

Summary: Xander reaches L.A.

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Warnings: Previous Warnings Apply

Challenges: None

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Chapter 1 by MultiMapper

Xander and Wesley had traveled all morning and well into the afternoon without saying more than a dozen words to each other. The silence wasn't strained or uncomfortable, they were both caught up in their own thoughts, contemplating events past, present and future.

When they had entered California, Xander felt his heart lurch. He knew that the past feelings between Wesley and himself were tender and loving compared to his past with Angel. He had not only been rude and nasty to Angel, he had been downright hateful. Not to mention that he had been responsible for sending Angel to hell for centuries.

If it weren't for the welfare of his baby, Xander wouldn't consider asking Angel for anything. Not out of a dislike for Angel but out of a sense of shame for his own actions. He knew that he was justified in one or two of his actions but for the most part he had acted out of jealousy, anger, and eventually, habit.

Now he had to stand before the one being on all the planet who had the most reason to want him to suffer. He had to stand before him and ask for his help. When they entered Los Angeles, Xander could feel a little tremble start deep inside himself. He couldn't explain exactly what the feeling was. Dread? Fear? Humiliation? Whatever it was, it was only going to grow stronger, the closer they got to Angel.

Finally they arrived at the Hyperion hotel. Xander got out of the car and looked up at the building. An old style building, grand majesty, the building had a dignity that comes only with age. Xander cradled his egg close to his chest as he followed Wesley closely into the hotel.

The inside of the hotel was even more majestic. Everything in sight was obviously from the days when this was a functioning hotel. Modernization had a way of creeping into places like this and destroying them in the name of progress. Xander had a special feel for this sort of thing since his construction work days. He could appreciate the craftsmanship that went into this place.

At the sound of movement in the lobby, Angel came out of his office. Xander glanced at him and cast his eyes to the floor. He couldn't, just couldn't face him.

"You made good time." Angel said conversationally, then did a double take. "Your eye... you had lost your eye... didn't they say it was gone?"

"Yes, it... um... grew back." Xander said nervously and looked at Wesley.

Angel noticed the nervousness and decided to change the subject, "Xander, I'm guessing that you're tired after your long trip. I'll get you settled into a room so you can rest, and we can talk later."

"Let's get your luggage in, and I'll be on my way." Wesley said, it was obvious that he didn't want

to stay any longer than necessary.

Xander nodded and followed Wesley outside to the car.

As Wesley was opening the trunk, Xander placed his free hand on Wesley's arm to get his attention.

Wesley looked up to see the pensive expression on Xander's face.

"Wesley, I just wanted to thank you again for going all that way to help me. I want you to know that I really do appreciate you going out of your way for me when you had no reason to. If there is ever any way I can repay you, please let me know." Xander said shyly.

"Alexander, I am truly amazed by how much you've grown since we last met. I must admit that I held to my old notions of you and didn't consider that you could have changed. You did. You are growing into a respectable man who I would be proud to call a friend." Wesley said seriously.

Xander was surprised by Wesley's declaration, when only the previous evening he had said that he couldn't trust him to make a promise. "Thank you Wesley, but, if you don't mind my asking, why the change?" Xander asked, confused.

"During our trip here you've demonstrated that you can think of someone other than yourself, you have regret for past actions, you have shown honesty, trust, and a willingness to invest effort into building a friendship. With you willing to go to such lengths for me, I could hardly do any less in return. Now, let's get these bags into the hotel." Wesley said with a somber smile.

They took the suitcases into the hotel, Wesley carrying two and Xander carrying one with one arm and the egg with the other. Once inside, Angel led them to a room on the second floor where Xander could get some rest, and tend to his egg.

As Wesley and Angel walked away from Xander's room, Angel asked, "What happened to him? The old Xander would have insulted me twelve times by now. He couldn't even bring himself to look at me."

"It seems he recently realized that he isn't the center of the universe." Wesley said quietly, considering his words carefully.

"How do you mean?" Angel asked, confused.

"When we knew him before, he seemed to think that he could treat people anyway he wanted without consequences. I think he realizes how badly he treated the people around him and he is feeling ashamed. I don't know what past you have between you, but it seems that he regrets his actions toward you."

Angel considered his past with Xander and knew that they would be having quite a talk later. When they reached the lobby, Angel made his way toward the office as Wesley headed for the door.

"Thank you, Wesley." Angel called out.

