plane he had wondered if this was the smartest thing to do. A part of him had deliberated taking a different flight, wondering if he could somehow sneak on to his father's property, free Ethan and simply leave. He had discarded the idea quickly. If his father wanted something, simply removing it from his presence wasn't going to keep him from it. And his father had power and money enough to bring the fight to Sunnydale if he needed to, and Giles had no intention of letting that happen.

Better to go, meet with his father, act as if the past wasn't still standing between them with its claws extended, discuss events as calmly and rationally as possible and arrange for Ethan's release. Giles let out another deep breath. He really needed to sleep. Knowing the futility of even trying to rest with thoughts of his father racing through his head, he nonetheless closed his eyes.

##

After arriving at the Heathrow airport, Giles felt a moment of resistance when he saw the driver holding up a sign with his name on it. He couldn't help but feel as if he were a lamb going docilely to the slaughter. He wanted to believe that his father couldn't do anything to him now but, despite the passage of years, and the newer, more terrifying visages of evil that Giles had dealt with during his tenure as Buffy's Watcher, the thirteen-year-old boy inside had still not let go of his ghosts, or his sense of impotence in dealing with this particular evil.

He caught a pay phone with the corner of his eye. He let the driver know he had arrived, left his bag with him and walked over to the pay phone, pulling out his calling card as he went. After a minute's perusal of the instructions, Giles started dialing numbers. As the phone rang, Giles couldn't stop the pleasant sense of anticipation that grew at the thought of speaking with his wife. He loved thinking that. His wife.

"Hello? Giles? Is that you?"

"Yes, I just arrived."

"Is everything all right?"

"Well, other than the fact that I wish I were home with you, yes, everything seems to be fine. A driver is standing by to take me to my father's home."

"Isn't it where you grew up?"

"Yes."

"So, isn't it your home, too?"

"No." Giles was tired and he didn't want to go into explanations right now, especially as he'd have to make up some plausible explanation first. He didn't want Buffy to know about his father, or about what his father had done to him and his family. He didn't want to inflict that on her. Her life already had too many demons in it. And an irrational part of him kept thinking that if Buffy didn't know where he was going, then she would be safe, clear of his father's influence. "I need to go, Buffy, but I will be home soon."

"I still think I should be there."

"I'd rather know you were there waiting for me."

There was a hesitation. "I hate waiting."

Giles let out a soft chuckle. "I know you do, love. I'm sorry. I'll try not to keep you waiting for long."

He could almost hear Buffy frowning. "All right, then. But call me the minute you get to your father's house so I can reach you if I want to."

Reluctant for Buffy to even have his father's number, Giles was tempted to say no. But unless he wanted Buffy on the next plane, he knew he had no choice but to agree. "I will."

"You promise?"

"I do."

"So how long will that be?"

"It all depends on traffic, but no more than two hours."

"Okay, I'll be right here, waiting. I love you."

"I love you too. I always will. Don't ever forget that." Giles knew Buffy hated to be the one to hang up first so he silently hung up the phone. Then, squaring his shoulders, he headed back to the driver.

##

Buffy stared at the phone and repeated Giles' last words. "Don't ever forget that." She didn't like the sound of that. It sounded too much like words you say when you might not get to tell someone you loved them again. A finger of dread coiled around her spine. She tried to shake it off, tried to convince herself that she was being unnecessarily over-dramatic, but the sensation wouldn't go away.

She flipped her phone closed and looked around her father's spare bedroom. It felt weird to be here, even though it had been nice to hook up with her dad. It made her feel like a teenager again, instead of a sort of grown up woman with a husband of her own. A husband, she reminded herself, who is too many miles away, dealing with something bad, something bad enough that he refused to talk to Buffy about it.

Buffy didn't like that. She had thought they weren't going to have any more secrets. Flipping her phone open again she checked the cache of numbers and chose one. She bit her fingernail while it rang.

"John Drinan."

"John, it's Buffy."

"Hello there." His voice was genuinely pleased. "To what do I owe the honor of this phone call?"

Buffy couldn't help but smile. She really liked John. "What do you know about Giles' dad?" There was a pause that made Buffy nervous. One of those types of pauses.

"Giles' father?"

"You're stalling, I can tell. What do you know?"

"Why are you asking? Or I suppose I should be wondering why you're asking me? This seems a better question for Giles to answer."

"He told me his father was dead. But now he's in England on his way to see him and he won't tell me why. But I know it's something bad." There was another pause and it made Buffy crazy. "John."

"Are you sure he's on his way to see his father?" John's voice was laced with doubt.

"Yes, I'm sure. He just called me from the airport in London. What do you know about him?"

"I'm assuming you want to know specifics about his relationship with Giles, not his history as a Watcher."

"You assume right."

"Well, just rumors mostly. Serious estrangement, mysterious deaths of members of the family. I've been told that Giles ran away from home when he was thirteen, supposedly with another character of ill repute. Are you familiar with Ethan Rayne?"

Buffy's eyes opened wide. "Ethan Rayne? Giles ran away from home when he was thirteen with Ethan Rayne?" Buffy leaned back in her chair. She couldn't believe it. Giles had whole lives he'd lived that she knew nothing

about. Nothing. How could she feel that she knew someone better than she'd ever known anyone and yet seem to know nothing about him?

John was still talking. "Although none of this is substantiated. Giles and Ethan Rayne are probably the only ones who could corroborate that story. By your questions I gather that Giles has not spoken of it, and from what I know of Ethan Rayne, I don't imagine he would." He paused. "Unless you paid him a lot of money."

"Sounds like Ethan." Buffy thought for a moment. "So are you trying to tell me that Giles hasn't spoken to his father since he was thirteen?"

"No, they are both Watchers. Once Giles became a Watcher he would have found it necessary to talk with his father on occasion. All I've heard is that there continues to be no love lost between them." There was another pause. "Buffy."

Buffy heard something in the sound of her name that made her nervous. "What?"

"There is something else you should know. Giles' father is a powerful sorcerer, without equal among the Watchers."

"What aren't you saying?"

"His techniques have fallen under question over the years. At this time he really has very little to do with the Council, although he stays in touch, partly through his friends who, in my mind, are also of questionable character. One of his companions is, or was, Quentin Travers."

"Crap. I knew it. I knew this was something bad. I just knew it."

"It could also be just what Giles said it was, some family business that needs taking care of."

"Some family business that comes out of nowhere, takes Giles to England on a plane late at night, with no notice, and that makes him not want to take me?"

John knew Buffy well enough to recognize that tone in her voice. That dog with a bone tone. He tried anyway. "Perhaps you should wait until you hear from him again."

"If I waited until Giles actually told me he was in trouble he'd be dead a

hundred times by now."

"I suppose if I don't help you, you'll just do this on your own, won't you?"

"Yup."

John considered his options. He wasn't sure which Giles would be angrier about. On the one hand, he might not require rescuing at all, and John would be assisting Buffy to stick her nose in something that Giles clearly felt didn't concern any of them. On the other hand, Giles could find himself in trouble, at the mercy of some deadly adversaries, and Buffy might get hurt trying to help if she was without the assistance John could potentially provide. It really didn't take much thought. Giles would forgive everything except something untoward happening to his Slayer and the love of his life. For that matter, John wouldn't forgive himself if he let anything happen to Buffy.

"I can get you the address, schematics of the house, and transportation. Will that suffice, or do you want some additional manpower as well?"

"Just Paul. We'll need to go get him. He's in Las Vegas."

"No one else?"

"Well, I'll ask Roger but he's covering for a couple of other doctors, and seeing as no one's actually been hurt he probably won't feel like he can just hop on a plane and leave the country. And things get complicated with Spike because of sunlight, plus I'll need him to keep an eye on things at home." She sighed, loudly. "And if this really is just family business, Giles may be less mad at me if it's only me and Paul who show up, and not the whole gang poking their nose in where it doesn't belong."

Even though she couldn't see him, John tried to keep from smiling. "Well, all things considered, I think I'd rather have this be much ado about nothing, and have Giles be annoyed at the both of us, than think that he might really be in some danger."

"Yeah, me too. But he'll be less mad at me if I save his life."

John let out a small laugh. "Are you sure you don't want to wait a few hours?"

"No. I just know something's gonna go wrong."

"Far be it from me to argue with a Slayer's sixth sense. Let me make some arrangements and I'll get back to you."

"Thanks, John." Buffy hung up and then she dialed Paul's number. One of the many things Buffy loved about Paul is that he was perfectly willing to see threats to Giles in just about anything. She knew he'd be on his way to England yesterday even with the scanty evidence she had. But the names Quentin Travers and Ethan Rayne both ending up in a conversation about Giles was something she had no intention of ignoring.

End Part 2

Sins of the Father 3

Giles was escorted into his father's study. Reginald Giles looked up from his chair. "Ah, Rupert, welcome home."

Giles chose not to respond to the greeting. "Where's Ethan?"

"Slow down, boy. All in good time. We have a few things we need to discuss first."

Giles ran a hand down the bottom half of his face. He wanted to get this done and go home. "I don't know how to undo the spell he did. I already told you that. I will work on it, and find a way to counteract it." There was a reason Giles hadn't done the spell years ago when he'd first created it. The fact that it coincided with his father's request did not alter the fact that the spell needed to be undone.

Reginald carefully saved his place in the book he was reading, and laid the book to the side. "How long will that take?"

"I have no idea. I need my books and I need time to research. I don't know why you insisted I come here. I would be far more able to complete this task in my own home. Now, please take me to Ethan."

"I'm afraid I need a bit more than that."

Giles tried to curb his impatience. "What else do you need?"

"I need Ethan to do the spell I originally hired him for."

"I don't imagine he has any intention of doing that, as your current circumstances clearly demonstrate."

"Well, I trust you can persuade him."

"I have no intention of trying to persuade him to do anything of the sort. He took a step toward his father. "Why did you use Ethan anyway? You must have more than enough power to do whatever magic you wish."

"Yes, I do. But the Council's bloodhounds would trace the magic used to do that sort of spell, and I'd much rather have them chasing after Ethan, than chasing after me."

Giles contemplated his father. "It's not going to happen. Ethan clearly won't do it, and neither will I. I'll do whatever I can to reverse the spell he did because it may cause needless suffering over time, but then I'm through."

His father's voice grew soft and it put Giles on his guard. "I was counting on your assistance in persuading Ethan."

"I'm afraid you've miscalculated, then."

Reginald slowly nodded his head, his lips pursed. Then he stood up and walked over to the door. "It doesn't matter. You see, I know what his weakness is. And whether you want to or not, you will be assisting me." Nodding at someone outside the door, he moved out of the way as three men walked in.

Giles began to back away. "What are you doing?"

"Persuading Ethan." He watched, his face impassive as two of the men grabbed his son.

Giles struggled and almost got free, but the two men were more than a match for him, and held him still, securing one of his arms. He sent an unbelieving look at his father. "What are hoping to achieve? This is lunacy."

Reginald waited until the third man had removed a syringe from his inner coat pocket, uncapped the needle and injected Giles. "I told you. Persuading Ethan. He might not do the spell for me, but I'm betting he'll do it to protect you. I'll get his oath by blood and then I'll free you both to do your research." He stood in the doorway. "These men will take you to Ethan." The old man smiled and if Giles wasn't being held so tightly he would have recoiled. "Sweet dreams, Rupert."

##

Ethan leapt out of the chair when he heard a key being turned in the lock. He wanted to be prepared for any possibility of escape. As the first man entered

holding a gun pointed directly at him, Ethan stood quite still. All thought of running leached out of his mind when the next two men entered dragging a man between them.

Ethan let out a curse. "Bloody hell." He shot daggers at the two men. "What the fuck did you do to him?"

They ignored him and deposited Giles, none too gently, on the couch. Without another word, the three men left the room, locking the door again behind them.

Ethan moved to the couch and helped Giles into a sitting position. His voice was angry. "What happened? Why are you here? I told you to stay away."

Giles shook his head, trying to shake off the lethargy creeping through his system. "I know. But, I could hardly do nothing and just leave you with him." His eyes closed and then he jerked them open. "Don't let me fall asleep."

For a moment, Ethan felt as if he were twelve years old again. Then his older eyes perused his friend's face, taking in the glazed eyes. His eyes darkened in anger. "What did he do to you?"

"Gave me something to make me sleep." Giles' eyes started to close again.

Ethan stood. "Shit." He wished with all of his might that he could access his magic and use it to place wards to protect Ripper from his father. Or use it to stop the bastard's heart. With a sickening lurch in his stomach he knew that the bindings that would keep him and Giles from using their magic in this room, wouldn't protect them from the old man's magic. Ethan reached down and grabbed one of his friend's arms. "Get up." When all he got in return was a grunt he spoke more sharply. "Damn it, I said get up." He pulled harder, and forced Ripper to his feet.

Giles swayed as he stood and latched on to Ethan. The drug was taking its toll. He did his best, following Ethan's commands, stumbling across the room and back. Finally his knees just gave out and he ended up pulling them both down to the floor. "Ethan." Giles gasped in desperation.

Ethan hesitated but then slapped Ripper across the face. "Don't you dare fall asleep." As his eyes continued to close Ethan slapped him again. "Wake up." He tried to pull Ripper back up. "Get up, walk with me."

Giles shook his head. "I can't. I can't. I'm sorry." He grabbed at Ethan's hand.

"He's using me to get to you. Don't let him. Promise me."

"Just get up." Ethan tried again to pull him up, but Ripper had always been a heavy man, and supporting his almost dead weight from the floor proved a bit unmanageable. Ethan's voice was thick with fear and anger. "Bloody hell, Ripper. Don't do this to me. Wake up."

The grasp on Ethan's arm grew weak. "Promise me." Then Giles lost his hold on consciousness and the hand slipped to the floor.

Ethan pulled back as if to hit him again, but then thought better of it. He stared down at his now unconscious friend. "Fuck." Hating the older Giles more than he'd ever hated him before, he settled himself on the floor, resting against the couch. He gathered his friend up, resting Ripper's head against his chest. Knowing he would never be able to do this if Giles were awake, Ethan wrapped his arms tightly around his friend, resting his cheek on the top of his head. He spoke softly. "I'm right here, Rupert, I'm right here."

