

First Return 1/10

Series Ripping Confessions

Summary Gorgon returns to visit Jack Giles with his daughter to train as a Watcher.

The winter storm rattled the windows of Jack's room, startling him awake with the white flash of lightning arcing across his ceiling. He blinked at the dark then suddenly bright night.

At first he thought he heard incessant thunder, then realised someone was hammering on the front door. He swore beneath his breath and glanced at the clock. Who was knocking at such an ungodly hour? He padded downstairs, hauling his robe about him against the chill. He passed the lamp-lit library and resisted the temptation to growl at Spike. The vampire and Jenny had been spending time together recently.

He hurried to the door, his feet chilled by the flagstone floor. He drew the bolts and opened it into the howling storm. The lashing rain obscured his vision briefly. Two hooded figures stepped over the threshold and Jack slammed the door shut with a shiver.

"Master Giles?"

Jack turned on the hall light and stared at his mysterious visitors.

"Yes,"

"Forgive our intrusion at such a late hour. My daughter and I have travelled many leagues to visit thee, Master Giles. My name is Gorgon; I am a friend of thy father and mother."

Jack thrust his hands into the pockets of his robe to mask his astonishment. 'Damn! Where is a blasted stake when you need one! '

"I'm sorry, but they've both passed on. My father died about this time last year. My mother five years before that."

Gorgon slipped his hood down, revealing a full head of snakes hissing and writhing in Jack's direction. The watcher leapt back in alarm. He stared at his own horrified expression in Gorgon's mirror shades. Then Gorgon's daughter stepped forward and slipped her hood back.

Jack stared at the young woman, her shoulder length bronze curls framed her heart shaped face and set off her luminous green-gold eyes. Jack lost his breath and his heart beat madly in his chest.

"Mum?" He gasped.

Spike and Jenny appeared at the Library door, "What's up, Watcher?" Spike asked good-naturedly just before he noticed the young woman.

"Shit!" The vampire exclaimed.

End of part 1

First Return 2/10

Series Ripping confessions

Summary Gorgon explains himself and Willow and Giles arrive early.

Willow looked on him; he was her only love. How often had they met, fell in love and parted in past lives? He was beautiful, unscathed by his earthly deeds, cleansed of all evil in this, their own private paradise.

She smiled at his twitching nose as she tickled him with a blade of grass. She trailed the blade down his chest to his navel, twirling it there briefly before her tongue took over the exploration. She felt him tense and his breathing grow faster. Her touch was feather-light and her lips caressed his growing erection. He made a slight movement, a gentle incline of his hips and hissed a long drawn out, "Yessss".

She curled round his body and took him into her mouth, worshipping him, giving him life in her tender sweet warmth. She felt his warm hand on her shoulder and beheld her lover's eyes filled with smouldering need. She released him with a last lingering kiss, then he took her in his strong arms.

Rupert bestowed silken hot kisses on her throat and licked a fiery trail to her perfect breasts. Willow arched and moaned his name softly, begging him to take her. He smiled, slipping her nipple between his teeth and revelling in the wanton expression of her lust. He wrapped his arms round her waist and shifted her up, turning them on the soft earth.

"Rupert! Please, now?" Willow moaned passionately. She flung her leg over his hip and he held it there and entered her. Both gasped, breaths suspended, one completing the other, gifting each other with the indescribable joy that would always be so.

They rocked gently making love in the forest glade of their earthly home, the summer-perfumed breeze cooling their glistening bodies. They tumbled and turned; fingers and lips interlocking as they came together, igniting the green fuse that kept winter at bay.

"My love, my heart, my Willow," Rupert whispered, his fingers brushing her copper hair from her sweet face.

"My soul, my love, my Rupert," Willow smiled. Rupert kissed her and hugged her close. The willow tree that they lay beneath dappled them in stripy shade, its leaves the colour of sunlit emeralds, the same shade as his love's eyes.

##

Jack took a large swallow of the brandy handed him by Spike. He glanced again at the man sitting on his sofa; he had removed his glasses and stared at the painting of his parents in the garden. The snakes no longer disturbed him.

Gorgon, looked at the painting with longing in his eyes. Their bronze green colour tinged with the pearl of cataract. He felt his serpents' hunger, but he was ancient and weary of the world of men. He would soon be able to look on his friends with unclouded eyes, as soon as he explained the threat his first-born posed.

##

Spike fidgeted, his fingers itching for a smoke. Jenny's hand on his thigh, both calming and arousing at the same time. He smiled at her and she snuggled closer to his chest. He stared at the unmoving Gorgon on the sofa. His stillness annoyed him.

"Oi! Snake 'ead! You going to say something? Or are you going to ogle the Watcher and Witch all night?"

Gorgon snapped his head in the vampires' direction and snarled. He had no love for vampires; his gaze had no effect on their undead flesh.

Spike smiled glacially "Oooo, dead scary mate!" Jack threw the vampire a cut-throat glare, shutting Spike up instantly.

"Gorgon, can you tell me about how you know my parents?" Jack looked on the man, he knew he must be old; there was only one recorded instance of a Gorgon visitation in the Watcher Archives, twenty-six years ago when his father brought one into the headquarters.

Gorgon smiled wistfully, turning back to the garden painting. "Thy mother granted me a boon, she looked into my eyes and saw my soul. Thy mother and father saved me, I was in despair and they filled me, loved me and gave my child life." He replaced his glasses and continued. "I was supposed to have a son, a warrior of Light. My serpents perverted thy mother's gift. My issue is female. Her name is Laurel, my first born is a three headed Medusa and she is here growing in power."

Spike snorted and pointed a pale finger accusingly at the girl sitting silently on the sofa.

"Who's she then? You and Willow did the horizontal mamba?" He smirked.

Gorgon was at the vampire's throat in a second, his serpents erect and hissing, his icy glare matching Spikes.

"Pray, vampire, that you never know the joy of a heartbeat. If you are disrespectful to Mistress Willow again you will feel cold stone in your undead veins!" Gorgon had lifted Spike from his seat; Jenny tried to break his grip as she spied an odd glow emanating from beneath his glasses.

"Father!" Gorgon dropped Spike and stepped back breathing heavily. He sank back on the sofa and his companion asked Jack for some water. The water duly fetched he sat down next to Gorgon and felt an odd sense of belonging.

The girl extended her hand and Jack took it. Gorgon clasped their hands together. "Rose? Behold thy brother. Master Giles? Behold thy sister."

"You're my sister?" Jack asked the silent woman seated next to Gorgon. She nodded. He

looked to Gorgon again. "Why? How? ? I mean why have I got a sister? Did mum and Dad know?"

Gorgon sighed and squared his shoulders, tears tracked down his face. "Thy mother allowed me back. Laurel is a year older than Rose. I came back because only the daughter of a Witch and Watcher will vanquish Laurel." Gorgon eased his head back; his serpents fanning out like a demonic halo.

He continued in a voice hushed by reminiscence. "I knelt before Willow in the garden clasping her hand and she gave me the means to defeat Laurel. She sacrificed her health to save the world. Thy father never knew. I fertilised her egg with thy father's seed and incubated the child within by body."

The room was silent; save for the crackling heat from the fireplace, a log fell from its place with a fiery thump and guitar music floated on the air heralding Willow and Rupert's return.

End of part 2

First Return 3/10

Series Ripping Confessions

Summary What will Willow and Rupert make of Rose?

