

Teacher's Pet 1

Giles snickered as he read the last two lines of the story. He remembered that demon, but he didn't remember it quite dying like that. The author had made its demise terrifying, with a dramatic sword fight and sizzling arcs of magic lightening. But, the end result was the same, the demon vanquished, the hero, the victor. Except in real life Buffy had just stepped on him and squashed him flat.

Giles loved these stories. He knew he mostly loved them because Buffy wrote them, and because they were, despite the window dressing, a piece of their history. Otherwise, truth be told, he probably wouldn't have given them a second look. But because she wrote them, he read them, and he had discovered that he liked how she wrote. And she seemed to have quite a following.

He closed the magazine. It was geared towards sci-fi groupies, scads of young adults who thought life wasn't exciting enough but rather had to be punctuated with creatures from outer space who invaded one's body and made it do despicable acts. Buffy had been writing for them for two years. She wrote under a pseudonym but Giles thought he'd have guessed it was she even if she hadn't told him. Her humor and expressions and her unique view of the world shone through in every paragraph.

She had asked him not to tell anyone else so he hadn't. But he was proud enough of her to leave the magazines lying around, hoping one of her friends would pick one up and read her story and guess. He figured if they guessed that it wasn't quite like he had told. But all they did was tease him unmercifully about the fact that he subscribed to such a magazine. Giles suffered it all in good grace and just continued to leave them lying around.

Leaving this one open to the story he had just finished, he left it on the table, amidst all the research books. He fished the letter out of his pocket again and reread it. Buffy was coming home. It had been five years but she was finally coming home. Buffy didn't say exactly when she'd be home, but she intimated that it would be soon. She'd finished her Master's degree and at least for the time being she was coming here. And now with her chosen profession she could really live anywhere, including Sunnydale.

He had wondered if she'd ever come home. Not that he'd have blamed her if she'd chosen not to. Sunnydale had few good memories for her other than her friends. And him, he supposed. Although he'd certainly contributed to her less kind memories of home, being her Watcher, making her fight day after day.

Giles had encouraged her to go. Faith had been called when she had died fighting the Master, and Faith could do the slaying. Faith liked the slaying. She had no ambiguity about it. She saw no reason to go to school or see the world. So she had stood at Giles' side as they had watched Buffy's plane take off and the two of them had carried on.

Buffy had come home pretty regularly at first. But then her mom had died. And Buffy had made the difficult decision to stay in school but it meant she had to sell the house. She'd stay with Giles or with Willow and Oz when she came home but it wasn't the same. And the visits dropped off. Then Faith had died. Both she and Giles had chased a demon into a condemned building. The ensuing battle had knocked the few remaining supporting pillars down and the house had collapsed. Faith had thrown herself on top of Giles and saved his life. But her resulting injuries had eventually killed her.

Buffy had come for the funeral but over this last year she hadn't come to visit at all. They spoke on the phone and e-mailed but he had felt she was cutting ties and so this letter had surprised him. And delighted him. And made him dare hope that perhaps Buffy could assist him. Not that he'd actually ask her, he refused to put that burden on her. Giles wanted her happiness more than his own. He always had. But maybe after being here for a while she'd understand the situation and see how useful she could be to him, and she'd offer to stay, offer to help. If she didn't... Giles shook his head, not wanting to go there.

He glanced at the clock. Heather should be arriving any time. Heather was the new Slayer. The Council had decided that he should stay on as her Watcher and he hadn't been given much of a choice. He had suggested that they send a new Watcher, a younger Watcher and Giles could assist, but the Council had disagreed. And so they sent her on and he took on the responsibility for a third Slayer. Not that he would have gone back to England in any case. His life was here now. He had godchildren, three of them, and his business was thriving.

She was only twelve. The Council had no idea why she'd been called so young. She'd been eleven when she'd shown up at his doorstep; a day ahead of her scheduled arrival. He thought back to that first conversation.

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Giles had answered the tentative knock on his door and had been surprised to find a young child standing outside his door. He had at first thought she must be selling something. And then he'd begun to nervously wonder if this child who looked like she was eight years old could possibly be..."Are you

Heather?"

She looked up at him with anxious eyes. "Are you Mr. Giles?"

He nodded, smiling. "Yes, but you may call me Giles. Everyone does."

Relief flashed in her eyes as she realized that she was in the right place but then she looked back down at the ground. "Yes, sir."

Giles let out a small laugh. "And the sir isn't necessary." She just stood silently. He looked around. "Do you have any luggage?" She indicated the small bag at her feet. "Just this, sir."

"Well, here, let me get that for you." Giles reached for the bag. Quick as a snake she had grabbed it first, as if afraid he might take it and not return it. Giles pursed his lips and pinched the bridge of his nose under his glasses. He smiled at her again. "Fine then." He gestured her into the apartment. "Come on in."

She waited until he started walking and she walked in behind him. Her eyes nervously looked around but she said nothing. Giles looked down at her, still disconcerted at how young she looked. "Heather, how old are you?"

"Eleven, sir."

"Eleven?" Giles was appalled. She had just nodded, her eyes huge. He crouched down so he was more on her level. "And your parents, your family? Where are they?"

"I don't know, sir. I've always lived with my Watcher."

"What happened to your Watcher?" The Council had been elusive about answering his questions in regard to this.

Her lips started trembling and her eyes filled up with tears. "He didn't want me, none of them did."

"He didn't..." Giles was stupefied. He went to ask her another question to try and understand and found her biting her lips to keep from crying though tears were silently running down her cheeks. Even his British reserve wasn't immune to that. He opened his arms and she had gone to him, desperately needing some affection, even if it was from a complete stranger. She'd started sobbing and he'd picked her up and carried her to his big chair and held her for the longest time.

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He'd discovered quickly enough why they didn't want her. She was a menace. Oh, not at home where she felt safe. And she had a lovely personality, she was quick witted and helpful. But out on patrol, well, things quickly fell apart. Apparently the Watcher who had trained her from a young age had worked with her when she'd first been called and in very short order had been seriously injured trying to protect her. A second Watcher had been assigned and the same thing had happened. And then a third. If things had kept on she'd have put the entire Council in the hospital. So they'd sent her to him.

Giles couldn't decide if that was a compliment, or rather an expedient means to an end. Send her to the Hellmouth. Surely she won't last and a more competent Slayer can be called. Giles was the only Watcher that he knew of that had worked with three different Slayers as their assigned Watcher. He knew of only a couple that had had two and both of them were dead. He was in the unusual situation of seeing just how different one Slayer was from another.

Buffy had been so gifted. Spontaneous, flexible in her fighting skills, courageous, and willing to be part of a team, which ultimately made her stronger. And she'd brought her wonderful sense of humor to her slaying. But, she'd been ambivalent about her calling and had always wished to a certain extent that she hadn't been called. She did what she needed to do and then spent a lot of her energy doing everything she could that wasn't a part of slaying.

Faith, on the other hand, had loved slaying. She had been so strong, so skilled, but she had liked to work alone, and she had liked the violence. And she had loved being the Slayer. It had been an ego trip for her and she had never wasted her time trying to imagine being anything else.

Heather was a disaster. Giles was hopeful that it was just that she was so young. She could handle one vampire, maybe two, if they weren't mean to her. But anymore than that, or if the vampires threatened her too much or made fun of her, or ganged up on her, she froze. And Giles had to bail her out. He felt like he was having to be the Slayer, but without benefit of super human strength or Slayer healing. He went out on patrol every night and every night he had to fight vampires. Giles knew he had more field experience than probably every Watcher at the Council combined and that it was the only reason he wasn't in the hospital, or dead. He was bruised and battered and he knew he couldn't keep this up for long, sooner or later his luck would run out. But his hands were tied. Her life was literally in his hands and he couldn't just let her die.

Giles snapped out of his reverie when someone entered the shop. He smiled when he saw Heather. He stood to greet her. "Heather, how was school today?"

She ran to him and hugged him. "Good."

Giles smiled and stroked her hair. He had been a little amazed at how quickly she had taken to him. And within a very short period of time he'd become Watcher and surrogate father to this young girl who had no one but him.

He bought a bigger house so she could have a bedroom to herself. The Council had manufactured paperwork that showed her as being a cousin of sorts with Giles being named as her guardian. So, he bought a big house and had a library, and a training room, and even a guest room for Buffy, but she hadn't come home since he'd bought the house. She'd never met Heather.

He enrolled her in school, and spoke with her teachers, and signed her field trip forms, and made her lunch in the morning. And then he drove her to school and then himself to the shop. In between customers he researched the demons they'd found, or determined which prophecies might be coming due. When Heather came home from school he'd train with her, then go home and cook her dinner. He'd help her with her homework and then they'd go patrolling. After that he'd tuck her into bed, often reading her a story, and then have a few minutes to himself when he didn't have bills to pay or more research to do, or housecleaning or laundry or any one of a hundred things that seemed to get in line to be done.

And then he'd try and sleep. Generally unsuccessfully as his mind replayed the close calls of that particular night's patrol, or worried about what tomorrow's night might bring. Or he'd go over his training plan and try and figure out what he wasn't doing right, how he might make a difference in her capabilities. Or his mind would be full of a parent's concern, the less than stellar grades, or the bullies in the schoolyard that often brought Heather home in tears. Not to mention the pain he was always in.

He ruffled her hair. "Do you have a lot of homework to do?"

"Yes." Her voice sounded disgusted.

Giles grinned down at her. He couldn't help but love her. She was so consistently cheerful. Unless someone was teasing her, someone she didn't trust. He could tease her, and so could Xander and the rest of the gang but she ended up in tears if it was someone else. That's how most patrols fell apart, with her in tears.

Considering her upbringing and considering how every night seemed to traumatize her, the fact that she seemed so happy astounded him. And every night she headed out to patrol ready to take on the world. And almost every night he brought her home wiping tears off her face. If she was a normal child he would have put her in counseling but that avenue wasn't really available to him, so he just tried to love her the best he could. He wished, and not for the first time, that she was just his daughter, and not the Slayer. "Well, why don't you get some of it done now. Hmm?" He pointed towards the table.

Heather sighed and began to walk over to the table dragging her book bag behind her as if it were a ball and chain. When she looked at Giles to see what his reaction was and found him just grinning at her she grinned back and sitting at the table tackled her homework with a ready will. Most of her teachers loved her. The only ones he heard from regularly were the few who chastised their students in public or seemed to think teasing their students was an effective inducement to a higher level of work. There were a couple of teachers he'd have staked gladly and he almost wished they'd get turned just so he could.

He was going to just have her do aerobics today for training. He didn't think he could handle being manhandled by her and then go out and have to fight the daily evil of the day. She might not be able to handle much while on patrol but it wasn't because she wasn't strong. Her strength was never the issue. Giles went into the back to finish checking the new inventory that had just arrived. He let out an involuntary groan as he bent down to pick up a box.

End Part 1

Teacher's Pet 2

It was Friday afternoon. Heather was babysitting Anya and Xander's two babies. Xander figured that given that they lived on a Hellmouth that babysitters didn't come any better than Heather. Anya and Willow were off shopping. Oz and Xander were hanging around the shop doing some research. Oz and Willow's daughter was sleeping in the permanently stationed playpen Giles kept at the store in case any of his godchildren came to visit.

Giles was upstairs looking for a particular book when the bell above the door rang. He glanced down and just stared when he saw it was Buffy. Xander and Oz noticed her too and Xander ran over to her capturing her in a giant bear hug all but lifting her off the floor. She hugged him back, so glad to see him. Giles slowly started making his way downstairs.

"Giles said you were coming back but he didn't know when. This is great. You look great." He hugged her again.

Buffy laughed. "Thanks. I hadn't really decided when I was coming but suddenly I knew it was time to leave so here I am." She glanced over at Oz. "Hey Oz."

Oz flashed her a big smile, about as demonstrative as he got. She flashed a big smile back. Same old Oz. She looked around the shop. "Where's Giles?"

"Right here Buffy." Taking the last step off the stairs he walked over to her and just stood there looking at her for a moment. Then he reached for her and gave her a big hug too. Buffy was taken aback for a moment, Giles had never been much for hugging, but she quickly got into the spirit of it. It felt wonderful to hug him. As he grunted a little she pulled back. She didn't think she'd hugged him that hard.

Giles took a small step back and put a hand on her cheek. His face was so close to hers. For a weird moment, Buffy thought he might kiss her. He never got this close unless he was looking at a wound, or well, never. She was unprepared for the emotions it engendered in her, apprehension, the whole twilight zone surreal thing, and the sensation she was the most unprepared for, some unexpected butterflies in her stomach. But Giles just smiled. "It is so good to see you. Welcome home." Then he hugged her again.

Again Buffy dealt with dual emotions, acute relief and a vague sense of disappointment. She shrugged them both off and just hugged him again. This time when he backed away he backed completely away. He wanted to ask how long she was staying but he held his tongue. He just was so damn glad to see her. Suddenly Buffy sneezed and then she sneezed again. "Sorry, I'm getting over a cold." Giles had his handkerchief ready for her by the time she sneezed for the third time. The phone rang and Giles went off to answer it.

Buffy looked at Xander and Oz. "Wow, hugs from my Watcher. That's different."

Xander waved a hand. "Oh yeah, he's major hug guy now. Even let's us see what he's feeling now and then."

At Buffy's confused look Oz tried to explain. "Heather." That didn't help Buffy much. Oz tried again. "The new Slayer."

Xander chimed in. "Big into the hugs. She's all over him."

Buffy frowned, visions of Faith hitting on Giles circling through her brain. She

wasn't sure why the thought of that bothered her but it did. She tried to remember any details about Heather but she was drawing a blank. She was sure Giles had told her all about his new Slayer but Buffy wasn't much for retaining that sort of stuff. If it wasn't going to get her through the day, Buffy couldn't see the point of remembering it. She pulled up a chair in between Xander and Oz. "So, tell me about her."

Xander looked up at the clock. "She'll be here shortly. You can see her in action then."

Buffy frowned again. Then she heard a baby let out a wail. She watched as Giles having just hung up the phone, without missing a beat, reached down and picked up the toddler and began cooing at it. Buffy's eyebrows rose. "Now that's not something I ever thought I'd see."

Oz was watching Giles too. He grinned. "He's great with all of them. Quite the honorary dad." Oz smiled at Buffy. "That's Lizzie by the way. And feel free to hang with her, she's already got a cold."

Buffy grinned back and getting up she walked over to Giles. Willow and Oz had named their daughter after Buffy, named her Elizabeth. Xander had started calling her Lizzie the Lizard and the name had stuck much to Giles' dismay. Buffy stood close to Giles spending equal time looking at Giles and at her namesake. He looked good. Tired, but good. She couldn't believe how nice it felt to be with him, as if she was home where she belonged. Giles turned to her and smiling placed Elizabeth in Buffy's arms. Buffy took over the cooing and Giles just watched them both. Lizzie sneezed and Buffy made a face as she got sprayed. "Charming. At least I cover my mouth."

Suddenly the front door slammed open and Buffy looked up in some alarm only to see a little person come running up to Giles hugging him tight around his waist. Giles crouched down and gave her a proper hug. Then he looked at the door. "You're going to break that door if you're not careful."

Xander walked by and tousled her hair. "No, Giles, the phrase is, you're going to break that door again, if you're not careful." He pulled on Heather's hair. "Hey, what did you do with my kids?"

She put a hand over her mouth. "Oops, I was supposed to get you to help carry stuff over to your car." She began to tug on Xander's hand. "Come on." Xander let her drag him out.