Wesley stopped and turned to see Angel's form retreating into the office.

Considering the nature of friendship, Wesley continued out the door.

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Xander made his way downstairs, with his egg held carefully in his arms. As he entered the lobby, he saw a man that he hadn't met before.

Gunn considered the man before him. Angel had said that someone from Sunnydale was coming to stay. The man seemed timid, and was carrying something protectively in his arms.

"Hello, I'm Charles Gunn. You must be Xander." He said cautiously.

"Yes, nice to meet you Mr. Gunn." Xander said quietly as he walked up and extended a hand.

"Call me Gunn. Everyone does." Gunn said, shaking Xander's hand and giving a surreptitious glance at the bundle in Xander's other hand.

"Okay Gunn, is Angel around? He said that he wanted to talk to me when I woke up." Xander asked with some distraction.

"He's in his office, over there." Gunn said and pointed behind the check-in desk.

Xander nodded and made his way to Angel's office.

He knocked on the doorframe of the open office door.

"Come in Xander. Have a seat." Angel said from behind his desk.

Xander made his way into the room and took a seat. He glanced at Angel and cast his eyes to the floor, feeling the shame wash over him again.

Angel noticed Xander's subdued attitude and recalled Wesley's words from earlier. "I think we have a few things to talk about before we discuss your current situation." Angel said in a comforting tone.

Xander nodded his head and braced himself for the task, "Angel, there are a lot of things that I need to say, but the first is to tell you how sorry I am about the way I treated you in Sunnydale. I could give you a thousand excuses for how I acted but the truth behind them all is that I was jealous of your relationship with Buffy. I wanted her for myself and I thought that I was better than you because I was human and you weren't." And with that declaration Xander gave an ironic chuckle.

Angel only responded with silence. Xander continued, "I guess that's not a problem now, I'm not human anymore, I don't know what I am..."

Xander didn't know how Angel was going to take his next admission, but he felt that it had to be said. If this was going to work, he had to be honest with everyone, including himself. "When Angelus tried to open Acathyla, I didn't tell Buffy that Willow was trying to restore your soul... so it's my fault that you were sent to hell." Xander said in a near whisper.

Angel was shocked. He hadn't known about that and rage started to boil up within him. He could feel himself starting to shift into his demon visage. He knew that within moments the ability to reason might be beyond him. In a tightly controlled voice he said, "I think you'd better go upstairs for a while. We can talk again later."

Angel got up from his chair stiffly and made his way out of the office, careful to avoid looking at Xander.

After a moment, Xander got up from his chair and went back to his room. He could tell that Angel had to let his emotions cool before they could talk again.

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Angel knocked on the door of the room that he had assigned to Xander. It had been nearly a full day since Xander had told Angel that he had been responsible for the centuries of torture that he had endured. Angel's first instinct was to kill the boy, slowly, over a number of days. Then after a little thought he resigned himself to just throwing the boy into the street. Finally he had come to the point where he could at least listen to what else he had to say before deciding what to do next.

Xander opened the door cautiously. "Angel, come in." He said timidly, stepping back to allow Angel entrance to the room.

Angel walked in and noticed that Xander immediately went to the bed and picked up his egg.

"I came to finish our talk, I assume that there is more that we need to talk about." Angel said as he watch Xander caressing the egg with a wet towel.

"I think everything is out in the open, that was the only secret. All that's left is for me to say that I'm sorry, and for us to decide what to do next." Xander said, keeping his eyes firmly on his egg.

"I won't lie. I'm mad as hell at you and there's a big part of me that wants to cause you pain, and not all of it is Angelus. I also thought about throwing you out into the street. I'm still not sure that I won't." Angel said with more than a little anger in his voice.

"I understand. If you want us to leave, just say the word and we'll never bother you again." Xander said steadily.

"First, tell me what you want from me, and we'll see if it's something that I am willing to do." Angel said without emotion.

"I was hoping that you could get me into the demon community so I can take care of my baby. I need to make sure that the baby is healthy, and I need a job. I suppose that I'm also going to need something like demon daycare, too." Xander said while gazing at his egg lovingly.

Angel realized that Xander was here for the sake of his baby. Even though he felt some hatred for the boy, he couldn't deny what was the right thing to do, and he would do it.