NOTES: I've taken the liberty of making the Watchers accept the "Kings Shilling" which is a Naval term, meaning accepted into service, rather like a sheriff chucking his silver star away, in effect resigning.

MORE NOTES: Jenny is Jack's Slayer introduced in Ripping confessions, Buffy receives Giles' birthday gift that he withheld in Seal Of Fate, (where Buffy dies) Gorgon was introduced in Willow's Secret, Ethan has caused all the confusion, the little devil!

Everyone focused on the lilting music and with quietened breath waited for the spirits to appear. The glowing embers of the fire flamed into life and the shades of Willow and Rupert slipped into the room.

"Hello Jack. " Willow enveloped him in a warm ethereal cloud and Jack's childlike smile expressed the joy of seeing his mother again.

"Hello mum, dad..." Rupert took a step forward to greet his son then was sidetracked by Gorgon and his daughter. Jack noticed his fathers' disquiet and moved to introduce them.

The air grew still and cold and the fire died as Ripper regarded Gorgon and the woman at his side. He flashed a look of accusation at Willow, the dragon living in his eyes.

"You betrayed me." Rupert's voice was fire and ice echoing in the cold room. He flinched away from Willow's outstretched hand and locked his gaze on Gorgon, "You had her again, and you caused my wife to turn to stone!" His quiet voice built to a roaring crescendo and suddenly there was no light in the room.

In the pitch-blackness Spike found and gathered Willow up. She wept as he followed her gaze to where snow fell and lightning reigned in the summer garden. He looked up to the mystified Jack. "Your Dad's pissed off, mate!"

##

Wesley Wyndham-Pryce polished his glasses and jumped at the sudden crack of thunder as the storm raged over the "Big House." It hardly ever rained over there. He glanced over at the abomination in the cell at the far end of the Council's dungeon. Seb fawned over it, handing it scraps of cloth to make a nest and laughing as the multiple arms of the beast fought over where to place them.

"Why do you do that?" Wesley questioned. "It isn't going to mate with anyone!" He turned back to the window and shivered suddenly, it was as if someone passed by his shoulder.

Seb turned his young face toward his old mentor, "My father was murdered by one of these... Rupert Giles stood by as he turned to stone!" His diamond hard voice jangled in Wesley's ears. "She's going to help me," he reached out and stroked the auburn braid on the tri-headed creature. "I'm going to mate with her-"

Wesley spun round in shock, the storm died down. "You're insane! You can't unleash creatures like that on the world!"

"Watch me..." His protégé chuckled. "Wesley?"

Wesley halted at the dungeon's threshold, "Yes?"

"You go and warn them, old man," Seb smiled at the creature's semi-human head, it looked almost intelligent. "Tell them, something evil this way hastens."

Wesley made good his exit swallowing the bile that fizzled in his throat. He strode through the demon detectors on the first floor, past the hall of mirrors and hurried to his chamber. He ripped off his tweed "uniform" and threw it across the room. He dragged out the battered leather holdall that all Watchers were issued with in the field and packed it with weapons and his personal belongings. He hoisted it to his shoulder and then, casually tossing his "Kings shilling" on to the plate in the hall, he left the Council headquarters-- forever.

##

Spike straightened the paintings on their easels in the secret room. He stared at the painting of Gorgon.

"I saw his eyes once, he tricked me."

Spike leapt back in the darkness clutching his chest. " Bloody Hell, Watcher! A warning would be nice!"

Rupert chuckled. "Spike, I think I overreacted. "

"Yeah? You think? Christ Rupert! Red loves you! You are going to have to have wild make-up sex with her for this one, mate! "

Rupert smiled. "That I can live with! Spike, can you bring the others up? We'll need the whole team. " He then slipped through the door of the secret room and walked to where Willow sat weeping on the sofa. He held out his arms to her. "Wife" He murmured.

Willow got up and ran into his arms, "Husband" she sighed.

As they embraced, the dragon slept in the gently lapping flames of the fire.

Rupert pressed soft kisses over his lovers' face and throat murmuring that he loved her and that he'd never show her the dragon again. At last, when there came an awkward cough from the sofa, he realised that Jack still waited to introduce them to their daughter.

"Yes sorry Jack," his father smiled gazing on Gorgon's companion. His heart froze in his chest. "Look Willow, we have a beautiful girl!" Tears slid down his face as he reached out to stroke her silken cheek.

"Dad, this is Rose. Gorgon asked mum if he could take her because she needs to slay her...."

"Sister." His father completed. "I've seen her, in the Council's dungeon."

Rupert tore his eyes from the vision of loveliness before him, and hugged Willow close, "she looks so much like you..."

Rose searched the room, desperate for a sight of her "true" parents. "Father? I don't see them."

Rupert and Willow stepped in front of the fire and held hands. Jack pointed Rose in the right direction. Slowly the golden glow of the embers in the fire filled in the outlined shape of her parents and she stepped towards them.

"We tried so long, to have you Rose. " Willow struggled with her words; She looked over to where Gorgon stood. "Thank you!"

##

The paintings were displayed in the living room and one by one, their friends emerged. Buffy and Ethan came from the painting hand in hand smiling and chatting; Oz stepped nimbly from the canvas with a guitar in each hand.

"You forgot this Rupert," Oz chided. "Thought we could jam when the gang got here... Oh, new gang." Oz's gaze took in Rose and Gorgon. "Hi, I'm Oz... Buffy and the reformed master of Chaos, Ethan over there..."

Rupert made everyone visible to human eyes and the living room was suddenly crowded with ghosts, demons, humans and mage's all talking at once catching up on news.

Gorgon bowed his head in Ethan's direction. "Master, I have yet to complete my task" He slipped his hand beneath his robe and gave a small velvet box to Buffy. The faded lettering on the box read "Sebastian's"

"Happy Birthday Buffy!" Giles' voice drifted over to the Slayer as she opened the lid and saw "the seal" charm, his last gift to her, the one he withheld because he thought it would bring her death.

Soft spirit fingers plucked the charm from its foam cushion and Giles helped her to put in on her bracelet, because her eyes were filled with tears.

"Thank you Giles. I thought you'd forgotten..." She sniffed.

"Never forget you Buffy, the best Slayer a Watcher could wish for!"

Gorgon smiled and closed the box on the dull charm, its power now jangled and radiated in harmony with its fellows on the Slayers' wrist.

"My task is now complete, am I released from thy bond?"

Ethan smiled. "Yes, my good and noble servant, thou art released."

Gorgon sank into the sofa and sighed. "It was a long task. Watching over you and guiding you all to this moment, it has been at times rewarding and terrifying. I need to rest."

##

Willow slipped out and joined the Slayer, who was making tea in the kitchen.

"You and Spike, do you like him Jenny? " Willow rescued the cup from the tray, and smiled sheepishly. "Sorry, Rupert and I should wear bells." She giggled.

The Slayer smiled, "I guess I'm just not used to ghosts! Spike and I well, we work well together. Does that seem odd?"

"No, no it doesn't. In fact Buffy worked with Angel for a very long time. " She looked at the Slayer and noticed how in the last year she'd matured and lost her innocent edge. She shouldn't have been surprised. Slaying did that to you.

"Tea's ready! " Jenny called as she set the tray on the table. The humans, Rose, Jack, Jenny and Spike took up one sofa whilst Rupert, Ethan, Oz, Willow and Buffy arranged themselves on the other.

Everyone chatted as before, waiting for their visitor and the apocalypse of the week. It was almost like old times.