Buffy looked at Giles who was pulling on a chair to help himself up. Then he sat down. She looked down at him. "That was the Slayer?"

Giles grinned. "Yes, that's Heather."

"She looks like she's five years old."

"I know."

"How old is she?" Buffy held up a hand in apology. "I know you've told me but I don't remember." She sneezed again. Lizzie sneezed back.

"God bless you both. She's twelve."

"They can get called that early?"

"Not usually. Although she was actually eleven when she got called."

"She seems quite taken with you."

Oz went and relieved Buffy of Lizzie who had started getting fussy. "First thing she does whenever she sees him, right for the hug." He went to find Lizzie's bottle. He clarified. "The Giles' hug." He looked at the door. "You watch, she'll do it again as soon as she comes in."

Buffy was fine with a twelve year old that looked like she was five who wanted to hug her Watcher. That she could deal with. She heard a squeal and turned around to see Willow heading her way. "Willow!" Buffy met her halfway and caught her up in a hug. She looked up as more commotion came through the door. It was Anya and Xander, each with an infant in their arms, and Heather.

Buffy turned and watched as Heather make a beeline for Giles and just crawled on his lap. He laced his fingers behind her back and the two of them started chatting. His face was so expressive and he was clearly being silly with her as she was giggling at whatever he'd said. She turned back to Willow who had been watching Buffy. Willow grinned. "He's more like her dad than he is her Watcher. They're so cute together."

Buffy grinned back. "It just seems so weird to see him so..." She couldn't think of the right word.

"He loves her. You can just tell." Willow watched Giles and Heather with a smile on her face. She missed the odd expression that passed over Buffy's. As Lizzie sneezed again Willow made a face. She walked over to Oz, leaning down to touch her daughter. "Poor baby. I think it's time to get you home to bed." She turned back to Buffy. "Hey, maybe you, me and Xander can do the Bronze tomorrow night, you know, for old time's sake."

Buffy grinned. "That sounds great. Oz and Anya won't mind?"

"Well, I know Oz won't. Anya's Xander's problem." Willow grinned. Buffy grinned back.

They all left shortly after that, plans for the Bronze firmed up. Heather was still in Giles' lap but she was looking up at Buffy with an excited look in her eyes. "You're Buffy? You're the other Slayer?"

Buffy sat down next to the two of them. "In the flesh." She cocked her head to the side at Heather. "You like being the Slayer?"

Heather nodded but Buffy watched as she pressed herself back into Giles. "I like my Watcher." She turned her head and looked up at Giles. He grinned and kissed the end of her nose.

Buffy felt those unexpected butterflies again. They were too adorable. Buffy nodded. "We got the best Watcher of the bunch, no doubt about it."

Heather nodded with all the wisdom of a twelve year old. "I know. I had three of them before him."

Buffy's eyebrows rose. "Giles is your fourth Watcher?" She wanted to ask why but didn't when she saw the cautioning look in Giles' eye. "Well, seems like you're pretty smart to me. I mean you ended up with the best of the best."

Giles gave Buffy a pleased but embarrassed grin. Buffy lit into another round of sneezes. Giles stood up, letting Heather find her feet. "Perhaps I'd best get you all home." He looked at Buffy. "A good night's sleep might do you good." Buffy nodded. "Sounds great to me. But I'm not taking your bed."

Heather grinned. "You have a whole room to yourself. Giles fixed it up for you right after I got here."

Buffy sent a surprised look at Giles. He nodded. "I...I moved. I know I told you. I needed a bigger place so Heather could have a room of her own, so I got one big enough so you could have one too."

Buffy smiled her self-mocking smile. "For all my frequent visits you mean?" She walked over to Giles and gave him a quick kiss on the cheek. She figured seeing as she was his Slayer too that she could touch him. It seemed only fair. "Thanks, Giles. I can't wait to see it."

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Buffy loved her room. She could tell that Giles had put a lot of care and attention into it and it made her feel all warm and snuggly inside. He must have gotten a lot of her stuff out of storage. She unpacked a few of her things and then headed downstairs. Buffy paused on the staircase and watched Giles as he sat next to Heather, his head close to hers as he helped her with her homework. After a moment she spoke. "Hey, should I start dinner?"

Giles turned his head. "I put a casserole in the oven. It should be done in a few minutes. You could set the table if you don't mind working around us."

Buffy grinned. "Nah, I'll just push you off your chairs if you get in my way." Heather giggled at that. Buffy couldn't get over how little she was. She rummaged through the kitchen until she found everything she needed and she started setting the table. "I love this house, Giles. It's so comfy. And I totally love my room." She even had her own bathroom. How cool was that?

Giles smiled up at her. "I'm glad. I was hoping you would." Again, Giles wanted to ask if she was staying, but again, he stopped the question from coming out.

The timer went off and Giles rose and had Heather put her school papers on the coffee table. Buffy and Giles worked together quickly to get the rest of the table set and the food put out. Neither of them noticed but Heather watched them curiously as they quickly found a rhythm that made them function as if Buffy had been living here for months and they did this every night. Heather giggled.

Giles looked at her curiously. "What was that for?"

"You guys. You're like Oz and Willow, you know, like you can read each other's minds."

Buffy and Giles smiled shyly at one another but Buffy answered. "Well, me and Giles have known each other a very long time."

"Is he still gonna be your Watcher?" Giles held his breath at Heather's question, nervous at what Buffy's answer might be.

Buffy grinned at Heather. "Why? Are you trying to get rid of me?"

Heather's eyes grew wide and she shook her head. "No." She looked horrified that Buffy might think that.

Buffy laughed. "I'm just teasing, Heather." She narrowed her eyes. "Besides, I think I could take you."

Heather giggled again and Giles relaxed, delighted that Buffy had so quickly been promoted to someone who could tease Heather. Heather dug in to her dinner and then asked another question. "So, are you gonna stay here with us?" Giles could have hugged her.

Buffy dug in too. "Yeah, for right now anyway." She sent a nervous look Giles' way. "That's all right, isn't it?"

Giles rolled his eyes. "Definitely not. I have plans to rent that room out starting next week."

Buffy pretended to pout. "But I like it." She tapped her fork on her plate. "I might actually do dishes every now and then if you let me stay."

Giles laughed. "That would be a minor miracle." He looked tenderly at Buffy. "Buffy, this is your home. I want you to stay." He looked back at his food as if his own words had surprised him. Without looking at her he spoke again. "There's a desk in the library you could use for your writing, if you want. I have a computer now although I imagine you have your own."

Buffy watched Giles as he pushed some food around on his plate. She reached out and put a hand on his arm. "Thanks Giles. Really, thank you. It feels like home."

Giles covered her hand briefly with his other hand and smiled. "Good."

Buffy drew her hand back and ate some more food. "This is really good. Did you cook it?" Her question was directed at Giles.

Giles shook his head. "No." He looked at Heather. "Who dropped this off, Heather? You're so good at keeping it straight."

"Mrs. Ferguson."

Buffy frowned. "Who's Mrs. Ferguson, and why is she dropping off food?"

Heather grinned. "Lots of ladies drop food off for Giles." Her voice dropped down to a confiding whisper. "Sometimes they stay for dinner."

Buffy turned to Giles for an explanation and found that he was blushing. Giles waved a hand as if to diminish the whole thing. "I guess I'm a bit of a novelty at the school, being a single father, so to speak. I think they all feel sorry for me. I'm sure none of them think I can cook."

"So they bring you food?" Buffy wasn't crazy about what she was hearing.

Giles nodded. "Most of it is quite good, actually."

"And sometimes they stay for dinner?"

Heather grinned. "Only the really pushy ones."

Giles frowned at her. "Heather."

Heather just kept grinning. Buffy leaned closer to Heather. "Are you making sure none of them get too close to him?" Buffy was pretty sure that these women weren't bringing food over just to make sure that Giles and Heather didn't starve to death.

Heather nodded her head but before she could respond Giles interrupted her. "Could we please change the subject now?" Heather grinned at Buffy and let out a giggle.

Buffy loved this kid. She let out a sigh. Giles glanced at her. "What's the sigh for?"

Buffy sighed again. "I really do feel like I'm home." She and Giles caught each other's eyes and they gazed at one another for a long moment. Then she sneezed. "Okay, I am way ready for this cold to go away."

Giles looked at her with some concern. "You don't usually get sick, Buffy."

"I know. Everyone seemed to have this cold, though, and I just got sneezed on one too many times. I didn't get as sick as everyone else did, so that was good. Most people got really, really sick." She glanced at Heather and Giles. "Don't worry, I'm sure I'm not contagious anymore." She laid her fork down and leaned back, full and happy. "So what's on the agenda for tonight?"

Giles glanced at Heather. "Homework and then patrol."

Buffy grinned. "Great, we can get caught up while Heather patrols."

Giles shook his head. "No, I go with Heather when she patrols. She's still...well she's still training."

Buffy looked surprised. "Okay, then I'll just unpack and then we'll visit when you get back."

Giles had half been hoping that Buffy would volunteer to go with them but she didn't. "Of course, I imagine you're tired." Giles still didn't know if Buffy planned to function as a Slayer anymore.

"I am. That was a long drive. A very long drive."

Giles got up and began to clear the table. Buffy stopped him. "I'll do that. You help mini-me do her homework." She grinned when that got another giggle out of Heather.

Giles smiled at her. "Thank you, Buffy." He looked at Heather. "Go get your papers."

Buffy cleared the table slowly, wanting to watch Giles and Heather together. He seemed so good at this father business. And it was clear that Heather adored him. Not that Buffy blamed her. Buffy thought back to Willow's comment at the store, about Giles loving Heather. She wondered if Giles had loved her like this when she had been his Slayer.

End of Part 2

Teacher's Pet 3

As Giles and Heather headed off to patrol, Buffy snuggled up on the couch with a legal pad. She had been sort of surprised that Giles hadn't asked her to go with them. She would have liked to offer but she didn't want Giles to think that she wanted to interfere with his training.

She let go of that train of thought and focused on her pad of paper. Her deadline was looming and she needed to organize her thoughts. She knew what she wanted to write about; in fact the topic would cover several stories. The tragic love story, the angst, the drama, the soap opera-ness that was Angel and Buffy. Oh yeah, that would cover a few months in a continuing saga. Her leaving five years ago had been the best thing that could have happened. It hadn't taken her long to put him behind her and now, looking back, five years after the fact, the whole thing seemed to be about the anguish of being a teenager. It would be laughable if the damage done because of it hadn't been quite so horrific.

She scribbled notes for about an hour and then her eyes grew heavy. She really wanted to wait up for Giles and Heather. Buffy tried to focus again but her need for sleep grew too demanding and she curled up on the couch and fell asleep.

##

Giles was glad their last fight had taken place so close to where the car was

parked. He honestly didn't know if he could have made it any further. It had been a bad night. Too many vampires and him already tired and hurting. He had come within seconds of dying and would have if Heather hadn't managed to pull it together enough to come to his rescue. He put his fingers up to his neck. When he pulled them back, even in the dark, he could see the blood on his fingers. He'd been bitten. Only for a second, but still, it had been that close.

When the dust had rained down on him he had seen Heather standing there, a stake in her hand, tears running down her dirt smeared face, her posture a mixture of anger and fear. She had thrown herself on him and cried her heart out. Fortunately the vampire she had dusted had been the last of them or they'd both probably be dead. Neither of them had been in any shape to put up any sort of resistance.

Giles pulled into his garage and turned the car off. He leaned his head against the headrest and closed his eyes. His body was craving sleep and, if he was honest, a short hospital stay, but he had to get Heather to bed. Giles turned to her and found her quietly sitting, running her hands over the stake she still had in her hands. "Heather, are you all right?"

She looked up at him, her eyes huge and still bright with tears. "Are you going to get rid of me?"

Giles' heart clenched in his chest. He reached for her and pulled her close. "Never. I'll never get rid of you." He pushed her back just a little so he could see her face. "Heather, I love you. You're my family. You and Buffy. As long as I'm alive, I'll be your Watcher."

Her eyes still held some anxiety. "You promise?"

He softly smiled at her. "I promise." He chuckled her under the chin. "You saved my life tonight." He looked at her very seriously. "Thank you for that."

She gave him a tremulous smile. "Can I have some hot chocolate?"

Giles let out a silent chuckle. "Yes, you can have some hot chocolate." He gestured towards the door. "Come on, let's go inside." She was already in the house before he'd managed to pull himself from the car. He knew that any part of him that hadn't gotten bruised over the last month, had gotten bruised tonight.

Giles was met at the door by Heather with a finger over her lips. Then she pointed towards the couch to where Buffy lay sleeping. Giles smiled and nodded. He whispered. "Maybe we should pass on the hot chocolate."

Heather nodded and whispered back. "Will you read to me then?"

Giles nodded. "Go up and get in your pajamas and brush your teeth. I'll be up in a minute."

Heather bounded up the stairs and her energy made Giles feel as if he was 200 years old. He walked over to the couch and sat on the coffee table, across from Buffy. He shifted and pulled out the legal pad he had inadvertently sat on. He glanced at her notes and his eyebrows lifted. Angel. The memories were so old at this point that they had no more power over him but it was odd to see his name. He admired Buffy for being willing to drag that all up again for the sake of her writing. Giles read a note she had penciled in the corner of one page. 'Ask Giles how he feels about having Jenny and torture bits in the story'. Giles put the pad down and looked at Buffy for a minute.

She had gotten even more beautiful, her teenage features completely overwritten by that of a young woman. He had always loved her so much. From that first night she'd gone out to find Jesse and he had sat in the library looking at the clock, willing her to come back safely. She had crawled inside his heart and was planted there so firmly it felt as if she was an extension of him. He'd have sat and watched her sleep all night but his own need for sleep still beckoned. Giles gently touched her shoulder. "Buffy, wake up."

Buffy started awake and then smiled when she saw it was Giles. "Oh, sorry. I wanted to wait up for you guys." She yawned. "How did you do that every night? You were always awake whenever I showed up."

Giles smiled but didn't respond. "I wouldn't have woken you at all but I thought you'd be more comfortable in your own bed." He stood. "I need to tuck Heather in."

Buffy sat up and stretched. "How was patrol?"

"There was a lot of activity tonight."

Buffy's eyes gleamed at the thought. "Did you get them all?"

"Yes, I believe we did." He headed for the stairs and then he turned back. "Sleep well, Buffy. I'll see you in the morning."

Buffy nodded as she ran a hand through her hair. She watched Giles as he made his way upstairs. She frowned and then almost gasped as it looked like he might miss a step and fall. Frowning, she watched him ascend the rest of

the way. He looked tired. More tired than she could remember him being. It must have been busy tonight. She yawned again and headed upstairs herself, entering her room and shutting the door behind her.

As she got ready for bed she found herself smiling. Heather's room was right next door to hers and she could hear her giggling. And she could hear the soothing tones of Giles' voice. He must be reading to her. After a while it grew quiet but she didn't hear Giles leave. Her curiosity got the best of her and she went back into the hallway and peaked in Heather's door. Giles was asleep and Heather was leaning over him with a sad look on her face.

Buffy walked into the room. "Why so sad?" Heather pointed at Giles' neck. Buffy headed over to the bed and this time she did gasp when she saw the bite marks on his neck. "When did that happen? Tonight?" She looked up at Heather and saw that she was fighting back tears. Buffy had to ask one more question. "How long? How long did the vampire have him?"

Heather shook her head, her voice laced with fear. "I don't know." She glanced up at Buffy. "Is he gonna be okay?"

Buffy sat on the bed and spoke his name. "Giles." When he didn't respond she spoke it louder. "Giles."