##

Giles glanced around, wondering where he was. Then he noticed the topiaries and his heart started pounding. It had been years since he'd been here, but he would never forget it. This was his father's domain. The garden, but not the garden. In this garden the topiaries weren't mythical beasts, and gaily-prancing animals. Instead, they were creatures in anguish, locked in deadly torment. The sky was gray, and all the greenery had a sickly brownish tinge to it, as if the ground had been poisoned.

Giles heard the footsteps and he spun around. He tried to keep the feeling of helplessness from rising but it was difficult.

His father walked around him, smiling. "You're stronger than you used to be." He sniffed the air, as if Giles' magic filled the atmosphere with an enticing aroma. "Maybe strong enough to resist."

Giles hated that smile. He lunged at his father but when he reached the spot where his father had stood, he was gone.

The voice came from behind him. "Yes, definitely strong enough to resist. But not while you're on that drug."

Giles lunged again only to find himself wrapping his arms around empty space again. "You can't keep me drugged forever."

"I don't have to. I only have to do it long enough for Ethan to agree to help."

"He won't do it."

"He will. He foolishly loves you."

"I'll kill myself first."

"Then he won't care. Either way he'll help."

"Do you really think you're that invincible? Do you really believe you can somehow control a Slayer and not have the Council know, not have them take action against you?"

"You don't understand. I don't intend to keep her."

"What then? Why do you want to know where the next Slayer is?"

Reginald smiled again. "Think of it, Rupert. A brand new Slayer, all that power, all that raw power but still untrained. She won't know how to fight back, how to protect herself."

Giles gave him a horrified look. "Good Lord, you'd go into her head while she's sleeping and siphon part of her power off, weakening her."

"But not completely. She'd still be strong, and never know what she lost. Then she'd be assigned a Watcher and go off and get herself killed quickly like every Slayer should. Then there'd be a new one and again I'd get there first." His eyes gleamed. "Just think of all that power."

"You've gone completely mad."

"No, well, yes, I suppose, but only for the power. Otherwise I'm still quite sane."

Giles sent up a little prayer of thanks that Ethan had actually done his crazy spell. "I'll never undo the spell Ethan did. How could you think I would after you've told me this? Those girls are better off never being found by the Council than being violated by you."

"Ethan's a bright lad. He'll figure out a way to undo it, or he'll figure out a way to make you do it."

His father's certainty made Giles uneasy. "I won't let him."

Reginald waved off his statement. "I understand Ethan better than you do. Ethan's the sort who will do anything to get what he wants, without questioning the ethics, or the outcome of his actions. That's why you're in this predicament to begin with. And to save you from me, I don't believe there's anything he wouldn't do, even if it destroyed you."

Giles was afraid his father might be right. "Don't do this."

The older man laughed. "Hoping to touch a core of decency within me, Rupert, after all this time? You are such a fool. You always have been." He took a step closer to his son. "Although, I do like this new plan of yours. Quentin told me all about it. Even more Slayers for me to access."

"I'll stop it. I'll stop the research."

"And leave your beloved Slayer to her fate?" He shook his head. "What a quandary for you."

"There is no quandary. Buffy would never choose a longer life at the expense of someone else."

"Oh, dear. You've found someone as noble as you to marry. How dull." He waved his hand again. "Enough of this. I didn't bring you here to chat."

Giles' heart began to pound again. Regardless of the many years since he'd faced this, there were too many vivid memories to keep the fear at bay. He started to back up, his eyes darting around, looking for a place to run, knowing it was futile. But the fear continued to grow and when Giles saw the pathway open up he ran.

Reginald smiled and lifted his hands, creating a small fireball in his palms. Then he spoke a few words and set it aloft after his son.

Giles could feel the heat from the fire just before it knocked him off his feet. Then it began to slowly consume him and he let out a scream.

##

Ethan could feel the body in his arms stiffen. He held him tighter as Giles let out an agonized cry. Ethan wished he could rip out the old man's heart. He'd eat it as he stood over him.

##

Buffy glanced at her watch again. It had been four hours with no word from Giles. He had said no more than two and he wasn't the sort to just forget to call. Giles never forgot to call. Not unless he was researching, and even then, only if it was life threatening. But if he were dealing with some life-threatening research, he would have called her so she could come and help. No matter how she looked at it, it made no sense that he hadn't called. Unless he couldn't call. Unless he were hurt, or...

Buffy shook her head, unwilling to go there. Buffy was sure she'd know if something that horrible had happened. Somehow she'd know with that link they had if he... Again she shook her head. He was fine. It was something stupid like the phone line being down, or a flat tire.

Buffy checked her phone again, making sure it was on, and the batteries were good. She shook it as if it might make it ring. Buffy fought the impulse to call Paul again, just so she could be talking to somebody. She glanced up at the door to the cockpit. John was there, talking to the pilot, making arrangements. She resisted the urge to burst in and make him talk to her. She hated this. Hated the waiting, hated not being able to just punch something. Clenching her jaw, Buffy looked out the window down at the patterned fields as they passed by beneath the plane.

##

Paul stood at the small airport, waiting for the private plane to come and pick him up. He'd been speaking to Buffy every thirty minutes, hoping that Giles might call, hoping that Giles would put all their minds at ease, saying he was fine, giving them the number where he was staying. But he hadn't. And now too much time had gone by, and Paul was beside himself. He glanced at the sky again, cursing every second that he had to wait.

End of Part 3

Sins of the Father 4

Giles jerked awake with a loud agonized gasp. He was disoriented. "Buffy?"

"No. It's me, Ethan." Ethan's voice was mocking, filled with an expectation of rejection.

Giles surprised him. He laid his head back down on Ethan's chest. "Oh, God."

The pain in Giles' voice elicited a fresh spurt of anger in Ethan. "What did the bastard do?"

Giles lifted a hand and looked at it, amazed his skin was intact, amazed it wasn't just a blackened charred stump. "He burned me." He half turned his body and pressed his face against Ethan's shoulder. He needed the touch of a friend, someone who would understand.

Ethan tightened his hold on Giles, grateful beyond words that his friend was accepting his support. "I tried to keep you awake. I'm sorry."

Giles shook his head, not lifting it. "It's not your fault." He stayed there for another minute trying to get his strength back. Then he pushed back, out of Ethan's arms and frowned at him. "Actually, on sober reflection, it is your fault. What the bloody hell were you doing getting involved with my father? What were you thinking?"

Ethan frowned back. "I just wanted to get one over on him."

Giles rolled his eyes. "One over? One over?" He let out an exasperated sigh. "Well, you've signed our death warrant." His lips tightened. "And an unpleasant one at that."

"Why? Why would he kill us? We have what he wants."

"Ethan. Even if we did as he asked..." Giles glared at his friend, "...which we won't." He glared again to make sure he was making his point. "But even if we did, do you actually believe he's going to keep us alive to tell the tale? Do you know what he plans to do with the Slayers as he finds them?"

Ethan shook his head. "No, I never got that far. I just knew I wanted to bugger things up for him."

"He'll do what he just did to me. He'll get there first, and get in their heads while they're sleeping and steal some of their power. And he'll keep doing it to every Slayer that gets called, and he'll just get stronger." He gestured to himself and Ethan. "He can't afford to keep us alive. If we're dead, no one will ever know. These girls will just think they've had a bad nightmare."

Ethan stood up and began to pace. "Shit." He measured out the room with his

stride and turned. "Why does he think we'll do the spells for him, then? He's got to know we'll work it out that he'll have to kill us."

"He thinks it because he thinks he knows you. He thinks he can torture me and make you crazy enough to agree to anything." Giles pulled up his legs and wrapped his arms around them, resting his head on his knees. "You mustn't give in to him, Ethan. It won't save me in the long run, and it will only put more people at risk from him."

"I don't really care what he does to anyone else. I just want him to leave you alone."

Giles gave Ethan a sad smile. "I know you do, and I appreciate it. But I do care about those other people. No one deserves to be attacked in their dreams and I'll do whatever it takes to protect future Slayers from anything he might inflict on them."

Ethan leaned against the wall. "I don't plan to just sit here until I rot."

"Neither do I, but you not thinking things through is what put us in this mess, and you'll just make it worse if you continue to not think."

"Are you hoping your heroine will come and rescue you?" Ethan's voice was sulky.

Giles' eyebrows rose as he considered the question. He looked at his watch and sighed. "I'm hours overdue for when I was expected to call. And that means, knowing Buffy, she's already marshaling the troops. The problem is that she has no idea what she's getting into. Which is my fault entirely as I've never told her any of this."

"What makes you think she'll come anytime soon? It seems to me that she was pretty good at ignoring you for long stretches of time."

Giles let out a soft laugh. He held up his left hand. "This is why."

Ethan furrowed his brow as he looked at Giles' hand. It took him a few seconds but then he noticed the ring. "You're married? To whom? And why would that make any difference to Buffy?" He gave it a second's thought. "I get it, you married her mum, didn't you?" He gave Giles a leer. "I admit, she seemed quite taken with you the last time I saw you together."

Giles glared at him. "No, I'm married to Buffy."

Ethan slid down the wall and thumped into a sitting position. "What? What? You married that fishwife?" He paused. "Were they going to take away your green card?"

Giles frowned at Ethan. "No. She loves me, and I love her." He twisted the ring around his finger. "A lot of things have changed over the last year or so."

"Married?" Shaking his head, Ethan was having a hard time even imagining the idea. "You married your Slayer?" Another pause. "Does her mum know?"

"Buffy's mother died a couple of years ago."

Still nonplussed, Ethan only repeated himself. "You married your Slayer? You married Buffy? Why?"

"Because I love her."

"Buffy?" He gestured towards his face. "The one who keeps threatening to kill me?"

"Yes, in between my own threats to kill you."

"Bloody hell."

Giles glanced at his friend. "I expected you to know. You always seem to know everything."

"Why didn't you invite me to the wedding?"

Giles rolled his eyes. "You don't really expect me to answer that, do you?"

"Yes, actually, I do. I can't believe you didn't invite me. Your best friend."

"Oh, please. If I'd invited you, you'd have come with the intent to do us some mischief. Trust me, we had enough to deal with without any help from you."

Ethan scowled. "How could you do that to yourself? How could you get involved that way with someone who's just going to die and leave you alone?"

Giles' lips tightened at his friend's words but he captured Ethan's gaze, and held it relentlessly. "Ethan, you can't always control who you fall in love with." The two men's eyes locked for a few more moments and then Ethan dropped his to the floor. Giles looked away as well. Then his gaze hardened. "Why do you even care? Your visits to Sunnydale were a consistent effort to speed that process along, for

both of us."

Ethan shrugged. "I never started anything intending for you to die." He grinned. "I can't help it if it sometimes just seemed to end up that way."

Giles snorted. Then he got up off the floor and moved to the small couch, laying down on it. "God, I'm tired."

Ethan stayed on the floor. "Do you think you should sleep?"

"I'm probably safe right this minute. I know these spells wear him out." Giles had no intention of actually sleeping, just on the off chance his father was sitting up in his room, waiting for another opportunity. He again looked at his hands. He could still feel the skin crisping, peeling back. He glanced over at Ethan, picking up the conversation, his voice heavy with the need for sleep. "You never did know how to let go. After we drifted apart you should have just stayed away."

Ethan barked out a laugh. "Drifted apart? There was no drifting, Rupert. There was only you, running, as fast as you could, without a by your leave, or a cheerio old chap, it's been nice to know you." Ethan pushed against the wall and stood. "It left things a bit unresolved for me." When there was no response he walked over to the couch to see that his friend looked as if he'd fallen asleep. He nudged him with his knee, hard. "Wake up."

Giles opened his eyes and sat up. He hadn't intended to drift off like that, so easily. The drug was still pulling on him, and the fact that he had been up essentially all night wasn't helping. He tried to refocus. Glancing up at Ethan he flashed him a tired lopsided smile. Ethan felt it pull on his heart. Giles sighed. "You're right, of course. I did run. That whole affair with Randall terrified me. I saw myself becoming my father and I..." He raised his hands palms up, almost in supplication. Giles stood. "And the few times we saw each other after that, you and I were both too stubborn to find any reliable middle ground."

Ethan sighed. He knew the story only too well. He hated it, hated what had happened between them. It was time to change the subject. "So you think blondie will come and get us out?"

Giles sent his friend a glare. "Her name is Buffy, and yes. I just hope..." Again he left his sentence unfinished, deeply worried for her safety, chagrined that she would be so unprepared for what she might find herself fighting against.

"Buffy is better than blondie?" Ethan grinned at his companion. "There is something marvelously ironic about you, with that brain of yours, and your

education, marrying someone named Buffy."

"Ha bloody ha." Giles shifted a little, not wanting to get too comfortable. "Keep me awake, Ethan. Tell me some of your more stupid adventures since I last saw you. I realize that will be most of them so it should take us awhile to get through them."

Ethan sent him a disparaging look. "Your sense of humor always did slay me, Ripper."

"Ethan."

"Fine, fine." Ethan sat down on the couch as well and searched his mind for some amusing stories to tell to keep his friend awake. He and Ripper were chuckling over one of his escapades three hours later when the men appeared to drug Giles again. And again Ethan held him as he cried in his sleep.

##

John watched Paul and Buffy sleep. It was a welcome relief. He'd been hiding in the cockpit with the pilot, needing to escape Paul and Buffy's escalating anxiety. After listening to them, even through the bulkhead, rehash the same few facts over and over, he had finally gone back and told them to shut up and sleep. They'd both been resistant to the idea, and only his insistence that they needed to be at their best when they went to rescue Giles got them to settle down enough to even try.

There was no doubt it was a rescue mission at this point. It had been hours now since Giles had been due to call. John had, through the Council, tracked down Reginald Giles' telephone number but no one had been able to get through. Two operatives had been sent to the house but they had also missed their last check in. Because of that, John had made one last call for someone to meet them at Heathrow Airport. He'd discuss that with Buffy and Paul when they awoke.

John checked his watch. An hour before landing. Then a two-hour ride to the house. Too much damn time. He could understand his friends' anxiety. He hadn't known Giles long but he had come to care deeply for him, to care deeply for them all. But he knew it was Giles who was the glue that held this motley family together. And he suspected it wouldn't take long for it to fall apart if he disappeared from the equation. John watched their two sleeping faces for another moment, and

then he took his own seat and closed his eyes.

