

Summary: Okay, you guys said post, so here it is. lol. Spike's cutting himself to try and feel something. Riley finds him doing it and makes friends with him. Then the Initiative comes back.

Summary sucks, sorry. lol

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1. [Chapter 1](#) by RogueSpike

Chapter 1 by RogueSpike

Riley was losing his mind.

He still wasn't entirely sure when he'd made this decision. Maybe it was when he'd first learned what Buffy was. Maybe it was when he had tried to see the grey.

Or maybe it was when he began to see the sense in not killing Spike.

Riley wondered for a brief moment what Buffy would say if she found out he was on his way to see Spike right now to ask him about Dracula. He knew it was a long shot, but Spike had been known to have some useful information before. Maybe he knew something about the vamp.

Riley opened the door without knocking. Spike was sitting slumped in a chair not far away, staring at a blank TV. He didn't move when Riley entered, which made Riley frown. Spike never sat still for more than five seconds.

"Spike?"

Finally, a movement. Spike moved up a bit and turned his head.

"What do you want?" Spike snapped.

"Got a new evil in town. Need some information. Might pay a little."

Spike sighed and stood up. "I'll play."

"What do you know about Dracula?"

"Drac? Poncey bugger owes me eleven pounds for one thing."

"You know him?" Riley said, slightly disbelieving.

"Know him? We're old rivals," Spike pulled a smoke out.

"Well, he's in town."

Spike laughed. "Drac's in town. He gone after Buffy yet?"

"Yeah."

"Shouldn't be too much trouble for her."

Riley frowned. "But he's got powers. Special abilities."

Spike waved his hand in a dismissive gesture. "Nothing but fancy gypsy tricks."

Spike fell silent, casting a quick, hopeful glance toward Riley's pocket. Riley rolled his eyes.

"I said might."

Spike sighed again but didn't say anything. He watched Riley leave, then went back to his chair. He glanced behind him to make sure the boy was gone before he pulled the small knife back out from under his seat.

Couple weeks later.

Spike watched from the dark as Buffy and Riley fought a small group of vampires. Normally he would have jumped in by now, but he couldn't bring himself to do much lately. It wasn't so much fun when you couldn't feel anything.

Leaning back against a tree, he watched as Buffy and Riley walked toward him. He thought about leaving, but what was the point?

Riley spotted him first. He didn't say anything for a moment, he just looked at Spike. Spike looked back.

"What are you doing here?" Riley finally asked. Buffy looked over and saw him.

"Nothing," Spike answered.

"Well go do nothing somewhere else," Buffy told him.

Spike didn't answer. He looked at Riley again. Riley was looking at him strangely. Spike raised an eyebrow and Riley looked away.

"Come on, Buffy." Riley took Buffy's arm and the two walked off.

"Okay, that was weird," Buffy said, glancing back in time to see Spike walk off. "Usually he would have found a way to get at least one of us mad. This time he just..."

"Did nothing, like he said," Riley answered. "He has been acting weird lately. When I went to his crypt to act him about Dracula it took him a whole two minutes to react."

"Huh," Buffy shrugged. "Oh well, who cares about Spike."

"Yeah," Riley said absently, glancing behind him. "Who cares."

'Yup, I have definitely lost my mind,' Riley thought as he walked toward Spike's crypt. Spike's strange behavior hadn't changed over the last week, so Riley was going to find out if Spike was up to something. Just because he was chipped didn't mean he wasn't dangerous.

Riley opened the door. Spike was sitting in the chair again. This time he turned his head when Riley walked in.

"What?" He asked a little weakly.

"Buffy and I want to know what you're up to. You've been....."

Riley trailed off in slight shock when he saw the blood running down Spike's hand. Walking around to the front of Spike's chair, Riley saw Spike had sliced six jagged cuts up the inside of his left arm.

"What are you doing?" Riley asked slowly.

For a second, Spike didn't answer. He just stared up at Riley.

"Why can't I feel anything?" He suddenly whispered. "I can't feel them. They should hurt. Why can't I feel them?"

The knife fell from Spike's hand. The clatter it made as it hit the ground seemed louder than it should have. Riley knelt down and picked the knife up. It was caked with more than one layer of blood. Riley put it down on the chair's arm and looked at Spike's other arm. At least seven other cuts were in the process of healing.

"You can't feel that?"

Spike shook his head. "I can't feel anything. I even stabbed myself with it, I couldn't feel it." Spike's voice shook as he spoke. "Why can't I feel, Riley?"

Why was Spike asking him? "I don't know," Riley answered. "But you shouldn't do this to yourself."

Spike let out a little shiver. Riley went to put a hand on Spike's shoulder, but before he could Spike suddenly leaned forward and shoved his head down on Riley's shoulder. Riley froze. For a moment he didn't move, then he slowly put his hands on Spike's shoulders. He didn't pull him any closer, but he didn't push him away.

A second later Spike suddenly shot up and away from Riley. His eyes were wide as he stared at the man. Riley rose with a questioning look.

"Get out," Spike suddenly hissed. "Just...go."

Riley paused for a moment, then left. He was almost out of the cemetery before he actually realized what had just happened.

He turned and headed toward the Magic Box. It was still early enough for Buffy to be there.

Riley walked in to find most of the gang still there.

"Hey," Buffy came over and gave him a quick kiss. "What's up?"

"I just ran into Spike," Riley said. "Well, actually, I went to his crypt. I thought maybe he was up to something, since he's been acting so strange lately."

"And?"

"I found him cutting himself. He had cuts up both his arms. I asked him what he was doing and he said he couldn't feel it. He says he can't feel anything."

"Oookay," Buffy said slowly. "He's gone crazy."

"Yeah. Here's the craziest part. He kept asking me why he couldn't feel anything, and then he sort of...well, he put his head on my shoulder."

"Ug," Buffy shuddered. "Did you stake him?"

"No," Riley frowned, remembering the vampires sudden reaction. "He got sort of...scared. Or maybe startled. He told me to get out."

"Huh," Buffy shrugged. "I guess Spike's finally lost it." She looked at Giles hopefully. "Now we can stake him, right?"

Giles shook his head and didn't answer.

"I don't think so," Riley said. "This is kind of interesting. We never found anything about vampires acting this way..."

"Riley," Buffy said a little warningly.

"Sorry. I'm just a little curious." Riley told her.

Spike waited until the boy was out the door before he allowed himself to fall to his knees. He'd as good as submitted to Captain Cardboard. Just because he was loosing it was no excuse for that.

He was pretty sure Riley had no clue what had just happened. At least, not on the surface. Riley was the alpha male, but so was Spike. Usually.

It had been decades since he had been the beta male. Not since Angelus. Since then Spike had learned to take care of himself, and that generally involved being the alpha.

But something about Riley had made him want to quit. Or maybe it was this nothingness he was feeling. But SOMETHING had made him quit. Just for a few seconds. And it had felt GOOD.

"Damn, Spike, get a grip," Spike mumbled. He pushed himself back to his feet and looked down at the cuts that were already healing. They made him want to scream. He reached down and dug his fingernails into one. Nothing.

Maybe he'd feel better if he did scream.

Grabbing his coat, Spike slipped into it and walked outside. A demon with large horns was coming toward his crypt. Spike watched it with little interest. It was a Kal'ar, very dangerous. Maybe it could hurt him.

Spike walked toward the demon. The Kal'ar looked over at him and snorted in disinterest.

"Come on, you son of a bitch," Spike muttered. "Try to rip me apart. Maybe then I'll feel something."

The Kal'ar started to turn. Spike, in a sudden rage, ripped a gravestone right up from the ground and hurled it at the demon. It crashed over the large horns. The Kal'ar roared in anger and turned on Spike.

"Yeah," Spike growled. "Come on."

The Kal'ar lowered its head and charged Spike. Spike didn't even move out of its way. The large

horns torn through him and finally, there was pain. So much of it, searing through him, and Spike heard himself laughing.

The Kal'ar turned but didn't attack again. Instead it looked in confusion at the laughing vampire on the ground. Blood was flowing out of Spike to pool around him and he was laughing?

The Kal'ar turned and left. His victim would be dead come sunrise.

Spike's laughter subsided as his strength left him. Sunrise was in four hours. The last thing he was ever going to feel was the searing light of day burning him to dust.

Spike groaned softly and opened his eyes. The dark, cob web covered ceiling of his crypt stared back at him. Spike frowned. Why wasn't he dead? Who had bothered to drag him back to the crypt?

Spike suddenly became aware of hands. Someone was wrapping bandages around his wounds. Spike lifted his head to find Riley.

"Wha...?"

Riley looked up. He reached over and pushed Spike's head back down. "Careful, you'll pull them open more."

"What are you doing here?" Spike asked, trying to lift his head again, but Riley's hand was firm.

"Helping you, for some odd and unknown reason," Riley answered. "Did you do this?"

"Sort of. Got in the way of a Kal'ar." Spike sighed. "Could feel it."

"Why?" Riley finished and let Spike sit up. "Can't you try to find something to make yourself feel that won't hurt you so much."

"Who's gonna care?" Spike said, shrugging to try and cover up the tears threatening to spill. "I don't care because nobody cares about me."

A single tear slipped down Spike's cheek. Great, now he was acting like a great puffer in front of the white hat. There went the last of his reputation.

Riley stood still for a moment, unsure what to do. Here he was, having just rescued the blond menace, and now said menace was starting to cry. Slowly, Riley reached out and wiped the tear off of Spike's face with the back of his hand.

"Stop it," Spike muttered.

Riley made a frustrated noise. "Spike, I don't get you. You act like you want comfort or something, but you reject it when you get it."

Spike just looked at him.

"Well, if you decide you wanna talk or something, I'll be at the Magic Box," Riley told him before walking out the door.

Spike groaned and fell back down. Stupid git, stupid boy....