He opened his eyes. "What. Did I fall asleep? I'm sorry." He looked down at the book in his hand. He turned to Heather. "Why didn't you wake me up?"

Buffy reached up and turned his head to the side, baring his neck. "Why didn't you tell me you were someone's snack tonight?" She let go of his head. "How much did they get? Should I take you to the hospital?"

Giles shook his head. "No, he'd just bitten me when Heather staked him." He smiled at Heather and then back at Buffy. "You should have seen her."

Heather glowed but she was willing to share the glory. "Giles killed a bunch of vampires. He's really good."

Buffy grinned at Heather. "That he is." Then she frowned as she looked back at Giles. "But you Mister, either it's the ER for you or it's bedtime."

Giles lifted the book. "I don't even think I finished the chapter."

Buffy rolled her eyes. "Listen super guy, I'm sure Heather would rather have you get a good night's sleep than finish the chapter." She sent a meaningful look at Heather. "Right?"

Heather nodded and she took the book from Giles. "I'll save our place."

Giles sighed. "Yes, well some sleep would be good. I am a bit tired." Buffy grasped his arm and helped him stand. Giles complained. "I'm perfectly capable of getting to my room unassisted."

Buffy kept her grip on his arm. "Nothing doing. Dr. Buffy has you under strict TLC orders. Come on." As she headed Giles towards the door she looked back at Heather. "I'll come back and tuck you in after I tuck him in. Okay?"

Heather giggled at the thought of Buffy tucking Giles in. "Okay."

Buffy grinned back. She had Giles in the hallway. "She has got the cutest damn giggle." Giles answered her back with a grin. Buffy got him to his room and sat him on the bed. She knelt at his feet and slipped his shoes off.

Again he complained. "Buffy, I can undress myself."

Buffy ignored him and began to parrot their conversation downstairs. "So, Giles, how was patrol? Fine Buffy, there was a lot of activity. But you got them all? Oh yes, we got them all. Oh and by the way, one of them almost killed me and maybe sucked most of my blood out of my body but, nah, no need to tell Buffy that, it's not important." She glared up at Giles.

"I'm fine, Buffy."

Buffy looked up at Giles. She had an uncomfortable thought. "When's the last time you had someone fuss over you?"

Giles frowned. "What difference..."

"When's the last time?"

Giles thought for a moment, and then he thought a little longer, trying to remember the last time someone had taken care of him. He shook his head. "I can't...it doesn't matter."

Buffy felt tears prick her eyelids. "It does matter." She looked up at him again and saw that he was practically asleep sitting up. She stood and slowly laid him down, covering him with his blankets. She sat at his side and gently ran her fingers through his hair, softly speaking to him about sleeping, and sheep, and whatever soothing nonsense she could think of.

Long after he had fallen asleep she continued to run her hand through his hair. Her heart was pounding in her chest. He could have died tonight. Her

breezy goodbye to him as he left her on the couch might have been the last thing she ever got to say to him. That seemed unbearably sad to her. His loss, his death, not even something she wanted to think about. It had made her braver, these last five years, even before her mom had died, to know that he was here. That she had someone here for her. Someone completely on her side.

She sighed and ran her hand through his hair again. His hair was so soft. She ran her hand down his face, her fingers catching on the stubble of his beard. The sensation caused those butterflies again. And then the bite marks caused her gut to clench. Buffy rose, aware that she had told Heather she'd be back in to see her. She whispered to Giles. "I'll be back in a minute." With that, she left his room.

Heather was waiting for her, her eyes still wide with anxiety. "Is he okay?"

Buffy grinned and sat in bed with her. "All tucked in." She took in Heather's look. "Heather, listen, he got hurt when I was the Slayer here. He got hurt all the time. He won't blame you; he'll never blame you for anything. Trust me on this one."

"I just don't want anything to happen to him."

"Well, now he's got both of us watching out for him and we'll make sure nothing does happen to him." Buffy stood and pulled the covers down encouraging Heather to snuggle down. She drew the covers up and sat again. "I have an idea. Maybe just you and me could go out patrolling tomorrow night and give Giles a night off. What do you think about that?"

"Really, you'd go patrolling with me?"

"Sure, it'll be fun. The two Slayers, taking on the world. What could be more right than that? We'll let Giles lay on the couch with his feet up, with a cup of hot tea and some boring book and make him relax. Okay?"

Heather looked at Buffy with worshipful eyes. "Okay."

"You want me to read to you?"

Heather shook her head. "I like to listen to Giles."

"I don't blame you. I may have to join you from now on."

Heather giggled and Buffy grinned. "That's better. You ready for sleep?" Heather nodded and snuggled down even further until she was all but buried

by the blankets. Buffy leaned down and gave her a kiss on her forehead. "Sleep tight, don't let the..." Buffy frowned, the usual way she finished that sentence seeming somewhat inappropriate this evening.

"...vampires bite?" Heather peeked her head out, her eyes mischievous. At Buffy's surprised look she giggled. "Xander taught me that one."

"Why am I not surprised?" Buffy put her hand on Heather's cheek. "He'll be okay, I promise."

Heather nodded and then she turned on her side and closed her eyes. Buffy shut the light off and left the room, taking one last look before she closed the door.

Buffy walked back to Giles' room. She carefully got on the bed, not wanting to wake him up. He was muttering and his body was restless. He looked like he was having a nightmare. Buffy started running her fingers through his hair and he quieted. Now that she'd started touching him, Buffy found that she didn't want to stop. Heather definitely had the right idea. A few hugs during her high school years would have been a good thing. But the thought of hugs now sounded even better. Giles shifted again and Buffy softly spoke to him. Again he quieted. Buffy's eyes grew heavy and soon she fell asleep.

End Part 3

Teacher's Pet 4

When Giles woke up he glanced at the alarm clock. When he saw the time his eyes opened wide. He tried to figure out what day it was. When he realized it was Saturday he relaxed. The shop opened up late, Heather didn't have to be at school, and he didn't have to hit the floor running trying to catch up. He actually felt better. Not great, he never felt great anymore, but he'd slept all night, which was unusual for him. He began to stretch and then realized that someone was holding his hand.

He grinned and turned, fully expecting to find Heather next to him. His eyebrows rose when he found Buffy instead. She was holding his hand and she had it clasped tightly between her breasts. Giles couldn't stop the thought that raced through his mind. All he'd have to do is reach out his fingers and he'd feel her softness. Giles tried to stamp down that thought but his body was ignoring his entreaties and he felt himself harden. Not that this was the first time he'd been hard around Buffy, but it was certainly the first time he'd been in that condition and had her in his bed.

Giles glanced down at himself to make sure that the blankets were covering any sign of his body's longings. He called her name. "Buffy." He didn't even try and take his hand away. Too much moving around would put him in dangerous territory. "Buffy."

Buffy's eyes opened slowly and then they opened wide. "Oh God, I'm sorry. I must have fallen asleep." She realized she was holding Giles' hand, and where she was holding it. She let go of his hand and blushed, sitting up. "Sorry."

Giles grinned. "It's okay." At the embarrassed look on her face he repeated himself. "Really, it's all right. It was sort of nice, actually." Giles could feel himself blushing now. "I mean, having you here." He pressed on. "Although I don't remember you being there when I went to sleep." He frowned. "In fact, I don't remember going to sleep."

Buffy frowned back. "Big surprise. A vampire bit you, remember? I put you to bed after you fell asleep on Heather. I was worried about you." She put a hand on his cheek. "So, I decided to fuss over you." She gestured at the bed. "I guess I fussed myself to sleep." She couldn't resist it and she lay back down and put her head on his shoulder, resting her arm across his middle. "I'm thinking I really like this whole Watcher hugging stuff that Heather's got going here."

"Yes, well, she's hard to resist."

"What's that supposed to mean? Are you saying I'm easy to resist?"

Giles couldn't stop himself from burying his face in her hair, breathing in her essence. He whispered in her ear. "No, you're impossible to resist."

The butterflies were back. Big time. All she had to do was turn her face and they'd be practically kissing. She slowly started to turn her head when Giles suddenly turned his head away and sneezed, twice. He reached for a tissue and as he wiped his nose he glared at Buffy. "What was that you said about not being contagious?"

Buffy flashed him a guilty look. Then she got a determined look. "Well, this is as sick as you're getting. Heather and I already talked about it. I'll take her patrolling tonight. I'll call Anya and tell her you're sick." She ignored any protests Giles might have made. "I'll take care of Heather today so you can rest." She looked at him fondly. "And if anyone ever asks you when the last time someone fussed over you was, you just show them this date on your calendar, okay?"

Giles let out a long breath. "Okay." He sneezed again. He realized that despite waking up feeling better that he could almost feel this cold attacking him. His chest felt tight and his head was pounding. He lay back down.

The fact that he wasn't arguing made Buffy nervous. She'd seen how sick her friends had gotten with this thing. "Do you want some tea?"

He nodded, his eyes closed. "Maybe some aspirin too if you can find it."

"You got it." Buffy got up and walking over to his side of the bed she kissed him on the forehead. A small smile appeared on his face. "I'll be right back."

Buffy headed down the hall and peeked into Heather's room. She was already up. Buffy could hear the TV on downstairs, could hear the beeping of the roadrunner. Buffy grinned and headed down the stairs. The first thing she did was call Anya to let her know that Giles was staying home. Heather watched Buffy as she hung up. "Giles is sick?"

Buffy frowned. "Yes, I think he caught my cold." She pointed upstairs. "He's sneezing."

Heather was relieved it was just a cold. "But, he's okay?"

"He's okay." Buffy yawned and moved back to the kitchen to start making Giles some tea. "What do you usually do on Saturdays?"

Heather shrugged. "Play with my friends, or me and Giles go do something."

"Well, doing something with Giles is a no-go today and I think I ought to hang around here and fuss over him." She liked the idea of fussing over Giles. He had a lot of non-fussing time to make up for. "Do you want to call one of your friends and see if they want to do something?"

Heather joined Buffy in the kitchen. "Yeah, I'll call in a while. Will you make me breakfast?"

"Does Giles make you breakfast every day?"

Heather shook her head. "Just on the weekends. During the week we have cereal or toast or something."

"What, Mrs. Ferguson doesn't bring you by tea and scones every day?" Heather giggled. Buffy grinned. "What does he make?"

"Pancakes, or French Toast, or these yummy crepe things."

"Well, the yummy crepe things are out but I think I could manage pancakes. Yes." She pulled a pancake mix out of the cupboard. "I can definitely do pancakes. Let me make his tea and bring it up to him and we'll be pancake bound, okay?"

At Heather's happy nod Buffy turned back to her tea making apparatus. It had been a long time since she'd made Giles a cup of tea but it felt like it was yesterday. Her hands knew just what to do. She started going through the cabinets to try and figure out where he kept the aspirin. As the water heated she headed for the downstairs bathroom and found a bottle in the medicine cabinet. She made his tea and headed upstairs. He sat up when Giles saw her enter. "I really think I feel well enough to go to the store."

"Nothing doing. I already called Anya and Xander's going to go help her. She says she hopes you feel better." She carefully placed the tray on the bed, not wanting to spill the tea. "And I'll cancel my outing with Xander and Willow tonight so I can take Heather out patrolling."

Giles shook his head. "Buffy, don't cancel your plans. I'll be fine for a few hours. I would appreciate you taking Heather out patrolling though. Maybe you could just cut your evening plans short."

Buffy looked at Giles. "We'll see how you feel." As he opened his mouth to protest she put her fingers over his lips. "Shh. I said we'll see. Don't argue. I'm not going anywhere. I have lots of time to see Xander and Willow."

Giles reached up and pulled her fingers off his lips, holding her hand. "I'm glad. I'm glad you're not going anywhere."

The memory of how close she'd come to kissing Giles shot through her lower body. Their gazes held. Then Giles sneezed. Buffy rolled her eyes and muttered. "Your sneezes have very bad timing."

Giles didn't hear her. Each sneeze was making every bruise in his body ache. He reached for the tea and wrapped his hands around the cup. The warmth was soothing. He smiled at Buffy. "Thanks for the tea."

She held up the aspirin bottle. "How many?"

"Three."

Buffy poured out three into his hand and he took them, followed by a swallow of tea. "Will you be okay for a while? Heather has insisted that I take your place this morning and make pancakes."

"Buffy, you don't need to..."

"No, I want to. It will be fun." She rose and looked down at him. "Do you want any pancakes?"

Giles shook his head. "No, the tea is fine. I might try and get some sleep."

"Good idea. I'll check on you later."

Giles nodded. "I'm glad you're home, Buffy."

"Me too."

##

Heather went off to play with Nancy Ferguson. Giles continued to get sicker and sicker. Giles knew it was due to the fact that he was so run down but knowing that didn't make him feel any better. Buffy had gone out and bought him some cold medicine and that made him feel intermittently better but he mostly was just grateful when he could sleep.

Buffy sat with him most of the time and scribbled on her note pad. Giles was watching her at one point and when he spoke she let out a squeak. "It's all right, you know."

Buffy put her hand on her heart. "Jeez, Giles, you scared me to death. I thought you were asleep." She frowned. "And what's all right?"

"Putting Jenny in your story, putting me in your story. I don't mind."

Buffy stared down at her legal pad and then up at Giles. "Are you reading my mind or something?"

Giles laughed a little which turned into a vicious cough. When he was able to stop coughing he spoke again. "No, I saw your notes downstairs. I hope you don't mind that I looked at them."

"No, I don't mind at all. Are you sure you don't mind?"

Giles shook his head. "I really don't mind."

"Even if I change things a little?"

"You may do whatever you like with those memories. I've no doubt you'll kill

me off, or perhaps have Angel turn Jenny into a vampire or something horrible like that." At the concerned look on Buffy's face, Giles smiled and repeated himself. "I really don't mind. I love your stories. I'm sure it will be wonderful."

Buffy scowled. "Well if it is, it will be the only thing wonderful about the whole thing. And are you sure you're not reading my mind?" She had just written down the idea of turning Jenny into a vampire.

Giles shook his head. "I've been reading your stories for a long time. I've learned which events you tend to take dramatic license with." Giles rubbed his temples. "Is it time for more aspirin?"

Buffy put her pad down and moved to sit on the side of the bed. "No, you just had some thirty minutes ago. Here, let me rub your head." Giles lowered his hand and rolled on to his stomach. Buffy had given him those directions earlier when she had rubbed his head. It had felt like heaven so he was more than willing to have her do it again.

He let out a sigh as soon as her hands touched him and she smiled. She worked her way down his scalp, moving in small circles, and she didn't stop until she could see that he had fallen asleep again. And even then she played with his hair, noting all the places it curled and where it was straight. She still couldn't get over how soft it was.

In time her story called to her and she got out her laptop. She pulled her chair over to the desk in Giles' room and started writing.

Buffy lost all track of time and it wasn't until she heard the front door open that she looked at her watch. Her eyes opened wide when she realized she hadn't even given dinner a thought. Heather came bolting up the stairs and skidded into Giles' room. When she saw he was sleeping she spoke in a loud whisper. "How is he?"

Buffy scrunched up her face. "He feels lousy."

"Mrs. Ferguson is here. When I told her he was sick she made us some more food. She wants to see him."

Buffy couldn't stop the flash of annoyance that went through her or the feeling that this woman was trespassing on her property. She stood and nodded. "I'll go talk with her."