##

Reginald Giles checked the wards he had surrounding the house. They had alerted him to the silent approach of the two men who were currently tied and gagged down in the basement. The wards would continue to alert him if anyone else showed up. He was depending on them to alert him if Rupert's Slayer appeared. He was looking forward to meeting her.

He hadn't decided what to do with the two men yet. Something lovely. He rubbed his hands together in anticipation. Something that would let him test the power he'd usurped from his son that was running through his veins. It had been so long. He'd forgotten how sweet Rupert's power was, and now that he was an adult, it was so much stronger, so focused. The older man almost hoped Ethan would hold out longer just so he could keep indulging.

He knew Ethan would eventually buckle. But he'd make Ethan sweat a bit more. Reginald drew a deep breath. This last dream had exhausted him. He'd needed to be so careful. Every strip of skin had brought him a rush of power but he'd had to weigh each indescribable taste against the risk of killing Rupert. He'd miscalculated with Eleanor and he was determined not to make that mistake again.

##

Giles let Ethan hold him. He didn't have the strength to move. He didn't think he had ever experienced anything quite as horrible. Angelus, Drusilla, even Randall, paled in comparison. The pain of it still resonated in his body and just the thought of it made him shiver uncontrollably.

Ethan clenched his jaw as he felt the shivers and his hold tightened. Again he swore to rip the old bastard into little bits if he ever had the chance. Keeping his vow to himself he ran his hand through Ripper's hair and spoke softly to him, trying to convince him that he was safe for the time being.

The tender caress made Giles ache for Buffy. Only the thought of losing her could compare with the agony he had just gone through. While a part of him longed for her arrival, a deeper part of him wanted her to stay away, to stay safe, to stay away from the beast that lived in this house.

As if Ethan had read his mind he spoke of Buffy. "You really think she'll come for you?"

Giles only answer was a nod.

"How will she get here? How will she find you?"

His voice was strained. "We have some resources now we didn't have before. She'll find us." He hoped that was the case. He hoped Buffy would have the sense to use those resources, to ask for help.

"It better be soon." The sorcerer's voice was dark.

"Ethan, you can't give in."

"Yeah? Just as a matter of interest, dear Ripper, how are you going to keep Buffy from just falling right into the old man's clutches? What's to keep him from getting into her mind? You might find out for yourself what it feels like to be watching this and not be able to do anything about it."

Giles groaned at the thought. He was afraid that he wouldn't be able to stand it, not for an instant. His noble words to his father about choosing what was right over what he loved felt like ashes in his mouth. Buffy was so impetuous, and had so many times walked right into danger with no preparation. It suddenly seemed too much to hope for. Feeling a sense of despair overwhelm him he pushed away from Ethan and stood, needing to move, needing to plan. "We'll just have to be ready." He glanced down to where Ethan still sat. "Just don't let me fall asleep. I don't care what it takes."

Ethan nodded, his eyes making the promise. Giles nodded back and he started to pace.

##

John had arranged for one of the Council's sorcerers to meet them at the airport. There were also two vehicles, one to take John to the Council where he could keep track of things, and one for Buffy and Paul. After explaining what the sorcerer was there for, John left. Nervously climbing in the car, Paul and Buffy sat silently while the sorcerer weaved concealment wards around them. The soft mutterings of the spell made Buffy miss Giles so much she had to fight against the sting of tears.

When he was done, the sorcerer got out of the car and walked away. Buffy watched him and then she turned to Paul. "I guess he's not coming with us."

Paul was watching him walk away as well. "I guess not." He gave Buffy a

nervous smile. "Let's go get Giles." He looked up at the driver. "Do you know where you're going?"

The driver nodded, started up the car and began to work his way out of the congested Arrivals area. Buffy squeezed Paul's hand. "I'm glad you're here with me."

Paul smiled back. "Wouldn't miss it." He felt for his gun. He'd been amazed that John had gotten them through customs and a myriad of security checkpoints without a hitch. While he was glad to be armed, Paul sincerely hoped he wouldn't have to use it. Sending Buffy a rueful grin he teased her a little. "So, first trip to England?"

She mock punched him and grinned in return. The smile didn't last long. "I always figured Giles would bring me here."

Paul reached for her hand again. "We'll find him. He'll be fine."

"Yeah, he'll probably just yell at us for getting so worked up."

Paul nodded. He peered over the front seat to check the speedometer. He sat back, frustrated, when he realized the driver was already exceeding the speed limit. He looked out the window. "He'll be fine." Anything else was unthinkable. When Buffy moved closer to him, he silently lifted his arm and held her tightly as the scenery sped by.

End of Part 4

Sins of the Father 5

Ethan was running out of ideas. When the story telling ceased to keep Ripper awake, Ethan had forced him to walk. When he'd started stumbling, a cold shower had worked for a while. A few head dunkings in the sink got him through another hour. Over this last hour, Ethan had slammed him into a few walls, and slapped him around a little bit, but it was getting harder and harder to keep him from falling asleep.

Ethan could almost feel the old man hovering, waiting for his son to fall asleep long enough for him to creep into his dreams. Part of him wondered why they were working so hard to keep Ripper awake. At some point they'd simply come back in and drug him again. But the other part of him had no intention of letting his friend fall prey to his father's sadistic machinations while he had anything to say about it. For the first time since he knew of her existence, Ethan actually found himself wishing that Buffy would show up.

##

The driver dropped them off a few hundred yards away from the long driveway. Paul and Buffy had chosen to eschew the obvious way in and were working their way around the side of the property. As they neared the house Buffy's eyes opened wide. "Look at this place, it's a mansion."

"This is where Giles grew up?"

"I guess." Buffy scrunched her face up. "I had no idea he was so rich."

Paul shook his head. "If he really did run away from home when he was thirteen, and has been estranged from his father all that time, my guess is that he hasn't had access to any of this money."

Buffy frowned and looked up at her companion. "It's weird. There's so much I don't know about him."

Paul couldn't help but agree, and he found the idea disconcerting. He supposed he shouldn't be surprised. He didn't think he knew anyone who was better at hiding things than Giles. Paul just wished that Giles didn't feel the need to do it. He'd thought the large secrets were out on the table and it saddened him to find out how wrong he'd been. He was about to reply when he saw the first guard. Pointing him out to Buffy, they both crept in closer.

Paul kept watch for anyone else as Buffy took the guard down with one solid punch. Relieved by the absence of any surveillance cameras, unaware that the wards fulfilled that function, they worked their way up to the back door of the house. The magic woven by the sorcerer at the airport kept their presence unknown. There were two more guards playing sentry at the door and Buffy and Paul each took one on and then Buffy forced the door open.

##

Ethan yelled at his friend. "Wake up, God damn it." He shoved Giles against the wall. At the glare he got in response, he grinned. "That's right, get angry." He bounced on his toes and held his fists up. "C'mon, fight with me."

Giles pushed against Ethan's fists. "Ethan." He closed his eyes in absolute weariness.

Ethan shoved him against the wall again. "C'mon you bastard. You wanted me to keep you awake, so I'm keeping you awake. Fight with me." He was rewarded with another hostile flicker in Giles' eyes.

Giles pushed away from the wall and fisted his own hands. "Maybe trouncing you is just what I need to stay awake."

Ethan grinned. "I'd like to see you try."

Giles rolled his eyes. "You've never won a fight with me yet, Ethan. What on earth makes you think you'll do it now?"

"Because you've been drugged and you're exhausted. This might be my only opportunity. I hate to waste it."

"But knocking me out will hardly keep me awake."

Ethan put down his fists. "Shit." Then he put his fists back up. "Just one punch? I must owe you several dozen at this point."

"I'm not going to fight you." Giles let out a long breath. "I'm too tired." He shook his head. "Much too tired."

"Well I'm about out of ideas to keep you awake."

Giles leaned against the wall and let his head hang. His body started to sag.

"Bloody hell." Ethan moved in and grabbed Giles' throat by one hand. He pushed him against the wall and moved his face in close. "Maybe you don't want to fight me, but maybe fighting for your life will keep you awake for a while." He increased the pressure around Giles' throat and his voice was angry. "Are you just going to let me strangle you? Fight back."

Paul and Buffy moved through the house. Buffy put her hand up, her acute senses allowing her to hear what Paul couldn't. Her eyes widened and a flash of anger crossed her face. Moving quickly she headed down a hallway, Paul right behind her.

She heard his voice again. "You're just giving up? C'mon, Ripper, you can do better than this." Buffy kicked the door down and saw Ethan with his hand around Giles' throat. With a cry she was across the room and Ethan, in response to the door opening, got his head turned just in time to do nothing as Buffy grabbed him and threw him against the opposite wall.

Ethan picked himself up, only to see a man with a gun in his hand, pointing it right at him. It wasn't one of the old man's usual thugs. "Who the hell are you?"

Buffy was holding tightly to Giles, overwhelmed with relief that he wasn't dead. He held her back just as tightly. She responded to Ethan's question. "He's with me."

Ethan brushed himself off. "You took your bloody time getting here."

Buffy helped Giles over to the couch. She glared up at Ethan. "What the hell did you do to him?"

"I didn't do anything to him." Suddenly it dawned on him that he was free. He headed for the door. "Did anyone see you come in?"

Buffy had no intention of answering any questions. "Don't even think about trying to get away, Ethan. You are so getting a beating."

"Shut up for once, would you? Did anyone see you? Did you see an older man?"

Buffy frowned but she shook her head. "All we saw were three guards that we knocked out."

Ethan found it hard to believe that they had just walked in without the old bastard knowing it. Then he felt it. "Someone put a concealment spell on you."

"Yeah, so?"

Ethan pointed at Giles. "Do not, under any circumstances, let him fall asleep until I get back."

"You must think I'm crazy if you think I'm doing anything you say."

"I mean it. This is for him, not for me. His father's just waiting for him to go to sleep."

"What the hell are you talking about?"

"Just keep him awake. I've got to go before he realizes I'm free." He gave Paul a wary look and headed for the door.

Paul looked to Buffy for some guidance, not sure if he should let the man

leave or not. When he saw the confused look on Buffy's face he asked his own question of the man. "Who are you?"

Ethan pointed at Giles. "His best friend."

Somehow that answer startled Paul more than almost any other answer might have and he just watched as the man left the room. Torn as to whether he should follow or not, he decided to stay put to keep an eye on Buffy and Giles. Walking to the couch he sat on one of its arms.

Giles had just started to drift off when he jerked awake in a panic. "Ethan?"

"No, Giles, it's me, Buffy. Me and Paul."

Giles lifted bleary eyes to her. "Buffy?" He turned his head to look for Paul and sent him a small smile.

Paul's heart clenched at the haggard look on his friend's face. His best friend's face. He scowled at the other man's words.

Buffy was stroking Giles' arm. "What happened? What was Ethan doing here? What did he want?"

Giles shook his head, explanations beyond him. "I just need to sleep."

Disregarding Ethan's words as undoubtedly mischief she spoke soothingly to him. "I'm here now, you can go to sleep. I'll make sure nothing happens to you."

Giles smiled and closed his eyes. Somehow he could sense his father's malevolence. His eyes snapped open again. "Oh, God." He looked around, his eyes nervous. "Where's Ethan?"

"Ethan's gone. He can't hurt you now. It's safe to sleep."

Giles shook his head. "No, I can't."

Paul sat down on the other side of Giles. "Giles, what is it? Why can't you sleep? Why did he want us to keep you awake?"

Giles tried to focus. "My father...he..." The story seemed so complicated. For some reason he couldn't ever remember being so tired. He looked at Paul. "What day is it?"

"Sunday, early morning."

Giles thought that information through; it took him a minute. Forty-eight hours with little sleep, certainly none of it restful. He'd been drugged twice, and tortured twice in his dreams while his magic was ripped out of him. He decided he deserved to be tired. He laid his head back on the couch and started to fade again. Buffy ran her fingers through his hair. "That's right, go to sleep. We'll be right here."

This time he didn't have the strength to do anything but obey. Paul and Buffy both watched him as he slept. Paul frowned. "I don't understand."

Buffy shook her head. "That makes two of us."

##

His father smiled at Giles. "I was wondering how long you'd be able to hold out. Ethan is more persistent than I gave him credit for."

Giles looked around, found himself in the twisted garden again. He took a step back and almost lost his purchase. Glancing down in concern he saw a hole in the ground. All that was missing was a tombstone. He hissed at his father. "I'm not drugged now. I'll fight back."

Reginald shook his head. "You're too tired."

Giles thought of Buffy. He wondered if he had dreamed her or if she was really here. His thoughts conjured her in to his dream and for a moment she was standing in front of him. "Buffy?"

His father laughed as he shared the vision. He used it, manipulating the dream Buffy so that she shoved Rupert into the hole. He walked to the edge and looked down. "Do you think she'll help you out when she just put you in there?" Grinning maliciously, he watched as dirt started to pour into the hole. Giles tried to climb up the dirt sides but the dirt was pouring in too rapidly.

He drew in a mouthful of dirt and started to cough. Spitting it out he just drew in more. Giles tried to cover his head and the pressure of the dirt drove him to his knees. He started to panic as he realized that in too short a time the dirt would cover him completely. He tried to dig his way out, trying to get some air. Every movement just sent more dirt onto his face, making it more and more difficult to breathe.

##

Buffy grabbed Giles when he let out a cry and his body stiffened. "Giles?" He didn't respond. Buffy wondered if this had been the one time she should have listened to Ethan. She shook him. "Wake up." She shook him again, harder. "Wake up." When he started gasping for breath Buffy lifted fearful eyes to Paul.

##

Ethan was running up the stairs, muttering spells. He needed to conceal himself as best he could to hunt the old man down. He and Giles had been in his spell room only once. Even though they thought they had left no trace, the old bastard had somehow known and the retribution had been fierce that night. Neither of them had gone near it again. As he raced up the flights of stairs he tried to remember where it had been, knowing that it, as well, would be hidden by concealment spells.

He was afraid to do a search spell, afraid it would tip his hand. Ethan knew he'd only get one chance at this. Lost in his thoughts and his spells, he almost ran the guard down. Fortunately, the guard was equally surprised at Ethan's sudden arrival and hesitated. That was all Ethan needed. He spoke a quick spell with a wave of his hand, and the guard fell to the floor, choking.