Jack swallowed rather more tea than he wanted when the knock at the door came. He glanced at his father who nodded slightly.

It had begun...

End of part 3

First Return 4/10

Series Ripping Confessions

Warning the character Seb is nasty. The kind of man who would give a rattle to a baby... with the snake attached.

Summary In which Wesley arrives and reveals his part in Laurel's Story

NOTES Seb, Gorgon, Rose, Laurel, and Slayer Jenny are my characters. Wesley has never had a Slayer, because in the original Ripping Confessions I made no mention of him, he only knows of the "scoobies" by Giles' Watcher Diaries

Wesley looked back over his shoulder and wrapped his overcoat more tightly round his body. It was dark and cold as he trudged along the winding country road towards the Big House. His mind whirled with the impossibilities of Sebastian's scheme; he couldn't possibly be thinking about populating the world with snake headed demons!

##

Wesley thought back to the hour that he had found the creature in a ruin near the compound. He had thought it to be a normal girl, although downtrodden and in need of a bath. Her eyes had held him bewitched as he'd pulled her from a rotting tree; then the other two creatures followed and broke the enchantment. He had named them Laurel, after the tree he had dragged them from

The creature had three bodies joined at the hip in a circle. Two bodies of human flesh and one covered in snake-scales. The snake-skinned triplet had long red hair and reptilian eyes. The second body joined in the circle was blind with a head of snakes that hissed and writhed constantly; the third had neither snakes nor hair and regarded all who came near with intelligent human eyes. She among her sisters had a human soul but was dumb, having been born with a forked tongue and bereft of vocal chords. This unholy triad were dependent on an unusual symbiotic relationship. The snake-headed triplet killed; turned living flesh to stone, for the snake-skinned triplet who had the power of speech; the fork-tongued triplet was an observer and reluctant participant in Sebastian's evil scheme.

##

The sound of a car approaching roused Wesley from his maudlin thoughts. He stood at the roadside shielding his eyes in the glare of the headlights.

"Hey! What are you doing in the middle of the road?" A female American voice called from the E-type Jaguar.

Wesley approached the driver's side resting his palms reverently on the sill.

"Good evening, I'm looking for the residence of Mr. Jack Giles, am I near? Could you give me a lift?"

"What'd'ya think Xander? Do we give him a lift to Giles'?" Cordelia looked at her passenger with a glimmer of a smile about her lips...

"There's not much room, Cordy, but yeah, c'mon. What's your name by the way?" Xander squashed his gear into the corner of the rear seat and moved the box he carried on his lap into the foot well.

"Thank you, I'm Wesley Wyndham-Pryce," he shook their hands as he folded his body into the car. A stake fell at Xander's feet and Wesley stared open mouthed desperately thinking of a reason for it to be there...'He was a Scout leader and carried it as kindling?'

Xander retrieved it and smiled, "You dropped your stake Watcher."

Wesley looked from one to the other and slowly realisation dawned. The Journals of Rupert Giles often referred to the group who aided his Slayer, the Slayerettes, or Scooby's.

"Do I have the pleasure of travelling with "the Scooby's"?" Wes swallowed doing his best not to look too awed.

Cordelia and Xander exchanged happy grins and in unison uttered, "Fame at last!"

##

Cordelia, Wesley and Xander, still carrying his box, arrived at Jack's house in a parcel, like last time. Cordelia lightly gripped Xander's hand as he glanced at his box. A stray tear dropped on the lid as Jack flung the door open.

"Xander!" Jack smiled, despite the gravity of the situation, "Cordelia! Stunning as usual," He kissed her in greeting.

She blushed and wondered at his charm and poise. He was so like Giles.

Jack searched the eyes of the remaining visitor, extended his hand and then clasping Wesley's, he brought him into the hall. "We've been expecting you Mr.Wyndham-Pryce." Jack took his coat from him and tried to ignore the man's astonishment as "William the Bloody" came from the kitchen sipping blood from his mug, Jenny, the present Slayer followed on behind with a plate of doughnuts...

"Jenny?" Cordelia shrieked and battled past the bewildered Watcher. Soon both women were talking "nineteen to the dozen."

Xander walked slowly into the living room following the sound of joyful laughter. Rupert saw Xander and sensing that something was wrong, he crossed the room. Xander's eyes brimmed with tears as he held his box before him...

The room hushed as he said one word before his tears finally fell. "Anya."

Rupert gazed at the box now in his hands and opened the lid. A cold bronze urn gleamed softly in the firelight. He shot a shocked look at Willow and she hugged Xander. Her life long friend wept on her shoulder.

Rupert placed Anya's ashes on the mantle and then enfolded his wife and Xander in his healing embrace.

##

Wesley sat timidly on the corner seat of one of the sofas. He'd been introduced to the dead

Scooby gang. No problem... Buffy, the Vampire Slayer? Piece of cake! The vampire Spike, William the Bloody, who owned the house that Jack lived in, was a little more difficult to comprehend. Then there was Gorgon and he had freaked!

Gorgon sat across the way from him and Wesley could see his own anxiety reflected in the mirror shades the monster wore. Everyone sat about the room, supping tea, reading books, and eating doughnuts, looking nonchalant. But Wesley knew that beyond the tranquillity of the scene each person in this room had a mind like a steel trap. His reflection smiled.

"What amuses thee, Watcher? " Gorgon's quiet cultured voice caught Wesley off guard.

"It's..." Wesley gestured to encompass the room and its populace. "Them, they're a well oiled machine. The council had no idea how to replicate this until Jack came on the scene. It's wonderful!"

##

Jenny slipped from Spike's lap as he leapt up and started to pace, Buffy exchanged glances with Giles. Something was up with the vampire.

"Spill, Spike! " Buffy still didn't like him much.

"Why are you all just laying about? I don't remember this much research when we were back in Sunnydale! Why can't I go over there and bung the blokes balls in a blender? That'd put paid to this "mating" lark pretty damn quick!"

"Because..." Ethan mildly complained from where he leaned against the mantelpiece "That would be rude..."

Wesley, who had crossed his legs at Spike's remark, uncrossed them and decided to join the conversation. Although he had never had an active Slayer, he felt that this was something he could comment on. "Laurel, the serpents spawn, is held captive in the Council's dungeon. She is divided into three separate beings, each dependant on the other for survival. Rose, " he gestured to the redhead on the sofa, "is the only one who can slay her. I say she needs help. Spike is immune to the ossifying glare of the Gorgon sisters, but to gain entry he needs help; we've had a mirrored hall built. He can't get past that, but Jenny can get in and so can Jack. I will be your guide. We only need a few minutes to slay her."

Rupert smiled. "What do you propose? "

"Gorgon, Rose, Jack, Jenny and Spike gain entry to the compound to slay Laurel and Henri Sebastian." Wesley hesitated, "Are you familiar with the film 'Ghost'?"

Buffy smiled. "Oooo goody! Does this mean I get to kick butt again?"

End of pt. 4

First Return 5/10

Series Ripping confessions

Warning you are privy to the baddies plan

Summary The ghostly and demonic gang are together and have a plan to thwart the evil. Meanwhile in the dungeon...

She clutched her blanket to her breast, it was the last thing he had given her and the only kindness the humans had shown her. Her body ached from being in one place for too long, but she dared not move. Her sisters would be angry.

She craned her neck to the iron grid at the base of the ancient stonewall; the floor was damp mildewed flagstones here, but she didn't mind. She could hear the occupant of the next-door cell. He paced constantly, the sound of his leather boots scuffling on the stones. She lifted her hand and tapped on the grid.