Heather nodded and bolted back downstairs. Buffy followed her down a little slower, wishing she were dressed in something a bit...less frumpy. Especially

when she saw Mrs. Ferguson. Somehow the Mrs. had made her seem safe, like that meant she was old and matronly. Instead Buffy saw that she was quite pretty, and dressed much more attractively than Buffy was, even on a good day. Buffy squared her shoulders and walked over to her. She put her hands on Heather's shoulder. "Thank you for taking care of Heather today."

Mrs. Ferguson smiled. "We love having Heather over. She's such a sweet girl. I understand Rupert is ill?"

Buffy nodded. "Yes, he is. I'm afraid I gave him my cold." Buffy watched that comment register.

"Is he up to having company?"

"No, he's asleep. I've been sitting up there with him most of the day."

Another furrow appeared on Mrs. Ferguson's brow. "And you are?"

Heather spoke up. "This is Buffy. The one I told you about. She's living with us now." Buffy could have hugged her.

"Are you one of Rupert's charges too?"

Buffy smiled. "No, I'm a ...", she hesitated on purpose, "...good friend." Buffy felt as if she'd gotten her point across. Time to be nice. "Giles said that you've been great about supplying him with food. We finished off a casserole of yours last night. It was wonderful." She looked down at Heather and Heather enthusiastically nodded.

Mrs. Ferguson looked down at the casserole dish she was carrying. "Well, I thought I'd drop something else off, once I heard he was ill. I don't remember him ever getting sick before."

Buffy heard the implied criticism and winced. "I know. But Heather and I will take good care of him." She reached for the dish. "Especially with all this great food." She looked down at Heather. "Heather, why don't you get Mrs. Ferguson's dish from last night." Heather nodded and bolted for the kitchen. Buffy looked after her and grinned. "She has so much energy, she makes me tired just watching her."

Mrs. Ferguson laughed. "I know what you mean. Would you like us to have her over tomorrow as well?"

Buffy smiled. "Would you mind? I'm afraid we're not paying much attention to her." Heather had bolted back. "Would you like that? To go back over to play

with Nancy again tomorrow?"

Heather nodded. "Course, Nancy's my best friend."

Mrs. Ferguson took the dish from Heather. She looked at Buffy. "I notice that you call him Giles as well. Why is that?"

"I don't know. I've always called him Giles. Most of the people I know call him Giles. It always seems odd to hear someone call him Rupert. I don't think he cares either way."

Mrs. Ferguson pursed her lips but didn't say anything else about it. "Well, tell him I dropped by."

"I will. And thank you again. This was very kind of you."

"I hope he feels better soon. And just send Heather over anytime."

Buffy gave her one of her genuine smiles. "Thank you so much. It's nice to know she's someplace where she feels so loved."

Mrs. Ferguson laughed. "Well, she's pretty hard to resist."

Buffy looked down at Heather who was busily chatting with Nancy about tomorrow's plans. "Yes, she is."

"Come on, Nancy, time to go. You'll see Heather tomorrow." The two of them headed off into the night and Buffy closed the door behind her.

Heather followed Buffy into the kitchen and perched on one of the counters. She watched as Buffy lifted up the aluminum foil to see what was inside. It looked like lasagne. "Yum." She looked at Heather. "Any idea how to cook this?"

"400 degrees and cook it for 30 minutes."

Buffy looked at Heather admiringly. "I'm impressed. How do you know that?"

"We've had a lot of Mrs. Ferguson's casseroles." Heather swung her legs as Buffy turned the oven on. "I think she wants to be Giles' girlfriend."

Buffy frowned. She looked at Heather. "Leave the aluminum foil on?" Heather nodded. Buffy put her finger up to pause her as the phone rang. "Hello?"

"Buffy, it's Xander. I thought I'd check in and see if the festivities are still on for

the night with the big guy being sick and all."

"Oh, God, Xander, thanks for calling. I meant to give you a call. I think I better stay home. He's really feeling crappy. How about if you and Willow come over for lunch tomorrow? That way I can be close if he needs me but he'll be upstairs so won't hear if we talk about him." Buffy winked at Heather. "I'll make lasagne." Heather giggled at that.

"I'll check with Will. If you don't hear from us, expect us about noonish."

"Sounds great. Thanks for checking in."

"Tell him we hope he feels better."

"I will. See you tomorrow." Buffy hung up. She looked at Heather. "I figure I better milk this lasagne for all its worth. Something tells me we won't be getting any more casseroles from Mrs. Ferguson." She felt sort of guilty for pumping a twelve year old for information but she couldn't resist. "Do you think Giles wants her to be his girlfriend?" Buffy didn't want to examine her feelings too closely right now but she knew she wanted the answer to her question to be no.

Heather shook her head. "No. He doesn't ever want anyone to be his girlfriend. You're the only one he even sort of acts that way with."

Buffy's eyebrows rose. "What do you mean?"

"You know. He smiles at you and says nice things to you and acts like he likes having you around. He's never like that when all those other ladies are here."

"All those other ladies?" Buffy's voice sounded ominous.

"Yeah, there's a bunch of them who want to be Giles' girlfriend." Heather grinned. "They think he's handsome."

"Don't you think he's handsome?"

"He's the handsomest." Heather let out a sigh.

Buffy laughed again. "That's right. He's the handsomest, the smartest, the bravest, the everythingest." She frowned at Heather. "And he belongs to us. Right?"

Heather gave Buffy back a huge nod. "Right. He's ours and nobody else's."

"That's my girl." The light went off signifying the oven was preheated. Buffy slid the lasagne in and set the timer. "Let's go check on Giles."

The two of them ran upstairs and then more quietly entered Giles' room. He looked like he was still asleep. They stared down at him and then they both tiptoed back out, Buffy snagging her laptop on the way out.

He was awake the next time she went up after Heather and she had eaten Mrs. Ferguson's lasagna. Giles was sitting up in bed sounding like he was trying to cough his lungs out. Buffy measured out some cough medicine for him and when he was able to draw a breath she had him drink it. She patted him on the back. He flinched away from her touch. He hastened to reassure her. "I'm a little sore back there, from last night."

"Maybe I should take a look."

"No, no need."

Buffy frowned. "Why are you up anyway?"

"I needed to use the bathroom. Once I got back to bed I couldn't stop coughing." He looked at the clock. "Good grief. I've been sleeping almost all day. Did Heather eat?"

Buffy grinned. "Courtesy of Mrs. Ferguson. She brought over some more food when she brought Heather home."

"Ah, Heather went to play with Nancy?"

"Yes, she's going over there tomorrow too."

"Well, I'm sure I'll be up and about by tomorrow."

Buffy snorted. "No way, Jose. You're on strict bed rest until the weekend is over and maybe longer." She glared at Giles. "Remember me? Master fusser?"

"Shouldn't you be meeting Willow and Xander now?"

"I cancelled. And before you start to scold me, they're coming over for lunch tomorrow. That way I can keep an eye on you and visit all at the same time."

Giles smiled at Buffy. "I appreciate everything you're doing. I do have to admit that I don't feel very well."

"Well, if I interpret that correctly from Giles speak to normal person speak that means that you feel like death warmed over and you wish someone would just shoot you."

Giles let out a laugh and that got him coughing again. He ended the coughing fit on a half laugh. "You know me too well."

"Well, I'm a little out of practice, but I'm getting there."

Giles turned to Buffy. "On patrol tonight. You need to watch her. You need to watch her all the time. She gets...overwhelmed. She's so young, I think it's all a bit much for her sometimes." He smiled. "She amazes me, how cheerful she is, even with the slaying."

"You mean compared to what a whiny brat I was most of the time?"

Giles' eyes opened wide. "Buffy, I never felt that way about you."

"Only because you have conveniently forgotten every annoying thing I've ever done."

Giles laughed softly. "I've never forgotten anything you've ever done, Buffy. I just remember it differently than you do." He touched her arm. "You'll watch out for her?"

"I will." Buffy could see how this whole conversation was wearing Giles out. "Come on, lie down. Time to get some more sleep. I'll check in as soon as we get back."

"Be careful, Buffy. Be careful of both of you. I couldn't bear it if anything happened to either of you."

"Tell me about it." She ran her hand gently down his face to where the bite marks were still clearly evident on his neck. "You came so close to dying last night."

Giles reached up and held her hand. "But I didn't."

"No, you didn't. Thank God. I don't ever want to lose you."

Giles squeezed her hand and again they just looked at each other. Buffy saw his eyes start to crinkle up and she just reached for the tissue box. Buffy was way ready for the sneezing to be done with. Giles sneezed several times and when he was done Buffy gestured with her hand. "Roll over again. I'll rub your head before I go." Giles turned over and smiled as he drifted off to sleep.

End of Part 4

Teacher's Pet 5

As Buffy carried Heather home she wasn't sure who she was madder at, herself or Giles. A little overwhelmed. She could kick herself. He'd said that right after she'd interpreted his not feeling well comment and then she'd let him say something vague like that and hadn't insisted on a more definite explanation.

Heather was still crying. And the bruise on her head wasn't helping, not to mention the cut on her arm. Buffy just prayed that Giles was out like a light when she got home so she'd have time to clean Heather up first. She knew Giles wouldn't blame her but she still felt like she'd let him down. She had promised to watch out for her and their first night out Heather was coming home all banged up. She opened the front door quietly and took Heather into the downstairs bathroom. She had noticed the medical supplies in there earlier.

Heather sat there sniffing as Buffy wet a washcloth. "Heather I'm sorry. I didn't mean for you to get hurt."

Heather's words came out hiccupy. "I don't mind." She reached up a hand to Buffy's face. "Besides, you got hurt too."

Buffy swept Heather up in a big hug. How could you not love this girl? She turned them until they were both facing the mirror. Their bruises were in almost the same place. "Yup, we're the Slayer twins." Buffy smiled when she saw that got a giggle out of Heather. She gently cleansed Heather's wounds, memories of Giles doing this to her more times than she could count pressing on her. "Giles used to clean me up all the time after patrol."

Heather's voice was still hiccupy. "Did you used to get scared?"

"All the time."

"Like me?"

Buffy shook her head. "No, I got scared in my own way. You want to know what happened when I got scared?" Heather nodded, her face streaked with tears. "I got mad. Being scared made me mad. And then I'd go off and fight the monsters without any backup or any advice from Giles. And he would get so mad at me."

"Giles would get mad at you?"

"Well, the way Giles gets mad, which looks like he's not mad at all, except he gets really quiet, and he whips his glasses off and cleans them furiously with his handkerchief." Heather giggled at that. Buffy smiled as she started cleaning the dirt off of Heather's face. "Anyway, he'd get mad like that at me all the time, telling me I needed a plan, that I needed more information, that I shouldn't go racing off all by myself."

"Did you listen to him?" Heather couldn't imagine not listening to Giles.

"Sometimes. Well, a lot of the time. Except when I got scared again. Then I just got stupid." Buffy rolled up Heather's sleeve and began to wash the large scrape there. "Being scared is scary."

"I wish I didn't get so scared. I wish the vampires didn't have to be so mean."

"That's part of their job description, Heather. Vampire needed: nice guys need not apply. Looking for big mean bullies. Besides you're pretty good with that stake of yours. And you saved Giles last night, and that makes you one of my favorite people of all time." Buffy kissed Heather on the end of her nose and got a grin in return. She lifted Heather down from the bathroom counter. "Now scoot upstairs and I'll be up in a minute to tuck you in." Heather nodded and bolted upstairs. Buffy looked at herself in the mirror and decided she'd clean her own wound later with a nice hot shower.

She headed upstairs and winced when she heard Giles and Heather talking. She should have known better. Of course Giles would be awake and waiting for them. He was always awake after a patrol. He'd never let something like a cold that made him wish he were dead keep him from being awake.

Buffy stood outside his door, keeping out of sight. She had to fight off the tears as she listened.

Heather was crying again. "I'm sorry I'm not a good Slayer." "Heather, don't say that."

"Buffy can kill so many vampires. And she yells at them."

"Buffy's been a Slayer a lot longer than you have, dear heart."

"I'll never be as good as she is."

Giles hugged her tightly. "You don't need to be. You just need to be you. That's all. That's all any of us can ever be."

"I wish I was better at it."

"You will be. You're so young still. But, you know what? I'll love you no matter what." Giles pushed her away just a little so he could look at her head. "Let me see your head. Does it hurt much?"

"Just a little. Buffy has one just like it."

"Buffy's hurt?" He called for her. "Buffy?"

Buffy entered the room. "Right here."

Giles patted the bed next to him. "Come here, let me see you." He reached out and with his hand under her chin he turned her head so the light revealed the bruise on her forehead. "Does that hurt?"

Buffy grinned. "Just a little."

"Go get me a wet washcloth." Buffy got up and did as he asked. She didn't even bother to argue. She wanted Giles to take care of her. Buffy handed the cloth to Giles and Giles carefully washed all the dirt off the wound. "There." After Buffy threw the cloth back in the bathroom Giles had her sit on the bed again. "So, tell me about patrol."

Heather was feeling better. She always felt better once she got home with Giles. She pulled on Giles' arm. "Buffy yelled at the vampires." Her voice was filled with awe.

Giles laughed and then winced at it turned into a cough. "Buffy is very good at that. It was her favorite part of Slaying, I think."

Buffy rolled her eyes. "Giles used to yell at me about that too. He always told me it was a waste of energy. That I should plunge and move on, plunge and move on."

Giles grinned. "But my words fell on deaf ears. She could hardly stand to kill a vampire before she insulted him, taunted him, and got a few punches in just for good measure."

"Hey, it worked."

"Yes, it did."

Buffy poked Heather in her stomach and tickled her a little. "You'll figure out

what your style is. Just give it some time."

Heather snuggled into Giles' side. She yawned. "Okay."

Giles kissed the top of her head. "You need to go to bed. Go brush your teeth."

Heather reluctantly got up and headed off to the bathroom.

Buffy grinned. "Okay, I wouldn't have been too crazy if you'd been telling me to brush my teeth along with the Slayer tips."

Giles sent her a rueful smile. "We had a very different relationship, Buffy." "But you loved me, though, didn't you?" Buffy slapped her hand over her mouth. She hadn't meant to ask that out loud but Giles' comment had caused an almost physical pain and she had to know.

Giles closed his eyes. "Oh Buffy." He opened his eyes and reached for her hand. "I loved you so much. I loved you practically from the moment I met you. You crept inside my heart and took up permanent residence. I'm only sorry I didn't tell you. I just assumed you knew."

Buffy laced her fingers through Giles'. "I did know. It's just nice to hear it every now and then." She looked down at their entwined hands. "I loved you too, you know."

"I did know. But you're right. It is nice to hear."

Heather was bounding down the hall. Buffy grinned and stood. "I'll get her tucked in."

"Would you come back when you're done?" Buffy nodded and ushered Heather to her room.

##

Giles was still sitting up when she returned, although his eyes were closed and his head was resting on the headboard. He opened his eyes as if he sensed her presence. "Close the door, would you?"

Buffy shut the door and then pulled up a chair. "Are you going to yell at me now?"

Giles' eyebrows furrowed. "Whatever for?" "First night out with Heather and I bring her back all bruised up."

"Buffy, she's a Slayer, so are you. She gets bruised up all the time."

"I know. I just promised you I'd take care of her." Buffy's eyes narrowed. "You know, a little more information might have been nice. You know something like, if a vampire is mean to her, she starts to cry and curls up in a ball and ceases to function. It might have made me watch her just a little bit more closely."

Giles closed his eyes and let out a breath. "I'm sorry. I guess I hoped that with you she'd..."

"She'd get in touch with her inner Slayer?"

"Something like that."