Ethan pressed against the wall, looking for any other guards. He saw one, down at the end of the hallway, guarding a door. Ethan smiled. Staying out of sight he murmured another spell and then stepped into the hallway to cast it at the man. Ethan was already running before the guard hit the ground. When he was half way down the hall he could feel the magic repelling him, convincing him that there was nothing of interest here for him. He fought it, using his magic and his hatred to keep his vision clear. When he forced himself to his destination he tried the doorknob and smiled when it easily turned.

He opened the door and saw him. His eyes were closed, and he had this look of rapture on his face. Ethan's mind filled with murder. He knew that Buffy had let Rupert fall asleep and his father was in his head. Ethan had dual thoughts of strangling them both. He felt a moment's nervousness about the possible consequences to his friend if he stopped the process mid dream. Deciding it didn't matter, that this was the only chance he'd get, Ethan picked up a heavy spell book and with as much force as he could he swung it at the old man's head.

When he slumped to the floor, Ethan bent over him, making sure he wasn't dead. This would be much too easy a death for him. Satisfied as he felt a steady pulse he cast another spell, binding the hated man magically and physically. His eyes searched the room and they fell on the spell book that had been sitting in front of where the man had been sitting. Ethan picked it up and read the spell. His eyes grew dark as he realized that it was the dream spell, the one he used to hurt Rupert. An unpleasant expression came over Ethan's face and, clutching the book to his chest, he ran downstairs.

##

Buffy was getting frantic. She couldn't wake him up, and Giles couldn't catch his breath. She was terrified he was going to suffocate in front of her and she wouldn't be able to stop it. Suddenly Giles came awake with a shuddering breath. Buffy let out a relieved cry. "Oh, thank God. Giles, what happened?"

At the sound of her voice Giles shot off the couch and moved away from her. He looked around the room, his eyes panicked. "Where is he?"

Buffy moved toward him but he put his hand up to keep her away. "Who? Where's who?"

"My father."

Buffy shook her head. "I don't know what you're talking about."

Giles' head was so muddled. Everything seemed dreamlike. He remembered the Buffy in his dream, the one that had pushed him into the grave. "Are you still part of the dream?"

Paul tried this time. "Giles, it's us, Paul and Buffy."

Giles kept his hand up, keeping them away, feeling raw from this last cruelty of his father's. "Where's Ethan?"

Buffy's eyes darkened. "Did he do something to you?"

"Where is he?" Giles' eyes glanced around the room, wondering where the next torture would come from.

"He left."

Giles stared at her suspiciously. "He wouldn't leave me. Not here. Not with my father."

Buffy was hopelessly confused. "Giles. I need some help here." For the life of her she couldn't understand why Giles seemed to trust Ethan, but not her.

Paul took a couple of steps closer to Giles. "Why couldn't you breathe? Are you safe now?"

Giles took a step back, shaking his head. He was afraid to trust anyone. "Where's Ethan? I need Ethan."

"I'm right here." Ethan ran into the room. He sent an angry look to Buffy, angry enough that she found herself taking a step back. "You bitch, you let him fall asleep. I told you to keep him awake." Buffy's eyes narrowed. Ethan ignored her. "Rupert, I'm here." He lay the book down and moved over to his friend.

Giles closed his eyes. "He did it again."

"I know. But he won't do it anymore." Exultant at his audience, Ethan pulled Giles into his arms.

Buffy's jaw dropped when Giles let him do it. And it dropped even farther when Giles wrapped his arms around Ethan and held on tight, laying his head on his shoulder. "I think I might have died this time. Just like Eleanor."

Ethan stroked his back. "Shhh. It's all right. I won't let him hurt you anymore. I promise." He began to move the man over to the couch. "You can sleep now."

Giles sat and at Ethan's coaxing he lay down. He glanced up at his friend. "I can sleep?"

Ethan nodded and took his hand. "You can sleep. You're safe now."

Giles gave him a small, tired smile, and squeezed his hand. Ethan enclosed Giles' hand in both of his and just watched him as he drifted off to sleep.

Paul observed the two men, and his own chest felt tight. Somehow, despite the fact that he'd only known him for a relatively short period of time, he had never questioned his place in Giles' life. But looking at the two of them, the deep relationship they seemed to share, threw everything he thought he knew into question, and he felt a keen sense of loss. Looking over at Buffy he saw that she was looking at the tableau on the couch with an equally lost and confused expression on her face. He moved to stand beside her.

When it was clear that Giles was deeply asleep, Ethan stood. Buffy squared

her shoulders and stared at him defiantly. Ethan didn't have time to deal with her. "One of you needs to stay with him while he sleeps. He'll be out for a while. The other one needs to sweep the house. I took care of two more guards upstairs but I'm guessing there'll be more."

Buffy glared at him. "And what are you going to do? Run away?"

Ethan picked up the spell book. "I've got some dreaming to do."

Buffy rolled her eyes. "Cryptic much? What happened to Giles? What's going on? And who's Eleanor?"

"His sister. He can explain it to you later. I promised him I'd keep him safe, and that's what I'm going to do." With that, Ethan left the room. He was smiling as he headed back upstairs, enjoying this small victory, relishing the fact that at least for a few minutes, Ripper had been his again, not hers, his.

Buffy moved to the couch and sat down next to Giles. She put out a hand to touch him but she hesitated, confused.

Paul pulled up a chair. "Who was that? Who is he?"

"Ethan Rayne." She gently took Giles' hand in hers. "Giles hates him, or at least I thought he did."

Paul made a vague gesture to where the two men had been standing. "That didn't look much like hate to me."

"No, to me either." Buffy shook her head. "Giles knows him from a long time ago." Her lips tightened. "John told me that when Giles ran away from home, Ethan went with him."

Suddenly Paul made the connection. "Wait a minute. That's Ethan Rayne? The Ethan Rayne?" Paul didn't know what he'd been expecting but it wasn't the well-dressed, attractive guy who just skated out of the room. Somehow he'd been expecting something more...demony.

Buffy nodded. Her voice was unfriendly. "That's Ethan Rayne. The one and only."

Paul glanced down at his friend. His thoughts about Ethan faded. "Why did he run away?" He was at a loss. "And I thought Giles was an only child. I know he told me that." Paul tried to not feel betrayed.

Buffy shook her head. "He told me that same thing. And I don't know why he ran away. I don't seem to know anything." Then her face got angry again. "What I do know is that Ethan's come to town four times and each time people almost died. I don't understand why Giles would ever trust him."

Paul let out a sigh. "Well, Giles obviously does, and Ethan clearly knows things we don't, so maybe we should do as he says for the time being. I'll stay here while you go check for guards." He gave her a small smile. "You're better at the sneaking and clobbering than I am."

She returned the smile although it was a bit shaky. "Sweet talker." Buffy ran her hand down Giles' face and then got up. "I'll be back."

End of Part 5

Sins of the Father 6

Buffy found four more guards, all currently bound and gagged and laying in the room the two Council agents had occupied. The agents were now free and were in an office, on the phone with John, filling him in. Buffy was sitting on a chair, watching Giles sleep. She had looked for Ethan but had been unsuccessful. She figured he was half way to Timbuktu right now. Which suited her just fine.

She looked up as Paul re-entered the room. He had spoken to John as well, assuring him that the three of them were fine. He glanced down at his sleeping friend. "Any sign of Ethan?"

Buffy shook her head. "This is pretty typical for him. He causes trouble and then runs away."

Paul nodded, relieved. The presence of the other Englishman had made him uncomfortable and he was just as glad not to have to deal with him. Glancing at his watch he realized it had been several hours since they had arrived. A movement on the couch caught his eye. "I think he's waking up."

Buffy sat gently on the edge of the couch, wanting to be right there if he was waking, but not wanting to disturb him in case he needed to continue sleeping. Giles shifted again and spoke softly. "Ethan?"

Buffy clenched her jaw, trying to push down the spark of jealousy. "No, Giles, it's me, Buffy."

Giles turned and looked at her and smiled. He lifted a hand and touched the side of her face. "You really are here. I thought you were a dream." He took in

Paul as well and held out his hand.

Paul eagerly clasped it in both of his. "We were worried about you."

Giles smiled softly again and moved to sit up. He ran a hand through his hair. Then his eyes narrowed. "Where's my father?"

Buffy shook her head. "I don't know. We couldn't find him or Ethan."

Just the fact that he'd had a restful sleep told him that his father was, at least for the moment, incapacitated. Giles thought briefly of looking for Ethan but discarded the idea, knowing Ethan would turn up whenever he was done doing whatever he was doing. "Where are my glasses?"

Buffy picked them up from the table where she had placed them earlier. "Here."

He put them on and then looked at her again, leaning forward to give her a soft kiss. "Thank you for coming. Both of you."

Paul wanted some answers. "What happened? Why did you have to come here?"

Buffy started in as well. "What's up with Ethan? And why didn't you tell me you had a sister?"

Not prepared to talk about it yet, Giles wearily pushed up from the couch and paced across the room. He ran his hand down the binding of an old book. "It's complicated."

Paul shook his head. "Don't even try that, Giles. I think we deserve a little bit more than that."

Giles sent him a sharp look. "It is, Paul. Very complicated...and painful."

Paul stood as well, filled, suddenly, with nervous energy. "I don't understand, Giles. I thought there weren't any more secrets."

Buffy nodded. "Yeah, especially huge ones like this."

"Sometimes things are better left in the past where they belong."

Buffy got up too. "You mean like Eyghon?" She almost stopped when he flashed her another sharp look but anger was sweeping through her. "Come on, Giles. Whatever was going on here was not a good thing." She pointed at

Paul and back at herself a few times with an index finger. "We needed to know this stuff. How can we fight stuff we don't understand?" She took a step closer to him. "Why didn't you tell me your father was still alive and that you had a sister?"

Paul touched Giles' arm. "Giles, I know that we all have some things we'd rather keep to ourselves, and everyone's entitled to them. But you lied to us about this. You told us both your father was dead, and I know you told me you were an only child. Why? Why the lies?"

Giles took his glasses off. "Do we have to do this now?"

Buffy could tell he was trying to put them off and on top of everything else it infuriated her. She lost the final hold on her temper. "Yes, we do. Paul's right, you totally lied. And we came all the way here to rescue you and you didn't even care that we were here. All you wanted was Ethan. You hugged him, Giles. He's tried to kill me and it's like you don't even care anymore."

Giles sent her an entreating look. "Buffy, that's not true."

"Then tell me why you asked for him when you woke up? Like you expected him to be with you and not me. Like you wanted him here, and not me. What's that about?" Buffy hated the words coming out of her mouth, but she felt so threatened and the fact that it was Ethan making her feel this way made it a hundred times worse.

Giles glanced at them both, his own temper rising. He was still exhausted and found himself annoyed that they were both demanding explanations that, at this point, could wait. His voice was cold. "I apologize if my behavior is confusing you. This affair with my father goes back to my childhood, and Ethan, well, Ethan's simply involved."

Buffy lost it a little bit more. "Can't you for once just answer a question about your past without all the beating around the bush activity? I'm your Slayer, not to mention your wife. I should know this stuff. You shouldn't be keeping all these secrets from me. It makes me feel as if I don't even know you."

"You know me, Buffy. You know me better than anyone." Giles glanced at Paul. "As do you and Roger."

Paul shook his head. "I don't know that I believe that right now. It's hard to feel that way when it's clear you don't trust us, not enough to tell us the truth." Paul wished he could take the words back as soon as he saw the sad look in Giles' eyes.

Giles let out a soft bitter laugh. "The truth." He resisted the urge to throw something. Instead he walked out of the room, needing to escape the place where he'd so recently experienced such misery, and needing to escape the accusing eyes of those he loved the most.

Buffy and Paul were right behind him. Buffy grabbed his arm. "Giles. Talk to me."

Giles pulled his arm away and continued walking until he got to the fireplace. There was a fire going; as far as he could remember there had always been a fire going. Squatting down he added a couple of logs to the flames, hoping it might warm him.

Paul's voice was soft as he stood behind his friend. "Giles, I'm sorry. Obviously whatever is going on here is difficult for you. But, I...we...want to help. We've clearly stumbled into the middle of something and I think we have the right to know what it is."

Giles stood and faced them both. "The right? You think you have the right?"

Buffy felt a moment's uneasiness at the look on his face. Then she lifted her chin in defiance. "Yes. It's not all right for you to be keeping this stuff a secret."

Giles gave her a twisted smile. "You make it sound as if I've been enjoying myself, knowing things that you don't, having a good laugh at your expense because of it."

Buffy's chin rose just a little higher. "Well, how am I supposed to feel about this? This is big stuff."

He let out another half laugh. "Big stuff." He turned and picked up a glass paperweight. It was his father's. It felt satisfyingly heavy and he was tempted to hurl it through one of the windows. He closed his fingers tightly around it, wishing he could crush it in his hand, knowing he could not. He glanced around at the sizeable collection scattered around the room.

Standing near the fire, still craving its warmth, he nodded. His voice was terse. "Fine." He glanced up at Paul. "I know I told you I was an only child. I have been, for a long time. Eleanor died when I was thirteen." These last two days had brought everything back and the last thing he wanted to do was drag it out, scrape open all the old wounds. His control felt tenuous at best. Giles' eyes darkened as he gazed at the intricate and delicate design of the paperweight in his hands. There was an irony in someone so repellent collecting things of such beauty.

Buffy and Paul exchanged looks, not only at the news of his sister's death, but because of the look on his face. For a moment, Paul wished he could rewind the last thirty minutes and try it again. As Giles lifted his head again, Paul took an involuntary step toward Giles, needing to respond to the anguish he saw in his friend's eyes. Buffy saw the same look and she moved as well. "Giles."

He put up his hand to keep her away, to keep them both away. "You wanted to hear this."

They exchanged another look, suddenly not sure at all that they wanted to hear it.

Giles almost laughed at the look on their faces. He would have, if anything about this had felt remotely amusing. He captured Paul's gaze again. "There was a reason I told you what I did." He glanced at them both. "Mostly it was due to the fact that I'd just as soon forget it ever happened. Some of it was because I didn't want to push you away."