But that was just the problem, Spike thought. Riley wasn't a boy.

"Bloody hell," Spike mumbled.

Just as he was closing his eyes to sleep his door burst open. Spike left them shut, hoping the Slayer would leave if she thought he was asleep.

"Spike, wake up."

Spike didn't move.

A fist came down right onto his wounds. Spike let out a pained cry and sat up. His arm went around his stomach as he resisted the urge to laugh again.

"Hi, Slayer," Spike gasped. "You need somethin'?"

"Demon. Need help with it."

Spike snorted. "Do I look like I'm in any condition to fight?"

"I dunno," Buffy smiled. "Mabye you'll FEEL something."

Spike choked back his snarl and laid back down. "Get out."

Buffy didn't move. Spike lifted up on his elbow.

"Get out," He hissed. "Get out GET OUT!!"

Buffy rolled her eyes and left, slamming the door behind her. Spike collapsed.

"God I hate you," Spike mumbled.

Riley laid on his bed staring at the ceiling, trying to figure Spike. He was beginning to wonder if it was a vampire thing. Or maybe Spike was so used to being the tough guy that didn't need help.

Tough guy...

"Oh, Riley, you moron," Riley muttered. Alpha male. Spike was an alpha male. So was Riley. Which meant Spike thought he was submitting.

'And it just gets more and more complicated,' Riley thought.

There was a knock and Buffy walked in.

"Hey."

"Hey," Riley smiled at her distractedly.

"What're you thinking about?" Buffy asked.

"Spike," Riley said before he thought. Buffy raised one eyebrow.

"Remember I told you he was acting strangely? Well, he was acting even stranger when I tried to...I dunno, comfort him a little. I figured out why."

"Okay, I'll asked why you comforted him later," Buffy said, sitting down on the bed.

"We're both alpha males," Riley explained. "If Spike continues to help, that means he's sort of part of the pack. Which means one of us would have to back down."

"Men," Buffy muttered.

Riley laughed. "I think it's stronger with Vampires though. We did see some stuff like this in the Initiative when we'd put two vampires together."

"Okay. Now, why were you trying to comfort him?"

"I don't know," Riley sat up and looked at Buffy. "I just...I don't think he's really evil any more. And he was so unhappy."

Buffy shrugged. "If he got that chip out it would be amazing how evil he'd be in a second."

"Maybe," Riley said. "I think it's definately possible. But you never know. Maybe he'd turn around on us and stay good."

"Hopefully we'll never have to find out." Buffy grinned suddenly and slid closer. "You know, I can think of things much more pleasant then talking about Spike."

"Can you now?"

Spike reached for the door knob again before dropping his hand. What was he doing here? This had to be some sort of stupid prank or plan or something. Know way Riley would help him.

Spike reached for the door knob again. He turned it slowly, then, before he could lose his nerve, walked in.

Giles looked up from behind the counter and sighed when Spike walked in. "Do you need something?"

Spike wrapped his arms around his waist and looked around. Riley wasn't there.

"Riley said he was going to be here." Spike said.

"He was a while ago. Why?"

"Do you know where he went?"

Giles frowned. "No. What's going on?"

Spike turned around and left without answering.

Waiting until he was sure Spike was out of earshot, Giles picked up the phone and dialed Riley's number. "Riley? Yes, Spike is trying to find you. I just thought I'd warn you."

"Spike's coming over," Riley told Buffy, who was getting dressed.

"Yay," Buffy said sarcastically. "I'll get outa here then. Do me a favor and stake him?"

Riley smiled. Buffy opened the door to find Spike, hand raised to knock.

"You can come in, Spike," Riley called. Spike pushed past Buffy with a glare and walked over to the bed.

"Hi," Spike muttered.

"Hi."

Spike sat down on the edge of the bed. Riley moved to sit a little ways from him.

"You weren't at the Magic Box," Spike said.

"I left a little while ago. Didn't really think you'd come," Riley answered. "How're your wounds?"

Spike shrugged. "Can't feel them anymore." He looked over at Riley. "I don't know what's wrong with me."

"Maybe you're just lonely," Riley said with a shrug. "Maybe you should go out and make a friend."

Spike frowned. "I thought I was trying to."

Riley's eyebrows went up. "Me? No, Spike, we can't be friends."

"Why not?"

"Because..." Riley trailed off. Spike had a point. Why not? Buffy was the only reason he could think of, but she could get used to it.

"Don't you kind of hate me?" Riley asked.

"No," Spike said. "Just pretend to."

"Okay. Why?"

"Cause you're dating the Slayer," Spike answered as though that were obvious.

Riley rolled his eyes. "You're kinda weird."

Spike smiled slightly. "It's been said."

Spike stood up. "Um...see you later, then?"

"I guess."

Spike nodded, then turned and walked out.

"Great, Riley, that was bright," Riley muttered to himself. He chuckled. What would the Initiative think of this?

"Great going, Spike. Make friends with the enemy, why don't you?" Spike grumbled. "Bloody hell, why do I always get myself into these messes?"

Spike opened the door to his crypt and collapsed on the chair. He picked up the knife and looked at it for a minute before he brought it down to his arm and made a quick cut. He could just feel the

sting.

"Neat," Spike murmured. He put the knife back down. "Maybe this was a good idea after all."

Outside, hidden behind a large gravestone, a man stood. He made a gesture to the men behind him before heading toward the crypt.

Spike sat cross legged on his chair, painting his nails. His eyes strayed to the knife a couple times, but he kept distracting himself with slowly spreading the black nail polish across his nails.

When he finished he stashed the bottle in a little box under his chair. He kept his hands on the arms of the chair, waiting for the polish to dry. He wiggled his fingers in boredom, wishing something was on TV.

A minute later he tested them. Dry. Sighing, Spike stood up and was heading toward the basement when the door knob slowly started to turn. Spike froze. He thought of hiding in his sarcophagus, but he didn't have time. Darting toward the trap door, he yanked it open and ran down the ladder, pulling the door closed behind him. He locked it and slid the rest of the way down. He could hear foot steps above him, and quiet voices. Spike snarled, wishing he didn't have to be afraid of who was up there.

He headed toward an exit to the sewers he'd discovered a while ago and was now infinitely grateful for. He heard someone try to open the door, then something crashed down on it. Spike ran quickly down the smelly underground tunnel to the nearest exit. It would be day soon, but Spike was sure he had enough time to make it to Riley's.

Hold up, Riley's? Since when had Riley entered the plan? Why not just another crypt?

They'd find him in another crypt. Riley was his friend now. Wasn't that what friends did? Help each other?

Spike slid out of the tunnel to the surface only to have to hide behind a gravestone. His eyes widened. The men searching for him looked like the men from the Initiative!

"Oh, bloody hell," Spike cursed under his nonexistent breath. He darted sideways and toward Riley's.

He didn't bother to knock when he got there. Desperately hoping the Slayer hadn't decided to spend the night, Spike ran to Riley's room and pounded on the door.

Riley groaned as he awoke to someone banging on his door. A second later it opened without him saying it was okay. Spike's scared face poked around the corner before the rest of him slid around. Riley rubbed the sleep from his eyes.

"Spike? What's wrong?" "Initiative," Spike said in a disbelieving tone. "Or something very like them. Stormed my crypt. Barely got away."

Riley frowned. "We destroyed them."

"I know," Spike said.

Riley rubbed his eyes again and looked at the vampire. His face was slowly hardening, blocking the fear from view unless you looked into his blue eyes. He was scared. And angry. Riley didn't blame him. He'd be angry if he couldn't defend himself, too.

"Come here," Riley said suddenly.

Spike moved instantly, surprising Riley. Riley made him sit down and put a hand on his shoulder. "You okay?"

"Fine," Spike answered shortly. "Just hate this...really hate this..."

Riley rubbed his hand across Spike's back. "I'll bet. I never really liked the idea in the first place. But I was just a soldier, I didn't have any say in what the scientists did."

"I know," Spike said. "That's why I don't hate you."

It took Riley a second to suddenly realize what Spike was letting him do. "Hey. You're letting me comfort you."

Spike shrugged. "Friends, right? So not really submitting."

"Yeah," Riley nodded. He continued to rub his hand across Spike's back, making sure not to go near his neck. Friends or not, Spike would still react on instinct to being touched there.

"So, does your coming here mean you're asking for my help?" Riley asked.

Spike shrugged. "I guess."

"Okay."

Spike blinked. "Okay?"

"Yeah. That's what friends do. They help each other."

Spike smiled. "Oh. I couldn't remember."

Riley frowned at that. Spike had lived for 127 years and he couldn't remember the last friend he'd had? It must have driven him crazy!

A knock at Riley's door made Spike jump. His blue eyes widened again. Riley stood up. He closed his bedroom door to hide Spike and answered the front.

Graham was standing there.

"Riley," He said.

"Graham," Riley answered slowly. "What are you doing here?"

"We're hunting down Hostile 17. Someone saw him run this way. You seen him?"

Riley shook his head. "Haven't seen him in weeks. What's going on?"

Graham paused. Then he said "New Initiative. Different location. Would be great to have you back."

Riley shook his head. "Gave up the government. Good luck with finding Spike."

Riley closed the door.

The tiniest sound escaped around the door to reach Riley's ears. It almost sounded like a whimper. Riley frowned. Would Spike ever allow himself to do something like that?

He opened the bedroom door. Spike was sitting stiff as a board. He wasn't scared anymore. No, now he was terrified.

Riley sat back down next to Spike. Spike looked over at him, eyes wide.

"I don't want to go back there," Spike whispered. "I can't go back there..."

Riley put his hand on Spike's shoulder. "It's okay. You can stay here until they move out. If they don't, we'll have to work something out."

The fear in Spike's eyes didn't lessen. Riley decided to tease him instead.

"Hey, Spike? You're acting like a 'ponce' in front of me."