The pacing stopped and long fingers reached through the holes and yanked out the ironwork. It had taken months of hard work to free the grid from its fixings and then she was rewarded by an uninterrupted view of his face.

##

Angel smiled at the sound of tapping. He stopped pacing his cell, stepped up on his footstool and opened the grid between the two cells. He knew she was a demon of some kind, but one with the face of an angel. He reached through the 5' by 9' gap in the stonework and stroked her face. She was cold despite the blanket he'd passed to her. He studied her face trying to figure out whom she reminded him of.

"Well, princess. What would you like to hear tonight? " He whispered. It was their custom to while away the hours reciting poetry.

His silent companion shrugged and then smiled as Angel started on his favourites. Her eyes gleamed with quiet joy. Just listening to his lilting soft voice made the night time and the horror of her existence bearable. She was almost asleep when she heard the grid slide back into place and his whispered farewell.

"It's morning, darling. Have to go. Sleep tight my angel."

Her lips curled in her sleep and her tongue slipped out between them kissing the air, caressed by his voice. Goodnight.

##

Henri Sebastian tossed the coin in the air. With each toss, his anger grew. Wesley had gone. Only his "Shilling" remained. Much as he hated the snivelling senile Watcher, he knew that he needed him. Laurel was getting harder to control.

How the Hell did one mate with a Medusa anyway? He tossed the coin again, cursing as it hit the rug in his room. He bent to pick it up and then noticed something odd. It was double-headed; Wesley had handed in a fake!

That meant that Wesley had gone to warn the Slayer and her Watcher, Giles the younger.

Henri grinned. He changed his habit with the coin; now he passed it over and under his nimble fingers. They would try to assassinate Laurel and he would be waiting for them.

##

Angel followed the Under-Secretary into the conference room. He smiled as he glanced round the frieze of the room. He sensed Giles' handiwork here; the Mage still left an echo even after these many years. The long table seated three Senior Watchers all eyeing him carefully.

Angel took his ease in the Gothic Oak chair opposite and the Watchers were undone. In one gesture, Angelus had them feeling as though they were in the presence of the Irish Kings.

"Gentlemen, why have you brought me here? And shown me such gracious hospitality?" Angel's cutting sarcasm was wasted on these dullards.

"We wanted to ask you to help us with a small problem." The gaunt man in the centre looked to his fellows either side and they nodded. "It's in the cell adjoining yours. One of our senior Watchers found it in the grounds and brought it in. We can't destroy it. It's killed all its guards and laughed afterwards. One of our Junior Watchers is enthralled and wants to ...to..."

"Mate with it?" Angel questioned. He leaned forward in his "throne" making a steeple of his fingers. "You don't want that do you? Or do you? The Council has always interfered with everything. Buffy and Giles had no end of strife with you!" He sighed and leaned back in the chair. "I'd think better if I had a pint or two..." He smiled gently, showing his fangs just slightly so his hosts would get the gist.

They scurried away scraping their chairs.

Once he was alone Angel stared out of the window. The sweet face he'd seen through the grating couldn't be evil! It was impossible! It was possible that a Watcher would want to mate with her. He sighed, yes indeed!

The door opened and his blood was delivered to him on a silver platter, at body temperature. Angel supped and raised a surprised brow. "Human..." The butler bowed out of the room.

##

Gorgon gazed at his daughter and the young Watcher. He knew that now his task was completed he was not long for this world. It had taken a hundred years for him to reach maturity. Mage Rayne found him and told him about Master Giles and Mistress Willow. His tender heart responded to their sad tale and pledged his lifelong fealty.

As his sight had faded, his serpents moulted from his head daily giving him back his human visage. Without his serpents' symbiotic relationship, he faced the prospect of starving to death.

He drank water from the cup his daughter handed him. They were going to slay the serpents' spawn tonight. The Watcher passed his hands over the cauldron mixing and

imbibing the spell. Gorgon stepped forward and breathed in the acrid smoke; and then it was Spikes turn.

Gorgon and the vampire exchanged venomous looks. "Just don't moult over me Grandpa!"

Gorgon smiled. "I wonder if my serpents have an affect on a bewitched vampire?"

Jenny took a pace toward Gorgon. Rose blocked her. Jack and Willow regarded the two women each defending the love of their lives.

"Jenny, back off. Nearly time to leave." He glanced at his father's ghost and at last understood how he was able to carve the name of his Slayer in the frieze of the conference room. "Dad?"

Giles breathed the smoke and held the power in his mind; he would hold and control all the transformations. Someone called him and he turned his dragon eyed gaze to his son.

"Jack, it's time..." He shifted his eyes to his Slayer and called her forth. "Buffy. Hold my hand and step back as they step forward. It will take a moment to acclimatise yourself. Don't worry they won't be harmed. They'll be enhanced by our knowledge and power."

Buffy took her Watcher's hand and smiled at Willow, hunching her shoulders slightly in excitement. Jack and Jenny did the same and stepped into the ghostly forms in front of them. Their bodies shivered, their joined hands tightening as they gasped aloud and closed their eyes, the room darkened and chilled.

Wesley, Willow, Xander and Oz studied the newly joined Watcher and Slayer. Slowly their hands uncurled and they opened their eyes. The Slayer smiled brightly tears coming to her eyes, Jack turned to his Slayer and Giles' voice added depth to his own. "You ok Buffy? " The Slayer nodded and gazed round the room; she wiped tears from her eyes and felt a sudden jolt in her loins as she watched an athletic blond man approach her.

The bewitched Spike kissed her and she felt her knees weaken; his lips had the illusion of warmth. She stopped his wandering hands. "Careful Spike, remember whose soul you're mauling!"

"Just saying welcome back, Slayer. Y'think I'm dead 'ard? I was sorry you died Buffy. Angel, Willow, and I made Mary Sebastian suffer for it! I'll not come near you again whilst you're in Jenny." Spike turned away dejectedly; only Willow saw the pain in his eyes.

"It really is time to go now..." Wesley glanced at his watch nervously.

Giles looked at him suspiciously. "Wesley? I can guide them there's no need for you to come with us" Giles watched as Wesley dithered and finally told them the truth.

"He'll be waiting for you!" He sat down heavily on the sofa and held his head in his hands. "He wants revenge for you killing his father. He's completely mad y'know..."

Jack's tight lipped smile held no humour only malice. Willow shivered; it was a look that she thought she would never see on her son's face.

"Henri Sebastian, is the one who wants to mate with the creature, correct?" Giles paused

while Wesley nodded. "Only those pure of heart and free of evil intent can mate with a Medusa, Wesley, and then only those who can look upon them without turning to stone. Who do we know here who's done that?" Giles finished gently and watched as Wesley realised he had looked on the creature and became flustered.

"But I didn't realise...I mean she's beautiful I always thought... The legends say..." His voice faltered and Willow drifted over to him smiling gently. "That's what I thought too."

Giles went over to the sofa and kissed his wife goodbye. "Don't worry, I'll keep him safe." Willow smiled. "I know."

End part 5

First Return 6/10

Series Ripping Confessions

Summary Henri Sebastian has set a trap; will our motley band fall for it? Angel has been employed by the council to rid them of Laurel; will he have the courage to execute her?

The morning sun streamed through the high narrow window in the cell. Laurel gazed up at the rays, as they danced and highlighted her miserable surroundings. Her reptilian eyes devoured what little light there was as she remembered a time when she was outside feeling the sun in her hair and meat between her teeth. Before she realised that because she was joined, she was reliant on the wretches to her left and right!

