

Death of a Rascal. 1/4

Series Ripping Confessions

Warning It's Ethan, but not as we know him. (Jim...)

Summary This tale is set after Willow's death, referred to in Ripping Confessions.

Notes Since I like Ethan so much and he's been in the background throughout all Ripping, I thought I'd better let him take his final bow. Not with a whimper, but a bang!

Jack crept into the sunlit bedroom to check on his father, and saw Giles senior sprawled in the bed tucked close to the bolster pillow. His limbs twisted round the cushion in a loving embrace. Jack smiled just like always and then crossed the room to the French windows, flinging them open on the fresh June morning.

His mother smiled her special 'good morning' smile from her portrait and he only just stopped himself from greeting her. Let his father do the talking for both of them. He turned at his father's greeting.

"Morning, love... Oh Jack... What time is it?" Rupert asked as he rearranged the bolster behind his back and sat up. He winced as the newly healed scar, that ran the length of his chest, complained. Jack was at his side in an instant.

"Dad. Will you stop exerting yourself! You know what the doctor said..." Jack fussed round his father.

Rupert slapped his hands away. "He said bed rest. I'm in bed. I'm hardly doing press ups am I?" Rupert saw his son's pensive look; he and Willow were plotting something. "Don't look at your mother, and don't even think of delaying going back to Oxford." He waved a defiant index finger at Jack. "I'm fine. Now do I get tea and my breakfast or do I have to get it myself?" Rupert made to whip the bedclothes back and Jack tucked them back in around him fiercely.

"No... you don't!" He chuckled. "Tea and toast coming up, blackcurrant Jam, ok?"

Rupert nodded. "Shall we have stew tonight for dinner?"

Jack hesitated at the door and glanced once more at his mother's portrait. "Yes, if you like." He stepped back to the bed and perched on the edge of the mattress. "Missing mum?"

His father's eyes brimmed with tears, "Oh yes, all the time. I talk to her everyday. I can feel her near me. It's worst at this time of year, when everything is in bloom and I think I see her in the garden, her hands buried in the earth, nurturing reluctant plants." Rupert's eyes focussed on the voile curtain blowing in the breeze and a tear finally fell from the cradle of his lashes.

Jack slipped from the room unnoticed and busied himself in the Kitchen with the breakfast.

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Jack turned at his father's soft footstep into the kitchen; the tray was in his hands. He

scowled at his father who simply smiled cheerily and sat at the kitchen table. Jack placed the tray on the table and removed the breakfast things.

"Y'know, if you want me to obey you Jack, all you need to do is practice your "resolve face"..." Rupert bit into the piece of toast he'd been buttering and glanced at his flabbergasted son.

Jack smiled as he felt another "mum" story coming on. His father was telling him more about the time before he was born nowadays and he absorbed the stories like a sponge, always hungry for more. His father talked about his Slayer and the rest of the Scooby's and mentioned that he wanted to have them over for Christmas this year.

Rupert dropped his slice of toast onto his plate and swallowed a sip of tea to keep the toast down. He had realised something was wrong a few months ago, when everything began to taste funny and he had lost some weight. He looked about the kitchen, hunting in his mind a strong taste to test his theory. "How about some stew tonight for dinner?"

"Dad..." Jack started to protest, but then saw how heartily his father tucked into his jammy toast and thought no more of his repeated request for the same meal. " Yes, I'll have to go to the village and get the meat... will you be alright?"

Rupert nodded, "I promise no raucous parties while you're gone, but I'll save a nymphet especially for you." He grinned.

Jack stacked the breakfast things into the sink to be washed on his return and collected the keys for the journey. He hesitated at the door but before he could say anything, his father shooed him out through the door.

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Rupert selected some books in the library, and took them to his favourite reading chair. The fireplace was stone cold and he shivered, pulling the old throw round his knees. He remembered seeing his grandfather doing exactly the same thing before he died.

"Really, morbid thoughts for your old age, Rupert!" He chastised himself and opened the first of his books. Biggles' adventures and smiled as he revisited old friends in his imagination.