Paul shook his head. "Nothing you could say could push us away."

"No?" Giles wondered. He prodded the fireplace andirons with his shoe. "We'll see." Taking a deep breath he marshaled his thoughts. "My father, and I use the term loosely, or at least, unwillingly, is a sorcerer. A powerful one."

Again he stared into the paperweight, as if his answers lay within the colored folds of glass. "My father found a spell, a spell that allowed him to enter our dreams. What he did there...well, it wasn't pleasant. He tortured us, every time a different method, and our pain gave him access to our magic. My mother died from a heart attack when I was ten. I believe she died because he accidentally killed her during one of her dreams.

"She was lovely. She had some talent of her own. Willow reminds me of her sometimes." Giles took off his glasses and placed them on the mantel. "He turned to us when my mother was dead. And in time, my sister died from a heart attack as well. Seventeen years old." His voice grew bitter. "Everyone thought it was such a shame. So young, so unexpected. My father was understandably racked with grief." Giles felt a surge of hatred and giving in to it he pulled back his arm and hurled the paperweight through one of the windows, leaving a perfect hole in its wake. "Fucking bastard." He picked up another paperweight. Giles missed the acutely startled look between Paul and Buffy. He was too lost in his memories.

"He refused an autopsy, of course. And while she had been young, she was my mother's daughter, and my mother had died from the same cause, so people wrote it off as a sad twist of fate." Giles shook his head. "I knew he'd done it. I knew he'd pushed too hard in one of her dreams, pushed her past her endurance." He glanced up at them, his eyes angry. "You can't imagine what it was like. You never knew when he'd strike. Unimaginable pain. He'd stand there laughing while you bled, or burned, as he tore you apart one way after another, night after night."

Buffy had tears in her eyes. She didn't want to hear anymore. "Giles."

He raised his head and met her tearful gaze with an angry one of his own. "You wanted this. You wanted to know my secrets." He took in Paul with his glare. "You both did. It was your right, remember?" Giles let out a half laugh. "Well, you can bloody well listen."

Paul risked interrupting. "Couldn't you have gone to someone? Told someone?"

"Tell them what? That my father was invading our dreams at night? My sister was too frightened. I tried. I ended up in a psychiatrist's office, his office deep within the Council building. My father was a Watcher, highly educated, and well respected."

Giles stooped and, with the poker, pushed against a log until it had better access to the flames. "I spent six months in counseling, until I learned to lie and say that I had made the whole thing up because I needed someone to blame for my mother's death. Every day after my session my father would pick me up and drive me home, all caring solicitation. He was very careful to never reveal himself outside of the dreams." Giles glanced at Paul. "I was eleven. Eleanor was fifteen. No one believed me."

Giles put his glasses back on, exchanged the paperweight he had in his hand for another one. "Ethan and I were acquaintances; we went to the same school. I was not a popular child, my upbringing and level of intelligence setting me apart from the others. One night Ethan snuck in to my bedroom to make me the butt of one of his practical jokes. I was already asleep, and in the middle of one of the dreams. I don't know why but Ethan stayed until I woke up. I found him just staring at me from the foot of my bed. For some reason I told him what was happening, and he believed me." Giles let out another soft laugh. "He appointed himself my guardian. I think he hated my father even more than I did. Every night he could he came and he did whatever it took to keep me awake."

He shook his head. "He loved Eleanor. We both did. We tried to get her to join us at night but she was too frightened to defy our father and she was weary from the abuse. He used her more often because I so seldom slept at night anymore. I often wondered if she'd have survived if Ethan hadn't tried so hard to protect me." He shrugged, the pain of that possible betrayal clear on his face. "Or I suppose we'd both be dead. I find that the more likely scenario."

"My father couldn't get in our dreams unless we were close to him, so I'd sleep at school. Either in between classes, or I'd just skip them outright. Ethan would watch over me, keeping everyone away, making sure I wasn't discovered. We lived that way until I was thirteen, until the night Eleanor died."

"We both knew, with Eleanor dead, that he'd turn to me. He'd figure out why I wasn't sleeping, why I was able to evade his magic. And he'd discover Ethan. I decided to run away from home, away from him. Ethan insisted on coming with me, and I welcomed the company. It all felt so exciting at the time. Some great adventure."

Another bitter laugh escaped him.

"That was until we got to London and discovered what living on the streets was like when you're thirteen years old. We'd escaped one hell and flung ourselves straight into another one. God knows why Ethan stayed with me. He could have gone home. But he didn't. He didn't."

He glanced up and took in the appalled looks on Buffy and Paul's faces. For some reason their expressions made him angry. "Not enjoying this? Not feeling a sense of vindication now that you're being let in on the big secrets of my life? Should I tell you now about those next five years? What it was like to be thirteen and living in condemned buildings, eating out of dustbins, doing anything it took to stay alive another day, to get something to eat?"

"Do you want to hear that now? Because there's some pretty big stuff there too." He glanced at Buffy, knowing he was being heartless, but unable to stop himself. They didn't deserve this from him, neither of them did, but the unresolved anger from years ago roiled in him just below the surface. "Isn't that the phrase you used, 'big stuff'? I was keeping big stuff from you? Well, it isn't big stuff. It's just endless little things, the things you do to stay alive, the things you let people do to you so you can have another meal, the things you learn to ignore, and turn your back on so you don't get knifed, or worse."

Giles let out a long breath. "But no matter how bad it got, it never seemed as bad as coming back to this house, to those dreams. This house was the place of ultimate nightmares for me, worse than anything the streets of London could throw at a thirteen year old boy." He paused, lost in his memories.

Then Giles looked up, still full of anger. "Feel better now?" He sent a bitter glance at Paul. "Feel like I trust you now? Does it make you feel better to know this about me?" Turning quickly he stared at the mantel and then with a quick movement he swiped his hand along it, sending a dozen paperweights crashing to the floor. Most of them were too sturdy to break. He scooped up a couple. "I know I don't feel better." He threw them both through the same window as before and smiled when the glass shattered this time.

He headed for a small table and felt a small pang when both Paul and Buffy took a step backward as he headed their way. Giles glanced up as the two Council agents ran into the room. He ignored them. He picked up two more glass paperweights and they were viciously thrown through other windows in quick succession. Every window that broke just egged Giles on to throw more until every window in the room was filled with hanging shards of broken glass, but he still couldn't seem to make himself stop. He wanted to destroy this house, destroy the memories.

Buffy stopped the agents from interfering and they stayed back at her command. Past that, though, she had no idea what to do. The only other time she'd seen Giles like this was when Jenny had died. She glanced at Paul, her eyes wide with consternation. Paul was as stymied as Buffy was. He felt a little afraid of Giles right now. Afraid that if he tried to stop him, that he'd find himself the primary focus of that anger, instead of the inanimate room currently being demolished by his fury.

But even through his fear, Paul felt another sense of amazement that Giles was the man he was, present outburst notwithstanding. Paul had worked as a policeman in a large city, and had seen what the streets could do to a young child. And with a father like that...Paul shook his head, his respect for his friend, considering what he'd been through and had to overcome, growing even stronger.

He also felt a moment of appreciation for Ethan, despite the shadows his presence had cast on his own relationship with Giles. Paul doubted he'd have been so steadfast at such a young age. As if he'd conjured him, he looked up to see Ethan standing on the staircase, watching Giles lob another paperweight against the wall, smashing a small curio case filled with other glass paperweights, causing it to fall to the floor with a resounding crash.

"Redecorating, Ripper?"

Giles stopped and looked upstairs. He reached for another paperweight and threw it up to Ethan. "Want to help?"

Ethan grinned. He pointed at a painting of Giles' father and then touched his finger to his nose. His arm a blur he let the globe fly and it ripped through the canvas, obscuring the older Watcher's face.

Giles nodded. "You always did have a good overarm bowl, Ethan."

Ethan grinned again, slowly heading downstairs. He glanced at Buffy and Paul, taking in the looks on their faces, their seeming immobility.

Giles noted the book under Ethan's arm. He stilled. "You've been with my father, then?"

"Yes."

"And how is he?"

"I'm afraid he's had a heart attack."

Giles smiled tightly. "Was it a bad one?"

"Fatal, I'm afraid." Ethan held out the book to him.

Giles gave it a look of revulsion. "Was it painful for him?"

"Very."

"Good."

Giles put his hand on Ethan's shoulder. "Thank you."

Ethan let out a short laugh. "For what? You're only here because of me."

"He'd have come for me sooner or later." He glanced at Buffy. "And come for those I love."

Ethan pushed the book at him again. "Take it."

"It's in here, the spell?"

"Yes." Giles glanced at the fireplace. Crouching, he added more wood, building the fire up. Ethan crouched down next to him. "You planning on burning it?"

Giles nodded. "I can't risk this book falling into anyone else's hands."

"It won't burn."

"It will with magic."

One of the agents came forward. "I can't let you burn that. It needs to go to the Council."

Giles sent him his most deadly patented Watcher glare and the man took several steps back. Buffy almost grinned. If her heart weren't breaking, if she wasn't feeling a million miles away from the man she loved more than anything, she would have. She kept her eye on the agents, making sure they got no closer to Giles. If that book had the spell that had caused Giles such pain, she wanted it burned too.

When the fire was burning brightly, Giles pushed the screen completely to the side. Then he gestured Ethan to stand across from him. Both men held the book, their fingers overlapping.

End of Part 6

Sins of the Father 7

Somehow Paul could see the power of the spell they were doing. He had seen Giles do magic before, but nothing like this. Even Giles and Willow working together, even with Tara thrown in, hadn't generated enough of a magical backlash for him to sense it, let alone see it.

Paul watched as Buffy's hand went to the back of her neck. He had no doubt that the power was making her spidey-sense go haywire. He watched, as she made sure that the Council agents didn't interfere. Although Paul would have bet money that Buffy wished she could stop what was happening. Not the book burning, but the connection between the two men standing in front of the fireplace.

The two men were glowing. Whatever this magic was, it had them bound together. The energy flowed between them in currents wrapping them up in an experience that cut them off from the rest of the world. Their eyes were locked on each other as their mouths spoke words in unison.

Paul didn't know what language they were speaking but it sent chills up and down his spine. Their voices suddenly grew louder, then, as one, they threw the book into the fireplace. There was a loud whoosh and the flames burnt a brilliant red. Giles and Ethan had to move a few steps away from the increased heat. A wind suddenly swept through the room and Paul watched

as it was sucked into the fireplace. He could almost feel the house shake as that unleashed power shot up the chimney and out into the atmosphere.

The silence in the room was unnerving. Finally Giles looked up at Ethan. "Bloody hell, Ethan."

Ethan grinned. "Pretty impressive. Thank your father for that little demonstration."

"His magic?"

"Mine, now."

"What did you do to him?"

"Everything I could remember him doing to you."

Giles' lips tightened. Too many emotions to keep track of raced across his face.

Ethan kept his eyes on his friend. "Come here."

Giles' brow furrowed but he obeyed. Buffy watched as Ethan put his hands on Giles' temples. She tried to move, but it was as if she were in a dream, and no matter how much she tried she couldn't get her feet to move. Out of the corner of her eye she saw the agents head back to the office, no doubt to check back in with the Council. It seemed so easy for them to move; she tried again, but all she could do was watch. Paul seemed to be faring no better than she was.

Another bolt of energy shot into Giles this time, from Ethan's hands. Then Ethan grabbed his friend as he stumbled. "You all right?"

Giles nodded and then closed his eyes. "What was that? What did you do?"

"Gave you your magic back. Can you feel it?"

Keeping his eyes closed, Giles reached for his magic. His eyes opened wide as he looked at his old friend. "Yes." He smiled in astonishment, letting out a quick breath. "Yes, I can. I had no idea he'd taken so much. Of course, I didn't even know I had magic when he started taking it."

Ethan nodded. "You're as strong as he ever was, stronger probably."

Giles let out a soft pained laugh. It all seemed so pointless. His father had had so much power, and for what? He could have done so much good with it. Giles shifted and crunched some glass shards underneath his feet. He looked ruefully at the destruction he'd wrought. Ethan could feel Ripper's attention start to turn to Buffy and the man standing with her, and using his magic he pulled it back to him. Giles felt the light touch of magic and he pursed his lips as he looked at Ethan, puzzled. "What now?"

Ethan knew what he wanted now. He didn't expect to get it. He reinforced the magic that kept Buffy and her companion where they were. "What do you want to do with the house, with him?"

Giles sighed. He toed a still unbroken paperweight on the floor. "Do you remember our conversation about this house when we were boys?"

Ethan nodded. "Yes."

"You loved this house."

He nodded again. "I did."

"Do you want it?"

Ethan looked at Giles, his eyes dark. "It's not the house that I want."

Despite her inability to move, Buffy could hear, and she could see, and this declaration from Ethan, and the warmth on Giles' face, made her heart beat in agony. Surely he wouldn't...surely he didn't...she couldn't complete any of the impossibly painful thoughts as she was forced to watch.

Giles' look was kind and sad. "Ethan."

Ethan gave his friend a sad smile. "You've been my Achilles' heel from the day I sat on the end of your bed."

"I never meant to be."

"I know, and that just makes it worse."

"Ethan, I can't."

"Why? Because of her?"

"Because of her, and because of all the reasons that existed before. They

haven't gone away. Nothing's really changed. You know that."

"So, back to being enemies?"

"Are those my only two choices? To be possessed by you or to be hated by you? There's no in-between?"

"You said it yourself. We never seem to find any middle ground."

"Maybe we didn't try hard enough." Giles looked around at the house. "Do you want it?"

Ethan shook his head. "No. I stopped loving this house a long time ago."

Giles let out a long breath. Then his eyes grew dark with remembered pain. "Burn it to the ground. With him in it." He glanced up at Ethan. "Will you do that for me?"

"That and more, if you'd let me."

"That's enough." His eyes looked upwards, as if seeing his dead father lying up there. "You've done more than enough." He glanced again at his friend. "I owe you for this, for all of this."

"I'll collect. Don't you worry about that."

Giles gave Ethan a wry smile. "I've no doubt of that." He almost shuddered at the thought of what disaster he'd end up bailing Ethan out of in repayment. Then he frowned. "Although I should make you try to figure out a counter spell for the one that you cast."

