

Discovering Rage and Peace 1/3

Warning Weepy.

Summary This is set after Ethan's death around August of the year of Giles' death. Giles contemplates his life as it draws to a close.

Giles gripped the porcelain and heaved himself up. He didn't look in the mirror, but ripped a handful of toilet paper from the roll and wiped his mouth. The bright, lurid blood made his eyes sting and he swayed on his feet. He fought his dizziness; if he fell Jack would hear and his secret would be out. He swallowed and placed a calming palm on his stomach. He would find out today what was wrong. In his heart he knew. Four months to go before the time Eyghon had set for his demise.

He heard footsteps on the stairs. Jack was up. He cleaned the toilet bowl hastily and was standing by the sink, combing his hair, when Jack bobbed his head in and inquired if he wanted breakfast.

Breakfast? His stomach lurched.

"I've already had something Jack. I'm going into town today." Rupert saw his son's eager face about to offer to come with him; he looked so much like his mother..."Christmas Shopping." Jack's face fell and Rupert smiled. "I won't be long. I'm popping into the shop for a book signing, after my hospital check up." He turned and walked smartly past his concerned son. He took his keys off the hook and shouldered into his leather jacket. He was out of the door with a last farewell before Jack got down to the hall.

Rupert strode briskly to his car. He ran his fingers over the deep green burnished surface and smiled. Willow had loved this car. His nostrils caught a hint of her perfume as he opened the driver's door and slid onto the deep soft leather seat. Willow surrounded him as he opened the glove box and searched for the sealed bag containing the last of Willow's tissues he had used to wipe her tears. He would bury it by the Christmas tree he'd ordered.

##

The scent of pine wafted upward as his footsteps crushed the needles littering the ground of the conifer plantation.

The farmer walked beside him in respectful silence. Every year for the past five years, Rupert Giles had picked the weediest specimen of a tree that had then grown strong, sturdy, and lush. The farmer was beginning to suspect witchcraft! But since his customer always paid for the harvested product, he didn't ask too many questions. "Here you are Mr. Giles. I thought you might like this one..." He pointed to a weak shrimp of a tree.

Rupert smiled. The slim tip of the sapling bent his way on an otherwise still morning. Willow liked this one. "Thank you, Mr. Graves. It will do nicely... Oh, by the way. I'd like to give you extra this year. My son will buy the trees after this Christmas. "

"There's no need..." Mr. Graves said automatically, and then he looked closely at Mr. Giles. "Are you all right, sir?" When he didn't receive a reply, he backed off into his hut to put the kettle on. Mr. Giles always shared a mug of tea after choosing his tree.

Giles knelt in front of the tree and scooped out a handful of earth. He laid the tear-stained tissue by the roots of the tree and replaced the divot; patting the soil and stroking the trunk of the sapling. The kettle's whistle sounded. He stood, brushed the needles from his knees and turned to the foresters hut.

Behind him, Willow stood and played with the growing tip of the sapling; her gentle fingers whispered through its branches and it straightened at her touch.

##

The hospital gown he wore flapped around his ankles. The tests were taking longer than usual. He gave his consultant no clues to his new symptoms. Let him earn his money this month.

He swallowed the barium meal and obeyed all their instructions. After an hour, the tests completed, he sat in the garden area nursing a pot of tea. Many patients passed by in various states of recovery. He felt like a fraud. He didn't look or feel as ill as these poor wretches.

His consultant looked serious as he approached him. "Mr. Giles, Rupert... I can't do anything more for you. Your cancer has spread and is affecting your stomach. But I think you already knew that."

Rupert's grip on his cup tightened and he savoured the mouthful of tea for longer than usual. Rupert replaced the cup on the saucer, noisily. "What can I expect, doctor?" Nausea overcame him once more. He opened his eyes to see the doctor mopping his chin with a handkerchief. "Sorry." Rupert took the handkerchief from the doctor. "I didn't make too much mess, I trust."

"No... Rupert. I can help you to control the nausea, but you only have four or five months at the most. If you came into hospital, I could stretch it to ten." He looked hopefully at his patient and watched Rupert smile.

"Four or five months will suit me doctor. Thank you for everything." He reached into his jacket pocket and placed an envelope on the table between them. "See what you can do with that..." He drew back his chair and shook the consultants hand. "Good-bye."

##

He walked for a long time, not noticing the setting sun, the gathering chill, or the tears on his face until someone noticed them for him.

