

Midsummer Night 1/2

Summary Sequel to A Summers' Day

Authors Note Speech in italics denotes telepathic thought.

Giles drove the car slowly to his house so as not to disturb his sleeping passenger. He parked and gently prodded her awake. She smiled at him she wasn't sleeping.

"Cheeky...!" He helped her out and supported her as she stepped gingerly up the path. The front door opened and everyone greeted her. It was a very quiet 'Welcome Home' surprise party. They hadn't even told Giles. Soft music played. Lilac and pink streamers hung down the walls and helium balloons bobbed along the ceiling. Willow looked supremely happy.

"You like?" Giles was speechless. He hugged her tightly, placing a lingering kiss on her lips. Chloe elbowed Xander in the ribs. She wanted a kiss too.

Buffy came in with a tray of tea and rolled her eyes at the sight of a double clinch. "Break! Back to your corners." Giles straightened. His glasses were slightly misty.

"Oh, tea, thank you, Buffy. Oh dear, you can't, can you, Chloe?" He looked at her and smiled, he explained her condition to the others. "The doctor has forbidden her to drink anything hot for twenty-four hours."

He looked at his watch. "You go into your room then, Chloe."

"How do you two do that?" Xander was mystified. "The thing with the thoughts...?" Giles poured the tea, smiling as he did so.

"How does she do it? Telepathy. Well now she can't talk I hear her all the time. But before, when we were growing up, only when she was in danger or I was up to no-good. I don't have the gift as strongly as she does." He grinned. "She shouts, I whisper." He frowned and looked at Chloe's door. "Excuse me."

##

He opened the door of Chloe's room and couldn't believe his eyes. The figure from the Prophecy stood by the bed. He stepped into the room quietly and the figure turned. It was Chloe, standing straight and tall and holding a small vial of white powder in her hand. She sniffed and carefully closed the vial. He sat on the bed and stared at her as she closed the door.

"All the dreams happened to you, didn't they?" said Giles. He swallowed hard, remembering the echo of multiple rape.

Yes, Rupert they did. I have to save the souls tonight.

"Do you want me to help you?" He asked.

There's no need. Xander will be coming with me and I've sent for Angel. I have asked Willow to help as well. Don't worry, Rupert, she'll be in no danger.

"What have you asked her to do, Chloe?" His voice took on a warning tone.

I've asked her to hold my pain.

"NO!" He cried in dismay. "She won't be able to stand it!"

She volunteered she loves you. I told her that you love her.

"Chloe, I... I do?" He shook his head bewildered by the turn of events.

Rupert. Believe me, you love her.

She smiled at him.

Rupert, I'm not coming back after tonight. So I need you to take over.

"What? That's all the more reason for me to come with you then. I'll get my things." He got up from the bed; he didn't want to look at her so she would see how much her words had hurt him.

Rupert, lie down. This will hurt.

He looked at his sister and saw a ghost of Willow's resolve face. He gave in reluctantly.

Take off your shirt. I need bare skin for this.

He shrugged out of his shirt, feeling a little awkward about being bare-chested in front of his sister. She smiled at his embarrassment. She approached him, hands extended. He caught her wrists before they touched his skin.

"Couldn't Buffy destroy The Soul Catcher?"

No, it has to be me. Sorry, Rupert, I'll try to be as quick as I can so Willow's pain will be brief. Let go, Rupert.

Giles released her hands and she placed them on his back and closed her eyes in concentration. He was hot suddenly, his back arched away from his sister's hands as one by one the brands appeared on his skin. The pain was so intense he couldn't give it voice. But in his mind he screamed. He fell onto the bed and lay still. He felt Chloe's cool hand on his forehead, then nothing more.

I will come and help you, Chloe.

##

Buffy was outside the door when Chloe opened it. She pushed her away and summoned Xander. He turned round in his seat and got up.

Willow? Thank you for helping me. Just lie still. The pain will fade when I'm... when I defeat the demon.