That did the trick. Instantly, the fear drained from Spike's eyes to be replaced by mild amusement and a little annoyance.

"That's my word!" Spike said.

"Oops, sorry," Riley said, putting on a mock sorry face.

Spike grinned. "Are not!" He wacked Riley lightly on the arm, then suddenly got up and darted out of the room. Riley rolled his eyes and followed the vamp out. He found him in the kitchen.

"What are you looking for?" Riley asked.

"Chocolate," Spike answered.

"There's some chocolate ice cream in the freezer."

Spike dug it out and grabbed a spoon. He plunked himself down at the table and began eating straight from the carton. Again rolling his eyes, Riley dug out his own spoon and dug some up.

"You're weird."

Spike made a mmph noise around his chocolate.

"I thought only women used chocolate as comfort food." Riley said, watching in amusement as Spike wolfed it down.

"Nuh uh," Spike answered. "Guys do to. Just not a lot."

Spike finally quit with the ice cream and put it away. He sat back down.

"Don't suppose you have bagged blood in there anywhere?" Spike said hopefully.

Riley laughed. "I don't make a habit of inviting vampires into my home. I'll run out and get some. You just...hang tight. Don't get into anything."

Spike made a face. "But I LIKE getting into things!" He said in a very loud and childish voice. His lips twitched.

"I know. Now be a good vampire and stay," Riley said, grinning. Spike grinned back.

It took Riley only ten minutes to run out and back. When he got back, he fully expected Spike to

be digging through a drawer, or at least watching TV. He wasn't. He was sitting in exactly the same place Riley had left him.

"Okay," Riley said, putting down his bag. "Did you turn to stone?"

Spike lifted his head. He smiled slightly. "Just thinking."

"I didn't know you could sit still that long," Riley teased, pulling out a large mug and filling it with blood before sticking it in the microwave.

"I'm tired," Spike told him. "I can sit still for pretty long when I'm tired."

The microwave beeped. Riley pulled out the mug. Spike reached up and took it, smiling gratefully to Riley. He took a big gulp. He lowered the cup and looked at it in amazement.

"Human?"

Riley put the rest away. "I know a bunch of vamps who steal the blood from hospitals."

Spike's eyes widened. "But you could have...I dunno, given it back?"

Riley shook his head. "By the time the vamps take it back to their lair, it's not good enough to use for people. But good enough for a starved vampire to drink."

Spike smiled. "Thanks."

"Sure."

The two sat in silence while Spike drank. Riley sat on the counter and thought. Why had the Initiative come back? What was the point? And why were they after Spike?

Riley glanced at Spike out of the corner of his eye. Spike kept glancing at him, and twice Riley caught a strange kind of longing in them.

Spike finished off the blood and rose, rinsing out his cup. He stood staring down at the sink for a few minutes. He glanced at Riley again.

"Wanna watch a movie?" Riley finally asked, wanting to break the uncomfortable silence.

"Sure," Spike said with a shrug.

"You have a preference?"

"No."

Riley walked into the living room and dug up his movies. Most were comedies. Some were war movies. But nothing Spike would like, he thought.

"Why don't you pick? I don't know what you like."

Spike wandered over and looked slowly through the movies. A big grin suddenly spread across his face when he spotted something.

"What?" Riley asked.

Spike held up "Labyrinth." Riley grinned a little sheepishly.

"It's funny."

Spike laughed. "Okay. Lets watch this."

Riley rolled his eyes. He'd been doing a lot of that since the vampire got there, he realized.

Spike remained silent through the whole movie. Riley thought this was a little odd. Giles had told the others that he had watched Passions with Spike a few times, and that Spike never shut up.

Riley got up and put the movie away when it was over. He looked over at Spike. Spike had curled up on his side on the couch and in the short time it had taken Riley to put the movie away he had fallen asleep.

Riley stood there for a second, looking at the vampire who suddenly seemed so small and innocent. A very strange feeling was creeping around inside him, but he didn't want to look at it too closely.

Heading to the bathroom, Riley took a quick shower before climbing into bed. Buffy would probably be over tomorrow, so he'd have some explaining to do about Spike. Closing his eyes, Riley decided he'd think of a speech when he woke up.

Downstairs, Spike's eyes opened. They stared hard at the bedroom door. Slowly, Spike stood up. He left his duster on the couch as he walked on silent feet to the door. He opened it and slid it shut as quietly as possible. He stood at the foot of Riley's bed, staring down at him for several minutes, before he carefully climbed up on the end of the bed. He curled up again, laying his head next to Riley's feet, before he closed his eyes again.

Riley groaned and slapped his alarm clocked as it beeped at him annoyingly. Why did he keep getting up at this time? It wasn't like he had anywhere he needed to be.

He started to move, but something was holding his feet down. Lifting his upper body, Riley found Spike curled up on the end of his bed. His head was pillowed on Riley's legs.

Riley stared a long time at the blond, wondering first how he'd gotten here, then why he was there. Finally, he reached down and gently lifted Spike's head. He pulled his feet out from under them, then shook Spike until he woke up.

"Five more minutes," Spike mumbled before he finally opened his eyes. His blue eyes took on a worried look when he saw Riley.

"Why are you here?" Riley asked.

"No reason," Spike rolled off the bed and disappeared. Riley sighed and followed him, finding him in the kitchen heating up blood.

"Spike."

"What?" Spike turned to him, looking like he was trying to avoid the subject.

"Why were you on my bed?"

Spike shrugged. "Probably got cold last night and remembered there was body heat in the house."

Riley frowned. It seemed like a perfectly good explanation, but Riley was almost certain the

vampire was lying. Spike raised an eyebrow at the look he was receiving.

"What?" He asked, taking a sip of his blood before hopping up on the counter.

"You're lying," Riley said. "That's not why you were in there last night."

Spike shrugged. "Maybe I am lying. Evil, remember?"

Riley smiled slightly at that and went to get his own breakfast. "Haven't seemed to evil lately."

"Oh shut up," Spike mock glared at him and took another drink.

Riley heard the door open and Buffy call his name. Spike tensed slightly but didn't move from his perch. Instead, he leaned back against the counter.

Buffy came into the kitchen. She started to smile at Riley, then frowned when she saw Spike.

"What are you doing here?"

"Nothin'," Spike said, putting his cup down. He glanced at Riley. "Hangin'."

Buffy raised an eyebrow at Riley.

"Spike wanted a friend," Riley explained. "And the Initiative's put itself back together. He needed a place to hide."

Buffy rolled her eyes. "Well, go hide in a crypt somewhere."

"Was in a crypt. Got found," Spike said. "Like it here. I think I'll stay."

Buffy turned back to Riley. "Look, we can find somewhere else for him. 'Sides, I want you all to myself."

Buffy reached out and touched Riley's shoulder.

Riley heard a funny noise behind him and turned. Spike was staring hard at Buffy. And he was growling.

"Hey, knock it off," Riley barked before he realized what he was doing.

Spike, also before he realized what he was doing, cut off the growl. He snarled at himself when he realized what he'd just done.

"Whatever," Spike jumped off the counter, downed the rest of the blood and headed toward the living room. "I'm gonna watch telly. You two shag all you like."

On the way past, Spike brushed Riley's hand with his, and Riley realized that was Spike's way of telling him that he was putting on a mask for Buffy.

Riley spent most of the day with Buffy. A couple of times when he went to the living room, Spike would stare at him, again with that strange longing and now with something that looked suspiciously like jealousy.

And that's when very strange thoughts began to creep their way across Riley's mind.

On the third journey through the living room to get a movie, Riley glanced at Spike. He was

sound asleep. He was hugging a small blue pillow from the couch, and his thumb was pressed against his lips. Riley smiled as he walked past him.

He looks pretty cute like that he thought.

Riley stopped dead in the middle of the hall when he suddenly realized what he'd just thought.

"Cute?" he said out loud. "Cute? Spike is not cute."

Well, not to him anyway. He was sure many women thought Spike was adorable with his small lean body and pretty blue eyes...

Pretty? First cute and now pretty?

Riley needed more Buffy.

In the living room, Spike had woken up and could smell something strange coming off Riley. He heard Buffy and Riley start at it again and sighed, pulling the pillow over his head. He'd leave, but was afraid to. God, he was so sick of being afraid.

"O!!" He suddenly yelled. "Keep it down, would ya!"

Buffy's noises got louder, but Riley's, the ones he actually wanted to hear, all but disappeared.

Spike grumbled at himself as he thought that. Okay, so the guy was hot. And big, he always had been a sucker for big. So what? Just wanted him as a friend, that was it. Really.

That's why you slept on his bed last night.

"Shut up," Spike told himself before closing his eyes again, trying to go back to sleep.

Buffy left around 5:00 p.m. Spike sat up as Riley walked into the room, looking a little embarrassed.

"Did you HAVE to yell like that earlier?" Riley asked as he put the movie he'd taken earlier away.

"Yup," Spike answered, smirking at him. Riley rolled his eyes. He got up and smacked Spike on the back of the head, making Spike laugh.

"Stupid vampire," Riley muttered. Spike pouted.

"Aw, but Riley, don't you love me?" Spike said in the same childish voice he'd used the other day. Riley reached out to smack him again and Spike laughed, rolling away from Riley. He stood up, still grinning.

"You know, you take away the big bad, and all you're left with is a great big dork," Riley said, grinning.

Spike glared. "I am NOT a dork!"

"You so are," Riley said, still grinning.

"Am not!"

"Are too."

Spike shut his mouth when he realized what Riley was leading him into and glared harder. Riley laughed and headed into the kitchen.

Spike wandered in after him a minute later. He sat up on the counter again and watched Riley for several minutes before he spoke.

"Why do you go out with Buffy?"

Riley paused, surprised by the question. "Why do I go out with Buffy?"

"Yeah." Spike nodded, looking curious.

