

Summary: The Initiative has a different idea of how to develop the perfect super soldier.

Categories: [Angel/Buffy](#) Characters: Ensemble, Spike, Spike/Xander, Xander

Genres: Gen, Het, PreSlash, Slash

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Story Notes:

Spoilers: Up to Harsh Light of Day.

This has a different history starting from The Zeppo in season three. Spike/Xander relationship is already started in this one. This is going to have some dark themes, so if you're looking for a fluffy Mpreg this is not the place to be.

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Chapter 1 by Amejisuto

Revelations

"It's not something new Giles, we've been mated since last August, and you guys just never noticed."

He watched the different emotions flicker across the faces of the people he cared most about. Giles looked shocked yet fascinated and Xander almost laughs to himself. The older man was such a Watcher.

Willow, dear, sweet almost-sister. Willow looks guilty and calculating all at once. He can see her look at how they are standing, Spike holding him close as if he was precious, and she starts a smile. He knew he could count on Willow.

But it's Buffy who's reaction he's been most afraid of all this time, and he could tell he was going to be right. All he can see is hurt and anger in her eyes.

"What ever happened to hating vampires Xander, huh? You always hated mine and Angel's relationship and now you're getting it up the ass from Spike? Who's tried to kill us more than once? You're insane!"

Spike's arms tightened around his boy and both vampires hissed at the girl. Xander's there before they are this time and Spike can't help but feel proud at how his boy is standing up for himself.

“Okay number one this is so different from Angel it isn’t even funny. Number two, can’t someone grow up just a little and change his mind about things? Don’t get me wrong, I still can’t stand Deadboy, but this time it’s not just because he’s a vampire, it’s because he’s a horse’s ass. And Number Three, you’re not my mother, you can’t tell me what to do or who to love, so get over yourself!”

By the end of his speech, he was straining against Spike’s hold, wanting to attack this woman he had thought was his friend. Okay, so he kept their mating a secret, it wasn’t that big of one, if they would have at anytime asked what was going on in his life, he had promised to tell them.

But Buffy and Willow had been so busy with college and Giles with his mid-life crisis or whatever it was that had been plaguing the Watcher. Xander thought that Oz knew, with his werewolf nose, but the quiet boy had never said and Xander never asked.

“Perhaps we should all sit and talk about this calmly and...”

“Fuck calm Giles, he’s standing there with an unchipped Spike and Drusilla. He’s either with them or with us, he can’t do both.”

“Bullshit Buffy, I’ve been both for a while now. Where do you think I got the explosives that blew the Mayor sky high, Big and Small Lots? Spike here helped me out and we weren’t even lovers yet. Hell, you think I was able to stop Faith when she tried to kill me all by myself. I would have died if it wasn’t for Spike coming out of hiding where he was stalking me and saved me.”

“Good Lord!” Giles takes off his glasses and pinches the bridge of his nose while Willow shakes her head.

“He... he was stalking you Xander?”

“Yeah Wills, but not in a bad way by that point. It’s a vampire thing, it’s cute.”

“M’not cute Xander, I’m evil.”

”So not helping Husband-Mine, and yes you are cute, get over it already.”

Spike just smirks at his lover, the comment did what he had intended it to do, make Red smile just a bit and drain some of the anger out of his boy. By then, he could feel Xander swaying and he knew it was time to wrap up this Hellmouth version of Jerry Springer and get them hidden for the day.

“Right then, now you know and knowing is half the battle and all that crap. We need to get hidden before the Slayer’s boy and his friends find us and take us to task for not accepting their hospitality. Dru love, Dru!” He shouts to get his Sire’s attention, she’d been singing to herself while standing in front of Finn. “Dru love, see what you can do about his memories, make sure he doesn’t remember us, alright? Can you do that?”

“Spiders in his brain, scuttling across the surface of the water. Pick one out and squish it, watch him twist.”

Spike cocks his head to the side and watches as she rouses the man enough to look in her eyes as she speaks to him softly. She must think she can do it, he figures, either that or she’s going to stomp the soldier flat, either way he didn’t care as long as no one knew he’d found the escapees.

“We’ll call you tomorrow. Red, I’ll need some help from you especially, I’ll explain tomorrow. Meanwhile, I’m taking my boy somewhere to rest. Don’t worry, we’ll take Dru with us and she’ll

be a good girl, won't you, Princess."

"Mustn't upset the kittens right now or they'll cry and there will be no milk." She finished with Riley and walks up to Xander, holding out her hand. Xander looks at her and all Spike can do is shrug and watch as Xander holds her hand like she's a little girl he's got to keep track of. What little tan Xander had before being captured has faded and they look beautiful together, both tall and dark and pale. His future and his past.

"No! We are not helping you Spike! If they're after Xander too, well I'm sorry I'll help him but not the gruesome twosome! Is no one else freaked that Xander's in some weird vampire group sex thing?"

"Buffy! While I might not approve of Xander's choices, the truth is that it's too late. We-we simply can't let them fall into the Initiative's hands just because you don't approve..."

"Approve! Hell I should just stake them both and then Xander won't be in this mess any longer."

"Stop it Buffy, just stop it! Look at him! He's hurt and tired; Spike and Drusilla are the only things keeping him standing right now. I knew he wasn't dead, Tara told me not to give up but I listened to you! Now I'm going to help my friend and support him and if you don't like it, well that's just tough!"

"But Willow, he tried to kill you last year when he kidnapped you! How can you forget that? He's a killer, he'll only hurt Xander!"

"Right now Buffy, the only thing I see hurting Xander is you, perhaps you should think on that. Spike, the three of you are welcome to stay here for the day if you think it will be safe. I believe between Willow and I, we should be able to ward the house for a short period of time. Perhaps Willow can run and get you any supplies you need once it's dawn. That would help you three keep a low profile until we figure out how to... what to do."

Spike watches the group as it shifts from its usual, supporting the Slayer no matter what, to Xander for once. He knows for a fact that the Watcher would as soon stake him as look at him, but because of Xander he's offering a roof and a bed. He wasn't that surprised by Red's reaction, in fact he'd bet the little girl wouldn't want to leave his mate's side if she could.