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The taxi drew level with the curb to pick up his fare. An elderly gent with a craggy face and needle sharp dark eyes, leaning heavily on a gnarled walking stick as he got up from the bench.

"Rayne?" the driver inquired. The man nodded and gestured to his case beside the bench. The driver sighed and bent to retrieve the battered luggage. He noticed the old mans attire, pyjamas peeped beneath his charcoal grey suit, and he wore carpet slippers on his feet.

The driver hesitated. "S'cuse me Sir, but does someone know you're out this late?"

Ethan Rayne straightened indignantly and fixed him with an eagle eye. "I have no one to care about me or my whereabouts, now kindly take me to this address." He whipped out an address written on the back of an envelope. "Your fare is inside."

The driver looked inside the envelope at the wad of notes and whistled. Ethan shrunk with a sigh and got into the car's backseat.

"There's a blanket beside you if you need it mate." The driver had noticed the old man's trembling hands. He checked to see if his fare would take it in the rear-view mirror.

Ethan nodded his thanks, and tucked the wool round his knees. He closed his eyes as they drove past the rest home he had escaped and thought of past adventures with his old friend-Ripper.

End part 1

Death of a Rascal 2/4

Summary Ethan has escaped from a rest home and is heading in Rupert's direction.

He woke to the sound of someone hammering on the front door. His fingers lost their precarious grip on his book and it fell to the floor. He reached forward in his seat, picked up his precious volume, and slid it onto the book table beside his chair.

He draped the throw over the arm of the chair and walked out of the library into the hall to investigate. He nearly collided with Jack who came from the kitchen with the same intent.

"Oh, hi dad. Supper's nearly ready. Do you want to go and answer the door?" Jack wiped his hands on the cloth on his shoulder and half turned back into the kitchen.

Rupert continued up the hall to the door and drew the wrought iron bolts.

"Is this Watchers Rest?" The figure of the cab driver was silhouetted in the gathering dusk. Rupert nodded. The driver looked back to his car and walked quickly to the boot to retrieve his passenger's luggage. Rupert took a step under his porch and saw an old man peering at him from the interior, the meagre light showed his features in stark shadows. His eyes lit from within only one man had that satanic fire in his eyes.

"Ethan Rayne..." Rupert muttered and took several halting steps to the car before he opened the door and Ethan eased his sparse frame from the confines of the vehicle.

Rupert stood a head taller than Ethan as he bent over his stick. The driver deposited Ethan's case on the doorstep and drove away.

"Rupert, may I stay here awhile? Till the magic dies down..." Ethan's voice was weak with age and illness. Rupert slid his arm round his friend's bony shoulders and nodded. He picked up Ethan's case realising how little he had packed. He wasn't staying long.

Jack came from the kitchen with a ladle in his hands. "It's ready! Oh, who's this?" Jack nonchalantly thrust his hand into his apron pocket where a stake nestled.

"Oh, good. Ethan you're just in time for supper. Ethan will be staying for a while, Jack." He

deposited Ethan's case in the hall and took his overcoat from his shoulders. Jack disappeared into the kitchen to lay another place.

Without his bulky coat, Ethan resembled an inmate of Belsen. Rupert hung the coat up and caught sight of Ethan's eyes taking him in.

"Quite a pair of ancient monuments aren't we?" Rupert quipped and Ethan barked out a laugh, then shuddered and wheezed in its aftermath.

Rupert's arms surrounded him lending him warmth and compassion; Ethan was well advanced on the path to damnation. Rupert felt Ethan struggling to calm his trembling limbs, at last giving up and simply shaking in his embrace.

"Jack? We'll have ours upstairs." Rupert turned Ethan to the stairs and ignored his friend's tear stained face. He half carried him up the stairs and led him into his bedroom.

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Jack knocked before entering and saw Ethan in his mother's bed with his father perched beside him talking softly. He stifled a comment he was about to make and dropped the supper tray onto the side table.

Both men looked at him and Jack blushed a little, he hadn't meant to make such a commotion. "Your supper, dad. Don't let it get cold." He backed out of the room, leaving the door slightly ajar.