They had accepted her leadership; it had been simple, their acceptance or their death. She didn't care that their death involved her own. She hated the world with a vengeance and hungered for its rapid and painful demise!

The serpents arched and writhed in wakefulness seeking out their morning repast. They struck at a blackbird and some rats.

Laurel swallowed and smiled showing even more teeth; the other en-souled part retched at the imagined after-taste of their morning meal. She got to her feet and stood holding the ragged blanket that Angel had given her.

Laurel made great show of smoothing her shining auburn locks and smiling in her "sister's" direction.

"Someone comes, someone wishing to destroy us." Laurel's voice hissed unpleasantly; the tone was dry with a reverberation of rock on rock. Her hips swayed back and forth so the others had to follow. She set up a sinuous rhythm, which held them spellbound.

Slowly the blanket slipped from the "soul" triplets fingers as she gave herself to the hypnotic rhythm of Laurel's dance. She felt Laurel's soft-scaled palms drift over her nipples and sighed, her eyes closed to the delicious erotic massage. All three pressed closer in their eternal circle and swayed as Laurel informed them of her plans.

"We will prevail. We must procreate. We will vanquish our enemies and crush continents

with our army of followers. This pitiful Council of Watchers will be that army. Together we will be omnipotent!" She waited while "the serpents" nodded their consent and "the soul" battled with her conscience.

##

The Electronic gate opened at the wave of Jack's hand and the party of five entered. "Five for a pentagram" came unbidden to Jack's mind. He looked at his Slayer. He had never felt so close to her. He wondered at his father's ability to read their whereabouts and to see the mantraps around the Watcher's headquarters'.

"They really must get some new ideas," Rupert muttered. Jack led the way with Jenny at his shoulder and Spike to her left. Rose and Gorgon strode side by side to the rear. Rose's fingertips barely brushed her father's sleeve to guide him through the wide Laburnum arched drive to the oak entrance door.

Spike scented the air before he entered. "Three guards and another two in a control room down the corridor."

Jenny looked at him incredulously. "How do you know that? "

Spike grinned, "Two in the control room are eating curry." He smiled wider as he saw the ghost of Buffy's smile on his love's face. Then he scowled, increasing his pace to the door.

"Sp...William!" Jack cried.

Spike halted and shot a venomous look behind him. "Angel's in there Watcher. Do you think they've invited him for tea?"

"Spike, we get in, do what we have to, and then get out. Understood? We don't have time to rescue vampires in distress." Jack hissed impatiently.

Jenny left Jack's side closely followed by Rose and Gorgon; Spike glanced at the group going through the door. "He's drinking human blood Watcher, I can taste it. You might want to reconsider who needs rescuing."

Jack sighed and eased his shoulders into a more relaxed position, now he understood the references to tension headaches in his father's Watcher journals.

##

Angel looked through the toughened glass of the Conference room and saw the approach of a group of five Watchers. One looked like a young Giles and the girl at his side he guessed was the Slayer. His eyes pricked as he gazed at her, younger than Buffy. Suddenly his vampire enhanced vision picked out a second girl to the rear.

"Laurel? No, Willow? " He breathed the names and scrutinised the group more closely. Five Watchers, one looked like Giles, one like Willow, and one like Buffy. "Spike?" He questioned and had his answer as the young man looked directly at him across the distance of a hundred yards.

"Bloody Hell!" He backed away from the window and hurried to the door. The mirrored hall

stretched before him. He glanced right then left, and calling upon his demon, he launched his vampiric form, with preternatural grace down the hall. Stakes flew at him thudding into mirrored surface which reflected nothing of his desperate flight to aid the "Scooby gang." He hit the far wall shattering the looking glass and fell into the pit below, twisting his body as his eyes sharply focussed on the lethal stakes lining it. He screamed as three punctured his body one at either hip and the last one plunging through his thigh. His only comfort before he blacked out was one less obstacle for his childe to negotiate.

##

Jack hurried to catch up with the group. He felt his fathers anger rising and that was dangerous. He'd never seen his father angry while he was growing up and now in the course of a few days he had witnessed his wrath twice.

Spike was drawing ahead of the group. Jack came upon his shoulder and heard him mutter, "Sire" beneath his breath, and then he took after the guards that had scattered in the direction of the mirrored hall.

Their running order was now Spike, Jenny and himself, with Gorgon and Rose at the rear.

The guards were shouting about a vampire shattering the mirrored hall and thoughts of Spike's safety blinded Jack. He let his father do the thinking and, seemingly unbidden, a spell seared through his mind.

Clear, cold and concise the rapier thought pierced and rearranged reality in the bat of an eyelash. Illusion: Reflection obscure: Vampire invisible.

His breathing calmed as he rounded the corner into the mirrored gallery. Unbroken glass stretched along the halls length and the watchers, with stakes drawn, were dumbfounded because they threw no reflection. Spike turned round and round on the spot very confused.

Jack took his arm and dragged him swiftly past the bemused men; Gorgon, Rose and Jenny followed. "We have little time..." Jack waved his hand in front of the far wall "Reveal." The wall disappeared revealing a sheer drop and Angel impaled on the stakes below.

"Spike?" Angel looked up hopefully out of the gloom as his childe peered into the pit. His heart fell as Spike disappeared and a young girl was lowered down into the pit.

"Angel... take my hands."

Angels' eyes burned as he struggled free of the stakes. The girl was the new Slayer but the tone of her voice reminded him of Buffy. She smiled and his mind reeled as he gripped her forearms. Strength and warmth flooded his body as he remembered so long ago holding Buffy in his arms and carrying her to her home.

"Buffy?" it was half question half prayer. He cried out as he was lifted from the pit into the brightly lit gallery. He sat against the wall waiting precious seconds whilst his body healed enough to allow him to stand.

Spike bent double heaving with unnecessary breath; it had been a long-time since he had

to expend so much energy.

Spike looked at Jenny uneasily.

She had moved to Angel's side. "Can you stand? Do you know where they're holding Laurel the Gorgon?"

Angel got to his feet shakily and noticed Gorgon and Rose for the first time. "They wanted me to kill someone. They can't control her or the madman that keeps her alive... Are you here to do the same? "

Rose stepped forward. "I am the one who will kill her, vampire."

Her green-gold eyes were cool on his skin reminding him of Willow in a rage when she had had her fill of Mary Sebastian. "I can help you then, she was in the dungeon, the floor above mine."

"They kept you in a cell?" Spike questioned, "Well, Sire, I had no idea your hankering for bondage had got so strong..."

Angel gave Spike a withering look, "Take care childe you're not too old to be put over my knee!" With that he walked ahead of the troop and tried not to react to Spike's "Promises, promises..." aimed at his advancing back.

End of pt.6

First Return 7/10

Series Ripping confessions

Summary Angel has joined our merry band of Laurel slayers, a spell has been cast to baffle the bad, and we learn how Anya died.

Oz sat quietly by the fireplace staring at the embers gleaming in crumbling ruby cubes across the surface of the logs.

Cordy looked at him, his eyes fascinated her. How many times had they changed in his lifetime? Lupine to human? She could only imagine how his life had been. Had his employers found another Were-Wolf assassin after his death or was he the last of his kind?