"Giles, I totally get why you love her. I'm half in love with her myself. But she's a walking disaster area." She held her hand up to stop Giles. "How often are you killing vampires?"

Giles let out another breath. "Every night."

Buffy moved to sit on the side of the bed, wanting to be closer to him. She shook her head. "That's crazy. You probably kill vampires better than any other regular human on earth but sooner or later one will kill you. It almost happened last night."

Giles' eyes grew frustrated. "You don't think I know that? What am I supposed to do? Let her die? Send her out on her own when I know she won't come home if I do? I'm pretty sure that's what the Council was hoping for when they sent her here."

"What happened to those other three Watchers? Are they dead?" Buffy was terrified for Giles.

"No, almost but no. They all ended up in the hospital though and then they refused to work with her again. So, they sent her here." Giles rubbed his face with his hands. "God, I'm tired."

"Has she gotten any better in the time you've had her?"

"She smiles, she laughs."

That made Buffy want to cry. "Why didn't you call me? Why didn't you tell me what was going on?"

"Buffy it wasn't your place..." At the angry look on her face he retreated. "Okay, it was your place and I probably should have called you." He gently touched her cheek with his hand. "I wanted you to have the life you always dreamed about. If I told you, you'd have come home, and I didn't want you to feel obligated to stay. I didn't want you to have to slay again unless you wanted to."

Buffy's eyes filled with tears. "What kind of life would it be if you died? What kind of life would I have if I found out that you died because you didn't call me? Giles, you are the single most important person in my life. Don't you think I have the right to make that decision, to choose to help?" She leaned forward and rested her head on Giles' chest.

Giles wrapped his arms around her. "Buffy, you don't know how often I almost called you. I wanted you here more than I can say." "To help with Heather?" Buffy wanted it to be so much more than that. "Yes, to help, but mostly just because I wanted you home." He ran his hand down her hair. "I missed you so much. It felt like a part of me was missing the whole time you were gone. If I had my way you'd never leave. You'd never leave me again." He paused. "That's why I didn't call."

Buffy sat up. She was confused. "Because you wanted me home? That's why you didn't call?"

"No, because I didn't want what I wanted to be more important than what you wanted."

Buffy drew in a shaky breath. "What I want..." She stopped. She wasn't sure what she wanted but it was important she get this right. "I need to think about what I want long-term, but I can tell you this. What I want right now is to be here, with you, helping you. I can't think of any place I'd rather be." She took Giles' hand. "And the being here isn't just about helping. It's mostly about being with you. I know it sounds weird, because my life is always strange when I'm with you, but somehow, you help my life make sense. My life makes more sense to me, right now, than it has over the last five years."

Giles lifted Buffy's hand and kissed the back of it. "I know I said this before, but I'm so glad you're home."

Buffy couldn't resist. She laid her head down on Giles' chest again and sighed when Giles held her tightly. She started to frown as she listened to him breath. "God, your lungs sound awful, all squeaky and wheezy."

"Yes, well they feel all squeaky and wheezy."

"I think it's time for more medicine." Buffy reluctantly rose from her cozy position. As she walked into the bathroom she asked a question. "So, where's Spike at? Why isn't he lending a hand?"

Giles let out a groan. "Heather's scared of him. He confuses her. He's supposed to be one of the good guys but..."

Buffy interrupted. "But he's mean to her."

"He's helped us out often enough but she falls apart if he hangs around." Giles looked up to see a gleam in Buffy's eyes. "What's going on in that scary place you call a mind?"

Buffy wiggled her eyebrows. "Will you let me work with Heather for a while? Will you trust her with me?"

"Of course." His expression grew worried. "You don't plan to lock her in a room with Spike or anything like that, do you?"

"God no. But I may let her watch me as I beat Spike up and insult him."

Giles grinned. "I shall leave her in your capable hands." Giles sat up a little straighter when she returned with a handful of pills and a glass of water. He swallowed them all down.

Buffy looked at the glass of water. "You haven't eaten anything all day. Maybe you should eat something."

"I'm not really hungry. I don't think I'm in any danger of wasting away if I don't eat for a day or two."

Buffy scrunched her face up. "I need a translation dictionary. I'm not as good at this as I thought I was. Does that mean that you're hungry but don't want to put me out? Does that mean you don't want to eat because you're afraid you'll puke it up? Or does it mean you're really just not hungry?"

Giles laughed, trying not to let it turn into a cough. "In this case it means I'm just not hungry."

"You sure?"

"Yes, quite sure."

"Well, I'm gonna go take a shower. You'll be okay?"

Giles rolled his eyes. "Buffy, I've been taking care of myself and of you and of Faith and of Heather for eight years now. I think I can take care of myself for the time it will take you to take a shower."

"I'm just worried about you."

"I know, and I appreciate it, but I'll be fine. Go take your shower. I'll probably be fast asleep when you get back."

"Did you sleep at all while we were gone?"

"I slept for a little while. It's hard for me to sleep when any of you are out on patrol. I worry."

Buffy smiled at him. She leaned down and kissed him on the cheek. "I know and I appreciate it."

She left the room and Giles touched his cheek. He lay down and hugging his pillow to himself he smiled.

##

Buffy took a long shower and she thought of Giles. She thought about how she had almost kissed him and her nipples got hard and she felt a pooling warmth between her legs. It was amazing how being away for five years could make someone seem so different. Sure, she'd seen him when she visited but things were different now. The way he shared more of himself, the way he was with Heather, the way he looked at her.

She bent over double from the butterflies that attacked her insides. There was no doubt that he was looking at her differently. The love was so clear in his eyes, and in his words. Words she probably would have made fun of six or seven years ago, but words that she was now desperate to hear. Words that told her that he loved her, that he missed her, that he wanted her with him, that his life was not complete without her in it. Words that let her know she was needed, that she belonged.

Buffy still wanted to fall in love, she still wanted a man to love, a home of her own. She tried to picture herself with someone else. Someone who would take her away from Giles, perhaps away for good. Just the thought of leaving Giles made her feel sick to her stomach.

He was old. Not that that was a bad thing but it was true. But he was handsome, and strong, and there wasn't a more caring man on the planet as

far as she was concerned. Other women obviously wanted him. Buffy growled. Other women couldn't have him if she had anything to do with it. But, it looked like he wasn't interested in anyone else. At least according to Heather. Was it because he wanted her? Had his feelings for her changed over the years?

Buffy frowned. Clearly, just because someone told you they loved you, it wasn't near enough information. How did he love her? Was he in love with her? Buffy put some shampoo in her hair and lathered up.

Now came the hard part. Was she willing to take this life on again? If she stayed she'd be slaying. At least until Heather got her act together. And probably as long as Giles was a Watcher with an active Slayer. If anything, God forbid, happened to Heather, Buffy knew she could keep Giles from taking on another Slayer. But, between the two of them they'd be doing everything they could to keep Heather alive for a long, long time.

She thought about what she'd said to Giles. That being with him made her life make sense. For five years she'd lived away, trying to find her place, find her way. And here she was, back in Sunnydale, and back with Giles. And for the first time in five years she felt like she was home. And for the first time she wondered if she could just stop running.

As she rinsed her hair the water sluiced over her body. She ran the soapy washcloth over her body and she thought about kissing Giles. She thought about Giles touching her, touching her breasts. She ran the cloth over her hardened nipples. She thought about Giles sucking on her nipples and she let out a groan, desire sweeping through her body.

She thought about touching Giles, making him hard, guiding him into her. Buffy spread her legs a little and moved her hand between her legs. She was wet from the water and she was wet from her desire and she was able to push two fingers into herself easily. She imagined it was Giles' fingers, or his cock, and she groaned again. Buffy cupped her mound as she worked her two fingers in and out, her other hand playing with a hardened nipple, the washcloth forgotten on the shower floor.

Her orgasm was strong and she needed to put a hand out to keep from falling. She reached out her other hand and leaned against the shower wall, the tile cooling off her body in spite of the hot water running down her. Despite her physical release she still felt consumed with a longing for Giles, to be near him, to be touching him.

Buffy pushed away from the wall and quickly finished her shower. She barely dried herself before putting her pajamas on. Buffy knew she was being

absurd but she had to see him. She practically ran to his bedroom. At first she thought he might be sleeping but as she got closer she saw that he was awake, curled into a ball, and he was shivering.

Buffy sat on the bed and felt his skin. He was burning up. She reached for the aspirin bottle and got some water. She touched his arm and tried to get his attention. "Giles, you need to take some aspirin. You've got a fever."

Giles opened his eyes. He looked miserable. He moved to sit up, trying to take the blanket with him. "God, I'm freezing."

"I know. You'll be freezing until your fever starts to break. Then you'll be sweating. Charming, I know. I watched several of my friends go through it." She grimaced. "Giles, I'm so sorry. I never would have come home if I thought I would get you so sick."

Giles shook his head. "I know that." His teeth were chattering. "I'm still glad you came home. I'd rather be sick than have you not be home."

Buffy's eyes were bright as she watched him take the aspirin. "Do you need another blanket?"

"Please." He crawled back down under the one he had.

Buffy went and pulled the comforter off her bed and brought it back, spreading it over Giles. "Is that better?" Giles nodded, but he was still shivering, still curled up tight. Buffy got into bed and crawled under the covers. She pressed up against his back and curled her body around his, wrapping her arm around his shoulder and chest. "How's that?"

"Hmmm. That feels wonderful." Buffy ignored the butterflies running rampant again. But she agreed, it did feel pretty wonderful. As Giles stopped shivering and began to relax, she drifted off to sleep.

End Part 5

Teacher's Pet 6

She didn't get much sleep. Giles kept getting fevers on and off all night. Every few hours she gave him aspirin. When he was shivering she held him tightly, and when his fever broke she moved away, knowing her body heat would be too much. Buffy woke up again when someone touched her arm. She looked at Giles to see if he needed her but he was sleeping. Someone touched her again. She turned over and Heather was standing there, looking concerned.

"Are you sick too, Buffy?"

"No, Heather. Giles had kind of a bad night. I wanted to keep an eye on him."

She shuffled her feet a little. "Should I just have a bowl of cereal?"

Buffy reached out and hugged Heather. "Do you know you are just about the best kid I've ever known?" She let Heather go. "Would you mind?"

Heather shook her head. "No. Do you want me to bring you a bowl?"

Buffy shook her head. "Nah. I'll come down in a little while. Thanks though. And make sure you don't leave without letting me know."

"I won't." Heather stood there another second. "Will Giles be okay?"

"Oh, sweetie, it's just a bad cold. In a few days he'll be all better. I promise. Okay?"

Heather solemnly nodded. "I'm glad you're here to take care of him."

Buffy made a face. "Well, if I wasn't here he wouldn't be sick in the first place, but let's ignore that fact for the moment. I'm glad I'm here too." Buffy reached out and tickled Heather. "He'll be fine. Go, eat your cereal and let me know if the coyote catches the roadrunner."

Heather rolled her eyes. "The coyote never catches the roadrunner. The roadrunner's way too smart."

"Hey, it could happen."

A voice from the other side of the bed spoke up. "It will never happen."

Buffy frowned. "Hey, are you two ganging up on me?"

Heather giggled and walked around the bed so she could see Giles. "Are we ganging up on Buffy?"

"If she continues to root for the coyote I don't think in good conscience that we can do anything else."

Heather giggled again. She looked over at Buffy, her eyes full of mischief. "We're ganging up on you."

"You could follow that sentence? I'm impressed."

Giles lifted himself up on one elbow running a hand through his hair. He reached behind him for his glasses. "And as a personal favor, if you could please make sure not to teach her to speak in indecipherable slang, I would be forever in your debt."

"Sorry, pal. While the thought of having you forever in my debt sounds intriguing, I'm afraid I shall soon be corrupting Heather's language skills, so just prepare yourself."

Giles lay back down heaving a dramatic sigh. Then looking up at Heather he grinned and reached out to gently run a hand down her hair. "Sorry I've been sick and haven't been spending time with you. Are you all right? How's your head feel this morning?" Giles could hardly see the bruise anymore.

Heather prodded the bruise with one of her fingers. "Doesn't hurt at all."

Giles sat up. "Good." He looked at Buffy. "Same for you?"

Buffy nodded. "Yup, God bless that Slayer healing."

"Well, then, if the two of you don't mind, I think I'd like to get cleaned up and change."

Heather's eyes lit up and she looked at Buffy. "Can we have pancakes then?"

Buffy laughed. "Man, you don't miss a trick, do you? Yes, I'll make you pancakes." She looked at Giles and took his hand. "Are you sure you feel well enough to be up?"

"Actually, I feel almost human right now. Which I'm sure is some huge practical joke my body is playing on me but I plan to take full advantage of it." He held on to her hand and turned to Heather. "Why don't you head on downstairs and start getting things ready for Buffy. She'll be down in a minute."

"Okay." Heather bolted.

"Does she have another speed?"

Giles softly chuckled. "No. She makes me feel as if I'm walking backwards most of the time." Giles shifted his hand so his fingers laced with hers. Buffy's heart started to speed up. Giles looked at her and flashed her a small smile. "I keep waking up and finding you in my bed."

"Do you mind?"

Giles shook his head. "No, I don't mind at all." His thumb began to caress her thumb and she could feel her body respond, even to such a simple touch. She shifted a little closer to him, the tension between them growing by the second. Buffy lifted a hand and felt his two-day-old stubble. It felt so sexy.

She leaned towards him. He lifted his other hand and ran his fingers through her hair, cupping the back of her head. Buffy whispered to him. "Giles, are you about to sneeze?"

Giles' eyebrows furrowed. "Why would I..." He pulled away from Buffy and got both hands over his face as the first sneeze hit. It was followed shortly by a few more.

Buffy made a face. "That's why." She flopped back on the bed as she heard Heather bellow for her from downstairs. Groaning she rolled out of bed. She pointed a finger at Giles. "Hold that thought." She grinned at Giles and headed downstairs.

Giles sat there and watched her go. "Damn." He wiped his hands off on his pajama bottoms. They were going in the laundry basket anyway. He sighed and stood. Giles grabbed the headboard as the room spun a few times. When it passed he headed towards the bathroom after grabbing another pair of pajamas. As he pulled off his pajama top he made a face as the cloth passed his nose. "Probably just as well. I stink." Determined to be more aromatic by the time Buffy returned he turned on the shower.

##

Buffy made pancakes and she and Heather ate in front of the TV, enjoying a cartoon moment together. Heather threw her napkin at Buffy when Buffy kept cheering on Wily Coyote. Buffy cleaned up the kitchen, only because she had company coming in a couple of hours and then got Heather off and on her way to Nancy's.

When she shut the door behind Heather, Buffy ran upstairs and into Giles' room. He was fast asleep. Buffy stood there in the doorway and just watched him breathe for the longest time, feeling her love grow for him as the minutes passed. In time, she headed back downstairs. Opening up her laptop she began to write, planning on working on her story until her friends arrived.

##

A little past noon the doorbell rang. Buffy saved her story and ran to answer it

before they could ring it again. She swung the door open. She caught them both up in a hug. "I cannot tell you how good it is to be home so I can see you guys." She let go and got out of the way so they could come in.

Xander grinned. "Not half as good as it is to see you." He gestured upstairs. "How's the big guy?"

"Fast asleep." Buffy wrinkled her nose. "He had a bad night. Lots of fevers."

Willow made a sad face. "Yuck. Lizzie's had a few fevers but she seems to be getting better now. She just keeps sneezing."

Buffy rolled her eyes. "Tell me about it." She headed for the kitchen and turned on the oven. Then she got the pan out of the refrigerator. "We're thirty minutes away from some yummy lasagne."