But the Slayer, she was reacting exactly as Xander had said she would. Her scent told a story of anger, resentment, and jealousy.

"No way Giles! I can't believe you of all people are supporting this!"

"Buffy, it's done, if you don't like it that's your problem, but I am Spike's Consort, nothing you can do will change that and I won't let you even try."

All through the fight, Xander had been trying to get a hold of himself; it wasn't fair to Willow and Giles if he didn't say anything to protect his lover. She had been the main reason they had stayed quiet, he had hoped that they would get to know Spike as a person and not just a vampire while the chip was in place, but Buffy never even tried to look at the personality that was Spike, she just saw the killer.

"And what are you going to do Xander? Throw doughnuts at me?"

"Pretty Lion has blood on the sands Slayer, claw out your eyes to make you see. Toy soldier, kitten and puppy in one, my Lion's jaws can snatch your neck make it crush. Shouldn't push, or he'll go away and you'll never get to meet the dark that's coming. The stars sing of the dark and how it will save the light one day." Drusilla had never let go of his hand, but had switched to her

demonic face and danced at the end of his arm.

"That's it, I'm staking 'em!" Buffy rushed forward and Giles stepped in front of her.

"You'll do no such thing. Go home, get some rest and we'll... we'll discuss this further once everyone has had some rest. I take it you three will be staying?"

"Sure mate, as long as we can have a bed instead of the bathtub this time." Spike smirked at the Watcher, unable to pass at annoying the man just a little.

A half hour later found Xander asleep in the guestroom, Drusilla sitting by the bed crooning to his Consort while Spike kept watch from a window for any soldiers. He didn't really want to stay where they'd be so easily found, but he knew Xander couldn't go on.

The slayer had taken her boy toy home after he made sure the soldier knew nothing. The woman had promised no help, but that she wouldn't say anything either. Somehow he had a hard time believing her though, they'd have to get out of Sunnydale quickly.

A soft step on the stair alerted Spike to a presence but he relaxed when he found only Willow's scent. He quietly slipped out the door into the hallway and met her halfway up the stairs.

"Spike? I... I can't sleep and you said that you'd need my help for something and well I thought I'd try to get a start on it. I mean I can go and get Xander a change of clothes or some food or get you some blood. I know you can bite now but I don't think it's a good idea right now if the army guys will be looking for you."

"Wow Red, now I know how you kept up with my boy for all those years. Is not breathing while babbling a Sunnydale trait?"

The girl blushed and Spike let up on the teasing. Leading her back downstairs and setting her on the couch, he sat back and really looked at her.

"Listen Red, Willow, what I'm going to tell you, you can't tell anyone, not the Watcher, not the Slayer, not anyone."

"Not even Tara? We've gotten really close while you were-were gone. She's the one who helped me keep hoping we'd find Xander."

"Would you trust her with your life and Xander's?"

"Yes."

Spike just looked into the girl's green eyes, noticing the set of her jaw. It was what Xan called her Resolve Face.

"Okay pet, I'll trust your judgment on her, but know this. As much as Xander loves you lot, if what I'm about to tell you gets round neither one of you will live. Not a threat Red, a promise. It's that important."

She nodded and swallowed. Spike leaned forward so no listening equipment that might be trained on them would hear. It was only paranoia if there wasn't anyone out to get you.

"Need you to hack, or whatever it is you do, into the Initiative's computers. They did some experiments on Xan, cut him open like. I need you to find out what they did and destroy anything about us. Can you do that, Red?"

Her lips had thinned at the thought of her friend being hurt. She nodded. "I can do that, I'll get back to you as soon as I've found something."

"Red? From what little I know it's a bit out there pet, just don't say anything, got it?"

"Got it."

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Eight hours later and Xander was beginning to think he might get back to normal sometime soon. Sleep followed by food was always of the good. Now if only he could get Spike to rest. The vampire had been on guard all day, and now that Giles was awake the two were arguing about the fact that they were leaving Sunnydale. Evidently Giles wasn't going to wig over their relationship as long as he was around to make sure Xander stayed breathing.

Xander, in the meantime, was trying to keep his lover's Sire from eating said Watcher or do anything else too weird. He was glad the vampire liked him, but he did not want to have another tea party with her and Miss Edith, or play with Miss Edith or any of the weird things Dru kept asking of him. He finally gave up and asked Miss Edith for her opinion of where the stars think they should go. Vampire and doll were now in conversation in a corner of the living room.

He stood and listened as the Giles and Spike argued. Giles was adamant that the soldiers would stop looking for them and they would be able to slip back into their normal lives, well normal for them. Spike on the other hand was taking no chances; he wanted them out of town as soon as possible. Xander had tried to intervene, agreeing with Spike but he had grown tired of arguing with his father figure. He knew they would be leaving. He hated leaving Willow behind, but it had to be done, not only would the Initiative be after them, but Buffy was on the warpath as well. If they stayed, either Spike or Buffy would end up dead.

Leaving Spike and Giles to their British swear-word-a-thon, Xander wanted desperately to go outside and sit in the sun before it set in an hour or so, but he settled for sitting near a window looking out, keeping watch. He hated being trapped and after weeks of being inside it grated on his nerves, but he knew going out would be idiocy right now.

After a few minuets of watching, he saw Willow come up the walkway, lookin behind her shoulder. As soon as she was at the door he opened it and let her slip in before closing and redoing the locks.

"Hey Wills."

"Xander, you look better. Where's Spike?"

"He's getting all bloody and blimey and wankery with Giles in the kitchen right now, they'll be back in here fussing in a minute."

"Xander, why didn't you say anything? I would have understood, look at me, here I am being understanding Willow."

Xander put his arm around his friend and pulled her close. "You gotta understand Willow, I was just so afraid that Buffy would kill him outright, I can't live without him and it's not just because of the Consort bond. Hell, I wouldn't want to live without him. I just thought that if I told you, you'd have to choose between me and Buffy or I'd have to choose between my friends and my lover. If that ever happened, I knew you wouldn't like my choice. Then the chip happened, and while I hated it, hated what those bastards did to him, I kinda hoped it would give you a chance to get to know Spike as a person, not just a killer. Besides, with the chip he'd have no chance of defending himself, so we just couldn't take that chance. Understand?"