"I'll see to the doctor. And I'll have Lorn come and talk to you about getting a job. He has contacts throughout the demon community and can find something for you. As far as the daycare, we can work that out as we need to." Angel said emotionlessly, then continued with some venom in his voice, "Don't think I'm doing this for you, this is for Spike's child. You can stay here, and I'll provide food and shelter for you for the baby's sake."

Xander kept his eyes firmly downcast and said, "Thank you for your help Angel, I promise that we'll be out of here as soon as we can."

Angel was about to get up and leave when he heard a rumble from Xander's stomach. "Have you eaten since you arrived?" He asked.

Xander shook his head.

"Go down to the kitchen and get something to eat. There's some human food in there."

Xander nodded and got up to leave.

Angel also got up and preceded Xander out the bedroom door.

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Angel found himself knocking on Xander's door. Three days had passed since Xander and Angel had their talk. Xander stayed in his room, coming out for food around noon each day. He would go to the kitchen, prepare the food, and take it with him to his room. None of the other members of Angel investigations had seen him since the day he had arrived.

Xander opened the door and said timidly, "Hello Angel." Not knowing what else to say.

"I have a doctor here to check out the baby, please come downstairs." Angel said and walked away.

Xander picked up the egg and left the room. As he descended the stairs, he noticed a lavishly dressed woman standing in the center of the lobby. He walked up to her and looked to Angel, to be introduced.

"Here is the egg we need you to look at." Angel said, ignoring the disapproving look from the woman.

She held her hands out to Xander. He looked into her less than human face and saw the tenderness, knowledge and wisdom of years. He unwrapped the egg and carefully handed it to her.

She saw the anxious look in his eyes and said, "Do not worry, I am The Shamenka. Among my people I am priest, prophet, doctor, and counselor."

Then she held the egg to her bosom, took a deep inhale of breath and closed her eyes. A low humming started in her throat and she began to rock. After a few minutes she stopped and opened her eyes. With a large smile on her face she handed the baby back to Xander.

She looked toward Angel and the smile dropped off her face. "Let us go into the lounge where we can sit."

Angel led the way into the lounge and waited for The Shamenka to be seated.

"The baby is perfectly happy and healthy, you are doing a fine job...?" she said in such a way as to inquire Xander's name.

"Xander, ma'am." he said shyly.

"Xander, you have done well by your child and should expect the birth in about seven days. Do you have any questions for me?" She asked in a friendly tone.

"What is my baby, I mean what species?" Xander asked nervously.

"The baby is a combination of it's parent's, of course. Tell me of the baby's other parent." She said in a curious tone.

Xander thought about Spike for a moment then began, "He was a Master Vampire, the Grand Childe of Angelus I think." He looked at Angel and received a grudging nod.

"He was my friend, he cared enough to tell me some ugly truths about myself. He died his final death less than two weeks ago, he sacrificed himself to seal the hellmouth of Sunnydale." Xander said with tears in his voice.

As The Shamenka reached across the table to pat his hand she noticed Angel's look of disgust focused on Xander.

Xander calmed down and thought about his next question.

"Can you tell me what I am?" Xander began when Angel interrupted. "She is here for the baby, not for you."

"Liam Jude Matthew Gilligan O'Rourke! How dare you treat any person living or dead with the disrespect that I have seen here today! You may think you are justified in your anger, whatever it is, but you are only succeeding in diminishing yourself in the eyes of everyone around you." The Shamenka said with righteous indignation.

"No." Xander said, "He has every right to feel the way he does. I did something unforgivable to him, so please don't be upset with him for feeling angry."

The Shamenka looked from the pleading eyes of Xander to the angry eyes of Angel and said, "Isn't it amazing that this young one has reached such a level of maturity in barely more than twenty years when you have yet to achieve it in nearly 250?"

A questioning look fell across Angel's face. Then dawning comprehension. [He hurt me, so I wanted to hurt him back. Maybe that was a little immature.] Angel thought to himself, then continued. [Wesley already told me that he had changed, I could see it myself, and yet when I got angry, I turned into a rapacious spoiled brat.]

"Xander, I'm..." Angel began.

"Angel, don't worry about it, I already said that I understand and I don't blame you." Xander said reasonably.

The Shamenka got up as if to leave when Xander asked, "What about the baby, please tell me what it is and what I am."

"Any answer I could give you would be inadequate because there has never been anything like you or your baby before." The Shamenka said haltingly.

"I don't understand." Xander said, obviously confused.