"Well, what do we have here? " The harsh inhuman cackle invaded Rupert's senses and charged his heart. "My favourite crumbly snack."

Rupert did precisely the wrong thing and froze. All his years of training had evaporated with the sun. He gave in.

And the vampire sensed it. He was an easy kill. Until, a sleek streak of black flashed past him and pinned the vampire youth to the wall with a bone white hand.

"Not this one, little vamp. Not on my chomping ground!"

Rupert almost fainted with relief; he'd not heard that voice in over twenty years. Spike, Spike was in London and rescuing him.

The young vampire struggled in Spike's grip, snarling and spitting the contents of his last meal in Spike's face. The older vampire's eyes closed "Only newbies spit up their food. Blood clot!" He snapped the youngster's head round to face Rupert. "Y'see who that is you almost ate? He's a Watcher... The Watcher of The Greatest Slayer that ever trod the Earth. He's slain more of our kind than you've had hot dinners!" Spike glared at the young vampire's lack of recognition. "You are a waste of space!" He head butted him and then staked him before he could utter another sound. "You mouldy, sorry pile of dust!"

Spike turned on his heel, grinding the dust into the ground and studied his friend. "Hello Giles, long time. What you doing here?"

Rupert's hand on Spike's forearm stopped his key on its passage towards the locked door. "You live here." He asked.

Spike nodded, "Yep, twenty years. I work here too. Since someone started writing stories about a hot-chocolate-loving vampire...Ring a bell."

"But," Rupert looked around and recognised the sign above another door in the dark alley. "This is Deacons. You can't work here. It's the bookshop I was supposed to do a signing for today."

"Yeah, and you didn't turn up! All them kids. It took me hours to get rid of 'em! You're a bloody cult, Watcher. Didn't you know?"

Seeing Spike unchanged and sniping in front of him filled Rupert with such mourning for his past that it wrenched a sob from him, as he clasped the vampire to his chest.

Spike struggled with his feelings for a moment, with his arms full of Watcher, then decided that shock had set in and helped Rupert into the back room of the shop.

##

Jack slammed down the phone. His father wasn't home yet. He'd left the hospital in the afternoon and had never arrived at his book signing. He marched into the kitchen and turned the oven off, the dinner was ruined anyway. Where could he be?

Jack worried at his lower lip and decided to try the shop again.

End of part one.

Discovering Rage and Peace 2/3

Summary After being attacked at the back of Deacon's bookshop, Giles tells Spike of his loneliness since Willows death.

Spike turned his back to the Watcher as he made tea, he didn't need to see Giles' face to

know that he was upset. He knew he was gravely ill, perhaps dying. He tapped the teaspoon against the mug as if announcing his imminent intrusion upon the old man's thoughts.

"Here, drink up...then you can tell me about Red..." Spike held the mug deftly despite the scalding tea. Giles looked up at him with haunted eyes. He accepted the tea and settled back into the high-backed "story telling" chair in the children's corner of the bookshop.

##

Willow made a lovely bride, she was sultry, and knowing but also possessed a child like innocence

We had a son, Jack...we were happy. For nearly twenty years, I knew her inside and out and she could always read my mind. The only secret she kept from me was that she was dying...

##

Spike's attention centred on the Watcher as he imparted this bombshell, Willow was dead? He lowered his eyes to stare into the dregs of blood puddled at the bottom of his mug, a single tear splashed into the mug and he drained the guilty evidence of his grief.

Giles swept up a long draught of his tea and swallowed the lump of sorrow in his own throat.

Spike collected his mug and disappeared into the kitchenette at the back of the shop. He emerged carrying glasses and a bottle, which he waved at Giles with an inquiring eyebrow...

Giles took the glass with a smile, recognising the brand, one of his favourites.

"About time you drank my Scotch, eh, Watcher? "

"Yes, I think it's overdue." Spike poured a generous measure into both glasses and set the bottle down between them. Giles took a sip, feeling the burning alcohol settle and sizzle in his empty stomach.

##

Willow's illness crept upon her like a gentle shadow. Gradually overtime, she could do less and less about the house. She had the energy, but her body was weak. We had no more children after Jack.

Giles grinned a lecherous grin and swirled the amber liquid in his glass. "Not that we didn't try!"

Eventually, when eating became difficult, she decided that hospital was the best place for her. She was put on total life support, I visited every day, and every day I could see her gradually slipping further away from me.