"I guess. I mean, it was hard for me to tell Buffy and Giles about Tara. But no more secrets mister! I mean it!"

"Yes Ma'am! So you're not mad?"

"If we had more time I would be, but we don't so I'll wait till you guys are safe to be mad."

Xander took a deep breath. "Here Wills, you gotta see this." He pulled up his shirt and there, above his heart, was the tattoo they'd had done by a sorceress.

"Ooh what a great Celtic Knot, I don't think I've seen that design before, and wow, red."

"Umm, yeah, it's designed specially for me, for us. It binds my soul to me permanently, no worries about perfect happiness or anything. The red, well it's blood magicks, tying me not only to my soul, but to Spike."

"Oh. Oh so that means that... he'll turn you?"

"One day, yes. Does that bother you? I'll still have my soul, Wills, and you'll always be my girl. And you did say no more secrets."

"It's just weird, to think that you'll be all grrr and biting and stuff. You really do love him, don't you?"

"Yeah, I do."

"Okay then, what's going to happen in the future, well this will make it easier. I found out what they were doing to you to get you that." She pointed at the scar on his midsection. "And can you please put your shirt back on, I so don't need Spike getting all possessive and growly at me for seeing you without one. Jeez, looking back on things I don't know how I missed it, no wonder you hated me after that 'My Will Be Done spell'."

"Yeah, well I've got other things to worry about now and I know you didn't mean it. Do another spell on my vampire, though, and I'll have to show Tara those pictures of you playing Rudolph in the second grade Christmas play."

"Xander! You wouldn't dare!"

"Married to the evil undead Wills, not much I won't dare!"

Suddenly he found himself in a crushing grip of his best friend and she was all but sobbing. "Hey Wills, it's okay, I won't show the pictures, promise."

"It's not that, you're gonna have to leave to protect... for your protection and I'm just going to miss you so much and so much will change for you and I won't be able to help you at all!"

During this speech Spike and Giles had come back in. Spike sat down next to Xander and looked at the girl that meant so much to his mate.

"Here now Red, we'll find some way of talking to you. Xander will need that. Did you get that information I asked for?"

She sniffed and sat back up. "Yes, and well, do you want Giles to know? I haven't told Tara yet even. I love her, but this...we need to protect Xander."

“Hey now, I can kinda protect myself you know, I’m not the Zeppo anymore, haven’t been for a while now.”

“You just sit there and be good Xander, you’ll need protection if you...Spike?” She looked at Giles with a question in her eyes.

“Oh, bloody hell, all right. Maybe this will convince the Watcher of why we need to leave this Hellhole.”

Willow straightened up and pulled out her laptop. “I have everything coded on these disks Spike, you’ll need the information if...well just if. A virus and a spell have wiped everything on the Initiative’s computers, so nothing of this research remains here in Sunnydale. I can’t be certain about other facilities, and there are more, the Initiative is just one branch of this secret organization. I’ll have to do some more hacking and research, I just got the basics. Evidently, the government has been playing God for years now, using different methods to create the ultimate super weapon or super soldier. Some of the files I’ve found date back to scientists back from Germany in the 1940’s.”

“In the 1980’s and 90’s there was work on a something codenamed Saint Francis. The scientists used genetic manipulation and what they knew of DNA to create two weapons, one turned out to be monstrous, human intellect but worse than some demons I’ve seen with the maiming and killing routine. They called it the Outsider because it was outside of humanity. Their other weapon was what looked like a simple dog, but with enhanced mental capabilities. The dog was smarter than some humans. Eventually, the whole thing blew up in their faces, their weapons escaped and the Outsider killed the dog before being killed himself.”

Everyone looked both fascinated and disgusted by what the witch was saying, and Spike couldn’t help but fear what they’d done to Xander, what he was pregnant with. He wrapped his arms around his mate and all but pulled him into his lap.

The girl continued. “There are other projects, I haven’t tracked them all down yet, one of them was to develop genetically enhanced humans, make them into something like Carrie from that Stephen King book with the mind powers and all. From what I can tell, that’s backfired on them too. Then we come to Professor Walsh. She’s my teacher for God’s sake; I don’t know how I’m going to be able to look at her! Walsh worked at both projects and another further up the coast here in California, I haven’t figured out what they’ve done there. Then Walsh found out about demons and the like and figured that demons were the way to create the perfect weapon.”

“She had a project. 314, a sort of Frankenstein’s monster made up of demon parts, human and computers. It didn’t work, though, so she started working on cloning.”

Here she took a deep breath and Spike could see her look at Xander from the corner of her eye. “They figured that they could create a demon/human hybrid, vampire/human specifically. The speed, strength, stamina. All the best parts of the demon with none of the disadvantages like sunlight and holy water. Something sorta like out of the movie Blade.” She added, noticing the dazed look in Xander’s eye.

“My god, these people are fools! They have no idea what they’re doing! Is it not enough that their experiments keep on backfiring, they have to make even more mistakes?” Giles took off his glasses and pinched the bridge of his nose. Xander could identify with the man, all that info in such a short time left his head hurting as well.

“There’s more, Giles. I-I have all the information here. See they made a successful hybrid, but the surrogate mothers never carried to term, evidently the child was too strong for a human female to carry, and well they figured out just a couple days ago when they were watching Spike and Xander that the fetus would need blood. They couldn’t use the vampires as a surrogate, because

they weren't living, so they, they decided to use human males as surrogate mothers, using an artificial womb and implants in the arms to provide all the necessary hormones once a series of shots were given."

Oh god, Xander thought, he just knew this wasn't going to be good. "Please Willow, please don't say what I think you're going to say."

Before Willow can respond, Drusilla gets up from where she'd been sitting in the floor with Giles's best tea set that Xander had given her to play with. "The dark will be coming and it'll be so sweet, don't worry my boys, Grandmum will take care of things, make sure the tin toys don't follow with their sharps. Miss Edith says I'm to learn new lullabies. Must hurry though, I killed the spider but the golden girl has given him another and she's calling on the angels to hurt my boys, hunt them down. The Tree and her Light will help me, must use a cloak to hide the kitten. Oh the stars sing of the little dark!" With that she started spinning in place.