"Looking back through history, everything had a first. The first milkshake, the first basketball, the first tomato. Everything that exists today had a first. You, are a first as is your child." She said carefully.

Xander sat in shock, his mind was racing with a million questions but there wasn't a single question that could make it's way above the others before she continued.

"Oh, get over yourself, I'm not talking messiah or anything. Don't make more out of this than there is. It just means that you are what you are, as is your child. There hasn't been a label made to classify either of you yet. You may be the patriarchs of new species that will one day fill the earth to overflowing, or you and your child may be the first and last of your kind. Either is a possibility, I suspect the reality will fall somewhere in between." The Shamenka said knowingly.

The Shamenka got up from her chair and made her way out of the lounge and into the lobby. Before leaving she said, "Just a piece of advice, have a little extra blood handy for when the baby is born."

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Chapter 2 by MultiMapper

Xander watched as The Shamenka left the lobby. He turned to go back to his room when a quiet voice came from his left.

"Hi, Charles told me that he met you a couple days ago you must be Xander you're from Sunnydale aren't you I heard about Sunnydale on the news I think Cordelia mentioned that you dated her in high school you knew Angel back then didn't you and you're one of the Scoobies from Sunnydale I'd really like to hear the inside story of what happened there because the news just said something like a gas main exploded and I know there has to be more to it than that to blow up most of a town are you staying here or just stopping for a visit you'll have to forgive me I talk a little too much when I'm nervous and it makes me nervous to meet new people and you're new... to me anyway."

::Blink:: ::Blink:: Xander had to take a few seconds to process the chatter. It would have taken two espressos and half a pound of chocolate to get Willow to babble full-on like that. Finally he answered.

"Uh, Hi. Yes I met Gunn three days ago. I am from Sunnydale. I did date Cordelia in high school. I knew Angel, but we didn't get along, my fault. I was a Scooby. I'll tell you the story of Sunnydale sometime if you'd like. I'll be staying until I can get my own place. I get nervous around new people too. I think Wesley mentioned you, are you Fred?"

Fred just nodded her head shyly.

Xander smiled, feast or famine, she seemed to save all her speech up for a verbal explosion. After all the seriousness of Wesley and Angel she was refreshing.

"It's a pleasure to meet you." Xander said sincerely. "Maybe you could help me, I'd like to call Wesley, do you have his number?"

Fred nodded and led him to the check-in desk.

Angel had been watching Xander and Fred's conversation with fond amusement from the doorway of the lounge.

Angel listened as Xander dialed the phone and said, "Wesley? I hope I'm not bothering you..."

"No, no emergency, I was hoping that you'd visit then realized that I never invited you, So that's why I'm calling. Please consider yourself invited." Xander said seriously.

"No, just a visit... Wesley my friend, I promise that I have no motive for asking you over but for the pleasure of your company..." Xander said, a little exasperated.

"Good, I'm glad that's settled. Whenever you want to visit is fine, I just wanted you to know that you are welcomed..." Xander continued.

"No, we haven't talked about you at all... we've had other things to discuss. Things were a little tense for a while but I think we're good now."

"Tomorrow? That would be great, I'll see you then. Good night." And Xander hung up the phone.

Angel realized from what he heard that Xander truly didn't harbor any ill will toward him. Angel walked into the lobby and locked eyes with Xander.

"Do you have time for another talk?" Angel asked, trying to be friendly.

"Sure, do you mind if we talk in my room, I need to..." Xander said looking down at the egg.

In response Angel extended his arm toward the staircase to prompt Xander to lead the way.

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Once inside the room, Xander took a few minutes to wet some towels and settled on the bed, stroking the shell of the egg.

"Xander, I wanted to apologize for the way..." Angel began but was interrupted.

"Angel, I already said that I understand. Do you know why I told you about what I did?" Xander said seriously.

"Not really." Angel said quietly.

"If there is ever going to be any peace between us, then we need to be honest with each other. Now that my secret has been brought out, there is at least the hope of building something on the honest foundation. Even if you feel nothing but hate toward me, at least it's honest. I don't know if I'm making any sense." Xander finished, a little frustrated.

"Yes, you are. So... where do we go from here?" Angel asked hesitantly.

"With an understanding, I think." Xander said unsurely.

Angel prompted Xander to continue with a speculative look.

"I've known you for about seven years, but I don't really know you at all. So if you'd be willing, I'd like to get to know you. I'll try to set all my past feelings aside and get to know the person that you are here, now, today." Xander said quietly.