One day I was late and found a young consultant sticking pins in her feet... after he got up

from the floor where my blow had sent him, he explained that he was trying to determine the extent of her paralysis. He sat with me for the rest of his shift and we talked about Willow's choices.

She hardly breathed now, her skin was taut, and pale she looked like a delicate porcelain figure.

##

Giles took a shuddering breath as he ran his fingers down the smooth glass, he blinked, and a tear fell from his lashes and ran down his face.

##

We decided to switch off the machines and let Willow go... there were no words exchanged. Just a look and I had the feeling that Willow was in the room watching us. She "guided" my hand at the last moment to replace the doctor's on the plug, so that his was atop mine, he could say if it came to court action, that he tried to stop me.

The silence hurt my ears. I bent to kiss Willow's pale lips for the last time and felt her respond to my kiss and breathe a hushed thanks before the weak beat of her heart fell away to freedom.

I sat in the chair beside her bed and the consultant drew the sheet around her neck, I asked her face to remain uncovered so I could gaze on it for a while longer.

My life died with Willow that night.

##

"I'm sorry Giles, I liked Willow. When the Slayer died and you disappeared, she was a rock! She had real book smarts, looked great in her Josephine costume!" Spike hesitated as he saw tears shining in the Watcher's eyes, though he didn't need to, he said it anyway..."She adored you."

He left the Watcher alone with his sorrow for a moment, then got up and put the empty bottle in the recycle bin. Yep, he was a vampire with a social conscience!

Now, if he could only shake that dumb kid off his bones. He shot a glance through the shop window and there she was again, her hood over her head against the rain, He heated another mug of blood and toasted her with a bitter smile.

Her palm pressed against the glass; she had small hands. He hit the button to close the security shutters and waved bye-bye to his would be Slayer.

Back inside the main stacks of the bookshop, he handed a familiar object to the watcher. Giles' fingers tightened on the wool feeling its age and comforting warmth...

"Where did you get..." He began to ask as Spike smiled and tapped his nose.

"I liberated it." He said as he dragged a padded cube to the Watcher's chair. You take the chair, it's nearly dawn, and y'know how rosy-pink just ain't my colour..."

The telephone rang, Spike answered it and passed the receiver to Giles... "It's Jnr. "

##

At Jack's anxious greeting, Rupert's eyes watered anew. He needed to tell his son about his illness. Jack didn't need to witness another lingering death.

"I'm fine, Jack. I just got waylaid on the way to the bookshop..." He covered the mouthpiece as Spike scoffed.

"Waylaid? Hell's Teeth, Watcher, gimme the phone..." Spike snapped his fingers. When Giles turned away from him Spike tutted and muttered under his breath.

"The night watchman is looking after me. I had ... some disturbing news at the hospital. I'll stay here until morning, Jack. Don't worry about me. I'll be fine."

##

"I'll worry if I want to Dad. The manager of a rest home visited today. He said they'd lost one of his patients from the home and did we know anything about it..." there was silence for a moment and he heard his father's soft intake of breath.

"Ethan..." A bright spark of anger grew and nestled in the pit of his stomach. Time to avenge? "I'll be home around ten, could you have him call again? Perhaps for coffee?"

Giles hung up the phone after wishing his son good night...

Spike turned off the lights and retired to his enclosed room down a short flight of stairs. He hesitated on the last step as he heard the Watcher's voice drift down urging him to "sleep tight"

End of part 2

Discovering Rage and Peace 3/3

Summary After his rescue Giles travels homeward with vengeance on his mind.

Giles woke to the delicious aroma of freshly brewed coffee. He blinked in the brilliant sunshine. Through the shop shutters, he could see commuters hurrying to their jobs and the beginning of the normal traffic crawl.

"Oh..."

A surprised voice called behind him, Giles looked round and saw Mr. Deacon holding a huge mug of coffee in one hand and his radio magazine in the other.

"Good Morning... Mr. Giles, isn't it? "

He held his non-scalded hand out in greeting. The magazine dropped from his grasp,

spilling glossy ads all over the floor.

"I'm glad to meet you at last, your books sell like hot cakes, and since your publicist arrived..." Mr. Deacon continued.

"My publicist?" Giles questioned. Then he realised Spike had had a little joke with the mild-eyed man. "Oh, yes... um... you don't mind that he... Uh... has made himself at home?" Giles struggled to find a convincing cover story.

"Oh no, not at all, glad he's here. He looks after the place and is a charming member of staff... Sorry... would you like a coffee?"

Giles smirked as he eased himself out of his chair, stretching the kinks from his back..."Thank you, it might wake me up."