Xander couldn't look at her, didn't want to think of it. "No, no, it's can't be, that's...it's something out of a bad movie."

Willow looked up at him, her green eyes wide. "I'm sorry Xander, it's true. The fetus is about a month old, but you've only been implanted for two weeks. You're pregnant."

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Chapter 2 by Amejisuto

Worries

Xander shot up in bed, gasping as he shook off the last of the nightmare. He'd been taking a nap while Spike was downstairs doing some gabbling and trying to get into their accounts and it felt odd to wake up alone from a nightmare.

He got up from the rumpled bed and walked to the bathroom, washing his face and trying not to look in his eyes in the mirror. He'd been having dreams the entire time they had been captured, and they weren't stopping.

In fact they were only getting worse. In addition to the dreams of people in white coats taking Spike away from him he had added both Buffy and Angel, and now it was not only Spike but a small wrapped bundle as well.

He tried not to let it show but he lived in fear of his baby being taken away from him. Since they had decided to keep the baby he'd been worried sick. From everything to whether or not he'd be a good parent, to if his child was normal or had birth defects to being caught and his child trained as a soldier with an even worse childhood that he had.

He wanted to get further away from Sunnydale, and Spike had agreed. They just wanted to get organized so they could figure out where to go. There weren't that many doctors that would specialize in male pregnancies; they were going to have to search.

He heard the door to the suite they were in open and froze, hiding behind the door to the bathroom.

"Xander?"

"In the bathroom. Shit Spike you scared a year's growth out of me! Knock or whistle a Sex Pistol's songs or something." He slumped in relief and went into the main room, nearly throwing himself at his mate.

"What's wrong Love?"



“Nightmares.” He snuggled into the vampire’s embrace, inhaling his scent and feeling safe for the first time since he woke up a little while ago. More and more he was associating the smell of leather and cigarette smoke with safety. He wasn’t sure if it was a side effect of the pregnancy or if it was the hyena within getting out a bit more, either way it was nice. Of course the blonde refused to smoke around him anymore, fearing for his health and the baby’s.

Spike picked him up and took him back to the bed, not even stopping to kick off his shoes. It wasn’t sexual, it was comfort, and he loved the care Spike was taking with him, trying to help him get over his fears.

Ever since escaping the vampire had become even more protective of him, with good reason. Spike was becoming the very model of an alpha male protecting his mate and Xander had already resigned himself to being coddled within an inch of his life. Not that he was going to complain about it.

After a few moments of comfortable silence he moved so he was face to face with his mate on the bed.

“Were you able to get everything done?”

“Yeah Love, most of it at any rate. The few accounts I had set up that Peaches knew about have been closed, bloody bastard was trying to stop me from getting access to any funds. Shows what he knows, those were just there to let him play with. Tonight we’ll go out and get one of those cell phones and you can call your mates before Red worries herself into a fit. Maybe she’ll have some info on where to look for a doc for you Love.”

“Yeah, and while Las Vegas is nice it’s weird. I always thought it was gangsters that built this town, not demons. Was Bugsy Segal a demon? Or maybe Warren Beatty? Cause that would explain how an old guy like him got Annett Benning. And his sister’s weirdness.”

He heard the rumble of Spike’s laughter. “Bugsy was a human working with demons Love, and no one can explain Shirley McClain. You have the strangest mind sometimes Xander. We can be ready to leave day after tomorrow if you like. We can get supplies for the trip tonight.”

“I want to go to a bookstore I guess. From watching too much TV I know I’m not supposed to drink and eat bad things while pregnant but that’s about it. Willow sent some stuff with us I know, but...I want to do this right.”

Spike’s hand came down and reached under the sweats he was wearing to stroke the scar where the scientists had implanted the artificial womb. He was only about seven weeks along so he hadn’t gained any real weight yet but Spike was fascinated with his abdomen.

“It’s hard to believe there’s a life growing inside of there isn’t it? Wonder when you’ll start growing Xan, once you get too big you won’t be able to go out really, you’ll have to hide.”

Xander quickly hid the grin that had stretched across his face.

“Spike? Will you still love me when I’m fat?”

The vampire all but jumped up and looked like he’d just seen a rampaging elephant coming after him, his eyes wide and panicked.

“Oh bloody hell Pet! Red didn’t say anything about you being knocked up was going to turn you into a bint!”

Xander laughed and pushed Spike down so he could roll on top of him. “Relax Spike, I’m just

pulling your leg. So far I can report no cravings of ice cream and pickles, no morning sickness, and no crying over weight issues. I don't doubt that I'll be big as a whale, men aren't made to carry babies, but that will be worth having a kid."

Spike looked relieved. "You are evil Pet. I was about to run screaming from the room, and I still reserve that right if you do start puking up your toe nails."

"You run and I'll make sure to aim for your duster buddy." He leaned forward and nipped at Spike's lips and then kissed, slipping his tongue in when his mate opened his mouth. It was always an experience to kiss Spike, the cool mouth and strong muscle that stroked his never let him forget who he was with.

He ran his tongue on the underside of Spike's teeth and felt the resulting growl when Spike shifted to his demonic face. He leaned away long enough to lick along the ridges above his eyes before going back to kissing. He very carefully slit his tongue open on one fang and the taste of blood filled his mouth before Spike licked at him, trying to taste every inch.

He fumbled down and unbuttoned Spike's jeans, making sure to carefully remove the hardened cock, before raising his hips to allow the vampire to pull the sweats down to his knees. He settled against the cool body underneath him, making sure their cocks touched, and started a rocking motion.

Spike thrust up to meet him and they quickly fell into a rhythm, moving together even as they kissed each other and let their hands roam. Xander found himself almost to the edge so he broke off kissing to make his way down Spike's neck, laving the scar he'd put there so many months ago while at the same time offering his neck.

Their pre-come eased the way for their lengths to rub together, creating a delicious friction. Xander gasped when Spike's fangs finally penetrated him, enjoying the feel of his lover drawing the blood from his veins before he bit as well. He came hard as Spike's blood filled his mouth, the feel of it hot and slippery and home. He felt Spike follow him over the edge, a cool stream of come splattering his chest.