Ethan shook his head. "I'm no good at that stuff, you know that."

"You're just lazy."

Ethan grinned. "Yes, I am." His face grew serious again and he stepped close to Giles. "I can't change your mind?" He reached out and touched his friend's cheek with the pads of his fingers.

Giles shook his head and gently pulled the fingers away. Squeezing Ethan's hand lightly, he pushed against the magic that had been holding his attention. "Let me go now."

Ethan reluctantly released the spell, and the one on Buffy and Paul. "There're a few books I want to take." Avoiding Buffy's glare, he moved fast and was

upstairs in a flash.

Giles shook his head, shaking off the last of Ethan's spell. He looked at Buffy and at Paul, as if surprised to see them standing there. They all stared at each other for a moment, no one moving. The expressions on their faces made Giles nervous and he wasn't really sure where to start to try and fix the mess he'd made. Then he took another look at Buffy and knew exactly where to start. He walked over and pulled her in his arms, holding tight. He murmured softly to her. "Forgive me, please."

It took Buffy a moment but then she squeezed him so tightly he grunted. She didn't care. She couldn't hold him close enough. Her voice was shaky. "You're still mine? I haven't lost you?" That scene with Ethan had filled her with terror at the thought of losing this man, at the thought that part of him belonged to someone else.

"Oh, Buffy. You'll never lose me. Never." He glanced up at Paul. "Neither of you." He smiled down at Buffy, cupping a cheek with one of his hands. "I'll always be yours. I have been from the day I met you." He stepped away, but grabbed on to her hand. Giles looked at Paul. "Will you give me a few minutes, Paul, before I start my apologies to you?"

Paul shook his head, more relieved than he could say that his friend seemed to be back. "You don't owe me an apology." He smiled softly. "But I'll certainly give you a few minutes." He gestured vaguely with his hand. "Do you want me to leave?"

Giles shook his head. "We'll go for a walk." He glanced down at Buffy. "Will you go for a walk with me?"

She nodded, her hand holding tightly to his.

With another look at Paul, Giles gingerly steered Buffy through the piles of broken glass and left through the front door. He led her to the gardens.

Buffy watched the dancing animal topiaries come into view. She welcomed the temporary distraction. "Wow. It's like a zoo." She touched a dancing bear. "Boy, this place puts Disney to shame."

Giles let out a small laugh. "Does it?"

"Yeah. I mean Disneyland has a bunch of these animal bushes, but nothing like this."

"Hmm."

"Hmm? That's all?"

"What do you want me to say?"

"I don't know, but it just seems weird that you grew up here, you know, in animal bush land."

"They're called topiaries."

"Topa what?"

"Topiaries. Creating creatures and shapes out of live plants."

Buffy looked around her some more. "I like them." When Giles didn't respond she looked thoughtfully at him. "You don't like them?"

"I suppose the art of topiary deserves some recognition. I just..."

"You just what?"

"I hate this place, Buffy. Everything about it reminds me of him, of what he did to me, to Eleanor. I never wanted to come here again, never intended to."

"Why did you?" Buffy had softened considerably with that hug of his, but she was ready to be angry again. "If you knew what you'd be up against why did you come here, alone, without me?"

Giles lifted a foot and rested it on a planter. "I don't know. I suppose I wanted to protect you from this, from him, from my past."

"Right, because that's worked so well in the past."

"I guess I deserve that." His lips tightened. "I am sorry, Buffy. It was foolish of me." He turned to her, dropping his foot down. "I'm mostly sorry because it put you in danger."

She rolled her eyes. "Me in danger? Me? If we hadn't shown up you'd probably be dead." Buffy glared at him. "Dead." She scowled. "No thanks to Ethan."

Giles decided this wasn't the time to argue the point that Ethan had, in fact, been working very hard at keeping him alive. "Nevertheless, you were in

terrible danger. I just ran off without thinking it through, without realizing the danger to me, and the resultant danger to you if it became necessary for you to lend a hand. That was inexcusable of me. I'd have never forgiven myself if my father had done you some harm." He furrowed his brow. "I'm still not quite sure how you got in without him sensing you."

"It was John. He had a sorcerer guy put some mojo on me and Paul."

Giles' eyes opened wide. "John?"

"Yeah, he's the one who got us here, and I guess just knowing you hated your dad was enough for him to decide out he was bad news. He wanted us to be protected."

"Remind me to send him some obscenely expensive whiskey."

"Paul said he's on his way to get us. He'll be here in a little while."

Giles nodded and put his foot back up on the planter. "Buffy, I'm very sorry I got so angry. You didn't deserve it and I'm sorry you had to see me like that."

Buffy looked up at him, finding it hard to hang on to her anger as her eyes ran over the beloved face. "Hey, you're entitled to a meltdown or two. I mean, I've certainly had my share." She moved closer to him and wrapped her arms around his waist. "Your dad sort of makes my whining about my dad seem sort of stupid."

"No, don't say that. I know he's trying to make up for it, and you, I'm sure, will find it in your heart to forgive him, but he still abandoned you for too much of your childhood, and certainly while your mother was so ill and after she died. Those are real hurts, Buffy, and you mustn't belittle your pain because of what my father did to me."

She held him tighter. "I'm sorry things were so hard for you. I'm sorry I made things worse for you by badgering you. I wasn't very nice and I said some awful things."

"As did I." He turned and cradled her against his chest. "I love you so much, and I never meant for you to get hurt, or to feel betrayed by my secrets."

Her voice was muffled. "I know." She rubbed her face on his shirt, soaking up his heat and his scent. "Giles?"

"Yes, love?"

There was a significant pause. Giles waited, certain he knew what was coming. He wasn't disappointed. "Are you and Ethan...did you...?"

Giles rested his chin on the top of Buffy's head and sighed. Then he pulled away and tugging on her hand, walked her to a bench. He sat and encouraged her to sit beside him. Turning so he was facing her he took her hands. "Buffy."

"Oh God, am I gonna hate this?"

"No, I don't believe so. Ethan and I were a lot of things to each other. He was, for a long time, the only thing I could count on in my life, and I loved him for that. I still love him for that. I probably always will. Even though there's much I now hate about him, as well, especially the harm he's done you."

"But, were you...?"

"Not in any way that mattered."

"What does that mean?"

"It means exactly what it sounds like. Whatever we were, there is nothing there that need make you feel threatened. We were young, and we were frightened much of the time. We were all we had for a long time."

"He still loves you. He still wants you." Buffy had seen the look on Ethan's face. "If things were different, would you want him too?"

Giles cocked his head to the side. "If things were different? I can't answer that. They're not. They are what they are. The only meaningful question you can ask me is if I would choose him over you now."

Buffy was ashamed to ask, but she had to hear him say it. That conversation had frightened her, had made her hold on him feel too tenuous. "Would you?"

He hugged her tightly, wishing he could impress upon her what she meant to him. "No, and I can't tell you how sorry I am that I've given you room to doubt that. I love you so much. I love you more than I've ever loved anyone, or ever will. I couldn't survive without you. You've filled up holes in my heart that have been there for as long as I can remember, from long before I met Ethan." He pressed his lips gently against hers. "I ran away from home when I was thirteen and never stopped running until I met you."

Buffy moved to straddle his lap. She wriggled just a little. "So you don't, I mean...you don't, like when you see him, you're not wishing that you could...you know..."

Giles smiled at her and adjusted her until she was flush against him. "Does that answer your question?"

Buffy moved knowingly against him, feeling a rush of power at the hardness she felt. "So, you don't...?"

He forced her to be still, needing to finish this conversation. "No I don't. I never did, not that way, not the way I want you, desire you."

"But I thought you said..."

"My love, you're allowing yourself to feel threatened by something that happened years and years ago."

She touched his face, the way Ethan had. "Maybe, but I think I'm mostly feeling threatened by what I saw today, what I just saw. By the way you kept asking for him, by the way you hugged him, by the way he touched your face, and how he looked when he did it, and how you looked."

"How did I look?"

Her lips tightened and she shook her head.

He insisted. "How did I look?"

"So sad, like you were so sad for him. Like you wanted to hold him, and make him not feel sad."

"I did feel that way. It's never easy to know that you're causing someone pain. And I suppose if I had thought that holding him for a moment would have made him feel better, I might have. But it wouldn't." Giles ran his hand down Buffy's back. "As for the rest of it...I'm sorry, I never meant to hurt you. But when it comes to my father, Ethan was the only one I could ever trust. My father used you in one of my dreams, he used you to hurt me, and I was confused. I wasn't sure whom to trust. But in this, in this one thing, I knew I could trust Ethan."

Buffy suddenly felt ashamed that she was still badgering him. "It seems to me that for all my ranting and raving about you not trusting me, that I'm not trusting you very much, am I?"

"I can understand. Really, I can. This is one place where our age difference must be especially difficult for you. I've had so many experiences, lived so many, well, essentially different lives, been through so many upheavals in my life, and that was all before you were even born. It must make me seem like too many different people to you." He cupped her face in his hands. "All you need to know, now, is that I love you, and I would never choose to be apart from you, and I can't imagine my life without you in it."

Buffy looked at him for a long time. Then, her eyes bright, she leaned forward and kissed him tenderly. "I love you too. And I trust you more than I trust anyone. And the only reason I was being so stupid is because I'm so afraid to be without you." She frowned. "Well, and the fact that there's whole parts of your life I feel left out of."

"You won't ever be without me, Buffy, not if I have anything to say about it. I'm afraid you're quite stuck with me." He kissed her again. "And don't feel left out. As far as I'm concerned my life didn't truly start until you became a part of it."

She gave him a shaky smile. "Good." She leaned in again and began to nibble on his lips, pressing against him with her body.

Giles held her closely and ran his tongue over her lips, begging for entry. When she opened up to him, he let out a small moan and cupping her butt he pulled her even closer, letting her feel how much he wanted her. His lips slanted over hers over and over, as if he'd never get enough of her. Her small cries just aroused him more. His fingers gathered the fabric of her shirt in his hands. He longed to touch her naked skin. "Oh God, Buffy, I wish I could just take you somewhere and make love to you for hours."

That sounded fine to her. "Why don't you?"

His lips pressed kisses all over her face, her eyelids, her nose, her cheeks, her jaw. "Not here. I don't want to make love to you here, in this house."

"I don't mind." She started nibbling on his ear. "Really, I don't mind at all."

Giles let out a pained laugh. "I do. I can't."

She pulled back just far enough to see his face. "Okay." Buffy moved her kisses from his ear down the side of his face to his neck. "But we don't have to stop kissing yet, do we?"

Giles just answered her with another long sweet kiss.

End of Part 7

Sins of the Father 8

Paul stood as Ethan came back downstairs. The two men considered each other for a moment. Paul spoke first. "You can't burn down this house. That's arson."

"What, are you a cop all of a sudden?"

"Yes, I am."

Ethan looked taken aback. "You're a cop?"

"I'm the Chief of Police in Sunnydale."

Ethan blinked. "And you and Ripper are friends?"

Paul took offense at his tone. "What's so weird about that?"

"It's just that Ripper spent quite a few years on the run from cops; it's amusing that he's friends with one now."

Paul decided it was time to start getting some ground back. "Best friends."

Ethan's eyes flashed but he didn't speak.

Paul picked up where he'd started. "You can't burn this house down."

"You planning on stopping me?"

"I'll get your ass thrown in jail."

Ethan grinned. "If you can catch me."

"You're standing right in front of me and I have the gun."

"I'm only standing here because I want to be, and I'll put my magic up against your gun any day."

Paul scowled. He'd already felt how strong Ethan's magic was and he wasn't sure he'd bet on his gun either. "It doesn't matter."

Ethan took a step toward Paul and pointed upstairs. "That man...that thing up

there? He doesn't deserve a funeral. He doesn't deserve to have someone lay him in state and dress him in his finery. He doesn't deserve to have words spoken over him, or have people come to pay their last respects and honor him. He was an animal. Worse than that."

Paul shook his head, not wanting to be convinced.

Ethan kept on. "Would you want to live in this house, knowing what went on here? Don't you understand that magic takes hold of things, makes them different than what they were? This house is full of evil intent and would eventually infect anyone living here."

Paul remembered the house Buffy and Giles were living in now, how it had been haunted, how people who went to see the house fled after a few minutes of being exposed to it. "He could cleanse it. I've seen him do it."

Ethan let out a half laugh. "Is that what you'd ask him to do? Cleanse this house, take that on? That's not something I'd ask an enemy to do. He could have asked me to do that, he knows I'm strong enough, but he didn't. He wouldn't ask it of anyone."

Paul felt trapped. "I can't just stand here and let you burn it down."

Ethan grinned his most mocking grin. "I'll wait until you're gone. Don't worry about it."

"Ethan."

"What's your name, anyway?"

"Paul, Paul Erikson."

"Well, Paul Erikson. Are you going to be the one who calls Rupert in here and tells him that he has to deal with the authorities? Have someone come and retrieve his father, play the doting, grieving son to a man who destroyed his family, and his childhood? Tell him that he has to try and cleanse the house, take that evil on himself as he purges it?"

"Why would he have to do any of that? He can have other people do those things."

"You're not listening. Do you think he'd ask anyone else to do those things? Would he ask anyone to take that on?" He sent a challenging look Paul's way. "Shall we call him? Let him know that you've decided that you think that a

twisted old man who should have died years ago, and a pile of wood and stone are more important than the needs of your supposed best friend."

"That's not what I'm saying."

Ethan snorted. "What are you saying, then?"

Paul didn't know anymore. This wasn't the first time he'd found himself stuck between the law and the life that Giles led. But arson? Arson before the fact? Arson he could prevent? Granted, Buffy had used a rocket launcher at the mall, doing some significant damage, and Giles did blow up the high school. But that had all happened before he'd met them.

Paul clenched his jaw, his teeth grinding. Somehow in the midst of everything else he'd forgotten that this man had also murdered Giles' father. And Giles had thanked him. Visions of how well Giles had taken him arresting Buffy flashed through his mind. Paul let out a frustrated groan and ran his hand over his face. "Shit." He bent down and picked up a paperweight, its face cracked but otherwise still intact. He considered throwing it out a window himself, thinking he'd enjoy the sound of breaking glass, but he wasn't sure where Giles and Buffy were and didn't want to inadvertently hurt them. He spoke louder. "Shit."