Angel nodded and said, "I don't know if this makes sense but I can't give up my feelings toward the boy who insulted me and caused me to be sent to hell. But I can try to get to know the man that you've become. Maybe looking at it that way, I can let go of the past between us."

Xander's face lit up with a smile. "I think that would be a great place to start."

"So what changed you? I mean, did you just wake up one day with a new attitude?" Angel asked hesitantly, so as not to offend.

"I wish, but no. Spike happened. He stayed in my apartment for a while. He got the idea that I needed to understand something and took the next two days to hound me constantly until he finally got it through my thick head and made me listen." Xander said with a fond smile.

"What did he want you to understand?"

"That it isn't about me." Xander said absently.

"What isn't about you?" Angel prompted.

"About 99% of the things that happen around me have nothing to do with me personally. Like your relationship with Buffy for example. You didn't fall in love with her to hurt me or make me mad, it had nothing to do with me. But I acted like it did. I took it personally and attacked you because I felt like you were attacking me by being with her." Xander said with eyes that were looking into the past.



Angel sat stunned for a moment. That actually explained a lot. Finally he asked, "How long did it take you to reconcile your past with this new philosophy?"

"I'm still working on it, I've treated a lot of people really badly over the years. I can't fix everything, I mean some bridges can be mended, others are broken beyond repair." Xander said sadly.

"Bridges?" Angel asked, confused.

"Relationships, I can try to make amends with some of the people that I've treated thoughtlessly, but there are others that have written me off as a smart ass, and will never give me the opportunity to hurt them again. Anyway, I can't live my life trying to make up for the past, I can only face the present and if I have an opportunity to make things right with someone, I'll take it."

"Like with me..." Angel said quietly.

"Yeah, our bridge was broken up pretty bad." Xander said sadly.

"I think we'll be okay. Did you mend a bridge with Wesley too?" Angel asked, remembering the phone conversation earlier.

"I suppose, I don't know if we ever had a bridge. I attacked him the moment I met him. He was there to replace Giles, who was my father figure. So I took it personally and made every effort to make him feel unwelcomed and unwanted." Xander said with shame in his voice.

"But things are better between you? I mean, I heard you on the phone, and you called him your friend." Angel asked.

"Yes, Wesley is an amazing man. All I had to do was show him that I was serious about wanting to be his friend and he was willing to let go of the past. Not too many people would be able to let go of old hurts like that." Xander said with a note of wonder.

"I suppose he is amazing. I think I have a little bridge mending to do with him myself." Angel said sadly.

"A piece of advice. He has to know that you are serious, until he is sure that you are, he won't make any move toward reconciliation." Xander said thinking of the long trip from New Mexico.

"I'll keep that in mind. You look like you could use some sleep, so I'll be going." Angel said, noticing the tired look on Xander's face.

"Thanks, I am tired, and thanks for the talk." Xander said as he got up from the bed.

Angel left the room, deep in contemplation.

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The egg had been agitated all morning. Xander had kept it moist, and had been holding it and stroking it constantly for hours. He had been speaking soothing words and even tried singing for a while but the egg wouldn't be quieted. Over the past week, the shell of the egg had stretched, so now it's size was that of a half deflated beach ball and the shell of the egg had become thinner. The baby had been getting heavier, too.

All of a sudden there was something pushing from within the egg making the flexible shell of the egg taut. Xander looked closely and could recognize the bump as the baby's foot. With excitement he ran to the door and called out, "ANGEL! COME HERE, QUICK!"

Xander went back to the bed and watched as the baby alternated pushing one foot, then the other against it's shell.

Angel rushed into the room his hair was a mess and he was wearing only his pants. Xander would have laughed himself silly if not for the expression of absolute panic on Angel's face.

"Come look at the baby, you've got to see this!" Xander said from beside the egg.

Angel flashed angry look #7 at Xander, the one usually reserved for vampires who were soon to be dust, then walked over to the bed.

As he saw the baby feet alternately pressing against the leathery shell of the egg, a look of tenderness replaced the look of anger on his face.

A moment later Fred and Gunn were at the door, looking in curiously. Xander noticed and motioned them to come into the room.

"What the hell is that?" Gunn asked when he saw the beige amoeba looking thing thrashing on the bed.

"It's my baby..." Xander said tenderly.