Oz had always been an oddity in high school. In truth, she had never taken the time to get to know him. Willow had though, intimately. She wondered if Willow's relationship with Oz had affected Giles. Certainly last Christmas they seemed to be on good terms, but then she'd never seen Giles not be on good terms with anyone-No, not quite true. Ethan was the exception!

Oz turned to look through Cordelia, his eyes still holding the firelight. Willow and Ethan entered the room silently and Cordy jumped. "Jeez, have a little consideration to the living guy's!" She looked at the spirits hovering before the fire. "Something's wrong. What's gone wrong?"

Wesley came in with a tray of tea and Xander held the snacks on another one. Both exchanged worried looks with Cordy.

"Rupert's cast a powerful spell, we felt the ripples of it. He's expending a lot of energy keeping them safe. He may have to leave before Laurel is slain." Ethan finished his explanation and walked into the conservatory.

"What does that mean? Willow? What does it mean? " Xander's anxious voice penetrated her thoughts of her husband.

"It means that he's getting weaker. Getting weaker means that he can't keep up the garden and our haven here, we'll depart and we won't return."

Xander's eyes welled with tears as he realised that if Giles weakened more, he would never see Anya in this house, he would never share an after-life with her. His mind played over the hours of her death; how she had struggled to live for him and how determined her eyes looked before she drew her last breath, he had promised to bring her here to Giles, with his eyes blurring with tears as his wife's grip tightened then slackened suddenly. The doctors had whisked the dead baby away and he bent to kiss her cooling lips.

Slowly Willow's words hummed back into focus

"We were never supposed to go on death defying crusades on our return, simply to tell stories and help others to understand that death isn't an end, it's a beginning. As a spirit you're free of self-doubts, you can help people, help other souls who have lost their way. Ethan works with children, guides them back to their parents if that's where they want to be; more often than not, they stay with him until they're called. "

"Called?" Wesley asked. He sipped his tea as he looked at Ethan's back.

"Reincarnated." Willow quantified. "He teaches them to choose parents with the most love to give."

Something exploded inside Xander, a raw scream of grief ripped from his throat. "Those with the most love to give? Anya died giving birth to our baby! Our dead baby... " He staggered slightly and Cordy steadied him. "We loved him from beginning to the end." His face was grief stricken, hardly able to form the words. "He was so small.... Willow, he was perfect.... toes, fingers..." His shoulders shook with silent sobs as his large powerful hands, hands that could have tickled mercilessly, covered his face in a vain attempt to control his rage. "I love him still, as Anya does. I'll never love as much again!"

Willow glowed with understanding. She remained silent and summoned Ethan and Oz; drifted out into the quiet garden leaving Cordy to comfort Xander.

Wesley felt inadequate offering Xander tea but fortunately, he had calmed down enough not to throw it at him.

The three spirits flowed together. Rupert needed reinforcements. They held hands and beamed a third of their considerable energy to the Watcher.

##

Henri surveyed his image in the looking glass one final time; he'd had the call from Mistress Laurel that tonight would be "The night!" He smiled as he imagined the carnal delights before him; he'd never been in a foursome before.

Lust hurried his determined step to the dungeon door. He had of course been informed of the strange occurrence in the mirrored hall that evening, but obviously the guards in question had been indulging in recreational drugs.

The door of the dungeon swung open and the object of his desire turned to look at him, Laurel smiled and greeted him with a passionate kiss. Hands plucked at his clothing and he became unnerved by the constant hissing and writhing of the serpents. He felt powerful hands on his shoulders pushing him down and then a second set of arms pulled him into the Gorgon's centre. His anguished cry was brief, dying on his lips as the serpents struck, rendering all but his cock paralysed.

He stared wild eyed and silent, desperately trying to summon help with a suddenly disobedient tongue. Henri was turned around until he felt nauseous and finally came to rest before "soul", because she was the only one of the unholy triad that had a womb.

She smiled, her tormentor at last in torment himself, held secure by the slithering serpents of her sister. With Laurel urging her on, she parted her thighs to accept Henri's cock which betrayed him by seeping and throbbing for a home.

Her eyes closed against the undulating of her sisters and the beat of her heart. The man who's cock she rode was being strangled by the serpents, making his thrusts more desperate and her own climax imminent. In her head, Laurel's plan formed and pulsed and she saw all that she envisaged for the Watchers and the Earth.

The voice of another joined Laurels', one that recited poetry and bawdy songs. She opened her eyes and saw the purple anguish on the man she fucked and stopped before he came. She heaved away from his lifeless body, just as his seed jetted impotently into the air.

##

Jack felt strange, like he was floating out of his body. He must have stumbled because Spike caught him and he saw the look of concern on his face. Spike had never looked at him that way and he realised that Spike was looking at his father's face...

"I can't..." Rupert's voice was pained and weak and Jack studied the ceiling unaware that he had fallen. The dark stones closed around him and his breathing became loud in his ears.

Silver threads of light drifted toward him, hesitated before touching his body and then the beam spread and filled the empty spaces in his heart and soul. His body jerked under the pressure and force of the transferred power. He opened his eyes and saw the beam striking his chest. He held his hands under it and bathed his face. He smelt his mother, felt Ethan's love for Giles and Oz's strength and determination. He slumped against the wall and swallowed as the flow of energy slowly petered out.

Spike grinned and helped him up. "Batteries recharged?" Jack nodded. "Good, let's get

the bad guy and go home."

##

Laurel's scream of frustration ended abruptly with the swing of Rose's broadsword. "Soul" lay on the floor with her hands covering her eyes, knowing that if she saw her assailants "serpents" they would turn them to stone. With a terrible dying lunge, Laurel sliced the blade of her Thracian sword across Jenny's stomach. The Slayer dropped to the ground.

Spike ripped the sword from the Gorgon's hand and gutted her from navel to throat. Blood splattered all around and he dropped to his knees by his Jenny.

Gorgon locked his gaze with Laurel. "Thou art an abomination, an evil scar upon this Earth and I wish you gone from it!" Laurel's head and body turned to stone instantly and Gorgon staggered back to the dungeon wall.

Angel struck at the serpent-headed sister and watched with a satisfied smile as it bounced once on the dungeon floor and rolled to a corner. His boots stepped carefully over the bloodied dungeon floor until he reached "the soul." Her hands were still clamped over her eyes afraid to see the carnage around her. He took her hands in his and with kind words eased her up to sit leaning against his chest away from the bodies of her sisters.

Spike wept over the cooling body of the Slayer, his hands tight over the wound in her belly, Angel had never heard Spike utter such impassioned entreaties.

"Jenny, live... You have to stay with me, Jenny. We have that special date on your eighteenth remember?" He rocked her and cast about with tear-drenched eyes for the Watcher.

Jack stood quiet, too shocked to act.

"Vampire. I must slay this one too." Rose's voice reached Angel's ears and he looked up at her with haunted eyes.

"No need, she's dying. I feel her heart slowing, they were symbiots, kill one, and they all die." The soul clutched at Angel's arm, pointed across to the serpent head, and then turned her gaze to where the Slayer lay. Angel fetched the head; the serpents still writhed in blind agony. She clutched a serpent's head and milked the venom into her mouth then began to crawl over to Jenny.

"Move out of the way Spike." The younger vampire looked up at his Sire's voice then shook his head as he saw the last sister dragging the bloodied bodies of her sisters. "What? So, she can finish Jenny off?"

"No Spike, so she can save her." Jack eased the vampire away from the Slayer and let the last of the Gorgon sisters heal his Slayer.