"He doesn't like me..." Ethan whispered. Rupert scoffed and walked over to the table, shifting the tray to the bed.

"Here, you'll like this, Willow's recipe!" Rupert smiled brightly, "and before you ask, she never told me what's in it, she just passed the recipe to Jack and he hasn't told me either. It's the only secret we ever kept."

Ethan smiled and dipped his spoon into the mixture; it was good to have something solid! At the second spoonful, his hand shook the portion from the spoon, soon his upper body followed suit and he had to abandon feeding himself.

Rupert held his friend steady round his upper arms and took up his spoon; he fed Ethan who ate like a starving man. With food in his stomach, the shakes gradually dissipated and he sighed as he lay back against the soft warm cushions.

"I haven't had a hot meal in months!" He smiled ironically, "by the time I finished, it was cold." He glanced down briefly lifting the bedclothes. "Uhm, Rupert? You don't have any protection do you? I'm into rubber sheets in a big way."

Rupert regarded his friend for a long time knowing what that admission had cost him. "You always were perverted Ethan, I'll see what I can do." He grinned and his friend smiled.

"I missed you Ripper!" Ethan growled. Then he swallowed as tears came to his eyes once more. "I've got Olivopontocerebellar Atrophy."

Rupert looked at him mystified, "God Bless you."

Ethan laughed heartily. "Brain turning to marshmallow dear heart, tremor, numb limbs, muscle weakness and ..." he lifted his gaze skyward. "Intestinal hurry!"

Rupert sat down while he digested his friend's symptoms. A sort of resignation had settled around Ethan as he spoke. "No cure?" Rupert asked the question at the same time Ethan shook his head.

"I had the first vague symptoms when you were in "Red Hill" so I decided to redress the balance a bit, I found Mary Sebastian, found you for Willow, set Gorgon on his task to protect you and found this house."

He glanced up at the ceiling and sighed heavily . "This house and its garden are standing on the site of a pagan temple Rupert. I'd dearly love to see the garden before it's too late. "

Rupert was about to ask how Ethan knew all about his affairs when he realised that his friend was asleep.

##

Rupert took the tray downstairs and warmed his bowl of stew up in the microwave. It tasted as it always had. As he ate another spoonful, he could sense Willow bustling about the kitchen fetching spices and ingredients, the last spoonful halted at his lips as he saw in his minds eye Willow's body writhing beneath his on the table.

Jack coming into the room broke the illusion and his empty spoon dropped into his bowl with a clatter.

"Ethan Rayne." Jack said his name as though uttering a curse. He threw down the dishcloth. "Why couldn't you have put him in one of the guest rooms?"

"He's dying Jack, he deserves the best, I'm sure your mother won't mind..."

"Dad!" Jack turned and faced him fiercely. "I'm fed up of you talking like mum's still here. She isn't... She's dead! Gone."

Something flashed behind his father's eyes. And Jack was silent. "Willow is here. I know she's dead. I'm not daft!" Rupert's voice cracked with emotion on the last word. "Her portrait gives me a focus, just to see her smiling face in the morning, makes me live another day. Ethan has never had anything like that, well, perhaps me, but that doesn't concern you." He studied Jack for any more argument and found none forthcoming.

"I'm going to show Ethan the garden tomorrow. Now I'm going to bed. Goodnight Jack."

End of part 2

Death of a Rascal 3/4

Warning character death.

Rating romantic pairing of G/E

Summary Giles welcomed Ethan into his home installing him in his bedroom. Jack is less than thrilled. Jack and Giles had an argument about Ethan, as he lay asleep, Ethan has told Giles about his illness.

Jack climbed the stairs to his father's room and steeled himself for what he might find. He knocked before entering with the breakfast tray and carefully avoided looking at the bed that his father shared with Ethan. He straightened and glanced over at the bed.

Ethan had replaced the bolster in his father's affections. Jack's heart beat fast in his chest and he felt a blush rise to his cheeks. His eyes flew to his mother's portrait, wondering if she saw and approved of this coupling.

He saw only his mother's compassionate eyes resting on the couple on the bed. Her gentle smile caressed them both. Jack's gasp at the change in the painting brought the whole tableau to life.