Xander peaked underneath the aluminum foil. "Wow, where'd you learn to cook like this?"

"I didn't. One of Giles' women admirers brought it by."

Willow laughed. "Oh, my God, they just don't get it. They keep hoping he'll be so awestruck by their culinary expertise that he'll ask one of them to marry him. Like Giles is the sort of guy who's accessible through his stomach." She rolled her eyes.

Buffy frowned. "How many of them are there?" She ran her finger down the edge of a kitchen knife.

Xander grinned. "Too many to count. They hit him up at the store, the teachers at the school are after him, and the single mom's go crazy as soon as they find out he's not married. You should see him at a PTA meeting. It's like a feeding frenzy."

Willow grinned. "He likes to take one of us along to protect him."

"Why is he such a babe magnet all of a sudden?"

Willow shrugged. "There's something about a single dad that's like catnip. I swear to God. As soon as someone finds out he's a single dad they are all over him. And when they see how great Heather is and how much she adores him, well..."

Xander shivered. "You can practically see them picking out the his and her towels."

Buffy put the knife down. "So, why doesn't he ever go out with any of them?"

Willow walked to the refrigerator and opened it up looking for something to drink. She pulled out the orange juice. Opening a cabinet she pulled out a glass. "Xander, Buffy?" At their no's she poured herself a glass. "Well, it's hard to get a straight answer out of Giles when it involves his love life, but he usually just laughs and says that as soon as they found out what he and Heather did they'd go screaming into the hills so why bother."

Xander pursed his lips. "Although there was that one he sort of liked."

Buffy picked the knife up again. "Oh?"

Willow nodded. "Yeah, they went out a couple of times, a few times, actually. I'm not quite sure what happened. One minute he was dating her and the next minute he wasn't. But I'm pretty sure there were smoochies involved." She thought for a minute. "Although now that I think about it, that was after Faith died. It ended soon after Heather showed up."

Buffy wanted to change the subject before she stabbed something. "So, Giles seems to be quite attached to Heather."

Xander looked at her through narrowed eyes. "Ah ha, now you see what it's like."

"See what what's like?"

"Watching the two of them as they tell their secrets and read each other's minds. How he lets her get out of research and take naps whenever she wants." He waved a finger at Buffy. "See, you're not the Teacher's Pet anymore are you?"

Buffy rolled her eyes. "I had no idea Giles and my relationship so traumatized you, Xander."

Xander let out a heavy sigh. "It left a scar."

Buffy snorted and then noticed the oven was ready. She put in the lasagna. "Heather is great."

Willow grinned. "She really is." She took another sip. "You should have seen her when she first got here, though."

"Why, what was she like?"

Xander decided he wanted something to drink. He opened the refrigerator door and just stared. "All these yes sirs, no sirs, Mr. Giles this, Mr. Giles that, crying at the drop of a hat anytime anyone teased her. She was one scared and unhappy little girl."

Willow moved to stand next to Xander. "Are you hoping something will just fly out of there into a glass for you?" She looked at Buffy. "But Giles has been so good for her. And I think she's been good for him. They needed each other somehow. I think they were both lonely, they both wanted a family, and they just worked. They clicked."

Xander finally pulled out some soda. "And we've helped a little. Toughened her up on the teasing issue. I can tease her several times a day and get nothing but giggles out of her." Xander reached over Buffy for a glass. "I consider it one of my greatest triumphs."

Buffy reached for another glass. "Have you guys ever gone out on patrol with them?"

They both shook their heads. Willow spoke. "Giles won't let us patrol now that we have kids. We can help with the research and I can help with some magic, but no patrolling."

Buffy smiled a little sadly. "He takes care of everybody, doesn't he?"

Xander poured both him and Buffy a glass and then put the bottle back in the refrigerator. "It was weird not having him at the shop yesterday. Other than his Council trips to London, he's never missed a day."

Willow leaned against the counter. "Do you think Giles has ever had a day off?"

Xander considered her question. "Well, the shop is closed on Sundays."

Willow nodded. "Yeah, but he trains on Sundays, at least he did with Faith and I know he does with Heather. He's always researching and checking the prophecies. He probably never really gets to take a day off and do nothing."

Xander snorted. "If you look at it that way Willow, Giles hasn't had a day off for eight years. Not that Giles would even know how to take a day off."

Buffy ran her fingers through the condensing fluid on her glass. "Ever since I got here."

Willow touched Buffy's arm. "Buffy, don't feel bad. It's what his life is all about. Xander's right. I don't think he would ever take a day off. It's not in his nature."

Buffy shrugged. "I guess I just never thought about it. I spent so much time bitching about being the Slayer and how much time it took away from my life that I never even thought about how it did the same to Giles, and probably worse. At least I hung out with you guys, and went to the Bronze, and went on dates, and visited with my dad. Meanwhile he's never stopping. He's reading and researching and doing everything he can to keep me alive, to keep us all alive."

Willow looked at Buffy. "Hey, are you all right?"

Buffy nodded. "He got bit by a vampire the other night, Friday night. He didn't even tell me."

Willow gasped. "Is he all right? Is that why he's sick?"

"Well, I'm sure it didn't help. But he's mostly sick because I gave him my cold."

"How did he get bit? Where was Heather?" Xander's eyes were dark with worry.

"She killed the vampire that was biting him. According to Giles, when I finally saw the bite marks, he had just bitten him when she staked him." Buffy sighed. "So, anyway, I start fussing over him, and helping him to bed, and taking off his shoes, and he keeps arguing with me, telling me he's fine."

Willow touched her arm again. "And..." It was clear the story wasn't over.

"And then I asked him when someone had last fussed over him and he couldn't even remember. I watched him try and think of a time and he couldn't." Buffy's eyes grew teary.

Willow's eyes grew bright too. "What did you say?"

Buffy wiped her eyes. "I told him to circle that date on his calendar cuz serious fussing was about to commence."

Willow smiled gently at Buffy. "Buffy, even if people haven't fussed over him he hasn't been unhappy. He knows we love him. We made him godfather to all three of our kids. We couldn't even imagine asking anyone else."

Xander grinned. "He did his best to act nonchalant when Willow asked him

but he was practically strutting like a peacock."

Willow giggled. "He was so cute. Every time I turned around he was holding her. He bought her so many presents I thought we might have to buy a bigger house."

Xander laughed. "And then when Anya found out she was pregnant she asked Giles to be the godfather to our twins. He very gently told her that just because Willow had asked him that she didn't need to, that she was allowed to ask anybody she wanted. I think he was afraid that Anya had just assumed that she had to ask him." He started to laugh. Willow picked up the story. "Anya just looked at him and said: don't be stupid Giles, of course I want you to be my children's godfather and if Xander and I die, I want you to raise them, just like you did Xander because he turned out pretty good."

Willow and Xander were both laughing. Xander continued. "You should have seen his face. It was priceless."

Willow finished through her giggling. "He got really still, and then he sort of stood up tall and said in his most British of voices that he'd be honored and then he told us that of course nothing would happen to either Xander or Anya, and then he hightailed it out of there."

Xander smirked. "We think to go have a good cry."

Buffy sighed. "I wish I hadn't left. I wish I'd been here for all of that."

Willow shook her head. "Oh, no. He was so proud of you. His Slayer, in college. There wasn't a single day when he didn't mention you or at least think about you. He gets this look on his face when he's thinking about you. Even Heather could recognize it. She'd crawl in his lap and ask him if he was thinking about you. And he always was."

Buffy was curious. "What kind of look?"

Willow looked at Xander and he looked back. They both shrugged. Xander tried. "It's sort of, well, like he's daydreaming or something. He never did that until you left."

Willow grinned. "He just zones out, and gets this little smile on his face. Of course, he probably won't do it anymore now that you're home." She looked at Buffy, a wistful expression on her face. "Are you staying?"

Buffy nodded. "Definitely staying."

Xander looked around. "You gonna get your own place?"

Buffy shook her head. "No, I think I'm going to stay here."

Willow smiled. "Don't you love your room? Giles and I had so much fun doing that."

"It's the best room ever." Not that Buffy intended to stay in there very much.

Xander had a thought. "The other thing he started to do a while after you left was start reading the weirdest magazines."

Buffy let out a laugh. She walked into the living room and pulled a magazine out of her laptop bag. "You mean this one?"

Xander took it from her. "Yeah. You subscribe to this too?"

Buffy took it back from him and flipped it open to her story. "I write for it. It's what I do as my job."

Xander's mouth opened. He snatched the magazine back. "No way."

Buffy nodded. "I've been doing it for four years now."

Willow moved so she could peer over Xander's shoulder. "Why didn't he tell us? He just kept leaving the magazine around and we never could figure out why."

"I told him not to. I was kind of shy about them at first and I only wanted him to know and then it... I don't know...it just became our secret."

Xander shook his head. "Man, can that guy keep a secret or what?"

"You're not mad I didn't tell you?"

Xander shook his head. "Nah. What are these stories about?"

Buffy grinned. "All the monsters we've fought through the years. You're in some of them." She turned to Willow. "And so are you, and Oz, and well, all of us. I changed the names, but they're all about us."

Xander had an admiring look on his face. "Way to go, Buff. You finally found a way to milk your destiny for some hard cold cash."

"I know, cool, huh?"

Willow tried to tug the magazine away from Xander but he held on tight. She stuck her tongue out at him. "I need to go to the shop and get some of the back issues. Giles has every single one." She giggled. "This will be so much fun, to read about our adventures."

Buffy looked a little worried. "Just be forewarned. I change things around. Sometimes a lot. I kill people off, or make the monsters scarier or the way they died harder. But the basic story is there."

Willow grinned. "This is so great. And the best part is that you can live anywhere and do this. What are you working on now?"

"The Angel saga." Buffy made her voice quite dramatic.

Willow grimaced. "Yuck."

"Tell me about it." She leaned in closer. "In this version though, Angelus gets staked. And the hero gets the heroine." A mocking smile passed her lips. "It's one advantage to writing our history this way, I get to change what I want."

Xander pursed his lips. "Do your fans like a happy ending?"

Buffy laughed. "No, the gorier the better as far as they're concerned. Don't worry; I'll give them plenty of gore. Angelus will kill off everybody else in his inimitable fashion. One thing with Angelus, I don't have to exaggerate any of his evil."

Xander grunted. "Well it's about time Deadboy was good for something."

The timer went off. The three of them set the table and were soon digging into Mrs. Ferguson's lasagne. While Xander helped himself to a second helping he let out a happy sigh. "Man, that Mrs. Ferguson sure can cook. Giles is lucky she brings by so much food."

Buffy smiled nervously. "Well, I don't think she'll be bringing him any more food."

Willow cut another small piece for herself. "Why?"

"Well, let's just say she wasn't thrilled that I'm staying here."

Willow's eyes opened. "Does she think you're Giles' girlfriend?" Buffy nodded. "Well, you can just tell her that you're a friend." Buffy got a mutinous look on her face and Willow laughed. "Buffy, you always were so territorial about Giles."

Buffy looked affronted. "What do you mean?"

Xander rolled his eyes. "Come on, Buffy. Any time anyone started messing with Giles you'd get all hyper about it."

Willow nodded. "Even after you moved away. Every time you came to visit you'd make sure you were sitting between him and Faith and getting all his attention."

Xander looked smug. "Trying to capture your glory days as Teacher's Pet."

"I did that? Did Giles notice?"

Willow giggled. "I doubt it. But even if he did he wouldn't have cared. You were always his favorite. We all knew it. Even Faith knew it."

Xander waved his fork at her. "That was all before Heather. Heather may give you a run for your money for first place. He's pretty keen on her."

Willow glared at Xander. "Don't you listen to him. You'll always be his favorite. No matter how much he loves Heather."

Buffy patted Willow on the arm. "It's all right, Will. I'm all right. I know Giles loves me. I stand before you unthreatened by Heather. She'd be way too hard to stay mad at anyway."

Willow grinned. "Isn't she just the best?"

There was a thumping noise from upstairs. Buffy rose but Xander beat her to it. "I'll go check. I want to say hi anyway." Before Buffy could protest he was half way up the stairs.

Willow touched Buffy's arm to get her attention. "Are you glad to be back?"

Buffy smiled, looking at Willow with great affection. "You have no idea how glad I am to be back. I feel like I'm home."

"Buffy." Buffy looked up to see Xander standing at the landing. "Get up here." Buffy ran, Willow right behind her.

End Part 6

Teacher's Pet 7

When she reached the landing Buffy headed towards Giles' room. "What, what is it?"

"You need to see this." Xander walked into Giles' bedroom. Giles was sleeping. He'd obviously just gone through a fever cycle and was at the fever breaking stage. He'd stripped down to his boxers and otherwise lay unclothed on the bed, lying on his stomach. Buffy could see the bruises from the doorway and she gasped.

Walking closer her eyes filled with tears. Giles looked like he'd been beaten. Or rather he looked as if someone had been beating him every night for weeks. He was covered with bruises, huge ones, in a sickening array of colors. Buffy could see some wounds, gash wounds on his arms, and one that just started on his side and disappeared onto his front. Buffy sat by his side. She saw the bruise where she had touched him last night. When he had flinched away and told her he was a little sore. Her lips tightened. She whispered in Giles' ear. "Giles, turn over." She gently prodded him. He grunted but obeyed, without waking.

His front was even worse. Just as bruised but more cut up. The cut on his side ran up his chest all the way to his collarbone. It was new enough to still be held together with steri-strips. He should have gotten stitches. Xander shook his head and whispered. "Jesus, what happened to him?"

Buffy wanted to cry. She wanted to crawl in bed with him and make sure that nothing ever hurt him again. She put out a hand to touch one of his bruises, clearly a brand new one, the skin still raw and abraded. One he must have gotten Friday while she'd been home scribbling notes on a legal pad. Buffy stood and quickly left the room running back downstairs. She began to pace, her frustration creating a surplus of energy.

Xander asked his question again after following Buffy downstairs. "What happened to him? What is that? It looks like someone's been trying to kill him." He stopped Buffy on her next pass. "Buffy, what is it?"

Buffy looked at him, tears in her eyes. "Why didn't he call me? I would have come home."

Xander kept his grip on her arm. "What happened to him?"

Buffy shook her arm free and collapsed on the couch. "It's Heather." At their looks she hastened to explain. "Oh, no. She's not hurting him. She's just...she's..." Buffy struggled to come up with something that wouldn't sound so accusing. None of this was her fault. "She's young and the slaying is too

much for her. Giles patrols with her every night and he fights the vampires to keep her alive."

Xander's voice was dangerous. "You knew about this?"

Buffy sent him an anguished stare. "No, he didn't tell me. I don't think he would have told me at all if he hadn't gotten sick. I was on this couch when he took her out to patrol Friday night and he never said a word."

"So how do you know what's going on?"

"I took Heather on patrol last night. Giles was too sick. He told me to watch her. He told me she gets overwhelmed." Buffy let out a frustrated laugh. "Overwhelmed." She shook her head. "If there's more than one vampire she gets so scared she loses it. She starts to cry and she can't fight. So, Giles protects her. And he doesn't tell anyone, because he doesn't want you to patrol, and he doesn't want me to have to come home if I don't want to, and he keeps getting hurt and hurt and hurt until eventually it kills him."

Xander sat down. "I know he's been tired lately and walking a little slower. I just figured it was the added dad duties wearing him down, but I never..." Xander covered his face with his hands.

Willow already had tears running down her face. "Do you think he's okay?"