Gunn could tell by Xander's response that he loved the little... thing. So he turned his attention to Angel.

"A baby what?" He asked Angel reasonably.

"We'll know when it hatches." Angel said absently, enthralled by the sight.

"So this is an egg... Where's the chicken that laid it?" Gunn asked with concern.

That got Xander's attention. He stiffened and looked to Angel, asking with his eyes for Angel to handle this.

"This is Xander's egg. He delivered it about a week ago. His child is inside so please be kind." Angel said steadily.

Gunn just stood there stunned. Fred, however, jumped on the bed beside Xander and gave him a big hug.

"Oh, this is so exciting why didn't you tell us that you were going to be a father I mean mother when do you expect the baby to hatch do you have all the baby things you need I mean like clothes and diapers and a crib..." and she broke off as she looked around the room.

"I don't have anything. I really don't know what the baby is going to be like when it's born... er... hatched. So I don't know if I need a crib or if the baby would need to stay in the bathtub. Until just a few minutes ago I didn't know if the baby had feet. It could have had a tail." Xander answered seriously.

Gunn, Fred and Angel gaped. The enormity of this was hitting all of them, they had no idea what the baby was going to be and what needs it would have.

Xander took the silence as confusion and continued, "What's the use of getting the baby diapers if it doesn't have legs? Or a crib if it breathes water?"

"Don't worry Xander, the baby will have whatever it needs..." Angel began.

A sharp movement from the egg drew everyone's attention. The outline of a little foot could be seen, more clearly than before. Then the shell of the egg began to split around the heel of the foot. After a moment the pressure let up.

"I think it's hatching. It's too soon. The Shamenka said that it would be seven days and it's only been four." Xander said in a panic. The fear could clearly be heard in his voice.

"Don't worry Xander, these things happen when they're ready to. The Shamenka was giving an estimate." Angel said comfortingly.

"Would someone call Wesley and let him know?" Xander said excitedly.

Fred got up from the bed and ran out the room. Xander flashed a questioning glance at Gunn.

"Yeah, that means that she'll call him." Gunn said with a smile.

"Angel, remember what The Shamenka said? Would you please go get some blood for the baby?" Xander asked with pleading in his voice.

Angel quickly left the room. The egg thrashed again and the little foot shaped bump pressed at the split in the shell again. Xander couldn't think of what to do next so he sat, nearly vibrating with tension, watching the baby fight against the shell.

About a minute later Angel and Fred ran back into the room. Angel was carrying a coffee mug full of blood. Xander looked at Angel and asked, "The baby won't be able to drink from that, how are we going to...?"

The four of them looked at each other then with a squeak Fred got up and ran from the room. Xander and Angel both looked at Gunn inquiringly.

"That means she has an idea." Gunn said casually.

Wesley ran into the room asking, "Am I too late?"

"No, but it could happen any minute. Come over here where you can see." Xander said with barely held enthusiasm.

About five minutes later Fred ran back into the room, gasping for breath, and holding a plastic shopping bag. She sat on the edge of the bed and fumbled with the bag until she produced a baby bottle.

Angel took the bottle and was about to pour the blood into it when Wesley stopped him. "I think this needs to be washed first, I'll take care of it." Wesley said, taking the bottle from Angel and going into the bathroom.

The little footshaped lump began making short sharp jabs against the breach in the shell. "Wesley, hurry or you'll miss it!" Xander called out.

Just as Wesley made his way back into the room, the baby's foot pushed it's way through the shell. Xander immediately began pulling at the opening in the shell and within minutes, the egg was torn open to reveal the baby.

The baby was covered with a reddish black goo. Fred immediately ran to the bathroom and came back with a stack of towels. Xander started using the damp towels that he had used to wrap the egg to clean the gunk off the baby.

The baby let loose a lusty cry as Xander, Fred and Angel were all cleaning it. Once clean, the baby quieted as Xander laid the baby out on a towel in the middle of the bed and looked him over. A boy. He and Spike had made a son. The baby looked entirely human.

"He's beautiful." Fred said in wonder.

"He don't have a belly button." Said Gunn as he watched the little squirming boy.

"He has Spike's blue eyes." Angel commented in awe.

Then the baby began to cry. His cry began to deepen into a snarl and worked into a full fledged growl as he shifted into demon form.

"I'm guessing the horns come from Spike's side of the family." Xander said in amazement.