He collapsed on Spike's chest and cool arms wrapped around him, holding him close. The only sound in the room was a rumbling purr and his breathing as it slowed. Xander found himself getting sleepy again, at least until a sharp smack was delivered to his bottom.

"Come on Love, we need to get moving so we can get everything we need. You'll need to call Red once we get the phones. Shift your arse and get in the shower."

Xander reluctantly got up and headed towards the bathroom, stopping in the door to bend over to pull off the sweatpants the rest of the way and making sure to moon his lover. He heard the springs on the bed creak as Spike quickly got up to join him.

He turned and smirked at the blonde. "Coming Spike?"

"Keep teasing like that Pet and it'll be a week before we leave the room, never mind leaving town!"

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Spike stomped into the bookstore, determined to find his mate. How long could it take to pick out a few books at any rate?

Finding Xander in front of a large display with a slightly glazed look told Spike how difficult it was. There had to be a hundred different books, half of them with cutesy names or in pastel

colors.

“Xander?”

“Dear god Spike how do we choose? This is worse than a research night at Giles’. At least there I have a vague idea of what demon to find in which book. This is just weird. Jenny McCarthy from MTV has a pregnancy book out even! Maybe we should look for a magic shop or something, I really doubt they have anything I can use here.”

Spike picked up a book, read the title and put it back. “I can safely say you won’t be needing information on a natural pregnancy Xan, or information on conceiving. And I really hope we won’t need the one about twins. A kid will be nice but I don’t know if we can handle two at once. Look, just grab a couple and lets get out of here. It’s not like you aren’t going to see a mall in the next eight months or so.”

He couldn’t keep the growl out of his voice, there were too many people in the mall, and kids running every direction and adults stopping to walk right in front of him while he was walking back from the cell phone place. Anyone could try to grab Xander in this mess and no one would probably notice it.

“Yeah, that sounds good Spike.”

He followed behind Xander the rest of the way through the store, watching as his boy picked out five books, one of which was nutrition he was thankful to see. He’d noticed earlier that Xander had taken more blood from him than usual. Consorts always needed the blood of their mate to live, but usually Xander was much more careful. Spike just figured it was because the child within his mate needed the blood too and planned to feed accordingly. Already tonight he had taken a little from three different muggers and pickpockets on the way to the bookstore. “Someone having a baby?” The cashier was a young thing, hardly as old as his boy and spoke with fake enthusiasm. Spike could hear Xander almost growl and felt him move closer. For once his lover had nothing to say so Spike jumped in to fill the gap. “His big sis is having a little one and we’re getting her some books. These are the kind she’ll need, yeah?” He gave her the cover story they had cooked up. It would look really weird to have a gay couple buying pregnancy books for themselves unless they wanted to say there was a surrogate mother out there somewhere.

The girl behind the register looked like she was finally excited about something. “Yeah these are great! I just found out I’m pregnant last month and you’ve got some great ones. The ‘What to Expect When You’re Expecting’ one is required reading from my doctor, and the nutrition book that goes with it is great too. They even have an organizer, if you like I can order one, we just sold the last one the other day.”

This time it was Xander that spoke up. “Well we’re kinda from out of town, so we won’t be here when you get it in, but I’ll keep it in mind. If Willow wants it I’m sure she can find it.”

They made their escape, stopping in the middle of the mall to figure out what to do next.

“We still need to get a laptop Spike, Willow may have more of those files she hacked from the Initiative decoded. That plus I’ll want to do some research on the Internet on pregnancy too. Damn, I never thought I’d hear myself volunteering to do research. I keep on finding myself feeling like I’m in a Twilight Zone episode, either that or a bad comedy with Danny DeVito.”

“Look on the upside Pet, we haven’t ended up in a cornfield and I’m not planning on getting on a plane. I’ve got a contact already working on a laptop, she’s a Tesser demon and they’re computer experts, just look at the Gates bloke. Mandy should have it ready by tomorrow, that’s why we couldn’t leave tonight.”

“My god! Don’t tell me that Bill Gates is a demon!”

“What, you think a human would devise a way to frustrate so many people at once? Really Xander, you’re slipping, of course he’s a demon!”

“That just explains so much.” Before he could go on Spike heard Xander’s stomach rumble loud enough that even the human heard it and blushed.

Spike just laughed, he had long become used to the fact that Xander’s belly seemed to have a mind of it’s own and complained loudly at the lack of food. Being pregnant only seemed to make it worse.

“Come on Love, let’s feed you before your stomach is loud enough to wake the dead. Well any dead other than me that is”

Three quarters of an hour later found them seated in a nice restaurant, in a corner booth. It was nice and dark and the low hum of different conversations sounded like the ocean and Spike was glad the place was crowded enough to make it difficult for anyone to listen in to what they had to say.

Spike ordered fish and chips and Xander ordered what was becoming his usual, a rare steak. This time he had steamed vegetables and a salad rather than a potato, but the squinch of his nose said he didn’t really like the idea. The nutrition book was open on the table in between them.

“This sucks, low sugar, no caffeine, no artificial sweeteners, and loads of green stuff. Damn it this is a human/vampire hybrid not a human/rabbit! What else is there besides sugar and caffeine to drink? At least I’m supposed to have lots of protein, that I can do. Except they talk more about fish and chicken than beef, and that’s all I seem to want.”

Spike fought back the need to sigh. He wasn’t sure if he wanted to get into this before Xander ate, but his lover did mention it.

“Look you still have the hyena in your head Pet, not a lot but a little. Plus it’s a vampiric child. Only makes sense that you’d feel the need for red meat a bit more. Probably should have the others too, just to be on the safe side. We’ll stop on the way to the hotel and get you some vitamins.” Here he leered at his young lover. “Got to make sure you have plenty of iron in your bloodstream for me and the little one.”

The waitress came with Xander’s salad and he looked dejectedly at the mass of spring greens and spinach. Spike could just see the eight year old inside his lover trying to figure out how to get out of eating the stuff and laughed.

“It’s not funny Spike, I’m eating what looks to be grass and weeds. Something so green cannot taste good, it’s just not natural.”