His father placed a chaste kiss on Ethan's forehead and sat up, his chest bare and his hair more tousled than usual. He located the source of the noise and for the first time in a long time, didn't greet his wife.

"Morning Jack," He yawned and stretched and the sheets slipped further down his body indicating that he wore no pyjamas.

"B.Br..Breakfast's here. D.dad... " He thrust his hands into his jeans pockets, dropped his gaze and made good his exit.

##

Ethan stood at the end of Rupert's bed dressed in his robe over his own pyjamas. From his vantage point, he could look out over the green sward of lawn to the uninspiring dull red brick of the walled garden. He waited with his hands thrust into its deep, warm flannel pockets; the robe surrounded and comforted him like Rupert's embrace of the night before.

Rupert returned the breakfast tray to the kitchen and collected the key to the garden gate. He passed by the open door of the study where Jack stored his weapons; Jack had a cloth in his hands and was cleaning a sword lovingly. Rupert hesitated, and then shrugged he would tell him about Ethan another time.

##

Rupert peeped his head round the door jam and addressed Ethan. "Ready?"

Ethan turned and took up his stick. "Ready." He replied and followed Rupert downstairs, through the kitchen and into the garden.

The birdsong was singularly sweet as they approached the walled garden. Ethan breathed in the scented air as Rupert opened the gate onto a lush green womb of nature. Ethan smiled.

The squeak and clang of the gate became distant in his senses as he surveyed flora in abundance. He took several steps inside then sank to his knees and wept, wept for all the decades he'd wasted worshipping chaos. Where here, he could see random perfection in every stem, petal, blade, and stone.

This was mystical, natural chaos in all its glory.

Rupert lay beside Ethan; his fingers brushed through the chamomile and gazed at his friend. "You led us here Ethan, didn't you know what it was like?"

Ethan shook his head and sniffed back his tears. He leant back against an ancient rock and on impulse cupped his hand into the bubbling stream; the cold water calmed his nerves and cleared his head. "I had no idea," he said softly. He laughed and splashed some water over Rupert. "Ripper, my dear old chum, you lived for so long on a Hellmouth, do you know what this place is really?"

Ethan looked so young suddenly that Rupert wanted to cry. He shrugged and waited for the answer, just as in his youth, Ethan always had an answer, but back then it was usually in a syringe.

"Its Heavens mouth, dear heart, a tiny scrap of heaven. That's what this place is." Ethan threw back his head and bathed in the sunlight that filtered through the willow.

##

"Should I even be here?" She stepped over the brook asking the question of her guide.

Willow pointed and Buffy looked at the two men intertwined on the ground, they were kissing. Her face prepared to "ewwww" but then she recognised who she was there to pick up.

"Oh, my God! Not Giles! He's not dying is he?" Buffy asked panic stricken.

Willow placed a comforting hand on Buffy's arm. "Rupert has been dying for quite some time Buffy, but it's not him you have to look after." Willow smiled quietly at her friend's perplexed expression, and then chuckled as realisation dawned.

"ETHAN?" she yelled in disbelief. "You're kidding, tell me you're kidding..." Willow shook her head. "Aww, c'mon Willow, do I have to?" Buffy looked at her ethereal companion's resolve face. She sighed in resignation. "Bang goes the neighbourhood!"

##

Rupert peeled off Ethan's clothing and was surprised by the seemingly ageless body, he glanced up at his friend, whose lips moved silently. He pressed his fingers against Ethan's sensual lips to silence the spell.

"Don't hide from me Ethan, I am as I am, be as you are." He murmured.

Ethan nodded and slowly the veil dropped from Rupert's eyes and he saw the ravages of time and ritual sacrifice on his friend's body. He set about kissing each pale scar and darkened crevice. Ethan relaxed the tremor of his limbs responding and quieting to Rupert's expert touch.

Rupert bathed in Ethan; each soul caressed the other like vintage wine delighting an experienced palate. And when at last their love was spent each lay beside the other in quiet contentment.