"He has Spike's gold eyes too." Angel said, just as amazed.

"What's that on his side?" Fred asked in worry.

"Those would be gills." Xander said with shock.

"He may be hungry." Wesley said, being the practical one, as always.

Between Wesley, Xander and Angel, they managed to get the warm blood mostly into the baby bottle.

Xander lowered the bottle to the baby's mouth and dropped the bottle as the baby lunged onto the nipple. In two seconds flat, the nipple was no more and blood was drenching baby and towel alike.

The adults looked at each other with looks between confusion and horror when the baby turned itself half over and started sucking the blood out of the towel. "I guess that's one way to do it." Said Xander as he used another towel to clean the baby.

"I guess nursing's outta the question." Said Gunn with a smile.

Wesley, Angel and Xander turned as one at the comment as Gunn realized that he said that outloud.

"Look he has webbed fingers and toes. They're sooooo cuuuute." Fred said, as if she hadn't heard Gunn's comment.

After about three minutes of vigorous sucking on the bloody towel, the baby shifted back into human form and went to sleep. His little fingers and toes became completely normal just as his little horns, teeth and gills went away. In his human form he looked like a normal 4 or 5 month old baby, except for the absence of a navel.

His little tuft of wheat-blond hair and blue eyes made him look like a chubby little miniature version of Spike. But he DID have the Harris nose.

"Have you thought of a name?" Wesley asked as he helped Xander remove the bloody bedclothes without disturbing the sleeping baby.

Xander thought a moment and said, "William Jesse Harris."

[Part 3]

Wesley considered Xander's refusal to allow anyone to help him. In the week since the baby had been born... hatched... he had tried to do it all himself. Today Wesley was determined to make Xander accept some help with the baby for his own good as well as the baby's.

Wesley walked up the stairs to Xander's room and could hear the baby crying. The door was standing open so Wesley walked in. "Alexander, the baby is crying, what should I do?" he asked.

"How does the baby look? Human or demon?" Xander asked tiredly from the bed where he had obviously been sleeping.

"Human, but angry." Wesley answered.

"Check his diaper." Xander said from the bed.

"It's dry." Wesley yelled over the wailing of the child.

"Then we need to put a wet one on him. I'll take care of it..." Xander said through his exhaustion.

"I can change a diaper." Wesley replied indignantly. "Though this seems the reverse of the way I'm used to."

"I know. But Willie needs to stay wet. He's twice as cranky when he's dry." Xander said in an exhausted haze.

Wesley began changing the diaper and said, "Alexander, you are going to make yourself sick if you don't let someone help you. Would you allow me to take William for the afternoon so you can get some sleep?"

"Okay Wesley, you win. Just remember to take a few bags of blood with you. Warm the blood, not too hot, then put a towel into a plastic bag and dump the blood into the towel. Cut the corner out of the bag so that some of the towel hangs out and Willie will do the rest. He drinks about a bag at each feeding and feeds about every four hours." Xander said tiredly.

"And he goes into his demon visage when he is ready to feed?" Wesley inquired.

"Yes, and remember to keep away from his face about a half an hour before his feeding time or he WILL try to help himself. Fred probably should have gotten stitches and I'm glad that I heal fast."

"I'll remember that, anything else I should know?" Wesley asked, beginning to wonder if this was such a good idea. But one look at Xander, laying exhausted on the bed and he had no doubts.

"Yeah, it's natural to cradle a baby on your chest. Don't do it, he'll go right for your throat. And when he goes into game face, watch out for his dorsal fin. I think the spines are poisonous." Xander nearly mumbled.

"When was the last time William was fed?" Wesley asked, becoming more concerned at Xander's inability to stay awake.

Xander looked at the clock. "It's been about two hours, he should be okay for a while. If he starts getting really fussy, sit him in the shower and rinse him off, he loves that. The diaper bag is by the door and the blood is in the refrigerator downstairs. Thank you for doing this Wesley." Xander mumbled before falling asleep.

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In the three days since Wesley had started taking care of Willie in the afternoons, Xander began to feel like himself again. He decided that today he was going to fulfill a promise that he had made in New Mexico. He walked up to Angel's open office door and asked, "Angel, do you mind if I use the computer to send a few emails?"

As expected, Angel didn't even look up, he just mumbled "Okay." And continued with his work.