“If you’re real good and clean your plate like a good little boy I’ll give you a treat when we get back to the room, an all night lolly. How’s that?”

“I’m thinking how wrong it is for you to be talking like that while I’m reading ‘You’re Pregnancy Week By Week’. That and I now have an x rated version of the Tootsie Roll song running around in my head, thank you ever so much.”

“Took your mind off of eating the lawn clippings didn’t it?”

“That it did Husband-mine, that it did.”

By the time they left the restaurant it was late. Spike quickly drove them to an all night pharmacy so they could get vitamins and some chamomile tea, Xander had read that it was high in vitamin C and was good for helping someone to relax enough to sleep. He was ready to try anything to keep the dreams away and Spike couldn't help but agree.

As they left the store hand in hand Spike looked fondly at his mate. Xander had found calcium supplements safe for pregnant women that were chocolate flavored and had already eaten his daily allowance and was now bouncing along.

Watching Xander did not keep him from watching out for trouble, so when he pulled at Xander's arm the brunette knew something was up. They quickly moved to cover each other's back and Spike growled low. Warning off whatever it was from his boy. Xander to his surprise was doing much the same.

“Well, well, well. What do we have here? A couple of faggot boys in our neighborhood look like. We're gonna have to show these two we don't like their kind around here, eh boys?”

Four human males, drunk and obviously stupid. He had seen one of them in the store but had dismissed him from his mind. He relaxed a bit, they could handle this. He felt Xander's silent laughter vibrating through him from where their shoulders touched.

“My god, we're in a big city where you can be married by an Elvis impersonator, I wonder why it's a surprise when we run into rednecks? Hey guys, you do know that most people have seen Deliverance and know that you protest way too much right?”

“Why you...!”

The leader took a swing at Xander and that was the excuse Spike needed. He rushed to intercept the blow and caught the arm, then pulled it till the big idiot lost his footing and fell to the concrete dazed. Spike quickly disabled the two others, slamming his hand into the nose of one hard enough to kill him instantly while using the side of his hand to hit one quickly in the region of his Adam's apple, making him pass out from the pain.

He heard the crack of bone and looked to see that Xander had snapped the other' man's neck, his eyes showing more of the hyena than Spike had ever seen before. His demon felt the call from its mate and reminded Spike that he was needed to protect Xander.

His human face slipped as he grabbed the git who had started all this. He let his fangs slide into the man's neck right at the jugular and enjoyed the spray of hot fresh blood filling his mouth. He was soon done with his impromptu meal and looked to see if Xander was upset with him.

The brunette was smiling wanly and held out his hand to be held. “I don't think there are any cameras around in this alley but let's go before the other two wake up and call the cops on us.”

Once they got back to the car and was on the road again Spike looked at his love.

“You okay with that Pet?”

“Kinda too late now, besides while I may not like it, I know you have to protect me. I was scared for a second; I mean what if one of those idiots caused me to abort or something. And yes, eeeww. But a part of me loved what you just did.”

At this admission Xander looked sick, and Spike knew if he hadn't had killed the man he'd go back and do it again for messing with his boy.

“Don’t worry Love. Like I said earlier tonight, for some reason your hyena is closer to the surface. You’re just reacting to that.”

“Right. Don’t worry. Easy for you to say, you didn’t eat a pig.”

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Chapter 3 by Amejisuto

Beast

Xander felt sick to his stomach and was more than happy to reach the safety of their hotel room. He dropped the bag of supplies they’d bought at the pharmacy by the door and flopped on the bed, pulling the pillow over his face.

“Xan? You okay Love?”

“Yes. No. I’m not okay because I’m okay.” He knew the pillow muffled his voice but that Spike would still be able to hear him. He felt the bed dip as Spike sat down beside of him.

“Run that by me again Pet, I got lost in the circle of your logic.”

Xander pulled the pillow away from his face and used it to prop himself up on the bed. “It’s just, well I just killed someone. Well we both did, but you’re used to it. But I, I snapped his neck Spike. I didn’t need to, he was threatening us yeah but we’re both strong enough to just beat the crap out of them and leave them there. They were idiots, but couldn’t hurt us. I wasn’t fighting for my life. I just got pissed and snapped his neck. I know you said it’s the hyena in me, and maybe that’s true. Still I don’t like that I did it, or that I wasn’t bothered by it more. Dose that make sense?”

He heard Spike sigh. These kinds of talks were always difficult for them, they’d had quiet a few at the beginning of their relationship. Dealing with the fact that Spike killed and fed off of humans, but could still love, and the fact that Xander cared for him despite that had been a major hurdle in their relationship. Spike’s hand made it’s way to his abdomen and rubbed at his scar.

“Love its instinct, just as much for you as it is for me. Just think of it this way, if this little one was born, if we’d been holding the baby and that happened, would you feel guilty?”

Xander was silent as he thought about it. He could almost feel the rage at the thought of someone harming his baby.

“Probably, but not as bad. You’re right Spike. It’s like, well it’s like when we compromised I guess. Law of the jungle; the strong survive while the weak are culled from the herd. And those guys were obviously weak in the head. I guess I’m just afraid of loosing control too, becoming like I was when I was totally possessed. What happens if I hurt you? Or worse yet the baby?”

Spike laughed and pressed a quick kiss to his lips, leaving them tingling. “Xander if the hyena got full control it would recognize me as your mate and alpha, and it would recognize the baby as yours, but it’s not gonna happen. You’re still you; you know that, you’ve just got some accessories in that brain of yours. Now why don’t you call Red and find out what’s happening in Sunnyhell while I run down to the lobby. Then we’ll try out some of the stuff you bought to help you sleep, okay?”

Xander got up and reached for his cell phone. “Sounds good. Probably half of my problems come from not sleeping.”

A quick kiss was pressed to his lips. “Right, I’ll just be popping out then.”

Xander waited till Spike left before he started dialing the phone. He figured hormones along with the lack of sleep and the stress of being attacked was making him snarky, but he sure as hell wasn't going to admit it to Spike. One of his greatest fears about his pregnancy was the thought of turning into a cliché, eating ice cream and pickles and crying over coffee commercials.