##

Jack paced the kitchen clasping his coffee mug, every now and then he glanced at the clock...ten minutes had passed since the last time he'd checked the driveway. He sighed and shot an accusing look at the timepiece, slammed his mug down on the counter-top and made his way down the hall to the front door. He ducked into the weapons room when he heard the long sweeping crunch of the car pulling into the gravel drive. His stop-out father had returned.

Giles opened the door to his home and rested his shoulders on the studded oak. The drive had been tiring. A new consequence of his illness he suspected. Still, after breakfast...his stomach churned, perhaps not. He put his keys in the marble font at the side of the hall and walked silently passed the door to the weapons room.

Jack opened the door after his father's passage.

He hesitated in calling after him. He looked tired out. His father suddenly looked old in his eyes. He followed him into the kitchen and decided to gee him up a bit. "And what time do you call this, Dad?" He didn't realise that Giles had rinsed the sink quickly round before his entrance, and now stood sipping a glass of water leaning back against the unit.

His father smiled. "Ten o'clock.... the girls kept me back at the brothel, sorry about that son." He grinned wider at Jack's puzzled expression; he was so like his mother.

"What did the doctor say?" Jack needed the information; he'd waited all night for some word so decided on the direct approach. He watched his father's face change subtly, as he tried to find the best words.

His eyes fixed on Jack's. "It's finished, I don't have to go back anymore." He didn't quite expect his eyes to heat at that simple statement, but what he'd just told Jack affected him more because he saw vast emotion battling in his son's eyes. Finally, his arms were full of weeping boy and he cradled his son in a warm hug, he felt his own tears fall because each hug was now precious.

##

Giles spent the following weeks sorting through his college memorabilia and placing it in

the secret room. He moved the rare demonic texts from the main library into that room and used it as a study. Willow's laptop took pride of place on the polished oak desk; he would open it up and switch it on now and again just to "see" her ghostly form work her magic there. He smiled and caressed the keys, then shut it down before he got too melancholy.

He was in the secret room when he heard Jack calling him. They had a visitor.

Giles walked into the sitting room and saw a tall wiry man sitting in his armchair leafing through his copy of Biggles. Jack's sharp intake of breath as he noticed where the man sat matched his father's.

Jack skirted round and placed the tea-tray on the table by the sofa. "Dad, this is Mr. Shingle, the manager of the rest home I was telling you about."

The man got up languidly and regarded Giles with an eagle eye, as if he could sense senility. He raised his bony hand in greeting, which Giles blinked at passively then sat in the now vacated armchair and dusted off poor, violated Biggles.

Mr. Shingle, shrugged. And sat down on the sofa and helped himself to tea. He engaged Jack in conversation, totally ignoring Giles. Jack kept on meeting his father's gaze in a desperate telepathic plea for help.

"...You see Jack, may I call you Jack?" Shingle's hand on his thigh made Jack shudder. The man was well into his sales pitch, for getting rid of the Old Duffer, his father. "We at Merlin's Rest appreciate that all our senior residents are individuals, with different needs..."

As Shingles' voice droned on, Giles pondered what an apt name the man had. He could almost feel Ethan at his shoulder making yapping gestures with his hand and then badmouthing him. He grinned, and glanced suddenly to his left...had he heard correctly? Ethan's laughter tickled his mind.

"And of course, sadly occasionally we have to restrain the more troublesome residents..."

"Mr. Shingles." Giles couldn't let that go!

The man turned from his son to him with the slightest hint of irritation in his eyes, they softened to condescending and then suddenly guarded when he met a full on "Ripper" glare. "Um, that's Shingle, sir." He smiled. "I'm single..."

"I'm not surprised." Giles murmured, Jack sniggered. "Mr. Shingle, my son informed me that you were going to visit us some time ago about an absentee. Why do you think we would know anything about it? "

"Well, Ethan has this address in his diary."

"Sir Ethan, did not show his diary to anyone." Giles used the title that he'd given Ethan in his youth; he was chivalrous to a fault, always letting the girls come first. It gave him great satisfaction when Shingle broke out in a cold sweat.

"I didn't know..." he stuttered.

"Mmm, well he never used his title, got in the way of his work. I would like to have all his effects. I am his oldest friend... Should he come by to collect them of course." Giles stood and glared at Shingle, who stood and gathered his papers together. The man seemed not quite as tall now.

"I'll get them over to you by special messenger this afternoon." He muttered.