Buffy looked up defiantly. "Yes, or at least he will be. Because he's never going patrolling again unless he has a pad of paper to take notes on my slaying style."

"What about Heather?"

"I'll take her with me. I'll teach her. She knows she...she knows she doesn't do it well. She's devastated about it. I think she knows he gets hurt but she hasn't known what to do about it. Anytime, these last three days, that Giles looks sick or in pain, she just gets this haunted look about her and acts as if she's afraid he'll leave her."

Xander removed his hands from his face and wiped his own tears away. "Jesus, I feel so bad. How do we make this right?"

Buffy looked at him. "By loving him. I'm going to love him and marry him, help him raise Heather and keep her alive, and maybe have some children of our own."

Xander's eyebrows rose. "That's a little extreme. I was thinking more along

the lines of a weekend off now and then, helping out more at the store." He looked at Buffy and his eyes opened wide. "You're not kidding, are you?"

Buffy shook her head. "I love him."

Xander let out a long breath. "So are you trying to tell me, that back in high school, if I'd let myself be beaten black and blue night after night while protecting the Slayer, who of course was you, and stayed up night after night researching every way possible to keep you alive, and done everything I could to protect all of your friends and keep them out of harm's way, while never taking any time off or asking for a thing in return, that you might have gone out with me?"

Buffy couldn't help grinning, just a little. "Maybe."

Xander snorted. "You are way too easy."

Willow and Buffy both grinned at that. Willow glanced at Buffy. "What are you going to do with Heather?"

Buffy grinned. "I'll need your help with that. I want her to start hanging around with Spike. She's afraid of vampires. She thinks they're mean." She glared at Xander. "And if you ever say anything to tease her about this, you will look worse than Giles does right now."

Xander put up both hands. "Hey, you'll never hear a peep out of me." He reconsidered. "Well, maybe a few years from now we can all have a good laugh about it."

Buffy rolled her eyes. "She needs to get used to Spike. She needs to see Spike insulting you guys and you guys just insulting him back. She needs to see that just because they're mean doesn't mean they're tougher than her."

Xander pursed his lips. "So, you're saying that in order to help you, you need me to insult Spike and generally degrade him?" He rubbed his hands together. "Count me in."

Willow looked nervous. "I don't have to be too mean, do I?"

Buffy grinned. "Nah, just give him a little Willow sass."

"I can do that."

"So, when does Operation Spike take place?" Xander couldn't wait.

"Well, first I have to go talk to him and make sure he's willing."

Xander made a face. "What else does he have to do? I can't imagine he has an overly busy social calendar."

Buffy stood. "I'll let you know as soon as I talk to him." She glanced upstairs.

Xander and Willow got the message. Willow grinned. "Go fuss over him. Tell him we love him."

Buffy grinned. "I'll make sure he's feeling very loved."

Xander shook his head. "Man, you and Giles." He blew out a breath. "I gotta say, I didn't see that one coming." He sent her a challenging look. "But if you have any kids, I get to be the godfather. Don't even think about asking Oz. I get the first kid."

Buffy started shooing them out. Willow looked back over her shoulder at Buffy. "And I get to be the godmother."

When they got to the door Buffy gave them both a hug. "You guys are the best. I love you both so much."

They hugged her back. "We're just glad you're home."

Willow nodded. "And even gladder you're staying." She grinned. "Although probably not as glad as Giles will be." She winked at Buffy.

Buffy laughed and shut the door. She bolted up the stairs. Her smile left her face as she walked back into the bedroom. He'd rolled back onto his stomach. Buffy slowly sat on the bed and inched over until she was right next to him. She looked at him again, looking at his body at the same time she looked at his bruises. He was beautiful. Despite the wounds, despite the scars, and the signs of his age, he was beautiful to her. She leaned down and kissed one of his bruises. And then she kissed another one.

She kissed every single one and somewhere towards the end of the ones on his back she could tell that Giles had woken up. She could feel him tensing, just for a moment, and then felt him relax. He cleared his throat. She smiled and kissed the last bruise, one high on his back, the one she'd accidentally hurt yesterday.

Giles cleared his throat again and turned his head to face her. "What are you doing?"

"Kissing all your boo-boos." She kissed one on his shoulder, near to his lips.

Buffy watched his eyes, watched as they looked at her lips. She kissed him farther down his arm, on a scratch that looked as if it might be a week old, still scabbing.

Giles licked his lips. Buffy saw a fading bruise on his temple. She leaned over and kissed him very gently there. Her breasts brushed against his arm. He turned onto his side and touched the side of her face with his fingers. "That could take you quite a while." He looked down at himself. "I'm rather a mess. I'm sorry you saw me this way."

Buffy shook her head angrily, shaking a couple of tears loose. "I'm not." Her voice grew soft and filled with sadness. "Giles, you should have called me. I'm so sorry I wasn't here."

"Don't be. It was my choice. You couldn't have known."

"It was a stupid choice." She closed her eyes. "I'm sorry. It scares me to see you like this. And when I get scared I get angry." Buffy let out a long breath and then she gently pushed him until he was on his back. She reached over him and kissed him, ever so softly, on his newest bruise. "You got that one while I was sitting downstairs on the couch." She started to cry.

Giles wrapped his arms around her and using one of his hands he moved her face near his. He kissed her eyelids. He kissed her damp cheeks. As Buffy let out a soft moan he kissed her lips, very gently, just the lightest of touches. He did it again, just brushed his lips against hers. She let out another moan and whispered softly into his lips. "Kiss me, Giles."

Giles increased the pressure and turned his head just enough to fully capture her lips with his. Buffy threw her arms around his neck and then pressed him against her. She pulled back from the kiss. "I'm not hurting you, am I?"

Giles shook his head, his lips moving back to hers. "Only if you stop." He ran his tongue across her lips and she opened for him. Giles explored her mouth, reveling in the warmth and the textures and the way her tongue danced with his. Giles let out a groan. "God, you feel so good." He rained kisses down her face, her jaw, along her neck. When he got to her neck he stopped and just rested his head there for a minute.

Buffy ran her hand through his hair. "Are you all right?"

Giles lifted his head and gave her a sheepish look. "I think I just used up all my energy. I'm afraid I'm not at my best right now."

Buffy barked out a laugh and hugged him to her tightly. She could feel his

erection against her leg. She glanced down and then looked back up at his face, grinning. "Parts of you seem to have plenty of energy."

Giles silently chuckled. "It doesn't understand that it can't operate as a solo act." He stopped Buffy's hand as it started to wander down his body. "Buffy, if I came right now, I think it would kill me."

Buffy pouted and then she grinned. "I'm sorry. I'll behave. Just get better soon, okay?"

Giles ran his hand down her face and then ran his fingers along the lace edging of her top. The weariness was plain on his face but Buffy saw the flash of desire. Giles touched her skin again, above her breasts. "Trust me. With incentive like this I'll be better in no time." He couldn't resist. He ran his hand over her breasts, letting his hand rest under her right breast while he flicked his thumb over her hardening nipple. Giles suddenly wondered if he'd gone too far, if he'd assumed too much. He glanced up at Buffy. Her eyes were closed and her mouth was partly open, her breathing rapid.

Giles could feel himself getting even harder. He lowered his mouth and captured her nipple, biting her through her top. Buffy let out a moan and pressed harder against him. His hand moved to her back and slid up under her shirt. He unclasped her bra running his hand around to cup her breast. He lifted her shirt and tasted her for the first time. Buffy let out a cry and arched back, giving him better access. He pressed her down on her back and pushed her shirt all the way up so he could see her. "You are so beautiful." He tasted her other nipple. Then he lay his head down on her stomach.

Giles could feel her stomach move as she giggled. "Are you resting again?"

He rubbed his cheek against her stomach, enjoying the softness of it. "I'm sorry."

She giggled again and ran her hand down his hair. "Don't be. I should probably leave and let you sleep."

Giles let out a protesting moan and held her tightly. "Don't. Don't go."

She slid down until her face was level with his. She cupped his face between her hands. "I'll never go. I'm here to stay." She kissed him and pulled back, capturing his gaze again. "I love you so much."

Giles groaned and pressing her back on the bed he shifted his body until he was lying on top of her. Buffy wrapped her legs around him and pulled him close to her so she could feel the hard length of him. Giles thrust against her.

Buffy nibbled on his ear. "Are you sure you don't want to come, just a little?"

Giles let out a half laugh and rolled them until she was on top of him. "Only if you don't mind doing most of the work. And we take frequent rests, like right now." Giles closed his eyes. He ran his hands slowly up and down Buffy's thighs.

Buffy leaned down and spoke softly to him. "I'll do all the work. You just lie there and keep your eyes closed for a second." She got off of him and Giles opened his eyes to see where she was going.

His eyes widened as he watched her start to take her clothes off. First she took off her top and her bra. Giles' breath caught in his throat at the sight of her. Buffy glanced up and realized Giles was watching her. She undid her jeans and slowly pushed them down, over her hips, lifting one leg and then the other to step out of them. All she was wearing was the barest bit of lace. She made as if to take those off too when Giles shook his head. "Let me."

She moved to the bed and lifted his hands, placing them on either hip. Giles ran his hands down her hips and then behind her to cup her bottom. He pulled her close and placed a kiss on the lace, seeing her soft hair, barely hidden. Giles ran a finger underneath the lace and smiled as she moaned. Pulling her even closer until she was kneeling on the bed he pressed another kiss even lower, and he opened his mouth to nibble on her, to feel her softness.

He pulled back and slowly began to lower the scrap of lace until she was forced to stand to let them fall. She stood there for a minute and let him look at her. Then she got on the bed and straddled him, rubbing against him, enjoying the feel of the fabric of his boxers on her skin. Buffy almost growled as she thought of him entering her. She lay full length upon him, being careful to not let all her weight rest on him, not wanting to hurt him.

Giles held her close, the feel of her naked body lying on his sending waves of delectable sensations through him. He closed his eyes resisting the desire to flip her over and thrust into her. Giles was afraid that he might not have the strength to finish things up if he took such an active role. He knew he was really in no shape to make love at all, let alone take a dominant role. But he had been right. She was impossible to resist. And he could no more stop touching her now than he could stop loving her. But this really needed to be Buffy's show. Most of it, anyway. He wasn't planning on doing nothing. Giles ran his hands up and down Buffy's back, down to her bottom and up again. His thumbs caressed the sides of her breasts.

To Buffy it felt like the most sensual of massages. Him underneath her, the

crisp feel of his chest hair against her breasts, the hardness of his cock pressed against her groin, and his hands. God, those hands, so sure of themselves, so strong. Buffy shivered. Giles whispered to her. "Are you cold?"

Buffy pulled up a little so she could see his face. "No. I'm hot. You're making me hot."

Giles grinned. He cupped her breasts and pulled her up a little so he could take one in his mouth. She reached down as if to start working his boxers off but instead he sat her up and he began inching down, moving underneath her until his breath was stirring the hair on her mound. He flicked his tongue out and touched her clit. Buffy moaned and lifted herself up so he would taste her. Giles needed no further invitation. Holding her thighs from underneath, feeling her extraordinary strength as she held herself ready for him, he laved her with his tongue, over and over again. Long strokes, always ending with her clit. He could have tasted her forever, he could have listened to her pleading cries longer than that. He wished he had the energy to taste her until she came in his mouth. Giles reassured himself that he would have the time later. That he would have many more opportunities to pleasure her until she screamed for mercy. Giles pulled away from her and laid his head back on the bed.

Buffy lowered herself and scooted back down Giles' body. "Taking another rest?" She smiled at him, loving him so dearly. She frowned. He looked so tired. "Should we stop? We can stop."

Giles shook his head. "No, I just need to rest for a minute." He closed his eyes but he never stopped touching her. He ran his hands up and down her thighs again, down her calves. He smiled. "You're so strong. I can feel it. Your body is so amazing."

She smiled. "You're the one who feels amazing." She lifted up and he let out a soft cry as if she was deserting him. "I'm not going anywhere. You just rest there while I take care of these." She started tugging his boxers off, working the band over his cock, teasingly touching him as she pulled them oh so slowly down his hips and then down his legs. She glanced at him. "Are you resting?"

Giles nodded, his eyes still closed, a small smile on his lips. Buffy began kissing him, kissing his calves, kissing his thighs, finding more bruises as she made her way up her body. Her touches grew more tender, her desire to touch him dueling with her need to not hurt him. She rubbed her nose in his wiry hair, and brought a hand up to cup his balls. Giles shifted underneath her as he let out a soft moan. Buffy ran one hand up his shaft and lifted it so she

could take him in her mouth. This time Giles bucked under her and one of his hands fisted in her hair.

Buffy took as much of him as she could in her mouth, enjoying the size of him, and the hardness of him, knowing that he was hers now. She moved her head, moving up and down his cock, making him wet and slick. All of a sudden she had to feel him inside of her. Buffy straddled him and guiding him to her she pressed down and took him inside.

She had moved so quickly Giles didn't even realize she had changed tactics until he felt himself enter her warmth. His eyes flew open and he groaned. "Oh Buffy, that feels so good. You feel so good." Again he resisted the temptation to flip her on her back. He forced himself to relax as she began to ride him.

Giles reached up to caress her breasts, and then he pulled her down so he could kiss her. He bit her lips, and then he kissed her so very gently. Her hips pulled up until he was almost out of her and then she rammed down hard. Giles groaned into her mouth and he thrust his tongue inside her following the rhythm she set up with her hips. He pulled back and looked at her fiercely. "You belong to me now, you know that don't you?" His eyes closed on another groan as once again she teased his cock by pulling up so high and then claiming him again.

She touched his face. "I've always belonged to you. Don't you know that?"

He pulled her down for another searing kiss. He started pumping his hips up to meet hers as she thrust down. Giles loosened his hold on her so he could kiss her face, kiss her breasts. "Yes, you have. You've always belonged to me. From the first day I met you, you've been mine."

His words were like magic fingers, caressing her, loving her. She was so close. He could see it on her face. "Come for me, Buffy. Let me watch you." Giles watched as she found her release, as her cries grew louder and the sensation rocked her body. He didn't think he had ever seen anything more beautiful.

When she was done he finally did what he'd been wanting to do. He was so close himself it wouldn't take long. He flipped them over and he pushed into her, watching her face. Every thrust made her moan, her face still flushed with passion. He lifted himself up, extending his arms so he could watch himself enter her. It pushed him over the edge. With a cry he thrust one last time and felt himself explode inside of her. This time she watched him, watched as he moaned, as he made his final thrust. And then she grinned as he collapsed on top of her.

When he lay so still she got a little nervous. She ran her hand down his back. "Hey, you're not dead are you?"

Giles grunted. "Not quite." Buffy grinned and arched up against him. That had been so wonderful. She felt like a cat who'd been given a big ol' bowl of cream to drink. She felt like meowing. Giles spoke again. "Am I too heavy?"

Buffy ran her hands down his back until his flinching made her remember that he was hurt. "Ooh, sorry." She touched him more gently. "And no, you're not too heavy. You feel wonderful."

"Good, because I can't move."

Buffy giggled. That was all right with her. Her Slayer strength could handle him lying on her for quite some time. Although there was an awful lot of him. She'd never quite realized how much of him there was. Somehow looking at him this way, or feeling him this way gave her a whole new perspective on it. She smiled again, feeling very proprietary. Every inch of him was hers. She whispered to him. "I love you."

He grunted back. "I love you too."

Buffy let out a happy sigh. She looked down...and saw blood. She rolled Giles over onto his back. He looked up at her surprised, especially when he saw her face. "What's the matter?"

"You're bleeding. I made you bleed." Buffy's voice was filled with guilt.