Xander sat at the computer and signed in. As he was about to hit 'compose' he noticed that he had 162 messages so he went to his inbox to do some housekeeping. After deleting some junk mail, he had a total of 37 that were from actual people. Among those messages were some from Willow and Faith and one from Buffy.

He considered the best way to proceed and decided to go in the order that they were received. The story that he pieced together from the combined emails was that Cleveland was everything they expected it to be. Life on the hellmouth of Cleveland was as fast and furious as Sunnydale had ever been. Willow was mourning Kennedy's death and Faith was busy nursing Robin back to health. Buffy and Willow had both asked when he expected to arrive in Cleveland.

Xander had no desire to go to Cleveland, even if he weren't considering Willie's safety, it would feel like a step back. He had been the slayer's sidekick for seven years, and now he was done. This was a new chapter, and a new Xander... Alexander. He was a father who had friends that he respected and that respected him. Although he hadn't talked to Lorn about getting a job yet, he knew that he would.

He couldn't say that he had everything that he wanted in his life, but he felt that he was where he was supposed to be. So with that in mind he wrote his email. He had nothing to hide so he carbon copied the message to Buffy, Faith and Willow.

>Hey Guys, >

>I won't be joining you in Cleveland. I am now >a father and I have to consider the safety of my >child. See Buffy, I told you my stomach wasn't >from twinkies. That's right. I gave birth. >

>How? Think about all the things that happened >to me in Sunnydale. Something changed me. It >doesn't matter what. The child is mine and >Spikes. No Buffy, he wasn't with you at the time. >Yes Wil, you were right, I switched teams. And >No Faith, no details. >

>The baby's name is William Jesse Harris. He has >Spike's eyes. And he is part demon. So I have a >new way to fight the things that go bump in the >night. I will raise my son to be a good person. >He will know that Spike was his father and gave >his (un)life to protect us all. > >Please be happy for me. My thoughts are with >you. > >Alexander

Xander sent his email and shut down the computer as Wesley walked in with Willie in tow.

"So how was he?" Alexander asked.

"A perfect gentleman, as always." Wesley said with a smile.

Alexander couldn't understand why but Willie didn't seem to give Wesley any problems. He thought that he might be doing something wrong, and began to worry that maybe he wasn't a good father.

"Alexander? What's wrong?" Wesley asked.

"Wesley, I don't know what I'm doing wrong. Willie always behaves for you and always seems so happy..."

Wesley frowned at the statement and decided to tell Alexander the truth. "I haven't been completely honest with you. William screams and cries as much for me as he does for you. I just make sure to wash him thoroughly and put him in a fresh wet diaper before I bring him back to you. That way when you see him, he's happy. I was only trying to make it so you wouldn't be concerned about my watching him."

Alexander smiled and said, "Thank you Wesley, I was worried that I wasn't being a good father. Willie is the most important thing in my life right now."

"No worries there, you are a better father for William than I could ever be. I wouldn't have thought of half the things you do to make him happy. You have the instincts of what's right to do for him as well as the will to keep trying new things to improve what you can." Wesley said as a statement of fact.

"Thank you Wesley. I can't even begin to tell you how much all you've done has helped. I've been thinking about something that I'd like to discuss with you while Willie's quiet."

"What would that be?" Wesley asked curiously.

"Well, since Willie was born here, he doesn't 'officially' exist. If something were to happen to me, I don't know what would become of him, I mean legally. I've fought demons, a god, and the source of all evil but I've got to tell you... the California court system scares the hell out of me. Somehow between the legal system and the demon community I want to be sure that if something ever happens to me that you would get custody of Willie... I mean, if you would be willing to be his god-father... or is it devil-father in this case... anyway, you know what I mean."

"Yes, I do. And yes, I would be honored to be his guardian in the event that the unforeseen happens to you. As to the legalities of this situation, I believe that we should discuss this matter with Angel and Lorn. Amongst all of us, we should be able to sort out the best way to protect William's interests." Wesley said seriously.

"Good, I'll talk to Angel later and we can find a good time for all of us to..." Alexander sniffed the air.

"Wesley, take Willie upstairs and keep him quiet. HIDE!" Alexander screamed as he ran for the weapon cabinet.

Wesley was stunned for a moment then grabbed the stroller and diaper bag and ran up the stairs, taking them two at a time.

Alexander was facing the door with a battleaxe in his hand as the front door opened.

A lone figure walked in and said, "Xander"

Without expression Alexander replied, "Riley."

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