Riley sat down and started to say why, when he realized he didn't know why. Which, when he thought about it, really bothered him. Why would you go out with someone, try to love them, if you didn't know what for?

He knew why he had gone out with Buffy. But not why he did now.

Spike seemed to sense this, but he didn't say anything.

"I wanted to go out with her because she was...different. Special," Riley sighed. "Now...now I don't know why."

Riley expected Spike to tease, or to say he should have seen it coming, but he stayed silent, just looking at him. The looks Spike gave him were beginning to unnerve him.

"Riley?" Spike said softly.

Riley turned. "Yeah?"

Spike paused. He opened his mouth to speak, closed it, opened it again.

"Nothing."

Riley thought about letting it go.

"What, Spike?"

Spike stared hard into Riley's eyes, like he was trying to find something in them. Then, without taking his eyes off of Riley's he pulled his coat off, which, until this second, Riley had had no idea why he was wearing in the first place.

Four more cuts marked his arm, deeper than before. Riley instantly got up and grabbed Spike's wrist, pulling his arm straight to see better.

"Why?" He asked, making eye contact again.

"When you first said you'd be my friend," Spike said slowly. "I cut myself again. I could just barely feel it. At first I was happy. I thought maybe being friends with you would drive away this nothingness I can't get myself out of." Spike's gaze was faltering. He finally looked down, at the hands that were still holding his wrist. "But being around you isn't helping. It's driving me bloody crazy!"

Riley blinked. "What? Why?"

Spike looked at him again. "You're like this bleedin' light I can just see but can't reach. You're the

first person I've had help me in years and years, but I can't get to you. I can't pull myself out of the nothingness, and I can't bring myself to drive you away."

Riley looked hard into Spike's eyes and saw the fear again, along with frustration and just a hint of tears. The arm in his hand was shaking. Riley looked down and thought about letting go, but he didn't.

"I'm right here, Spike," Riley said, trying to imagine what the vampire was going through and failing. "Can't you feel this?" He let go with one hand and lifted Spike's arm. Spike looked at it.

"No," He whispered. "I can't feel it."

Spike looked back at Riley, and then he started to laugh.

Riley dropped Spike's arm in surprise and took a step back. Tears were rolling down Spike's face, but he was still laughing, laughing so hard he was about to fall off the counter. Riley watched as he lost his balance and fell to all fours on the floor.

"Spike?"

Riley sat down hard in a chair and just watched, feeling helpless.

Finally, Spike stopped laughing. He sat back against the cabinet and rubbed a hand over his face, getting rid of any evidence of tears.

"What was that?" Riley asked, a little weirded out by Spike's performance.

For a moment Spike didn't answer. Then he looked up at Riley. His eyes were frighteningly empty.

"Have you ever reached the point where you either have to laugh or cry?" Spike asked. His voice was as empty as his eyes.

"No," Riley answered. "I haven't."

Spike didn't say anything else. He just got up and went back into the living room.

Riley stood and walked after him. He watched as Spike collapsed on the couch. He waited for a moment to see if anything else would happen before he turned and walked back to his room. He stripped, climbed in and tried hard to sleep, but he couldn't. The image of Spike on the floor laughing wouldn't leave his mind.

Making a frustrated noise, Riley closed his eyes and tried to think of Buffy. It didn't work; Spike punched her right back out.

Not long later the door opened. Riley didn't move.

"Can I sleep here again?" He heard Spike say softly.

Riley paused. He opened his eyes and lifted up on his elbow. Spike's eyes weren't completely empty anymore, but they were close, so very close.

"Yeah," He said, lying back down. "You can sleep here again."

Riley jammed his stake through his third vampire. Around midnight he'd woken up and been unable to go back to sleep. Staking vampires wasn't making him any sleepier, but it helped to

take his mind off of Spike for a few seconds.

Riley sighed. Spike was probably still curled up on his bed, hugging the pillow Riley had slipped him to replace his feet. The thoughts that kept creeping their way across Riley's mind were beginning to bother him. Especially when he'd gotten up. Spike had had his thumb pressed against his lips again, and Riley had wondered for a brief moment if Spike sucked his thumb. His immediate thought to that image had been 'cute.'

Riley grumbled to himself and went in search of another vamp. Every time he tried to think of Buffy, the blond vampire would push her right back out.

"I'm straight," Riley grumbled to himself. "I like Buffy. I like her long hair and curves. I don't like Spike or his pretty blue eyes or his...gah!"

Riley almost laughed as he realized he'd just sounded like Xander. Another vampire attacked him, this one a new fledgling. Riley staked him almost distractedly.

Looking around once more, Riley finally turned and went back home.

The door was slightly ajar when he got there. Frowning, hoping Spike hadn't woken up and thought to look for him, Riley pushed the door open.

The living room was in shambles. The TV had been knocked over, the box with the movies knocked over so the movies spread across the living room floor, the couch was on it's back. Riley quickly ran to his room. The sheets were scrambled up like someone had been trying to get away from something, and Spike's duster and lighter were lying on the floor.

"Spike!" Riley yelled, hoping desperately that Spike was hiding somewhere. "It's Riley!"

No answer. Riley searched the house and didn't find him.

Finally, Riley sank down in the only upright chair in the kitchen. They'd taken him. Spike was probably stuck in a chair or something, being experimented on like some kind of rat.

Riley reached for the phone. He highly doubted Buffy would help him, but there was a slim chance.

Spike sat curled against the far wall, watching scientists go by. His cell was exactly like the last one, only the barrier was even stronger. His hands were still tingly.

He thought back to when they'd first stormed the house. He'd woken up to find Riley gone, but hadn't been that surprised. He figured he was out dusting some vamps or something. He'd smiled when he realized Riley had given him a pillow to hug before he'd left.

He'd started to get up to get himself a snack when the door opened and Graham and three other men had run in. Spike had managed to get out around them to the living room. Graham and his boys had knocked down quite a few things trying to get to him, and just before he'd reached the door they'd shot him with something that had knocked him out instantly.

No one had come in yet to try and experiment on him. Twice one scientist had stopped to look at him, and Spike had hissed at him, but he didn't know if he could hear him.

A blood packet was lying not far away from him, but Spike wasn't going to touch it. He'd starve first.

Again, the same scientist stopped and looked in on him. This time Spike didn't even hiss. He just stared back, hoping his eyes weren't showing any fear, even if the curled in the corner position did kind of give that away.

Then the scientist suddenly spoke to him.

"Aren't you hungry?"

His voice sounded like he was talking to a dog. Spike glared and said nothing.

"It's human." The guy said. He smiled at Spike. "It won't hurt you."

"No, but you will," Spike growled.

The scientist didn't lose his smile. "No we won't. We're just curious about you."

Spike hissed again. The scientist sighed and walked away.

Gods, Spike was hungry.

Riley hung up the phone and sighed. Buffy hadn't just not agreed to help him, she'd yelled at him. Yelled at him about Spike and how he seemed to care too much about the vampire.

But Buffy didn't understand. They didn't just open your skull and put things in it. No, their were other things, things that would hurt Spike beyond any torture he may have ever done.

Riley grabbed his coat and stake and walked out to where he had last seen them. He wasn't going to sit around and let Spike get hurt like that.

Hours of searching the cemeteries did him no good. Riley frowned. He was pretty sure they wouldn't have put it under the old high school, but he might as well check.

Another hour of searching brought up nothing, and Riley was getting tired. He headed back home for a few hours of sleep before he continued the search.

Spike lay with his eyes closed on the floor, back pressed against the wall. A second packet had joined the first. Spike wanted them so bad, but he knew if he drank them, the experiments would begin. What if they put more chips in his head that did something different?

The barrier suddenly shut down. Two soldiers stood at the opening as the scientist came in. He picked up one of the packets and brought it near Spike. Spike opened his eyes and growled but didn't move.

"Come on now. We're not going to do anything to hurt you." The scientist said, still talking in that voice like he was trying to sooth a dog.

"Bugger off," Spike whispered.

He didn't see the needle coming until it was too late. The scientist stuck it in his neck and Spike felt a burning sensation before he passed out again.

When he woke up he was strapped down to a very weird looking chair. Spike weakly struggled against the bonds for a moment before he gave up. He needed blood before he had any chance of escape.

Again, the same scientist. Spike glared at him.

"Oh quit that," he said, coming up close to Spike and pushing something small and square over Spike's heart. "I told you I'm not going to hurt you."

"Why not?" Spike growled. "Just a vampire. Don't have feelings or anything."

The scientist just smiled. "We're not like the old Initiative. Besides, I know vampire's have feelings just like the rest of us. They're just a bit different. I've even come across a vampire or two who are able to feel guilty." He adjusted the square thing before going over to a monitor nearby. "Besides, I'm not sadistic. I don't take pleasure in watching others get hurt."

There was silence for a moment as he watched whatever was happening on the monitor before he came back and adjusted the square thing again. "So, what's your name?"

Spike didn't say anything. This guy was beginning to confuse him. The others had just wanted to see if they could control him, wanted to hurt him. This guy didn't apparently want to do either.

The scientist smiled slightly. "Come on, it's not like your name can get you in trouble."

Spike still didn't say anything for a few more minutes before he slowly said "Spike."

"Spike, huh? Do I wanna know how you got that name?" He grinned. "My name's Gary."

Spike looked down at the square thing. He tried not to, but finally asked. "What is this thing?"

"Hmm? Oh, I can look at your insides that way without hurting you. I just want to see what they look like after...how old are you?"

"127," Spike muttered.

"Wow. Okay, for that long they're in pretty good shape."

"Duh," Spike said, then cursed himself for saying the word. "Vampire here. My demon keeps everything normal."

"Really?" Gary moved the square thing away. "So it's some kind of magic?"

"I guess." Why was he talking to this guy. "Look, will you just lemme go?"