Still he was more than willing to admit the nightmares were getting to him. Hopefully talking to Willow would help set his mind at ease.

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Xander was sitting brooding on the bed waiting for Spike to get back. He admitted freely to himself that he was brooding. At least he had good cause. Talking to Willow had only gave him new things to worry about, rather than reassuring him.

He heard the key card being used and restrained himself from jumping Spike the minute he came through the door. Not because jumping Spike was bad, but because it would be for the wrong reason. They'd talk first, then he's jump Spike.

He watched as Spike slipped out of his duster and laid it on a chair, a bag from one of the shops in the lobby unsuccessfully hidden in it's folds. That at least brought a faint smile to his face; Spike was planning a surprise for him. He needed a nice surprise for a change.

"Hey."

"What happened Pet, you've got that doom and gloom look on your face."

Xander waited till Spike had climbed up on the bed with him. They were both fully clothed, except for shoes, and were on top of the covers but it made Xander feel safe lying next to Spike, being in his arms.

"Well you know that Buffy called in Angel right? He, he came to Sunnydale, if Wills and Tara hadn't hidden her he would have gotten Drusilla. He didn't like the fact that she'd kind of eaten a platoon of men. Wills said she's left town now that she said she'd done what she could. But Spike, she was staying in our house and Angel, he burned it down. Our house Spike!" His voice broke and he found himself wrapped up in Spike's arms.

"Xan you know its only things. We're safe and we're together. That's all that matters."

"But Spike! It was our house, our home. It had the bedspread from the hotel the first time we made love and the stuff from our first Christmas together. It had our favorite books, and the tee shirt Jesse gave me and the Barbie I stole from Willow and kept. It was ours and that bastard took it from us just because he doesn't like the fact that we're together!"

His throat was tight but he refused to cry. What had hurt the most was hearing Willow apologizing, as if she was afraid he'd be mad at her. It was like she was jumpy around him now that she knew about him and Spike. He hadn't noticed it too much before they'd left, they didn't have much time to talk the either. Then again sharing a dorm room with Drusilla would make anyone jumpy. .

"Xander, we'll buy more books, fuck we can replace it all. It's just things, they don't matter."

"I know Spike. I guess it's just the fact that Buffy knew we're together and I'm happy yet she still has sicced Angel on us like an attack dog. From what Willow said Riley's been telling her that you've got me thralld and the Initiative was trying to break me free from your spell. Willow and Buffy are fighting, Willow moved in with Tara at least; Giles is trying to make Buffy see sense and she called him a traitor for having demon friends. I feel guilty, it's like I stirred up a hornet's nest

and the left G-man and Willow to deal with it all.”

He wiggled in Spike’s arms and the vampire pulled back, forcing him to look at him.

“You really think we’re just running away? Xander if it wasn’t for the baby I’d have turned you the minute we escaped, and soul or no soul we’d have paid those wankers back in blood for what they’ve done. Fuck. I’d go back and do it now, except for the fact that I won’t, can’t leave you. I need to protect you, and if you look into that weird brain of yours you’d realize you need me to protect you. It’s instinct.”

Xander thought about it, and realized Spike was right in a way. He felt this need to protect his baby, to do everything for his child that his parents never did for him. Whether it was the hyena or just him he wasn’t sure. It didn’t matter really, as long as all of his brain was agreed about the baby. He wondered where the soldier in his head was in all this.

Probably dying of shock, in the military it was “don’t ask, don’t tell” about same sex relationships, male pregnancy probably had him in some corner of his brain hiding.

Much like when Willow first told him he was pregnant.

Just then he had a thought. He looked at Spike and saw both the love and the anger at what had happened to them.

“When the baby comes, you’re going after them aren’t you?”

“Yeah Pet. I have to. They won’t rest till they get our little one and I can’t let that happen.”

“I get it. Its scary but I understand. Hell, I want to help you.”

“Can’t Love, even after the little one is born. One of us has to be around you know?”

Hearing Spike say that made Xander realize how much things were going to change. No more hunting with Spike. One of them had to stay safe, stay alive. For their child’s sake.

“Fuck Spike, I’m gonna be a mommy! And you’re gonna be a daddy!”

Spike looked at him oddly. “That’s usually happens when one’s pregnant Xan.”

Xander laughed. “You don’t get it Spike. You’re gonna be a Master Vampire carrying a diaper bag while your Consort pushes the stroller. If we can send the kid to school you’ll be the first undead member of the PTA. They’re be sleepovers and circuses and we’ll take our kid and sit through the same fucking Disney movie so many times we’ll know all the words to the songs and you’ll want to pull the spine out of whoever wrote them. Barney, Spike. At some point in time we’ll watch Barney or worse yet Teletubbies.”

He watched as Spike slammed his head against the wall. “Bloody fucking hell stake me now! There is no way in hell any child of mine is watching any thing that talks like they’re stupid.”

“Sesame Street it is then. And hey demon friendly children’s programming. You got human kids playing with Cookie Monster and Elmo. And that Kermit is a pretty cool frog.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about and I don’t want to know what you’re talking about Pet. Kid’s not even popped out yet and you’re planning its fall TV season. And we’ll get a pram, not a stroller.”

They lay in silence for a while, each lost in their own thoughts. Finally Xander curls into Spike.



“Can I still hurt Angel for burning down our house?”

“I’d be disappointed if you didn’t Xan. Now come on, strip. We’re gonna have a nice hot bath and I’ll order up some hot water for that tea we bought for you.”

Twenty minutes later Xander was leaning against his lover and they were both immersed in hot water in the hotel room’s large bathtub. The room smelled of the bath oil and candles that Spike had bought in the lobby downstairs. Lavender and chamomile and other herbs to help him relax. The smell and the heat seeping into his bones, relaxing him till he wanted to just sleep.

Spike was washing him, washcloth running over his arms, chest and stomach, working it’s way lower. He was sitting in front of his lover, leaning against his chest and all but purring in contentment. The edginess that had been with him ever since the fight falling away in the face of Spike’s gentle caresses.

This was what people missed when they took Spike at face value. Spike would always be the big bad, killer, all of that. But when he loved someone that person felt it in their bones. The same hands that had the strength to break bone and tear flesh could be so soothing.