Giles strode to the front door and yanked it open. "See that you do Mr. Shingles." Giles chanced a spell to conjure lightning which struck Shingle's car out of a clear evening sky. The man jumped almost out of his skin.

Jack hurried out and saw the aftermath of the strike.

Shingle gripped his briefcase, as Giles looked over the damaged car like the cat who got the canary.

"What happened?" Jack gasped.

"My, my car..." Shingle wailed.

Jack looked at his father accusingly. Who placed a hand on his chest and assumed a look of innocence...

"Pity you weren't in it." He announced and turned on his heel. He left Jack to explain to the dishevelled Shingle.

##

The weather turned colder and winter gripped the countryside. Giles wrapped himself up in warm clothes and walked around the garden; the holly and fire thorn were heavy with berries this year, indicating a bitter winter. He was glad he wouldn't see the New Year.

He had asked Jack to move Willow's portrait from the bedroom to the Sitting room so he could see her while he read. He took most of his meals in that room and often dozed in front of the fire when the pain got too bad to withstand awake.

He was sleeping when Jack came in one day a couple of weeks before Christmas. He picked up the pile of letters his father had left for posting and noticed that all but one had U.S addresses. He kissed his father on the forehead and left the house.

Giles jolted awake with the slam of the front door. He felt the familiar constriction in his stomach and toppled from the chair. The sudden pain had caught him off guard. The room tilted as he tried to raise himself from the floor but another bolt rocked him and he cried out in pain and collapsed unconscious at the foot of his chair.

Snow began to fall outside, soft and silent out of a grey velvet sky. The Sitting room clock stopped ticking and the world revolved around a forlorn fallen figure.

"Rupert."

He stirred at the sound of Willow's voice. He sat up wearily and gazed at her portrait. She

smiled at him and his heart leapt. He still had the pain but it was bearable now.

"Darling, hang on just a couple of weeks longer, please. You need to finish your painting; you need to finish a great many things. I'll be here."

He could hear the sunshine in her voice and remembered long warm nights spent in the walled garden. "Willow, It hurts..." He swallowed all his pain. "So much...like a never-ending tunnel and it's so dark!" He moaned, and swept away bitter tears.

Willow stepped from the painting and a soft glow suffused the room. "Rupert, I will hold a beacon to light the tunnel, for eternity, if need be."

Rupert's hands left his eyes and he saw Willow for the first time since her death. He smiled and reached for her. Her spectral lips touched his and then she vanished as Jack slammed the front door. The clock stuttered and started once more.

Jack called out "Dad!" When he heard no answer, he went into the Sitting room and saw his father struggling to get up from the floor. "Dad..." Jack gasped and helped him onto his chair.

Giles gripped his son's arm fiercely as if convincing himself he was real. "I just slipped, that's all. Jack, did you post the letters?" He glanced at the coffee table. "Good boy, will you bring me some tea into the conservatory? I feel like painting this afternoon."

Jack smiled as his father walked into the conservatory. He began to hope that the doctor's were wrong. He seemed to be coping with his illness so well. He brought tea into the room and sat as his father painted; his brush quickly covered the canvas and figures appeared as if by magic. He slowly became aware of a heavy atmosphere in the room that sent tingles along his spine. He'd been aware of it as a child whenever his parents had been "cuddling" in rooms. Magic, his father was using magic. It flowed out of him, covering the canvas and sinking into the walls of the house. His father was making it safe for him to live in.

Tears stung at his eyes as he watched his father work. He wanted to keep this time, capture it, and lock it away in his heart forever.

As if hearing his wish Giles stopped and peered over the canvas. "I love you Jack."

The tears did come then, silently and Giles ducked behind the canvas to give his son privacy in his grief.

Giles was no longer lost and mourning, he knew he had a purpose and he would soon be with his love again. She was the light at the end of the tunnel.

##

Giles heard the doorbell sound and then Jack's voice, "I'll get it!" They were here. He wiped his mouth and rinsed water around his sink, washing away the traces of blood. He popped a piece of fudge in his mouth. Fudge was something he adored and for some odd reason, his stomach tolerated it.

He took one last glance at his reflection in the mirror and went downstairs to greet his old

friends. Willow stood silently, invisibly by his side, guiding his step until he entered the Sitting room and saw them. Xander by Willow's portrait, he smiled and found he couldn't resist..."She always does that y'know. I think she bewitched the canvas as I painted her."

Everyone turned around and he found himself bathed in love.

The End.