Gary smiled a little sadly this time. "I would, but I can't. I'm being watched. I've helped a couple like you out before, but I'm the best they've got, so they don't want to get rid of me. Otherwise I'd help you. I'm sorry. The best I can do is keep you from getting hurt."

Gary moved something down in front of Spike's forehead and went back to the monitor. Spike decided he wouldn't growl at him again. This guy wasn't quite so bad.

"Why don't you quit?" Spike asked.

"Can't," Gary told him. "Every time I try, I get threatened. I had no idea what I was getting into when I took this job."

"No kidding," Spike shifted uncomfortably in his chair. "Um, could you loosen these just a bit, mate? My wrists hurt."

Gary paused. He glanced up at something near the ceiling before he came over and loosened them enough that Spike still couldn't get away, but he didn't hurt anymore.

"Thanks."

Gary smiled. "Sure. I really am sorry I can't help you escape, you know."

Spike didn't say anything. Gary moved away again.

"Oh, so you're the one with the chip in his head," Gary said suddenly. "I was one of the few who voted against that. Not being able to kill is one thing, not being able to defend yourself is just wrong."

"Yeah, I know," Spike mumbled.

After a while Gary removed everything. "Okay, back to the...cell? Oh, here," Gary gave him a blood packet. "It's not drugged, I swear."

Spike didn't care if it was. He tore his fangs into it and drank it dry as two soldiers came in and grabbed his arms.

-Come on, Riley,- Spike thought as he was put back in his tiny cell.

Riley walked into the Magic box. Buffy was there. Giles and Anya were behind the counter talking about something, but the rest of the gang was gone.

"Buffy."

Buffy looked up. She looked angry, and a little confused. She stood up and Riley walked closer.

"Look, I know you don't give a damn about Spike and could care less if he stays where he is," Riley said. "But...I do give a damn. I don't know why, but I do. And I don't know if I can get in by myself, once I find this place. So will you PLEASE help me?"

For a while Buffy didn't say anything. When she finally spoke, the question startled Riley.

"Riley...do you care about Spike?"

"I thought I just said..." Riley started.

"No, like you used to care about me."

Like I used to? Riley thought.

"Um, Buffy? Spike's sort of a guy."

Buffy made a frustrated noise. "I know! But the way he looks at you, and the way you sometimes look back...And you've been spending more time with Spike than me. I don't know. It just looks like..." She trailed off.

"Buffy..." Riley started, and then he stopped. Buffy was right. He didn't really care about her that way anymore.

But Spike?

Riley closed his eyes and pulled up a mental image of Buffy. Once, this would have sent shivers through him. Now it was just an image.

Then he brought up Spike. The image sent more feelings through him than Buffy's ever had.

"Oh shit," Riley cursed, opening his eyes.

Now Buffy just looked sad. She smiled slightly.

"If he matters that much, then I'll help you find him," Buffy said softly.

Riley smiled back. "Thanks. I'm...I'm sorry, Buffy. I don't know how this happened."

Buffy shook her head and turned. "Spike's always had a way of getting under peoples skin."

"Riley!"

Spike sat bolt upright. He put a hand over his eyes. He was still in his cell, and Riley was still out there somewhere.

Spike laid back down, shivering as he remembered the dream he'd just had. Riley had tried to break in and had been shot. It unnerved Spike how many feelings had shot through him when he'd dreamed it happening. Anger, terror, an overwhelming sadness. Other feelings he couldn't quite put his finger on.

Gary suddenly showed up. Spike sighed. He pushed himself up as Gary opened the barrier.

"Who's Riley?" Gary asked.

Spike felt his face flush; had he yelled it that loudly?

"Nobody," Spike mumbled, following Gary toward the room with the chair. The soldiers watched at a distance, but didn't come up like they had been the past few days.

Gary grinned. "Didn't sound like nobody to me. Come on, tell me."

Spike glanced around to make sure no one else was listening. "He's...He used to work here. He was one of the soldiers."

"What's he look like?" Gary asked as they entered the room. Spike sat down in it and Gary didn't put on the restraints. Spike knew he couldn't get away, and he now trusted Gary not to hurt him.

"He's big. Really big. He's got brown hair." Spike smiled slightly and closed his eyes. "He's nice. I dunno really how to discribe him."

"You like him?" Gary asked.

"Well, yeah," Spike said, giving Gary the 'duh' look.

Gary grinned again. "I meant the other way."

Again, Spike's face flushed. God, when had he become such a nancy?

"I..." Spike trailed off. Then he smiled. "Yeah, I guess I do."

"Does he know that?" Gary asked, moving the square thing over Spike's head again.

"No. He should," Spike said with a roll of his eyes. "I've only dropped a million hints. I've even been sleeping on the foot of his bed and he still doesn't know!"

Gary chuckled. "Maybe you should tell him when you get out of here."

"If I get out of here," Spike grumbled.

Gary didn't say anything to that. He just walked back over to the monitor and studied it for a while.

"Oh dear," He said very suddenly half an hour later.

"What?" Spike asked.

Gary hit a series of buttons and his eyes widened slightly. "Oh dear," he said again.

"WHAT?" Spike said loudly, starting to get nervous.

Gary looked over at him, eyes slightly wide.

"The chip is killing you."

"Where all have you checked?" Buffy asked Riley.

"Cemeteries, the high school, the college." Riley answered. "I didn't find anything, but I was sleepy when I checked the high school."

"We can go over everything again, then check the rest of it." Buffy said. She'd put on her slayer face, trying to hide the sadness. Riley felt bad for her, but he was too worried about Spike to think about it too much.

It took them most of the day to check everything again, and still they found nothing. Riley suggested they check the caves. Still nothing.

"Damn it," Riley swore softly.

"What if it's not in Sunnydale?" Buffy said. "What if it's outside of it?"

Riley made a noise very close to a growl. "Then it would take forever!"

Riley started to walk toward the exit, but Buffy didn't move. He turned back to her and raised an eyebrow.

"I've never seen you like this," Buffy murmured. "You must really care about him."

Riley stayed silent for a moment.

"I don't know how it's possible!" Riley suddenly growled. "I mean, honestly! I've been around him for a few weeks!"

"Sometimes that's all it takes," Buffy said.

Riley ran a hand through his hair. "Damn it," he swore again. "there's gotta be a way to check around Sunnydale without walking."

Buffy nodded. "Willow and Tera. They can do a spell."

Riley brightened at that. "A spell! Great, lets go get them."

"Killing me?" Spike whispered.

Gary nodded. "It's...well, sort of eating away at your brain. If it keeps going, it's going to dust you."

Fear rushed through Spike, but for once he wasn't ashamed of it. His eyes locked onto Gary's green ones desparately.

"Is there a way to stop it?"

Gary looked thoughtful for a moment. Then a big grin suddenly spread across his face.

"Oh, oh, I have the greatest idea!" Gary said. "You stay here, okay?"

Spike nodded and Gary left. What was the git so excited about? He was dying here!

Spike shivered. If he died, he'd never get to tell Riley how he felt.

The thought caused Spike to laugh. God, he never thought he'd think that about Riley.

Gary came back in a hour later, still grinning.

"Come on, we have to go to the operating room."

Spike stood up, still looking nervous. Gary put a hand on his shoulder.

"No worries," He said with a wink. Spike raised an eyebrow in question, but Gary didn't say anything else.

The room they entered was stark white and had nothing in it but another chair that adjusted and a table covered in lots of things that Spike had no clue what were.

"Sit down there," Gary told him. Spike did. He saw Gary pull out a needle and his eyes widened.

"It's okay," Gary told him. "this is going to knock you out. When you wake up, I'll have a big surprise for you." He winked at Spike again and stuck the needle in Spike's neck before Spike could protest. Spike felt the burn again before he passed out.

Riley wanted to scream. He wanted to pick up the damn book Willow was chanting out of and throw it. Why was this taking so long? Why couldn't they just say something and poof! There was the answer.

Finally the chanting stopped (No wonder Spike hated it so much) and a green glow lit up the square on the ground. It wavered for a moment, then all shrunk into one small spot.

Willow looked up and grinned. "It worked!"

"Great, now where is he?" Riley asked impatiently.

"He's just outside of town. Actually he's right near the Sunnydale sign."

"Okay, lets go."

Spike woke up to searing pain in his head. Groaning, he lifted his hands to either side of his head in an attempt to make it stop.

"No no," Gary pulled his hands down. "Don't touch it."

"Hurts," Spike said, his voice coming out in almost a whimper, thought at that moment he didn't really care.

"I know," Gary rubbed his hand back and forth over Spike's shoulder. "I know. But it'll stop in a few minutes."

Spike squeezed his eyes shut and pictured Riley blocking the pain.

After a few minutes it stopped. Spike opened his eyes and saw Gary grinning at him.

"Guess what?" Gary said.

"What?" Spike asked curiously.

"The chip is out."

Spike's eyes grew round as saucers. "WHAT?!?!"

Gary laughed, "Shh! Can't let anyone else know. I tricked them. I told them I'd found a way to make the chip stronger. I took it out and destroyed it. I need you to keep pretending it's in until we get you out of here, though, or it'll be far worse for you."

Spike nodded, grinning as widely as Gary now. He wanted to hug Gary, but he knew they were being watched and his big bad image was in danger. So he just kept grinning.

"Do you know a way out?" Spike asked.

Gary shook his head. "No. But I overheard the soldiers talking about your Riley. He's searching for you."

My Riley, Spike thought.

"Then I should be out of here in no time." Spike paused. "I mean we."

Gary's eyes widened at that. "oh no! I'd be hunted down."

"Riley and I can help you," Spike told him. "I can't just leave you here after everything you've done for me."

Gary smiled at that. He put his hand back on Spike's shoulder. "If you really think you can, I'd be

delighted to go."