They talked late into afternoon, neither suggesting a break for food, as with most lover's food is unnecessary "...most of these scars are recent Ethan, you couldn't have been casting so late, the concentration required..." Rupert stopped as he saw Ethan's face change, darkness swept over his features in a wave.

"At the Rest Home I rebelled, they didn't like someone who complained about the food and conditions. So they tried "other means" to convince me to stop complaining." Ethan's emotions warred in his eyes, anger won. "Amateurs! God Save me from them."

Rupert opened his arms and Ethan settled against his warm chest, his tongue gently lapping at Rupert's nipple. "Keep that up and you'll find yourself ravished." Rupert rumbled.

Ethan smiled and breathed in the scent of his lover and the place where they lay, he closed his eyes remembering it. "That's the general idea," he breathed. His eyes watered as he concentrated on Rupert's chiselled features, he took another breath, one of his last.

"Hey, why didn't the gay condom go to the party?" Ethan whispered in Rupert's ear. Rupert didn't move and whispered back, "Don't know, why?" Ethan leant his head on Rupert's shoulder and sighed the answer into his ear. "Because he didn't want to leave his friend's behind." Rupert joined him in gentle chuckles.

Ethan's eyes closed.

Rupert pulled Ethan closer and kissed his forehead, his companion remained silent and inert. Rupert opened his eyes and listened as Ethan whispered in his mind for the last time.

"I don't want to leave you lover. Consecrate the secret room; it's where we'll wait for you. I love you Rupert Giles. Always remember that..." Rupert hugged Ethan tighter to his chest, rocking him gently, tears coursing down his face.

End of part 3

Death of a Rascal 4/4

Summary Ethan has died in Rupert's arms and requested that he be buried in the secret room in the library.

Ethan walked quietly toward Buffy. She looked disinterested in him. He smiled at her. "Hello my dear, eternity agrees with you. You look stunning as always." Buffy lifted her hand to motion him forward into the garden and he caught it in a gentle grasp and kissed her knuckles in a courtiers greeting.

She stared at Ethan, not believing what her body told her. She could feel no malice in him.

Willow ducked beneath the honeysuckle and handed him a posy of blooms." Welcome Ethan. I'm glad you made it in time."

"Willow, I'm so glad to be here." He accepted her gift and gave her a kiss. "Rupert sends his love. Your stew was delicious. Tell me love, what was in it?" Willow and Ethan strolled

past the last rose bush and disappeared.

Buffy chose to dwell by her Watcher and watched him grieve for his friend. She gazed at Giles and her throat constricted seeing the scars and tattoos of numerous therapies and operations.

She watched as he finally gathered his clothes together and dressed. He stood before the body and summoned energy to levitate Ethan's corpse. Buffy followed the solemn procession to the conservatories threshold because that was the limit of her haunting. She couldn't enter the house until Rupert painted her portrait.

##

Rupert opened the door in the library and passed through the narrow opening with his burden. He laid Ethan's body on the table in the centre of the room. He winced as his friend's head thumped on the polished surface.

The perimeter of the room housed bookshelves and he realised he could put his secret demonic library in here, along with mementos of his Ripper past. He smiled gently down at Ethan's gentle, strong features.

"Planned it all along didn't you? You rascal..." He slowly walked the points of the pentagram, inviting a blessing at each house, then muttered an incantation that scattered his friend's spent body to the elements. A fitting end to a master of Chaos.

##

Giles closed the door on the sacred place and resumed his seat in the library. He'd just taken up Biggles when Jack came in with some tea.

"Dad, I'm sorry we argued." Jack apologised as he handed him his tea. "I brought some for Ethan...Where is he?" Jack glanced round the library his eyes finally lighting once more on his father. He caught the barest hint of sorrow in his father's eyes.

"Ethan's gone ahead..." Giles sipped from his teacup and swallowed the lump in his throat. He glanced up at Jack and offered no further explanation. He turned the page in his book and gave up reading, as the words swam before his eyes. He sighed. "I'm going into town this afternoon... Do you need anything?"

Jack shook his head and they sat in companionable silence whilst the library clock ticked away their lives.

The End.