She smiled lovingly at her. Willow nodded, managing a small smile of her own before the

pain took her.

Buffy entered the room where Giles lay prone on the bed. The brands were complete, blistered and raw looking. She dashed to the shower and soaked a towel in cold water. She laid it on his back, and then ran back into the living room. Willow was on the sofa. She looked as though she was sleeping. The front door was open and Xander was gone. Buffy looked round at the devastation and folded her arms round herself. Angel ran in. He checked on Willow first. Her eyes were closed but she was not at rest.

"Angel, how did you get here so fast? I was just about to call you, Giles is in there." She pointed to Chloe's room.

"Chloe called me. I'm supposed to help her but I don't know where The Soul Catcher will be. If I'm late she'll die." He was distraught. "She's not strong enough to fight him on her own."

They both turned at the sound of falling behind them. Giles was just getting up from the floor. He reached for his crossbow from his bag and was about to go out the door when Angel stopped him.

End of Part.1

Mid-summer Night 2/2

Summary Giles tells a secret.

Authors Note Speech in italics denotes telepathic thought.

"Giles, where are you going?" Angel blocked the door. Giles swayed backwards a little.

"I'm going to help Chloe. She only has Xander. You coming?" Angel nodded, knowing damn well the Watcher wouldn't get very far without him. Giles' head drooped he glanced back to the room.

"I won't be a minute..." He walked back to Chloes room and closed the door.

##

He came out a few minutes later without a trace of pain on his face. He slipped his sword into the scabbard behind his back and gripped his crossbow with one hand. He looked at Buffy.

"Take care of Willow for me, Buffy."

He pushed past Angel and ran down the street in the direction of the cemetery.

He heard the roaring of 'The Soul Catcher' before he saw it. It made him stop and stare. It was immense. The ground at its feet steamed gently where the cloven hooves bit into the earth. Its legs were covered in shaggy hair and its torso resembled bronze armour plate. Its neck was its one vulnerable point. That's where he saw Chloe standing, hacking at the beasts flesh. Her strength was waning. Angel stood by Giles.

"I think she needs my help." Giles nodded and Angel climbed up the beast toward Chloe. She was bent over, gasping for breath. Her mask and hood had been ripped off in frustration. Angel vamped his features and slashed at the flesh with his talons. He punctured the vein with his fangs and drank. The creature screamed and tried to rake him off but Angel had a good grip. The blood drenched his skin. Angel lifted his hand up to Chloe.

"Sword...!" She gave him the weapon and he sliced a hole big enough for Chloe to fit through. She beamed at him and he handed the sword back to her as she disappeared.

##

Deep in the beast's gut she found what could only be described as a nursery. The children it housed were too numerous to mention. Would she be able to carry so many souls out of this place? She had to try. She sat down on the ground to wait for them to come to her. They came in two's and three's then all in a rush of twenty or thirty at a time. At last the room was empty and the beast was raging at the loss of the souls. Chloe picked up her sword once more and stood. Her head was swimming. She staggered to the wall and hacked at the beast's flesh again. Fresh air hit her lungs. She forced her way out, sword arm first.

##

Xander pointed at the small opening. Giles rushed over and grabbed his sister's arm. Xander gripped her other arm and they pulled. The creature was shrinking without the souls of the children to give it essence. With one terrible mournful cry it swept Giles away with its venomous claws. Xander pulled Chloe the rest of the way out of the beast but her hand slipped from his grasp and she fell to the ground. The beast lifted its cloven hoof and pounded her limp body.

Xander screamed as the demon vanished. He scrambled over to where his love lay crushed and bleeding. He touched her face tenderly and her eyes opened. His heart leapt, she was still alive. She was going to be all right.

Love you, Xander.

"Ssh. I know. Lie still." He looked over her body, his vision blurring.

Xander, I'm dying. You're a sweet man.

She touched his cheek.

Be a Watcher, Xander, Rupert will need you.

"No, don't leave me..." He moaned.