Spike smiled back. "Riley'll understand after I tell him what's been going on. He'll help."

Gary nodded. "Alright. For now, lets get you back to your cell."

Riley and Buffy stood near the Welcome To Sunnydale sign, trying to figure out where the entrance would be. And what to do, once inside.

"There's nothing here," Riley murmured, looking around the flat ground.

Buffy shrugged. "I dunno. There's gotta be an entrance here somewhere. But aren't they gonna have the voice thingy and stuff again?"

Riley hadn't thought of that. "Yeah, they are. Darn."

Riley started pacing back and forth in front of the sign. "We could get in however you guys did that one time. Oh, but you got caught." Riley frowned. "Maybe I can reason with them. Try to find Graham and tell him what's going on."

"Right, and after you tell them your story they'll gladly give Spike over," Buffy said sarcastically. "That's not gonna work."

Riley sighed. "I know. I'm grasping at straws here."

After a long while Riley stopped pacing. "I think the only thing we can do is hide out somewhere nearby and watch. Wait until someone comes up. Then at least we'll know where the entrance is."

Buffy nodded. They hid behind a bush a ways away.

Several hours brought nothing, and Buffy was getting tired. She yawned, but Riley didn't notice. His eyes remained focused on the area around the sign.

"Riley, we should come back tomorrow." Buffy said. "I'm tired, and I'm sure you are too."

"Nope," Riley said, shaking his head. "You go. I'll wait here for another few hours, then head home."

Buffy paused, looking worried. Then she nodded. She stood and was quickly out of sight.

Seconds after she left, the ground at the base of the only tree in sight heaved upward and four men crawled out, dragging with them a man who was bound and had a bag over his head. A scientist came scrambling up after them, protesting loudly, loudly enough for Riley to hear.

"Really, he's not going to run away....Spike's been perfectly good, you've seen him..."

Riley tensed, ready to leap. It was Spike. But he wasn't struggling. Why wasn't he struggling? And why was the guy defending him?

"You think he's not going to bolt the second he sees he's out in the open?" A soldier said with a laugh that sounded like a bark. "What do you care, anyway? He's just a thing."

At that Spike jerked. The scientist reached out and grabbed his shoulder.

"What are you going to do with him?"

"We're supposed to test his durability," The soldier answered.

At that the guys eyes widened. "You mean...you're going to leave him tied up in the middle of the cemetery to get attacked? And why must I be there?"

"You have to patch him up afterwards. And you're supposed to observe."

"I'll do no such thing!" The guy was starting to get angry.

"S okay, Gary," Riley heard Spike's voice from under the bag. "I'm more resorceful then they think."

the guy....Gary...still looked worried, but the soldiers roughly hauled Spike away and Gary followed helplessly.

Spike felt like he was suffocating in the bag they had around his head. But even through the heat and strange scent that covered the bag he could smell Riley. He was near, probably waiting until the soldiers were gone to save him.

But the soldiers wouldn't be gone. They'd be nearby, watching. Spike just hoped Gary wouldn't abandon him.

Finally they stopped. The hands let go and Spike was left to stand there, blind and bound. He waited until he heard the soldiers go a good distance off before he started to wiggle his arms, losening the the bonds.

The bag was suddenly whipped off his head. Big, rough hands tackled his restraints.

"Riley," Spike murmured.

"Shh, they're still close. Haven't got much time," Riley panted. He must have been running to keep up, Spike thought.

"Gary," Spike said, turning around when Riley had the bonds undone. "We have to get Gary!"

Riley grasped Spike's arm. "Spike, we don't have time, we have to get out of here..."

Spike wasn't listening. He turned, scanning with his vampire sight until he saw Gary hidden in the trees nearby. He made a quick, desparate motion to him. Gary bolted out and toward them.

"Hurry!" Gary yelled. "They've spotted you!"

Riley grabbed Spike's arm again and without waiting began to run, hauling Spike along with him. Spike heard Gary catch up and the three ran as fast as they could, but it still wasn't fast enough. Soldiers seemed to appear out of nowhere, surrounding them in seconds. Spike and Riley ended up back to back in the middle of the ring with Gary hanging close by.

"General's not gonna be pleased, Gary," The one who appeared to be in charge said.

Gary spat at him. Spike was surprised.

"General won't be seeing me again," Gary said in a dangerous voice Spike didn't know he was capable of.

The one in charge frowned. Then he made a motion to the others and they began to close in.

'Don't kill them' Spike said to himself before he vamped, letting out a roar as he lunged. He swung his fist down onto the back of the first one's head, knocking him out. He whirled around and kicked the next in the face, sending him reeling backwards.

Riley stood in the center, frozen in shock. Spike was hitting them. Hitting them....but not killing them.

Riley leaped to Spike's side and together they took out most of the guards in short order, with Gary helping with some moves that surprised them both.

Just as Spike thought they were winning, everything seemed to suddenly slow down. Spike turned and the loud bang of a gun being shot sounded. Spike's eyes widened in horror when he saw Riley jerk, then fall to the ground.

"NO!" Spike screamed. He lunged at the man who had shot Riley. This time he didn't hold back; he tore his fangs into the man's throat and drained him dry.

He dropped the dead man and whipped around to Riley. He was alive, but his breathing was harsh, and his face was turning white as snow. Spike dropped down to his knees next to Riley and began looking him over. The bullet had hit him in the side. Spike's face paled impossibly farther at the sight.

"I'm okay," Riley gasped. "I'm...."

"Bloody not okay!" Spike growled. He slid an arm under Riley's shoulders and hauled him to his feet. "Come on, the hospitals not far. Gary! I need help!"

Gary was there in a flash, holding Riley up on his other side. "We have to hurry, he's losing blood fast."

They walked as fast as possible to the hospital. The rest of the next hour went by in a blur for Spike. When it finally settled, he was sitting next to a sleeping Riley.

"He's going to be okay," A doctor was saying. "You got him here before he lost too much of his blood, and the bullet didn't hit anything vital."

Spike nodded numbly.

"Are you family?"

Spike shook his head. "I don't know what I am."

The doctor looked puzzled at that, but he didn't say anything. He left the room. Spike waited a moment, then he got up and walked to the pay phone outside. He dug around until he found enough change to call Buffy.

"Hello?" Buffy answered.

"It's Spike," Spike said, and he suddenly realized his voice was rough. Had he been crying?

"Oh, I guess Riley saved you then?"

Spike squeezed his eyes closed. "We're at the hospital. Riley was shot."

Long pause.

"Is he okay?" Buffy said slowly.

"Doctor said so," Spike answered. He leaned against the wall. "It scared the bleedin' crap outa me, though."

Another pause. Then Buffy said. "I'd guess."

Spike was surprised that Buffy wasn't mad.

"I'll be there soon." Buffy said before hanging up.

Spike put the phone down and went back into the room. Riley's eyes were open, and he was searching the room, looking nervous. When his eyes landed on Spike he relaxed.

"Hey," Spike said, smiling.

"Hey," Riley smiled back. He held his hand out. Spike sat back down nearby and took the hand in both of his smaller ones.

"You killed him," Riley said.

Spike nodded. "I'm sorry."

Riley looked surprised at that. "Why?"

Spike looked up and into Riley's eyes. "Why? I...I didn't think you'd like that much."

Riley shrugged. "Kill or be killed, right? He attacked me, you defended me. You didn't kill anyone else, and you could have."

Spike nodded. His body was still buzzing from the fresh blood, but he had been too worried to notice. "I don't want to anymore. I think I grew a conscience."

Riley tried to laugh but ended up coughing. "I'm glad. How did the chip come out?"

"Gary. That's why I didn't want to leave without him. He was kind to me while I was there."

Riley nodded. "So even though you can get blood again, you won't?"

Spike smiled. "I didn't say that. I can still kill bad people. Murderers and rapists, people like that."

Riley nodded again. "You'd be getting your blood, and at the same time doing the world a favor."

Spike nodded. He moved his thumb back and forth over the back of Riley's hand.

"You scared me," Spike whispered.

Riley squeezed the small hand in his. "I'm okay."

Spike nodded. He glanced around, then he suddenly stood up and crawled up on the bed next to Riley, on his good side. He layed his head on Riley's chest and Riley slung an arm loosely over his small frame. He moved his arm so he could stroke Spike's hair.

"It's okay, Spike."

Spike thought he should be the one telling Riley it was okay. He closed his eyes and let himself get lost in the feel of Riley's hand gently stroking his hair.

Then it stopped. The hand slid under his chin and lifted his head. Spike opened his eyes. He was so close to Riley, so very close...

Spike felt himself moving forward as Riley lifted up slightly. Spike tilted his head, his eyes falling closed again, as Riley's lips closed over his.

Spike felt like an explosion took place behind his eyes. The nothingness he'd been trapped in for so long exploded into a thousand colors that danced behind his eyelids as Riley coaxed his mouth open and slid his tongue inside. Suddenly he could feel the heat below him, feel Riley's heart beat beneath his hands. The feelings seemed to rush inside and around him, overwhelming him with the pleasure of it all. He pressed himself harder against Riley. Riley's hand slid back to grip the back of his head, holding him in place.

Finally, Riley had to break away to breath. Spike left his eyes closed, reveling in the feelings that wrapped around him.

"Spike?" Riley murmured.

Spike opened his eyes. Riley looked worried. Spike let lose a big, happy smile, this first in what seemed like years. Riley's worry melted away and he kissed Spike again, quickly, before relaxing back against the pillows and closing his eyes. Spike tucked his head down and fell asleep wishing that Riley's arms would never let go of him.

In the doorway, Buffy silently watched the whole thing. Watched the kiss, watched Spike come to life. She thought to go in and wake them, but the two looked to peaceful. Smiling sadly, Buffy turned and sank down into a chair, already working out what she was going to say to Spike when he came out.