She opened her mouth and the stored venom bathed the Slayers' wound. She didn't stop there; she passed her hands over the body, a faint green glow emanating from her palms. Her eyes also glowed but after a few minutes, they became glassy and lifeless as Jenny grew stronger she got weaker.

Her fingers curled over and she fell sideways into the bloody puddle of her sisters' remains.

Jenny took a deep breath and smiled up at Spike. He laughed and picked her up swinging her round. Angel stood his ground in the middle of the carnage and wept a tear for the passing of a pure spirit.

Jack took Jenny's hand, "Time to go Buffy." A sudden noise made him look to the door, guards were thundering down the dungeon stairs.

"Sanctum Invisibalis!" At Rupert's command, a velvet transparent haze dropped over the dank cell. "Buffy, come..."

The souls of Jack's father and his Slayer fled their temporary hosts as the dungeon door crashed back against the stone wall, guards poured in but could see only the mutilated corpse of the Gorgon and it's would be master, Henri Sebastian.

End of pt 7

First Return 8/10

Series Ripping Confessions.

Summary Giles and Buffy have departed from Jack and Jenny, leaving Laurel slain but the others in their party in mortal danger, protected by a cloaking spell, cast by a weakened Giles.

Wesley's teacup rattled in its saucer as he reacted to the sudden reappearance of Giles and Buffy in their midst.

Willow embraced her husband; as he gave her a brief kiss and exchanged a nod of thanks with Ethan and Oz. Willows hands slid from Giles' back to his forearms and noticed the tension there.

"It's not over Willow, I had to leave in a hurry. Jack and the others need rescuing... Ethan? A circle if you please. Oz... Ah, stinky herbs at the ready I see." Rupert smiled as Oz cracked a grin at the old joke. Rupert glanced at the sofa holding Cordy, Wesley and Xander.

"Feet up!" Rupert snapped. Each one of them snapped their feet off the floor as the sofa flew back to the far wall revealing a pentagram beneath the rolled rug that followed it.

Ethan, Oz, Willow and Rupert took up their positions. Four. Each one of the spectres grew still, their forlorn faces shocking the onlookers.

"We need a fifth..." Ethan intoned unnecessarily.

"We'll have to manage without!" Ripper ground out.

Buffy fidgeted on the sidelines, she knew that in order to be in a circle one needed to have mythical or magical powers and she had neither.

"Mr. Giles? I have some magical knowledge... Could I help? "

Wesley approached the circle and Rupert looked at him, then shook his head sadly. "I'm sorry Wesley, needs a spirit and we have...no...one..." Rupert's voice died away as Xander pointed frantically to the door of the secret room.

A dark shadow crept along the gap beneath the door and began flowing across the hardwood floor. Cordy folded her legs beneath her and Xander became more agitated, hoping and praying that the new spectre was Anya.

##

Spike and Angel flattened themselves against the dungeon walls to escape detection from the Watcher Guard. Spike discovered Gorgon's fallen body.

Jenny and Jack held silent and steady whilst the Watcher Guard roved around them disposing of the remains. Rose breathed slowly as she made her way stealthily toward Angel and her father, resting at Spike's feet. .

Gorgon's opalescent eyes stared ahead, his serpents weakly writhing and his breaths ragged and rare. Rose knelt at her father's side. "Father..." She whispered.

One of the Watchers halted in his task and took a step nearer. Angel threw a stone across the floor and the man turned to investigate the sound, he shrugged and completed his task.

Gorgon struggled to draw breath, his chest heaving with the effort. Angel slid carefully down the rough wall and held the man close to him as his death drew ever nearer.

Rose was agonised in grief, her fist trapping her sobs deep within her whilst her silent tears ran their course.

The door clanged shut and Rose shook her head violently as Gorgon breathed his last. "No...." she moaned aloud and Spike hushed her, still fearful of discovery.

Angel hoisted Rose up and carried her to the centre of the dungeon, Spike, Jenny and Jack followed, to await rescue.

##

Rupert held his breath as the newcomer flowed and roiled over the floor toward the fifth point in the pentagram. The shadow grew in stature until it stood and solidified.

Hands joined in joy and sorrow as they welcomed Anya to the circle.

Anya's powerful voice leant strength to their daring rescue attempt. Her eyes were clear and flecked with the magic of creation. A rift appeared in the space before them and they could see the dungeon and the people trapped within. Rupert's voice cleaved the tear deeper and Anya's held it open while the others stepped through into Rupert's sitting room.

Anya chanted the closing incantation and turned to smile at Xander. He took tentative steps toward her that she halted by the upturn of her hand. "Xander don't grieve for me or

our baby. He is here." She pointed to his heart, and gestured to encompass the spirits in the room.

"He will be coming here as well, Ethan told me." She smiled at the sorcerer and he bowed gallantly. "But in the meantime..." She grinned and beckoned him to her with a sexily upturned eyebrow.

The rug rolled back at Ethan's gesture. He was about to deal with the sofa when his hands stilled and he glanced round the throng. Someone was missing. His eyes rested on Rose. Angel held her while she wept.

"Gorgon..." Ethan held Rupert's gaze as he said the name in quiet reverence.

Willow paused in hugging Jack, her arms suddenly chilled with the passing of a unique spirit.

"Gorgon..." Rupert groaned sorrowfully. Willow stepped into his arms to remember their old friend.

"He turned Laurel to stone. Never saw the like before!" Spike exclaimed. "I'm glad I never pissed him off." With typical Spike grudging respect, he wrote the epitaph of the Gorgon.

End of part 8

First Return 9/10

Series Ripping Confessions.

Summary Anya's spirit is in the house and helped in the rescue of the Vampires, Watcher's and Slayer.

Oz tidied the circle while his friends gathered in mourning around Rose and Jack. He didn't join them, he hadn't known Gorgon that well, but from what he'd gleaned in conversations, Gorgon was a mythical creature of great compassion and fierce loyalty. It was hard to believe that Ethan knew such a fellow! And from what little Oz knew about mythical creatures, generally they didn't just die. For the balance to be maintained, some kind of transformation usually took place.

Angel found himself alone, observing humanity again. His nostrils flared as the scent of Watcher blood approached from his right.

Wesley jumped as the legendary Angelus locked his predator's gaze on him.

"Ummm, what of.... Is? " He stopped and took a breath, lowering his gaze and trying a new tack. "I found Laurel, and I saw how beautiful she was, the human third. Did she...?" He swallowed the lump in his throat.

Angel took pity on him. "She died with the others, but she stopped Sebastian before he could complete his plan, and had no part in the fight that ensued. The Slayer almost died tonight and she saved her. She died well, that's all us en-souled demons can ask for. To die well."

Wesley had tears in his eyes and he blotted them impatiently with his handkerchief. "Seems like a very lonely existence..."

Angel nodded and then turned to Wesley as the Watcher's aura shifted. He could sense his growing excitement.

"Angelus? "

"Angel..." Angel corrected.

The middle-aged man before him nodded and continued. "I've left the Watcher's Council, and thus am without employment, would you consider letting me work with you? I mean what do you do? I'm assuming you fight evil otherwise; you wouldn't have been summoned to help the Council..." Wesley paused when he saw Angel's interested expression and smiled.

"I used to help Buffy, in Sunnydale. I was there the night she died. Since then, I've been a sort of auxiliary Slayer in Los Angeles. I hope I'm making a difference. But I do need an assistant.... Would you like the job?" Angel inquired hopefully.