Ethan grinned wickedly and pointed at a mirror on the first landing. "There, throw it at that. You'll feel better."

Paul decided he was right. The paperweight went flying and the resulting splintering of mirrored glass did make him feel better. Not by much, but better. He glanced at Ethan only to find him holding out another paperweight. Paul shook his head. "How many of those fucking things are there?"

"Hundreds. Well, at least he had hundreds when Ripper and I ran away. I'm sure he kept buying them."

It made Paul livid that Giles' father was out buying expensive hunks of glass while his son was trying to survive hand to mouth on the streets of London. "Do you think he looked for you, for him?"

"I imagine he made a token search. He could hardly have done anything else when his only remaining child disappeared." Ethan shook his head at the memories. "We kept waiting for him to show up. We were sure he'd figure out where we were, get close enough to use his magic, get in our dreams. We didn't sleep so well the first few weeks." He threw the paperweight up in the air, caught it. "I know he could

have found us, if he wanted to. I don't know why he didn't. Maybe he figured Rupert would just run again. Maybe he was afraid he'd get caught, that if Rupert came home, that someone might believe him this time. I don't know."

Paul watched the angry shadows on Ethan's face. He wasn't sure what prompted him but he decided to say what had been on his mind earlier. "I know it's not my place, and you probably won't care, but I'm grateful for what you did for him."

Ethan's eyebrows rose. He pointed upstairs. "That?"

Paul shook his head. "No, protecting him when he was younger. Going with him, sticking with him. I'm glad he didn't have to go through that alone." Paul could hear his voice getting thick with emotion and he shut up.

Ethan subjected Paul to some scrutiny. "He gets under your skin, doesn't he?"

Paul nodded. "Yes, he does."

Ethan watched him some more. "So, are you going to arrest me?"

Paul held his hand out for the paperweight and Ethan handed it over. Paul held it in his hand. "Shit." He hurled it at the mirror and was rewarded with another satisfying crash. "No, I don't suppose I am."

Ethan laughed. "Atta boy."

Paul glared at him. "But you make sure everyone's out, that no one gets hurt, that the fire doesn't spread."

"Should I be taking notes?"

"Don't push me, God damn it."

"Relax. I'm doing this for Rupert. I know his rules. He wouldn't have asked me to do this if he didn't trust me to do it his way."

Paul looked at him, confused. "Why do you hurt him?"

"What do you mean?"

"Why do you come to town and hurt him, hurt Buffy? What does it get you?"

"It gets me who he used to be."

Paul scrunched his face up. "And you think that's a good thing for him? You think him being angry, and hurt, and scared to death is a good thing? Isn't that why you left with him, to protect him from that? Why would you make him feel that way? Doesn't that make you as bad as him?" Paul pointed upstairs.

Ethan sent Paul a startled look although he tried to cover it up quickly.

Paul pressed his advantage. "It's clear he would still like you as a friend, or at least would not choose to have you as an enemy. It's even clearer that you'd like to be a part of his life, that he means more to you than I imagine anyone does. Why would you choose to have him hate you?"

Ethan scowled. "It's complicated."

Paul laughed. "I've heard that before." He noticed something he had seen on the wall earlier and it again caught his attention, distracting him. He walked over to it. "Can I ask you something?"

Ethan moved over to stand next to him. "What?"

Paul pointed at the picture on the wall. "Oxford, right?"

"Yeah. So?"

"How did Giles go to college?"

Ethan grinned. "You mean how did he get accepted at Oxford when he never went to secondary school?"

"Yes, that's what I mean."

"Magic."

Paul's eyes widened. "Magic?"

"Magic. He sent in our applications, and put a spell on them so people would see what he wanted them to see. We both got full scholarships." Ethan shook his head. "I didn't do so well. And when we both dropped out I never went back. But with that brain of his, he didn't have any trouble, either then, or when he went back later." Ethan let out a soft laugh. "Even on the streets he always had a book in his back pocket."

Paul smiled at that image. Somehow it made the imagined horrors of Giles'

life a little easier to bear. "He dropped out?"

"His father found him. Rupert left that same day."

"But he went back."

"He learned how to ward his dreams, to keep the old man out, and then he went back."

"But you didn't?"

"No. I stuck with my magic."

"And you and Giles stopped being friends."

"He didn't approve of my type of magic."

"Why not?"

"People got hurt."

"And Giles didn't like that?"

"No. It made him feel like he was becoming his father."

"So he left, and you did become like his father."

Ethan had him up against the wall, his hand around his throat. "I am not like his father."

Paul pushed him away. "You're just like him. I've heard about you, the things you've done. You hurt children over a Halloween prank, you were willing to sacrifice babies for money, you find delight in tormenting the best man I've ever known. How are you different?"

Ethan shook his head, backing away.

Paul kept at him. "That man upstairs that you hate so much? He did this to you. He fucked you both up, and ruined both your lives. But somehow Giles found his center again, and you didn't. And if you stay this way, if you choose to live your life this way, that bastard's won. He's succeeded in tearing the two of you apart, and getting himself an heir to carry on his dirty work."

Ethan hauled back and threw a punch, hitting Paul's jaw. "Shut the fuck up."

Paul staggered but didn't fall, nor did he stop talking. "And sooner or later, he'll come to despise you as much as he despised the man you swore to protect him against."

Ethan swung again but Paul blocked the punch and threw one of his own, hitting Ethan in his stomach hard enough to knock all the air out of him and send him gasping to the floor.

Paul stared down at him. "Get yourself a fucking therapist." He touched his jaw where Ethan's fist had connected then he glanced down at the man on the floor. "And when you're talking to your psychiatrist, you need to deal with the fact that Giles and Buffy are happily married now. Whatever you two had that you still wish you had? Get over it. Jesus, it's been, what? Twenty years? More?" Paul shifted his jaw from side to side and decided he was none the worse for wear. He had one more thing to say and he glared down at Ethan, the menace clear. "Oh, and by the way, if you come to Sunnydale, and if you try to hurt them, or try to come between them, I'll find a way to make you pay."

Ethan found his breath and slowly stood, carefully brushing off slivers of glass. "Why aren't you making me pay now? Why let me go at all?"

"Hell if I know." Paul let out a pained laugh. "Do you always engender this love/hate thing in everyone you know?"

Ethan gave him a crooked smile. "Mostly people just hate me."

"Well, he doesn't. Not completely. Yet. So it makes me willing to not put a bullet through your head. This time."

"Your graciousness astounds me."

"I could change my mind."

"I could turn you into a frog."

Paul laughed. He couldn't help it. "Could you really? I mean, can magic really do that? Could you really turn someone into a frog? And shouldn't it be a toad?"

"Want me to try?"

"Not particularly." His eyes flashed upstairs, his curiosity fully engaged. "Could you turn him into a toad?"

"A dead one."

"Really?"

Ethan shrugged his shoulders. "I don't know." He grinned. "Should we go and find out?"

Paul thought about the ethics of the situation. Then he grinned back. "Yes. It seems fitting, doesn't it?" He headed for the staircase. "Can you make him an ugly toad?"

Ethan laughed as he followed Paul upstairs.

##

Buffy and Giles were walking back to the house hand in hand when a large black limousine pulled up. Both of them watched nervously until John got out. Giles smiled.

John smiled back. "Giles, my friend. It's good to see you in one piece." He grinned at Buffy. "And you."

Buffy grinned. Giles clapped his hand on John's shoulder. "Thanks to you. I can't tell you how grateful I am that you took such good care of them."

"I didn't get where I am today by being stupid." John grinned. "I knew you'd skin me alive if I let anything happen to them."

Giles winced at the phrase. "Well, regardless of your motivation, I'm entirely in your debt."

"You can repay that debt by never doing anything like this again." He pointed at Buffy. "I had to spend over ten hours in a small space, 30,000 feet in the air, listening to her and Paul gripe about you nonstop. I don't ever want to have to go through that again."

Giles laughed, both at John, and at the disgruntled expression on Buffy's face. "I'll buy you two bottles of whiskey."

John's face brightened. "I'm feeling better already." He sent Giles a look. "So, my men tell me that you're destroying Council property."

Giles' face darkened. "I'm destroying what should be destroyed. You need to

trust me on this."

"I do. And I told them that. I'm sure they're sulking in a back room somewhere." He started to head for the house.

Giles barked out a laugh. Then he paused for a moment, needing John to understand. "There won't be anything left to salvage."

John looked at Giles, then looked up at the broken windows, the glass sparkling on the floor. He really hadn't got where he was by being stupid. He was very good at reading between the lines. And he trusted Giles, completely. He nodded. "Then I suggest we pack everyone up and get out of here."

Giles sent him another grateful look. "Three bottles of whiskey." He stopped John from entering the house. "You're a good friend."

John grinned. "Only to the people I like."

Giles laughed softly. He could imagine what John might be like if he chose not to be a friend. It made him even more grateful that he was. They moved into the house.

Buffy looked around. "Where is everyone?" She called out. "Paul?" She sent a worried look Giles' way. "You don't think Ethan...?"

Giles shook his head emphatically. "No, I don't. If I know Ethan he's temporarily gone to ground, and Paul's probably snooping."

Buffy frowned, not completely convinced.

End of Part 8

Sins of the Father 9

The charm of watching a man get turned into a toad wore off quickly. Especially as it ended up being a big toad, a very big toad, as big as Giles' father had been. Somehow it made him look scarier. Ethan had turned him back into his original shape and the two of them had left the room.

Paul, as Ethan looked on, tried to go back to the room, astonished at the way the magic kept distracting him, keeping him from his destination. "How does that work?"

"It's like the spell Ripper did to get us into college, but with a different focus. It makes you think that nothing important is down here.

Paul tried again and found himself standing next to Ethan again. "That's a pretty handy spell."

"I could teach it to you."

Paul was tempted for a moment. "Nah. I'll leave the magic to Giles."

Ethan grinned. "Coward."

Paul just laughed at him. He could imagine the look on Giles' face if he announced he'd decided to start dabbling in magic. "Maybe so, but I'll pass."

Ethan shrugged. "Come on."

Paul followed him. "Where are we going?"

"I know Ripper thinks he doesn't want anything from this house, but I think he's wrong. And one of these days he'll wish he'd taken a few things." Ethan descended one flight of stairs, Paul right behind him.

"Like what?"

Ethan just kept moving down the hallway and entered the first room on the right. "This was Eleanor's room." He looked around. "Bloody hell. It's just like it was when she died." He walked to the far wall and took a picture off of it. He handed it to Paul. It was a picture of two young children. "Rupert and Eleanor. He was eight."

Paul held on to it tightly. "What else?"

Ethan prowled the room. Then he spied the music box. "This." He opened the closet and pulled out a small traveling bag. He handed it and the music box to Paul. Paul placed both items inside the bag. He glanced up to find Ethan picking up a teddy bear that was lying on the bed. Ethan moved to the window, holding it tightly in his hands.

Paul saw the pain on his face and turned away, wanting to give him some privacy. In a few minutes Ethan approached him and held it out. Paul took it without comment. He followed Ethan out of the room and down the hall. The next stop was the master bedroom. He started peeking behind pictures and finally took one down off the wall.

Paul saw the safe that had been hiding behind it. Ethan closed his eyes and chanted. The door clicked open.

Paul rolled his eyes. "You are a menace to society."

Ethan grinned. "Rupert taught me how to do this." At Paul's sigh he grinned again and reached into the safe. He pulled out several cases and began to open them. He handed the chosen ones to Paul. "His mum's good jewelry. He might want to give them to his own daughter one day."

"Or to Buffy." Paul opened one of them up and whistled.

Ethan scowled and didn't reply. He crammed the remaining cases back into the safe.

"What are those?"

"His stuff." Ethan started pulling open drawers and stopped when he found a photo album. He opened it up and started flipping through the pages. He chose a few with care and then wrapped them up with a carefully chosen woman's silk scarf to protect them before giving them to Paul.

Paul accepted this new bundle and slid them into a side compartment, to keep the old photos from getting damaged. He felt a moment's tenderness for this enigmatic man who Buffy seemed to hate so much, and Giles seemed to hate and love in equal parts, and who could turn a man into a toad with his magic. A big toad, but still. The entire day took on a surreal cast and he wondered for a moment if he were dreaming.

Silently he followed Ethan as he once again exited the room and headed down the hallway in the other direction. He passed two doors and then opened the last one on the right. Paul knew right away that this had been Giles' room. He put the bag down on the bed and did some exploring of his own. His heart clenched at the thought of Giles at the age of thirteen, leaving this room, and all his belongings, and the only home he'd ever known, driven away by an unimaginably fearful childhood. He glanced at Ethan. "What did he take with him?"

Ethan thought for a moment. "Some clothes. A few books. A Swiss army knife." Lost in thought he moved to the bed, sat down on the foot. "I've wondered sometimes what my life might have been like if I hadn't come into this room that night."

"What were you going to do to him?"

"What?"

"Giles said you had come here to play a practical joke on him. What were you planning to do?"

Ethan tried to remember. He shook his head. "I have no idea. Probably soak one of his hands in warm water to get him to wet the bed. I don't remember."

"What made you stop?"

Ethan gestured at the bed. "He looked...he looked so small and sad." He smiled a self-mocking grin and snorted. "Small. Little did I know he'd be knocking the stuffing out of me for the next thirty years." Shaking off the memories he stood. "I can't imagine he'd want any of this stuff."

Paul pointed at the matching teddy bear on the bed. "How about that?"

Ethan reached for it, his fingers playing with the rounded ears. "No, I don't think so."

Paul almost argued but then he understood. That bear was going with Ethan. He blinked against a sting of tears at the pain this house seemed to generate. He found himself fiercely glad for a moment that it was going to be destroyed. Paul cleared his throat. "Anything else?"

Ethan closed his eyes, trying to remember the few happy times. His eyes snapped open. Moving to the closet he pulled out a carton. His eyes gleamed as he ripped it open. He pulled out handfuls of comic books. Paul's eyes gleamed in return and he sank to the floor next to Ethan with a grin, and began transferring them from the box into his bag.