Xander gasped, as all around him children gathered all happy and laughing. Right at the front was Chloe, waving to him as they walked into the woods.

##

The silence was broken by an innocent cry in the night, Angel looked at his book and caressed the binding soothing, the troubled infant. He looked blankly from one body to the next. Giles first. Xander was taking care of Chloe. He crawled over to where Giles lay. There was a long gash down his left side where the claw had ripped the muscles and Angel could see ribs. Giles was very still and quiet. Giles was cold and getting colder.

"Get Buffy." Giles whispered. Angel was off like a shot.

##

Chloe?

Giles turned his head to see Xander cradling his sister's head.

Hello, Rupert. Hey did you see? I did it!

He gazed at Chloes spirit. She was dressed for a day at the beach. Her skin was golden and there was sunlight in her hair. Children surrounded her. She looked lovingly at Xander as he held her body.

I'll miss Xander so much.

##

Angel was back with Buffy and Willow. Willow looked pale but had insisted on coming.

"They're here now, Giles."

Angel crouched in front of Xander who had taken over looking after Giles while he got the girls.

"You OK, Xander?" He smiled when the boy nodded Xander kept looking over towards the trees. He could hear children playing.

He got up and walked towards the sound. Suddenly he was bathed in daylight. Chloe smiled and beckoned to him. But he knew not to go in. Giles was there, playing with the children, twirling them round so fast in his arms that they screamed with laughter.

Then Xander heard a different scream. It was Willow. He looked away from the summer's day and into the night. Willow was screaming at Giles to wake up. He looked back to the happy children. Giles had stopped playing and was looking directly at him.

"You've got to come back, Giles. We need you." Xander didn't know if he was doing the right thing in talking to a spirit but then he'd never done it before.

Buffy was distraught, torn between trying to save her Watcher and mourn his passing.

Giles' spirit walked back to Chloe and Xander thought he had made his decision. He was staying. He kissed Chloe goodbye and walked past Xander into the night.

##

Xander ran to his friend's body. He was propped up on a rock, his head forward and his eyes dead looking. Willow was weeping over the body, not letting anyone near. Xander lifted her carefully out of the way.

He held Giles' hand and urged him to live. After a long drawn out moment Giles breathed again and had all the pain again. Buffy flew to his side, not knowing whether to believe her eyes. Angel picked up Chloes body and brought it over. Giles glanced at the sky.

"You should be home, Angel." He smiled weakly.

"I am home, I'm with friends." Xander rolled his eyes.

##

Angel waited in Chloes room while the ambulance came for Giles. He peered through the gap in the curtains. Giles was safely on his way to hospital. He looked down at the surface of the dresser. 'Why was it dusty here and nowhere else?'

##

The doctor clucked round Giles. How many concussions had this man had since he'd arrived in Sunnydale? The 'G' file in records was getting thick, all because of Rupert Giles. Now he was looking at an eleven-inch gash down the left side of his body that looked like a claw of some kind did it. Then he noticed the man's back.

"Mr. Giles, who did this to you?" He was awe-struck. "No lies now. Not even a street gang would be able to do this."

Giles sighed. What could he tell him?

"Can I trust you?" The doctor came round to look at him. Giles looked him in the eyes and nodded.

"My friends and I fight evil every day while the town sleeps. No one usually suspects anything. But you deserve the truth. Chloe is dead. She gave me the marks to carry on, believe it or not. Put it down to delirium. Stitch me up and let me go."

The doctor said nothing but proceeded to stitch the wound. Giles was still. He was thinking about Chloe and being very cold after the Soul Catcher had wounded him. Xander had brought him back.

"You're done." Giles slipped off the treatment bench and was stopped by the doctor's voice.

"Mr. Giles, your blood test showed you've taken cocaine recently..." Giles turned to look at the doctor. Damn!

"Don't do it again. Thank you, Mr. Giles, and I'm sorry about your sister."

End

Sequel: An Autumn evening