Riley woke up but didn't open his eyes at first. Spike's weight was still wrapped around him. A soft rumble was vibrating from Spike through Riley, and he laughed when realized the vampire was purring.

The laugh died when he thought about Spike being a vampire. He sighed, starting to open his eyes. He'd have to talk to Spike about it later.

"Hey."

Riley turned his head and saw Buffy sitting nearby. Riley smiled. "Hey."

"You two look cozy," Buffy said, and Riley realized Buffy was trying to be happy for them.

"Spike sure is," Riley said with another soft laugh.

There was a long moment of silence before Riley said "I kissed him a little while ago."

Buffy nodded. "What was it like?"

Riley closed his eyes. "Like...like flying. It was like there was this explosion and I was just being lifted up and swept off in this sea of pleasure." Riley opened his eyes again. Buffy looked a little envious.

"Okay, now I'm jealous," Buffy said with a small laugh.

Riley smiled. Buffy stood up. "I gotta go. Nasty thing called patrol."

Riley nodded.

The door opened and Gary poked his head in. "Just wanted to check..." He trailed off when his eyes landed on Buffy. Green eyes met with hazel and locked. Riley couldn't help but grin when Gary ran a nervous hand through his blond hair.

"I don't believe we've met," Gary moved the rest of the way into the room and held out the hand he'd just used to straighten his hair. "I'm Gary."

Buffy smiled and slid her hand into his. "Buffy."

Spike stirred and lifted his head, blinking sleepily. He smiled when he saw the scene across the room.

"You dump her, Gary finds her," Spike murmured sleepily, turning his head to look at Riley.

Riley smiled and ran the back of his hand over Spike's cheek. "Doctor came in earlier. He said if I can handle you sleeping on top of me, I can go home tonight."

Spike smiled. "Didn't think it was weird?"

"No. He just laughed." Riley continued to stroke Spike's cheek and Spike saw the worried look in his eyes.

"What?" He asked nervously.

Riley sighed. "I need to talk to you when we get out of here. About...you know, the whole immortality thing."

Spike looked relieved, to Riley's surprise. "Oh, that. It's okay. If you...well, after we test this for a while, see if it takes...I can make you my consort."

Riley raised an eyebrow in question. "What's that mean?"

"It means you'll be my life mate. Which means as long as you drink from me every so often, and I drink from you, you'll live as long as I do."

"Oh," Riley smiled. "Well, that takes care of that then."

Spike tucked his head back down on Riley's chest and smiled. Buffy and Gary were gone. Spike hoped they kept getting along. They both needed somebody.

"You trust Gary?" Riley asked suddenly.

Spike nodded. He smiled. "I know what you're thinking. He's being too nice. Too helpful."

Riley nodded, moving his hand back to Spike's hair.

"I asked Gary about that. His only friends are demons. He's never had a human friend. Gary's got that kind of luck where he meets all the demons that are either nice or have turned nice. He named a few that I know." Spike paused, then continued. "I think he might have a little demon blood in him, too, so he feels like he has to help us. I don't know. But I do know what it's like not to be excepted by your own kind. You start looking somewhere else, to a different kind."

Riley nodded again, but before he had a chance to speak the door opened and the doctor walked in.

"Feeling better?" He asked Riley. Riley nodded.

"You must be, if your boyfriend is still sleeping on you," The doctor grinned at them both. Spike felt his face flush again, but at least he wasn't alone this time. He grinned around his embarrassment. Boyfriend. He was Riley's boyfriend.

"Well, I guess you can get up."

Spike reluctantly moved from his place and helped Riley to stand. Riley winced but stood up straight and, with a little help from Spike, walked outside.

Buffy and Gary were sitting side by side in the waiting room, talking. They didn't even notice the two until Spike cleared his throat.

"Riley!" Buffy jumped up. "You okay?"

"Yeah, I'm cool. Mr. Over Protective here won't let go, though." Riley smiled down at Spike and Spike smiled back.

"Can you make it home okay?"

"Yeah. It's not far." Riley smiled reassuringly at her. "Why don't you and Gary hang out for a while?"

"Oh, I'm sure Gary has things to do..." Buffy started.

"No, absolutely nothing!" Gary said a little too quickly. He grinned embarrassedly. "I'm sort of out on a job, right now."

"Oh. Okay." Buffy grabbed Gary's arm. "See you guys later!"

"She moved on quick," Spike murmured.

"I think that means they're supposed to be together," Riley said with a smile. "Sort of moved on to you pretty quick, too."

Spike grinned. "Didn't even see it coming, huh?"

"Nope. And now that I think about it, it was OBVIOUS what you were doing," Riley laughed as they slowly made their way out of the hospital. "And no more sleeping at the foot of my bed. I can't snuggle with you down there. At least not comfortably."

Spike continued to grin. "You got it, mate."

Spike made Riley lie down as soon as they got home. Riley rolled onto his good side and held out his arm. Spike kicked off his boots and snuggled up to Riley.

"Aren't you usually Mr. Hyper Guy?" Riley asked, kissing Spike's temple.

"Yup," Spike said, shivering when Riley kissed him there.

"Then how can you stand this?"

Spike twisted his head until he could see Riley. "I'd never move again if you would just leave your arms around me."

Riley smiled at that answer and kissed Spike. He broke off a second later and laid his head down on the pillow.

Spike suddenly turned so he was facing Riley. "Hurry up and heal."

Riley chuckled. "Why?"

Spike gave him a look.

"oh," Riley blushed slightly. "Heh. Never done that before."

Spike shrugged. "I have. It's not exactly hard." He grinned. "Not that way, anyway."

Riley's hand slowly wandered down from Spike's hair to his hip. His hand clamped down as he kissed Spike again with much more passion than last time.

"Not healed yet," Spike panted, starting to grow hard at the attention.

Riley's hand kneaded on his hip before moving lower to his thigh. "Doesn't vamp blood heal things?"

Of course! Spike mentally smacked himself for not thinking of it earlier. He vamped out and ripped open his wrist. Riley didn't need to be coaxed; he sealed his mouth over the wound. Spike let him drink for a minute before pulling his wrist away. Riley lifted his other arm, which was covering the wound, and lifted his shirt. Spike watched as it slowly healed.

"Well," Riley said with a sly smile. "I guess I'm healed enough."

The next thing he knew he was on his back with a very hard and needy vampire kissing him. Riley let his hands wander, trying not to think of his nervousness. Nervousness that was quickly replaced by want as Spike did every trick he could think of to make Riley relax.

"I'll go slow," Spike promised as he broke away from Riley's mouth to trail kisses down to his neck.

"Okay," Riley agreed, pulling Spike's shirt off.

And it was slow. Slow and sweet and everything Spike once thought he'd hate. For the first time since Angelus, Spike ended up on the bottom, and once there he didn't need to instruct Riley anymore. Even though he'd never done this before, Riley made Spike crazy with the feelings that rushed through him.

When it was over Spike curled up against Riley's chest and buried his face in his neck. Riley stayed awake long after Spike, stroking his hair and shoulders, thinking Buffy had never made him feel that much pleasure, or made him feel this content afterwards. Just looking at Spike made him feel more things than Buffy ever had.

Finally, Riley closed his eyes. They'd have to deal with the threat of the Initiative tomorrow.

Riley woke up to the smell of bacon and coffee. Yawning, he stood up, pulled his sweats on and wandered out into the kitchen. He blinked, then grinned at the image that greeted him. Spike,

also shirtless, was scrambling eggs and keeping a sharp eye on the bacon that was frying in another pan.

"Oh my god, you look cute," Riley said before he thought. Spike looked around, then grinned.

"If you ever tell anyone I can cook I'll kill you," Spike said cheerfully. Riley sat down nearby and saw a cup of coffee waiting for him. "Didn't know if you liked creamer and all that rot."

"No," Riley took a sip and watched Spike put the eggs and finished bacon on a plate. "Thank you."

Spike shrugged, putting the plate down before he grabbed a large mug of blood out of the microwave and plunked down near Riley. "Welcome."

Riley laughed. "And everyone thinks if you get a boyfriend, you'll have to cook for yourself."

Spike rolled his eyes. "I was in a generous mood. Don't expect it everyday."

Somehow Riley knew Spike would make him eggs every morning if he wanted him to. But he said nothing, instead digging into the eggs.

"Buffy called," Spike told him after Riley had finished. "Wants us to come over and get researchy. Dunno why, not gonna find anything about the Initiative in a book."

Riley shrugged. "Maybe she's got something else in mind. How'd she sound?"

"Really, really happy," Spike answered. He drained the rest of his blood and rinsed out his cup. "Sounded like a bleedin' bird."

Riley laughed. "That's good."

The two went separate ways heading for the Magic Box, Riley using the sidewalks and Spike the sewers.

Buffy looked up when Riley walked in. Spike was already there. He crossed the room and Riley put an arm around his shoulders.

"What's up?" Riley asked.

Gary looked up from the table. "I'm trying to draw out the inside of the Initiative. If I can do it right, and we can get passed the security, we can bring it down again."

"But will it stay down this bloody time?" Spike grumbled.

Gary shrugged. "I don't know. But if we just leave it, they'll come after you again."

Riley squeezed Spike's shoulders when he shivered, then let go and pulled out a seat. He expected Spike to sit next to him, instead, he flopped right down in Riley's lap. Riley laughed.

"What?" Spike grinned at him innocently.

"Nothin'," Riley wrapped an arm around Spike's back and looked at Buffy, who was giggling.

"Shut up, Slayer," Spike said cheerfully.

"Sorry," Buffy said. "But you guys look cute. And I so never imagined you on someones lap."

Spike shrugged. "Used to do it to Angelus when he'd let me."

Buffy rolled her eyes at that.

Gary put down the pencil in his hand. "Done! It sucks, but it'll do."

Buffy looked down at it. "It'll work. Are there any back ways in?"