When the box was empty, and the bag uncomfortably heavy, and the teddy bear had mysteriously disappeared, Paul and Ethan started to head downstairs.

Paul followed behind Ethan, looking at him, trying to figure out where he was hiding the bear. Giving up on that mystery he focused on the reason they'd come up here in the first place. "So, I'm guessing that sorcerers and witches can't really turn people into toads, little toads, a toad that could be stepped on type of toad." Paul winced, realizing he sounded like he was channeling Willow. That scared him a little.

Ethan glared at him. "I turned him into a toad."

"Yeah, but a big toad. A 'if he was alive he'd have squashed you flat like a bug' toad."

"It just needs a little work." He made a mashing gesture with his hands. "I just need to figure out what you do with all that matter."

Paul laughed at him. "Bet you wished you'd stayed in school and paid attention to your physics classes."

"Very funny. Next time I see you I'll turn you into a newt."

Paul snickered and then stopped as he took in the faces of the people at the bottom of the landing. He supposed that he and Ethan talking and laughing like they'd known each other for years might account for the looks he was seeing. Buffy was glaring at him as if he had horns and red glowing eyes. Giles just look a bit stunned, or was that hope in his eyes? John was just watching Ethan. He was the one who broke the silence. "Ethan Rayne."

Ethan's eyebrows rose. "John Drinan." He finished walking down the stairs. "It's been a while."

"I understand I have you to thank, once again, for the current Council crisis."

"None other."

"Can you fix it?" His voice brooked no nonsense. This wasn't his first time cleaning up after Ethan.

Giles interrupted. "Actually it was my spell."

John's eyebrows almost lifted off his head. "Yours?"

Giles nodded. Then he glared at Ethan. "Although Ethan was the one who performed it, without my knowledge and needless to say, without my permission."

Ethan grinned. "But I couldn't have done it without you, old chap."

John decided to glare at them both. "Can either of you fix it?"

Giles let out a sigh. "I'll fix it. I'm not quite sure how yet, but I'll figure out how to undo it."

Buffy frowned. "What are you talking about?"

John answered. "When a potential Slayer is born, the Council seers are able to sense her. The seers keep track of all of them and are able to sense when

one is called." He pointed at Ethan. "He did a spell that conceals them, so the seers can't sense them at all." He turned to Giles. "And apparently your husband created the spell."

Giles grimaced. "It was a long time ago. I thought it had been destroyed." He felt the need to defend Ethan. "He only cast it because my father planned to take that power away from the seers and use it himself."

John looked ill for a second. "Good Lord. Really?"

Giles nodded. "He wanted the Slayers' power. He would have used his magic to attack them as soon as a new one was called, stealing away some of her power. It would have helped ensure that she died fairly quickly, and a new one would be called that he could then attack as well."

John looked impressed. "So, Ethan actually did a good thing?"

"That wasn't his motivating factor, trust me. But yes, he did." Ethan just snorted out a laugh.

Paul used the conversation's distraction to get the bag into the trunk of the limousine, with the help of the driver. He got back only to find Buffy still giving him the evil eye. She sidled next to him, whispering. "What were you doing up there?" Her eyes were suspicious. Everything about Ethan made her suspicious.

Paul whispered back. "I'll tell you later." At the look on her face he sighed. Seeing that Giles was currently deep in discussion with John he pulled Buffy across the room. "We were just gathering some stuff that Ethan thought Giles might want. Some of Eleanor's and his mom's stuff."

"And you trusted him? How do you know it's not magic? How do you know it won't just explode and do bad things? I need to see it."

"No, Buffy, you can't."

"Why not?"

Paul decided to go right for the most telling point, knowing it would be the

only thing
that would make Buffy back down. "Because some of it might be stuff Giles
will want
to give you at some point and I don't want to spoil his surprise."

As Paul had thought, that totally sidetracked Buffy. She grinned. "Really?
Something
I'll like?"

Paul nodded. "Something you'll really like."

She cocked her head to the side. "You looked pretty chummy with him. Are
you sure
he didn't put a spell on you?"

"I swear that I threatened him with dire consequences if he ever hurt either of
you
again."

"Scary threats?"

"Very scary. And I punched him, too." Buffy sighed happily, and Paul grinned,
relieved he was back in her good graces. He pointed a threatening finger at
her. "So,
no peeking."

She playfully slapped his hand away. "No peeking."

The driver showed up at the door, looking for John. "Hey, Boss, the second
car is
here."

John yelled for his agents, and they came running. He pointed behind him at
the door
with a thumb over his shoulder. "Your transportation is here." He glanced at
Paul and
Buffy. "Those guards you caught? Where are they?"

Buffy pointed down. "Downstairs."

John motioned to the agents. "They're your problem."

Glad to have a clear mission, the two agents snapped to, and sent a
questioning look at
Buffy. Buffy sighed. "I guess I'll give them a hand." She led the way into the

kitchen,
and down to the basement.

There was a small uncomfortable silence between the four men. John glanced at the other three, not sure where the tension was strongest, and how he could help. Paul decided to step in. He spoke to John. "I could use a beer, how about you?"

John took the hint. "Absolutely. Sounds brilliant." He gestured at the door. "There's some in the limo."

"Great." The two men stepped outside.

Ethan and Giles looked at each other. Finally Ethan spoke. "You and John are friends now too?"

Giles nodded. "He's a good friend. He spends a good deal of time in Sunnydale now."

"I guess things have changed for you."

"They have. I have a good life. Good friends. Even some unexpected ones." He thought of Spike.

Ethan pursed his lips. "I was counting on you growing old and miserable."

Giles let out a soft laugh and gathering some glass in a pile with his shoe, he then stepped on it, crunching it. "It almost came true."

"But then there was Buffy." Ethan's voice was bitter.

Giles' eyes softened. "Yes, there is that, of course. She's so much of what's good about my life. But that's not really what changed things."

"Then what did?"

"Paul and Roger."

Ethan pointed outside. "That Paul?"

Giles nodded. "Roger's his brother. He's a physician. They both...well...they both sort of adopted me. Became my friends even though I fought it all the way. They refused to give up on me." He glanced up at Ethan. "I haven't had a friend like that in a long time. Now, because of them, I seem to have more friends than I ever dreamed of."

Ethan considered his words. "He's all right." His voice was reluctant.

"Paul?"

Ethan nodded. "Once you get past what an asshole he is."

Giles grinned but chose not to respond. He looked around the house. "You'll be careful?"

"I'll make sure no one gets hurt."

"I meant you. Make sure you don't get hurt."

"Would it bother you if I did?"

"Bloody hell, Ethan, of course it would bother me."

Ethan gave Giles a tight smile. "Enjoy your life, Ripper."

"Ethan."

"No, don't. There's no place in it for me, I know that."

"There could be. You're the one slamming doors shut."

"I learned that from you."

"Well, I'm offering to hold a few open for you."

"Buffy would knock you clear to next Sunday if she heard you say that."

Giles rolled his eyes. "I'm not offering to sleep with you, Ethan."

"I don't think she'd want me around in any way."

"Probably not, but she'd adjust."

Ethan shook his head. "It's too late for that."

"Why? Why does it have to be too late?"

He shook his head again. "Time for you to go. I have things to do before people start looking for the old man."

Giles tried again. "Ethan."

"Time for you to go."

Giles let out a sigh. He gave Ethan one more searching glance and then he turned and walked out the door.

Paul took one look at his face and reached into the car, pulling out another beer. He held it out. "Here."

Giles reached for it, gladly. "Thank you." He watched as Buffy helped manhandle the last of the guards into the other car. He glanced at Paul.

John took the hint again. He headed over to talk to his agents.

Paul started before Giles could. "I'm sorry. I'm sorry I got mad, sorry I didn't trust you enough to keep my damn mouth shut."

Giles put his hand on Paul's arm. "I'm the one who's sorry. I should have told you. And I certainly shouldn't have behaved the way I did, after you came all this way to rescue me."

"Just part of my job description." Paul grinned at Giles. "He's not too bad."

"Who?"

"Ethan." Paul scowled. "I mean once you get past the part where he's a complete

asshole."

Giles laughed. "He said the exact same thing about you."

"He did?" Paul wasn't sure whether to be pleased or insulted. Then he just looked nervous. "Don't tell Buffy. She thinks I'm a card carrying member of the I Hate Ethan Club."

Giles laughed again. "Your secret's safe with me. Besides, rest assured Ethan will come to town and do something stupid and we'll all be signing up for T-shirts and bumper stickers."

"I sort of hope he doesn't."

Giles gave his friend a sad smile. "Me too."

Paul's lips tightened at the sad look on Giles' face. "So, we're okay? We're friends?"

"Best friends, Paul. You and Roger. Best friends. Don't ever doubt that."

Paul gave into the urge and gave Giles a big hug. Giles had come a long way but he still wasn't overly enamored of public displays of affection with anyone other than Buffy. Paul was immensely gratified when Giles hugged him back.

Buffy was suddenly there. "Hey, can I get in on this lovin'?"

Giles pulled away and wrapped an arm around her shoulder, drawing her close, answering her without words.

Then John was there. "Everyone ready to go?" He looked around. "Is Ethan coming?"

Giles shook his head. "No."

John accepted that. He gestured inside the car. "Let's go, then."

Giles waited for Buffy, Paul and John to get in. Then without another look at

the
house, he got in behind them and shut the door.

End of Part 9

Sins of the Father 10

The limousine stopped in front of the Victoria Thistle Hotel on Buckingham Palace Road. They all looked at John. He shrugged. "I took the liberty of booking you rooms for a couple of nights. I could arrange for your transportation home immediately, but..." He put his hands out, letting them know it was up to them to decide.

Giles looked at Buffy. "This is your first time here, isn't it?"

Buffy glanced at Paul from her very comfortable position tucked into Giles' side and grinned at him. Then she looked up at Giles. "Yup, very first trip to England."

"Would you like to see a few things while we're here?"

She sighed happily. "Will you be my tour guide?"

"Of course. I lived here for years." He grinned at them both. "I know all the best alleyways."

Paul barked out a laugh. The man never ceased to amaze him. He took them both in with a glance. "You guys sure you want the company? I hate to be the third wheel here."

John pointed at the door to the hotel. "I forgot to mention that we have company. He couldn't stand being left behind so I arranged for his transportation."

Paul grinned. "Hey, it's Roger." He opened the door and got out. "Roger."

Roger saw him and grinned, running down the stairs to the limousine. "Paul. You're all right? Everyone's all right?" He gave his brother a hug and peered in the car just in time to get an armful of Buffy. He gave her a twirling hug and set her down on the sidewalk. He looked her over, pleased to see that she looked unharmed. Roger turned back to the limousine, impatient to see Giles.

Giles found himself the recipient of another hug when he got out. He hugged Roger back as well, delighted to see him. "Not that I'm not glad to see you, but I thought you were swamped with work."

"I was. Then one of the doctors that had been away came back early, and another one who was sick suddenly recovered and things started to slow down. I couldn't stand it that you were all here without me, so here I am."

Paul slapped his brother on the arm. "Well, you're just in time. Giles was about to start giving us a private tour."

"Great." He gestured to the hotel. "Want to check in first?"

Giles nodded. "Yes, and take a shower."

Paul rolled his eyes. "Well, forget that. If you and Buffy get into a hotel room and get naked we won't see you for hours."

Giles let out a disgruntled noise at this assessment. Buffy moved to his side, snaking an arm around his waist, smiling up at him. He smiled back and ran his fingers through her hair.

Roger grinned at them and then at his brother. "They're a lost cause. Let's you and me go out and we'll meet them later."

Paul nodded. "Yeah, like for breakfast tomorrow." He whispered loudly to his brother. "Besides I have some major stuff I need to tell you."

Giles rolled his eyes. Then he decided that being alone with Buffy suited him just fine. "Breakfast it is." He turned back to John, who was leaning against the trunk, laughing at the four of them. "Will you join us for breakfast?"

He nodded. "I wouldn't miss it."

Giles held out his hand, and John took it. "Thanks again, John. There isn't anything you could have done for me that meant more."

John smiled at him. "I'm just glad it all worked out." He glanced at his watch. "What time tomorrow?"

"Nine?"

"Nine it is." He cocked his head to the side. "Will I be bringing you news of your property being destroyed?"

Giles pursed his lips. "Possibly."

Roger frowned. "What does that mean?"

Paul tried to explain. "This old friend of Giles, guy named Ethan, he's gonna burn Giles' house down."

Roger sent a concerned look Giles' way. "We don't want to stop him?" He sent an amazed look at Paul. "You're not going to stop him?"

Both Paul and Giles shook their heads. Paul did have one question, one thing that was still bothering him. "Giles?"

Giles lifted his brows in response.

"Will you take the insurance money?"

Giles shook his head.

Paul nodded, relieved. "All right then." At the look on Roger's face, he took pity on his brother. "I'll explain the whole thing to you, I promise." He glanced at the car. He wasn't quite sure how to get the bag out of the trunk without Giles asking questions.

John interpreted the worried look. The driver had told him about the bag. He spoke softly to Paul. "I'll get it home."

Paul sent him a relieved smile. He turned to his brother. "I'm ready when you are. We can check in when we get back." He turned to Giles and Buffy. "Will you please try and stay out of trouble while we're gone?"

Buffy stuck out her tongue at him. Giles sent him an annoyed glare. Then he grew stern, retaliating. "Do you have a stake with you? There are vampires in London, you know."

Paul opened his jacket and revealed his inner pocket, which housed two stakes. "Never leave home without them." He gestured to the hotel. "Stop worrying. We'll be fine. Go kiss your wife. I need to gossip now."

Giles let out a sigh but then did as he was told. He took Buffy's hand and after another goodbye to John, and another warning to be careful to Roger and Paul, he started climbing the steps to the large wooden doors to the hotel.

Roger couldn't stand it another minute. "This guy is blowing up Giles' home and we don't care?"

Paul nodded. "And you know what else? He turned Giles' father into a toad. A really big one."

"Damn, I always miss the good stuff."

Giles stopped and looked down at Buffy. "Did Paul just say that Ethan turned my father into a toad?"

"I don't know and I don't care. I just want you naked now."

Giles weighed going after Paul against spending some naked time with Buffy. It took him about a second. He opened the door to the hotel and followed her in.

The End

September 3, 2002