Giles looked down at himself. Part of his cut, the one that ran up his side to his collarbone had split open and had started to bleed. He pulled her down to his side. "It's fine Buffy, it's barely bleeding."

Buffy lay there for a second and then she shot up. "You're doing it again. I am never going to believe anything you say, ever again. It's barely bleeding. I'm a little sore. I'm not at my best. Look. At least three inches of it has opened up and there's blood leaking out all over the place.

Giles smiled. "You're not going to believe anything I say?"

"Nothing."

"I love you."

Buffy let out an exasperated breath. "That's not fair. You are the biggest liar

I've ever met."

"I am not a liar." Giles frowned at her.

"Okay, fine, you're the biggest understatement guy that ever walked the planet."

"That's better."

Buffy looked at his chest. "Aren't you worried about that?"

Giles barely opened his eyes. "I don't have the energy to worry about anything. I told you. I can't move."

"Where are the steri-strips?"

"In the downstairs bathroom."

"Okay, I'll be right back. Don't move." She grinned.

He glared at her. "Ha ha."

He was asleep when she got back. Trying not to wake him she gently started cleaning the blood off with a wet towel. When she realized that she could probably play the tuba right now without waking him she relaxed and cleaned him off as thoroughly as she could. Then she put new steri-strips on him, closing the wound again. Buffy started to feel guilty all over again. But even in the midst of her guilt she couldn't keep the smile off her face. That had been wonderful. And if that was Giles not at his best, she couldn't wait to see what he was like when he was fully recovered.

End Part 7

Teacher's Pet 8

The ringing of the doorbell woke her. Buffy blinked her eyes trying to figure out what the noise was. The second ring registered and she leaped out of bed. Figuring it was Heather she threw on the nearest thing, which happened to be Giles' robe. Belting it around her she headed downstairs.

Buffy flung open the door. "Did you forget your key?" It wasn't Heather. "Oh. Sorry. I thought you were someone else. Can I help you?" She looked down at what the woman was carrying and she gritted her teeth.

"Is Rupert home?"

Buffy nodded her head, and then she shook it. At the woman's questioning look Buffy explained. "He is, but he's still sleeping." Buffy yawned and ran her hand through her hair. She hoped she looked like she had just been thoroughly made love to.

Apparently she did because the woman's eyes narrowed. "I didn't realize Rupert had a house guest."

"Oh, I live here now."

The woman opened her mouth to speak again when they both heard a voice from upstairs. "Buffy, did you take my robe?"

Buffy and the woman both looked at her attire. Buffy grinned and yelled back up. "Yes, I did. I had to answer the door."

"Oh, who was it?"

"She's still here." Buffy looked at the woman. "What's your name?"

"Phyllis."

Buffy yelled back upstairs. "Someone named Phyllis. I think she brought you some dinner." Buffy wrinkled her nose as they both listened to him sneeze. She looked at Phyllis. "He's got a cold."

They both watched the staircase waiting to see if he might descend. Buffy figured if he could muster enough energy to have sex that he could make it down a flight of stairs. She grinned again. Again she felt like meowing. Then he appeared wearing some sweats. He was combing his fingers through his hair and Buffy thought he looked like someone who'd just been thoroughly made love to. She grinned again and walked to the bottom of the staircase.

Giles kissed her briefly and smiled at her. Then he looked up at Phyllis. "Sorry, Phyllis. I've been sleeping a lot lately trying to get rid of this cold." He put his arm around Buffy. "Have you met Buffy?" He walked over to the door with his arm around her waist.

Phyllis hid her dismay by smiling. "Yes, we were just introducing ourselves." She couldn't miss the sizzle going on between the two of them. "I understand she's living here now."

Giles smiled down at Buffy. "Yes, she is." Buffy smiled up at him.

Suddenly they heard a yell. "Giles, Giles." Heather zoomed up the steps and flung her arms around Giles. "You're up. Are you better?"

Giles ran his hand down her hair. "I think I am." He crouched down. "Did you have a good time at Nancy's?"

Heather nodded and glanced up at Buffy. At Buffy's grin Heather went to give her a hug too. Buffy leaned down and picked her up. "How's my girl?"

"We made cookies?"

Buffy gasped. "Where's mine?" She started going through Heather's pockets. "Where are they?"

Heather started giggling. "We ate them all."

Buffy started making pig noises and Heather giggled again. Buffy glanced up and saw Giles looking at them both. There was such a look of love on his face it captivated her and she couldn't look away.

Mrs. Ferguson had joined Phyllis on the front step. They looked at Buffy and Giles and they shared a commiserating glance. They muttered some goodbyes and shut the door behind them. Buffy looked at the closed-door. "Hey, she took our dinner away."

Giles chuckled. "I don't think we'll be getting any more dinners."

Buffy sighed. "Probably not." She grinned. "Good thing there's just enough lasagne for dinner." Giles moved closer and kissed Buffy.

Heather's eyes opened wide. "Buffy, are you Giles' girlfriend?"

Buffy grinned. "Yup. I most certainly am."

"Are you going to get married and everything?"

Giles and Buffy looked at each other. They both answered at the same time. "Yes." Their voices were both stern as if to communicate the fact that they were getting married whether the other person wanted to or not. When they both realized they'd done the same thing they smiled at each other. Giles kissed her again and spoke more softly. "Yes, we are."

"You're going to live here and we'll be like a family?"

Buffy nodded. "One big family."

Heather pushed out of Buffy's arms and spun in a circle until she fell to the ground. Buffy looked down at her and then up at Giles. "I take it that's a good thing?"

Giles chuckled again. "Yes, that's a happy thing she does when she's...well...happy." He pulled Buffy closer. "If I had more energy I'd do it myself."

Buffy looked at him with some anxiety. "How are you feeling? Should you be out of bed?"

"I actually feel better." At her disgusted look he repeated himself. "No, I really do. I think you cured me." He grinned at her. "I'm not saying I'm well, and I promise I'll take it easy for a few more days but I think I'm over the worst of it. I haven't had a fever since that one this morning." He paused. "Well, I had a fever, but not the sort that registers on a thermometer." He grinned again at her and the look in his eyes made Buffy's butterflies come back.

Buffy stood on her tiptoes and kissed him. And then she kissed him again. They heard a giggle and they both looked down to see Heather still sitting on the floor, staring at them and giggling. Buffy rolled her eyes. "Let me go get dressed and then we'll cook dinner." She pointed to the couch and looked at Giles. "You, on the couch."

Giles looked down at Heather. "Do you still have homework to finish up?" Heather groaned and lay back down. Giles grinned at her theatrics. "Go on, get your books. You can do it on the coffee table and keep me company." At that Heather got up and grabbed her book bag. She took Giles' hand and led him over to the couch.

When Buffy got back downstairs after changing she stopped in the living room. "Giles, do you want some tea?" At his nod she looked at Heather. "Something to drink?"

"Hot chocolate, please."

Buffy grinned at Heather's formal request in her little pixie voice and she headed off to the kitchen. She threw the lasagna in the oven. It was already preheated, as she'd never shut the damn thing off. She made Giles' tea and made hot chocolate for herself and Heather and realized that she felt ridiculously happy. She was almost tempted to do Heather's happy dance. Buffy put a tray together and headed back out to the living room. Giles looked like he was asleep but every now and then he'd answer a question of Heather's. Buffy put the tray down. Giles sat up and reached for his tea. Buffy sat down next to Giles and he put an arm around her shoulder and pulled her

close, kissing the top of her head. "I love you." Heather turned her head around looking at him. He grinned. "I love you too."

Heather smiled and turned around again to her homework. Buffy watched her pencil scabble across her homework sheet. She spoke softly to Giles. "You'll need to let me know what I have to do tomorrow so you can rest."

Giles laid his head back and pursed his lips. "You need to get Heather up by 7:00 so she has time to get dressed and eat breakfast. You need to make her lunch and then drive her to school. Then she probably ought to train tomorrow afternoon as we've missed the last few days. Then back home, dinner, homework, patrol, and bed." He grinned at Buffy. "Nothing to it."

Buffy shook her head, her respect for Giles leaping to new heights. "How have you done it?" She let her hands softly touch the areas of his worst bruises and cuts.

Giles lifted her hand and kissed it. "The way I've always done it. One day at a time, one thing at a time." He touched her face. "I'll be glad for your help."

Buffy laid her head on his shoulder. "I wish I'd been helping before."

Giles brushed her hair off her face. "Heather and I did fine. You're here now and that's all that matters."

The three of them sat there, Heather doing her homework, Giles and Buffy on the couch, their arms around each other, all enjoying each other's company. When the timer went off Buffy reluctantly got up. "Soup's on." She looked down at Giles. "You have got to eat."

Giles nodded and began to get up. "I will. I actually feel a little peckish."

Buffy reached down a hand and helped him up. Still keeping a hand on his arm she ruffled Heather's hair. "Come on, mini-me. Time to eat."

Heather giggled and jumped up bolting for the kitchen. As they ate Buffy looked at Heather. "I have a job for you tonight."

Heather looked at Buffy, her eyebrows up. "You mean, while we patrol?"

Buffy shook her head. "I'm going to patrol tonight. You get to stay here and take care of Giles."

Heather's eyebrows rose higher. "I don't have to patrol?"

Buffy grinned. "Don't get used to it. But I think you ought to have a night off every now and then. Besides Giles needs some extra lovin' right now and I think you're just the girl to do it. Am I right?"

Heather gave Buffy a big nod and she gave Giles a lopsided smile. Giles looked at Buffy. "Are you sure, Buffy?"

"Yeah. I need to talk with Spike so I'll get him first and we can patrol together."

That made Giles feel better. He glanced over at Heather. "What should we do tonight?"

"Watch a movie."

"Which movie?" Giles glanced at Buffy and mouthed the name of the movie before Heather even said it.

"Shrek."

Giles grinned. "All right. But after you finish your homework."

Heather ate her last mouthful of food and made as if to rise. She sat back down and looked at Giles. "May I be excused?"

Giles nodded. "Yes, you may."

She bolted back over to the coffee table. Buffy laughed. "I can't believe you actually have a television and a VCR."

"A DVD player, actually. And there's one upstairs in my bedroom too."

"You have a TV and DVD player in your...our...bedroom?" Buffy was astonished. "Cool." She frowned. "Where is it?"

"In the armoire."

"So we can snuggle up in bed and watch movies sometimes?"

Giles grinned. "Heather and I do it every Sunday morning."

"Man, I can see weekend mornings are a big deal around this house." Buffy let out a happy sigh. She looked over at Giles. "I'm happy."

Giles smiled at her. "I'm glad. I'm happy too."

Heather piped in from the living room. "I'm happy three." Giles and Buffy both laughed as their hands clasped across the table.

One month later:

Giles put down the book he was reading and grinned as he listened to the happy chatter coming up his front sidewalk. He stood to go open the door. Spike had Heather on his shoulders and Heather was giggling. Giles breathed through the gratitude that threatened to make him break down and cry. Heather giggled a lot now after patrol. She still had tears every now and then but it was happening less and less often.

Operation Spike, much to Xander's complete disgust, had been a huge success. Although not the way they had anticipated. Xander had insulted Spike one afternoon and Heather had seen a sad look pass over Spike's face. It had just been there for a second but Heather had recognized it because she felt it so often. Xander had hurt Spike's feelings. She had run to Spike and put her arms around him and tried to make him feel better. It had floored Spike and within seconds they were the best of friends, a situation Spike liked to rub in Xander's face every chance he got.

Spike patrolled every night with them and Giles breathed easier knowing it was the three of them out there against the world. Not that he didn't worry every second they were gone. His heart would shatter if he lost either of them. Giles patrolled on occasion, to see how Heather was doing, so he could give Buffy some advice on how best to train her. He supervised Buffy as she trained Heather. And Giles, for the first time in eight years, wasn't feeling sore. It was a remarkable feeling and he seemed to have more energy than he knew what to do with. Well, that wasn't strictly true. He knew exactly what to do with it. And Buffy seemed to wholeheartedly agree with his choice.

He watched as they walked up the steps. Buffy reached him first and kissed him. "Guess what?"

Giles shook his head. "What?"

"Heather sassed a vampire."

Giles' eyes widened and he looked up at Heather. "You sassed a vampire?"

Heather giggled. "And then I staked him."

Buffy beamed. "She sassed him, he gave her a little sass back, she sassed him again and then, poof." Buffy wiped her hands off with a very satisfied air. "Dust."

Spike stepped up to the door. "Watch your head."

Heather lay straight back until she was hanging down Spike's back as he hung on to her ankles. He carried her in the house. Heather pulled herself up and sat on his shoulders again. Spike reached up and lifting her up off his shoulders he deposited her on the ground. "And she told me to shut up." He looked down at her proudly. "She said: shut up, Spike. Just like that." Giles had to bite back a laugh at the look on Spike's face. He couldn't have been prouder if she'd won the Nobel Prize.

Giles glanced down at Heather. "You do realize you mustn't speak that way to anyone with a heartbeat, don't you?"

Heather nodded. "I only said it to Spike because he wouldn't stop teasing me."

"What was he teasing you about?"

"He kept saying I staked vampires like a girl."

Giles couldn't help it. He started to laugh. A month ago he'd been about as low as you could get, afraid for Heather's life, afraid for his own life, and now. Now, nothing was the same. Now he had Buffy back, they were in love, his body was healed, and Heather was sassing vampires. Giles sent Spike an affectionate gaze. Spike knew how grateful Giles was and he took full advantage of it, but Giles didn't mind. He'd have given Spike anything he wanted for protecting his family and considered it a bargain.

They all moved into the living room. Buffy and Giles cuddling on the couch. Spike perched on the arm of the lazy boy, and Heather sprawled on the floor. Buffy stood up suddenly and headed for the kitchen. "I think this calls for a celebration." She searched for the refrigerator for the bottle of sparkling cider she'd seen. "Aha." She pulled down four glasses and walked back into the living room, taking her place next to Giles.

She poured the cider into the four glasses and handed them out. Lifting her glass she held it high, looking at Heather. "To Heather's first successful vampire sass and stake."

Through Heather's giggling they all repeated Buffy's toast and drank down their cider. Spike put his glass down and stood. "Well kids, I hate to drink and run, but I've got people to annoy." Heather jumped up and hugged him goodbye. Giles liked to watch Spike's face when Heather did that to him. It made him look so human. Spike tousled Heather's hair and stepped away.

"Ciao." He blew out the front door and into the night.

Giles looked down at Heather on the floor. "It's a school night, time for bed. Head on up and get in your pajamas and brush your teeth and I'll be up in a minute to tuck you in."

"Will you read to me?"

"Yes, I'll read to you. Go on." Heather got up and bolted up the stairs.

Buffy snuggled in closer. "Can I come too so you can read to both of us?"

Giles chuckled quietly, his chest vibrating beneath Buffy's cheek. "Yes, you may come too." He tightened his hold on her. "Thank you for coming home. Thank you for being here, for loving me and Heather."

Buffy pulled her head up to look at him. "Thanks for keeping a home waiting for me. And loving you and her, it's the easiest thing I've ever done."

Giles kissed her, a kiss that started gentle and grew more passionate. He pulled away reluctantly. "Hold that thought." He grinned at her. Standing he reached out a hand to pull her up. Together they climbed the stairs to Heather's room. The three of them snuggled into Heather's bed. Heather was in seventh heaven snuggled between the two of them. She handed the book they'd been reading to Giles. Opening it up to the bookmark he found his place and began reading to his family.

The End

December 26, 2001