Wesley grinned, and bounced on the balls of his feet, instantly making him look years younger. "Oh yes! Yes please!"

"Sorry, what's your name?" Angel smiled at the Watcher, he's like a puppy with two tails, he thought.

"Wesley..." Wesley coloured when saying his name, aghast that he hadn't introduced himself at the start of the conversation.

"Well, Wesley. Try not to bounce too much; it's unbecoming to a rogue demon hunter." Angel commented dryly and excused himself in search of Buffy.

Wesley watched Angel's retreating back, straightening his shoulders, and muttering beneath his breath "Rogue Demon Hunter, I like the sound of that..."

##

Angel went outside and stood amongst the midnight scented roses. The hair on the nape of his neck prickled as he caught Buffy's essence on the gentle breeze; all fire and snap with a guilty hint of chocolate.

Buffy walked into his vision and stood before him, hands on hips. "So, you thought that dashing headlong down a booby-trapped corridor and crashing through a mirror into a stake lined pit was a good idea, did you?"

Angel shrugged; Buffy had always had the ability to reduce his reasoning to that of a bumbling child. Her stance changed, she lowered her arms and the tinkle of bells ended at her wrist. Angel concentrated on the sound, narrowing his gaze to the bracelet she wore on the night of her death. She was wearing the same outfit.

His heart ached as he remembered that night, the night she died.

He'd been seconds too late, he had heard her choking before he seen her and tested his sinews to beyond breaking point. He'd witnessed her struggles to breathe, her fall and the sound her bracelet made as it hit the ground. He had stopped dead. The horror of the scene pummelling his senses, the swirling dust of her last slain and the poison hidden within that dust.

"What's Bloodfast?" Buffy fingered her bracelet as she stepped closer to angel.

Buffy's question and the tinkling sound jolted him out of his remembrance. He swallowed the dust in his throat before answering.

"Bloodfast is called to honour a fallen Master, I called it for you, a great Warrior. No vampire or demon fed or killed for three weeks while Willow searched for your murderer. Her name was Marie Sebastian; she was a vampire without minions who considered it a sacred act of revenge to kill all Slayers that crossed her path. We, Spike, Willow, Xander and I, captured her and tortured her to death." Angel droned on, his gaze fixed on the damask roses before him. "Her last agonised screams signalled the end of the Bloodfast and Sunnydale became Hell, for the next three weeks. "

"Angel?" Buffy murmured.

He looked at her intensely. He wanted desperately to hold her, to feel her warm body next to his, to worship her to the beat of her heart. But that was never to be now.

"I hoped it would be you who found me, Giles... well he went a little weird." She smiled with tears in her eyes. "I knew the one who loved me most would find me. I love you, Angel."

Angel gasped at the jolt in his heart and tears sprang to his own eyes.

"I'll wait for you Angel," Buffy continued. "We'll be together with no curses or cares. I promise you... Only, don't be in too much of a hurry to join me, ok? "

He gave a sort of gulping hiccuping laugh, then was still as Buffy kissed him. The sensation was of sunlight and snapdragons; her fingers caressed his hair and swept away his tears.

"Buffy, I never stopped loving you..." Angel whispered into the soft night. He could feel the spectral strands of her hair on his face.

She nodded. "I know lover, I know." She slipped her hand in his and gently urged him to follow her. "Time to go inside or you'll miss Giles playing with Oz."

Angel's eyebrows nearly climbed off his forehead. "Now that's something I'd pay to see..." He muttered and followed his love into the Library.

End of pt. 9

First Return 10

Series Ripping Confessions

Summary After Angel and Buffy's reconciliation they listen to Giles and Oz "Jamming"

accompanied by Ethan on drums and Willow on tambourine and shared vocals with Rupert. A good time is had by all.

Angel sat down on one of the sofas between Cordelia and Wesley. He allowed his sombre face to relax into a less sombre one. He was enjoying himself.

Spike and Jenny sprawled on the second sofa, relaxing to the sweet music, while Rose and Jack sat in the conservatory with a pot of coffee catching up on each other's childhood.

##

Deep in the bowels of the Council of Watchers, something stirred in the dungeon.

Heat shimmered about Gorgon's body. Gradually green gold flames licked hesitantly up the prone figure; serpent scales sloughed off to reveal skin of coffee caramel, the body arching gracefully in an imitation of a striking cobra and light as bright as winter ice swept throughout the room.

An agonised cry pierced the silence as Gorgon surrendered to the light. The scent of honey and spring filled the air and as the light faded. Gorgon stood transformed. His eyes clear and green, bronze dreadlocks tumbled over his broad shoulders to his waist, where a sheathed hunting knife rested against his unadorned thigh.

Gorgon straightened his arms, flexing his shoulders to spread wide his soft feathered wings, the colour of earth and autumn leaves. A gentle breeze ruffled his wing tips; a golden sparkle surrounded him as he faded from sight.

##

Gorgon stepped through the garden wall and discovered the ravages of Rupert's wrath. The Magical garden was all but destroyed. He sighed and his breath stirred the honeysuckle to blossom. His gaze revealed all as it should be and he concentrated his energy on making the garden bloom. He had been charged with maintaining the earthly paradise of Rupert and Willow Giles.

In the wake of his footfalls, the camomile lawn greened and softened from its frosted brown. He stooped to the stream and scooped the fallen leaves from its stagnant surface, the water bubbled and sprang into new life at the stir of his fingertips, and birds sang on the boughs. Gorgon lowered his frame to a moss-covered rock and welcomed the wildlife back into the garden.

The willow tree stirred and wafted, dipping supple, green tendrils into the stream. The sun shone softly filtered through the cool, green leaf canopy. He surveyed his handiwork and smiled. His fingers plucked a few herbs from the border and he ate whilst waiting for his friends return.

##

The set was finished and everyone settled in front of the roaring fireplace. The tree stood in the corner covered with treasured Christmas memories; Rose had the honour of putting

the last bauble on the tree.

Rupert stepped back and sighed. "It looks wonderful Jack. You've inherited your mother's eye for a tree." His arm slipped around his wife's shoulders and kissed her hair. He looked over his friends gathered in his sitting room but found his gaze drawn constantly to the garden.

The Magical garden at the top of the barren winter earth was blooming again.

Willow followed her husband's gaze and gasped as she saw the sunlight sparkling through the trees. "How?" she questioned smiling.

Rupert squeezed her arm. "I don't know, let's go see!" he said excitedly.

They blinked out of the sitting room and walked into the garden. The air was warm and golden. They halted on the lawn at the sight of a stranger seated on a rock.

Gorgon stood and greeted his friends. "Master Rupert, Mistress Willow..." His wing tips brushed the sweet grass at his feet, stirring the perfume in the air.

"Gorgon!" Rupert and Willow exclaimed together and dashed forward to embrace their friend, whom they thought had perished.

Gorgon's wings enveloped them in a warm russet embrace.

"Rupert, I am here to preserve and protect your heaven on Earth. You and Willow can rest and relax here, leave everything to me."

They rested their heads on Gorgon's shoulders and bathed in the love that radiated from him. Willow raised a sleepy head. "Are you an angel now?" she asked in a hushed tone.

He smiled down at her and answered in tones of liquid honey. "A kind of Angel, yes. But do not tell anyone, otherwise everyone will want me." He winked and chuckled.

Willow giggled delightedly.

"Thank you for being here Gorgon. Thank you for everything." Rupert murmured.

Gorgon held the Watchers gaze for a long time. "You are very welcome, Rupert."

The end.