Gary nodded. "One. It's for emergencies. You have to pass the voice test, but I should be able to do that."

Buffy nodded. "Great. Spike, you're gonna have to stay here, I think, since you can't fight."

Spike looked nervously at Riley. Riley nodded.

"Buff...the chip's out."

Buffy tensed. "What?"

"Gary took it out for me. But I don't want to kill people anymore. Not good people, anyway. I told Riley I'm just goin' to kill bad people. That cool?"

Buffy relaxed a little. "Yeah, that's cool. Wow, Riley, you were right. He turned around on us and stayed good."

Spike smiled and looked down at Riley. Riley shrugged. "Anything's possible."

Spike bent his head and gave Riley a quick kiss before he looked back at Buffy. "So, when we doin' this?"

Buffy glanced outside. "Sunset. If you can fight, you'll be useful."

Spike nodded. "K. Got things to do until then." He hopped off Riley's lap. "Meet you back home."

Riley grinned and nodded. Buffy made an 'ew' face when she realized what was going on.

Half way back through the sewers Spike realized what he'd just said. Home. He was going home.

Grinning happily, Spike practically skipped the rest of the way home.

In the shadows, golden eyes flashed.

Spike, Riley and Buffy followed Gary down a winding tunnel toward the only entrance they had a chance of getting through. Spike and Riley's hands were touching.

"Ah ha!" Gary said down the tunnel. "Found it!"

The others caught up. There was a small speaker in the wall and nothing else.

"Gary Hannigan," Gary said clearly into the speaker.

The wall slid aside. Spike rolled his eyes at the typicalness of it.

"Now what?" Spike asked.

"Spike, you're going to make your way back to the place where they keep the demons. Release them. It'll give us the distraction we need." Buffy said.

"Adam all over again," Spike muttered. "Then what?"

"Try to find us."

Buffy turned to Gary. "Your job is to put a virus into the computers. You can do that, right?"

"Easy," Gary said with a grin. "I can make the computers crash completely."

Buffy nodded. "Great. Riley, you're with me. We're going to distract the general and friends so we can keep them away from Gary and Spike."

Riley nodded and he and Buffy disappeared down the hall.

"See ya soon," Spike said, punching Gary on the shoulder before heading in the opposite direction. He ran down several halls before he finally came to the demon enclosure.

Several demons started to make a racket when they saw him. Spike looked around to see if there was a main release but didn't see one.

"Damn," Spike waited for a scientist to come through. He knocked him out and stole his key card. v "Yeah, yeah, calm down," Spike muttered as he let loose the first demon. It took off down the hall and out of sight.

"Hey!"

Spike turned to see another vampire. He was pointing at something.

"There's a main release behind the wall right there!"

Spike turned to look, then punched a hole in the wall. He ripped aside the rest until he found it.

"Thanks, mate," Spike said before swiping the card through and tossing it aside as the demons were let out.

For a moment there was confusion. Then, right in the middle of the mass, Spike saw a strange looking man. He was standing perfectly still, as though the chaos around him didn't bother him. He was wearing a cloak with the hood pulled up so his face was shadowed. Then he moved as though to turn away, and before he disappeared into mid air Spike caught a glimpse of golden eyes.

Spike suddenly became aware that several vampires were patting him on the back and trying to pull him along with the crowd. He went with them, deciding to pretend for the moment he was going to help with the slaughter they intended.

He slipped away from the demons and into a room full of computers. Gary was typing away at one. Three men were out cold on the floor.

"How's it coming?" Spike asked, pulling a smoke from his pocket.

"Good. It's taking a bit though." Gary glanced up as Spike lit the smoke. It was suddenly yanked out of Spike's mouth and tossed across the room without Gary ever moving.

"Whoa!" Spike watched the smoke land. "What was that?"

"I don't need to be choking on second hand smoke while making a virus," Gary said, looking back at the screen. "I thought you'd figured it out by now."

"What?"

"I'm half Gara demon."

Gara. Gara's were peaceful demons who concentrated on expanding their mental abilities. They could do some incredible things.

"Cool. Does Buffy know?"

"Not yet," Gary paused in his typing to wait for something. "I wanted to wait until afterwards, for fear she wouldn't trust me."

Spike nodded in understanding. "I gotta go find them. See ya."

Gary made a vague gesture at him with his hand and Spike took off.

Spike sniffed out Riley's trail and followed it until he came to a room. At least ten different demons and even more soldiers were in the middle of a battle, and Riley was right in the middle of it all. Spike punched a path through to him.

"Where's Buffy?!" Spike called over the noise as he reached him.

"I dunno! I lost her back a ways!" Riley grabbed a demon and threw him into another. The two dropped away and there was the man...? again. Spike blinked.

"Who's that?" Riley asked.

"I don't know," Spike sniffed at him. Nothing he recognized.

Spike watched the man's lips, the only thing he could see from under the hood, stretch into a smile. A black gloved hand reached for him.

Riley lashed out with his leg, but before his foot ever came into contact the man disappeared.

Spike suddenly noticed that the rest of the demons were dead, and the soldiers were looking around in confusion.

"This can't be good," Riley muttered.

Spike frowned, staring at the place the man had just disappeared. He didn't get a sense of evil off of him. Not a sense of good, either, but he wasn't evil.

"Come on, let's find Buffy," Riley grabbed his hand and Spike forgot about the man.

Just as they found the room Buffy was in the light suddenly shut off. The backup ones flickered and went out as well.

"Go Gary," Spike muttered under his breath.

Gary suddenly appeared out of thin air in front of them. Buffy looked startled.

"How'd you do that?" She asked suspiciously.

Gary smiled nervously. "Um...can I tell you after we get the hell out of here?"

Buffy sighed and nodded. Gary led them quickly through the halls, trying to avoid the fighting as much as possible.

Spike caught a glimpse of the man several times as they left. He wondered briefly what he was, and what he was doing there, but he decided not to worry about it as they ran out onto the surface.

Spike realized as they headed back toward the Magic Box that Riley was still holding his hand. Once, only Drusilla would have ever been able to get away with this. Spike laughed out loud.

"What?" Riley asked.

"Nothing," Spike said, smiling and squeezing the hand in his. "I think Gary and Buffy need some alone time, don't you?"

Riley smiled. "Yeah. Buffy, don't judge him, okay? Spike and I are going home."

Buffy nodded.

Two months later.

Spike clapped with everyone else when Riley blew out the candles on his birthday cake, which, Spike thought proudly, he'd made himself. He was NEVER going to admit it out loud, though. Buffy'd never let him hear the end of it.

Spike walked over and plunked himself down in Riley's lap. Riley laughed. "How am I supposed to eat cake if I have to hold you here?" Riley asked, wrapping his arms around Spike to keep him from falling off.

Spike grinned. He cut a piece of the cake and scooped up some with the fork. "Like this."

Riley laughed and pulled the piece off with his teeth. Across the room, Buffy rolled her eyes, even though she was sitting in Gary's lap. She hadn't taken it very well when she'd learned Gary was half demon, but when she later found out about the Gara's, she'd said she was sorry. Gary hadn't taken it personally.

Spike looked happily around the room. Willow and Tera were sitting on the couch, awing about how cute he and Riley were. Buffy and Gary were sitting across from them. Giles was sitting near Riley, talking to him. Giles was the only one without a companion. Spike felt sorry for him.

Riley kissed Spike's temple, a place, he'd discovered, that always made Spike shiver. "What're you thinking about?"

Spike looked down at him and smiled. "Nothin'," Spike kissed him, then glanced at Giles, who'd stood and was looking out the window. "We need to hook Giles up with someone."

Riley grinned and leaned his head against Spike's. "I've been thinking the same thing."

Spike turned his head so their foreheads were touching. "Riley...I've been meaning to ask you about...about making you my consort."

Riley lifted his hand and stroked it down Spike's cheek and smiled. "Tonight." Was all he said. Spike grinned happily.

Night seemed to take forever in coming. When it finally came, Spike's stomach was in knots. He'd never taken a consort before. What if he did something wrong?

Riley seemed to sense his nervousness and hugged him. "You'll do fine. What do I have to do?"

Reaching up and stroking Riley's neck with one finger, he looked up into Riley's eyes. "Once I bite you, you'll have to wait a few seconds, then bite me back. Hard enough to bleed. You'll have to drink a bit."

Riley nodded. "That it?"

"Yeah," Spike kissed the side of Riley's throat. "Ready?"

Riley's answer was to grip the back of Spike's head. Spike vamped and very carefully slid his fangs into Riley's neck. He heard Riley gasp and wrapped his arms around him.

Seconds later blunt teeth broke the skin where his neck and shoulder connected. Spike let out a sound that was muffled by Riley's skin and gripped him harder.

Spike felt something strange start to happen. His Sire had told him about this. The feeling was supposed to grow to the point where you could barely stand it, and then everything was supposed to grow very calm. Or so he'd been told.

Sure enough, the feeling reached the point where Spike wanted to pull away, but didn't. He felt Riley jerk, but he also didn't move.

Then, finally, there was a very sudden, strong calm. Spike pulled away with a gasp at the same time as Riley.

"Whoa," Riley panted against his shoulder. Spike laughed.

"So, it's done, then?" Riley pulled back and then leaned his forehead on Spike's.

"Yes," Spike smiled. "It's done."

Riley reached up and stroked his cheek again. "I love you, Spike."

Spike's head jerked back in surprise. In the whole two months they'd been together, Riley had never said that. A big grin spread across his face.

"I love you too, Riley Finn," Spike answered, leaning up to kiss him.

Outside, the man with the golden eyes watched. It wasn't time yet. The two weren't ready.

He turned and walked away. The world blurred around him and reset in a small room. Several others were there.

"Are they ready?" One asked.

He shook his head. "Not yet. But soon." He smiled.

"Very soon."

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