He gasped as the washcloth brushed against his cock and he felt it filling with blood. “God Spike, love the way you touch me.”

“Good thing I like touching you then isn’t it? Relax, let me do this for you.” Spike’s voice was deep and he could feel his lover’s cock rising to the occasion as well. He lay back and let his hands run over Spike’s thighs, tracing patterns under the water as Spike used the washcloth to stroke his length, and then running it over his balls tickling them just for a moment so he lost his breath.

“Bastard.” He was panting and laughing all at once. Spike just laughed with him and pressed a kiss to the side of his throat. He arched his neck, giving his lover the freedom to do what he wanted.

The washcloth was abandoned and now it was Spike’s fingers alone that did the teasing. The thumb of one hand stroking the tip of his cock and his other hand was busy fondling his balls. Xander began to pant and rock into his lover’s touch and he tried to make sure he rubbed up against Spike’s cock at the same time. Spike groaned low in his chest and thrust towards him while licking at the side of his neck.

Spike sped up his rhythm and Xander found himself begging his lover for more. Now both of Spike’s hand was working his cock, using both hands to pull and stroke until his eyes rolled back in his head.

His body arched and he came with a shout as he felt the pleasure/pain of fangs in his neck at the same time Spike twisted his cock ever so slightly. He heard an answering shout and felt Spike buckle as well.

He collapsed against Spike panting, his eyes getting heavier and harder to open. “Mmmm, loved that Spike. Love you.”

“Love you Xan. Love the both of you. Hold on and I’ll get you into bed Pet.” He felt himself being held to Spike’s chest as he was lifted from the bath and his lover stepped out. He was sat on the vanity counter as Spike dried him off carefully and Xander thought that if he could purr he’d be doing it.

As he was carried to bed Xander spared a thought for the hyena part of his brain. He couldn’t feel it as if it was a separate being but he knew he felt happy and content and safe now that Spike

had taken the time to bath and dry him. Of course the sex hadn't hurt a thing either.

"You still want that tea Pet?"

"Nuh-uh. Want you. Sleep with me?"

He smiled as Spike crawled in beside him and he was wrapped up in cool arms. Spike even threw his legs over his, effectively trapping Xander. Instead of making him feel claustrophobic it made him feel safe and content.

"Sleep Love."

"Night Spike." His last thought as he drifted off to sleep was that he wouldn't have any nightmares; Spike had washed them all away.

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Chapter 4 by Amejisuto

Strength

Xander wasted yet another token in the slot machine and pulled the lever. He was killing time till they could go and pick up the laptop Spike had bought, and while he had slept well for once, he was too tired to do anything really. He was too restless to read, and too bored to watch daytime television and he was caught in between exhaustion and restlessness, as if something was crawling on his skin ever so slightly.

He'd already bugged Spike into leaving as soon as they had picked up the laptop and when Spike went down to get in some blackjack while waiting, Xander had packed up everything and checked out.

Still it had been so nice to actually sleep without nightmares. He didn't know if it was because of the bath or the fact that Spike purred to him for most of the night but it helped, he didn't feel quite so fragmented.

And waking up listening to Spike questioning the room service people about how many vitamins were in the cereal and if there was active bacteria in the yogurt was hilarious to no end. Not that he'd tell his Big Bad Mate that. Still the breakfast in bed was lovely, and Spike hand feeding him fruit in bed always led to more fun.

Still it made him all gooshy on the inside to know that Spike had read some of the books they'd bought already. The vampire didn't need to sleep that much when he was well fed and healthy and always stayed up till nearly dawn then slept with Xander for just a few hours before his hyperactive nature had him awake and ready for the next night.

Spike also was a speed-reader. In fact if there was ever a contest between him and Giles Xander was sure that Spike would win, as long as the book was something he was interested in. If it wasn't it would be good if he got even five pages into the book before abandoning it for something else, even if it was annoying his mate while Xander actually was trying to read.

Putting the lever on the slot yet again Xander spared a thought for their child and pitied any future teacher it would have. Between his class clown nature, and Spike's attention deficit and hyperactivity the poor teacher was in for a world of hurt. And gods help them if they ended up home schooling.

He laughed at himself. Once again he was putting the cart in front of the horse, or some such old fashioned saying. Here he was thinking about school and all that when the child he was planning for wasn't even a bump in his midsection yet.

Still he couldn't help but wonder if it would be a boy or a girl. Blue eyes or brown? Maybe a boy with his eyes and Spike's cheekbones. Still at this point he's settle with a healthy child with ten fingers and toes. He knew most parents said that but it was far more likely that the Initiative's version of Doctor Frankenstein fucked something up more than Mother Nature ever would.

He couldn't wait to get away from Las Vegas. Too many people in one place, the Casinos were always crowded and even his sense of smell was overwhelmed at times from the scent of sweat and hairspray and perfumes. Now that it was early evening it was getting worse. Spike must be going insane.

He laughed to himself. He still remembered the first time he realized just how well the vampire could smell. It was right before Graduation and he'd been meeting Willow at the school to unload supplies for the bomb he was making from the back of Oz's van. After they left Spike had come out of hiding to help him move the supplies to the right place, the vampire was a wiz at explosives surprise, surprise. He'd made a leering comment about what they'd been up to in the back of the van, nearly on top of the supplies, and Xander had felt his face turn red and he stuttered for five minutes while Spike had laughed.

Now he used that sense of smell to his advantage. He knew if he got within a hundred feet of the blackjack table and started thinking...fun thoughts, that Spike would smell it and well the last time he'd teased the vampire like that they'd had quite a bit of fun.

Suddenly the slot machine he'd been using as a cover for daydreaming lit up and tokens fell into the floor. He'd actually won something for once and Xander laughed, thinking it was his lucky day for once.

He didn't realize how lucky. He stooped over to pick up his winnings as two men walked down the isle of slots in the next row. There was just something about them that set him off, he could see their shoes and they were too nice, too polished.

Xander found the answer to why it bothered him in the memories of the soldier. Army regulation spit shine.

Okay, they could be just two guys on leave looking for something to do. Then again they could be looking for him and Spike and they'd have to leave faster than he thought. As he stood up he tried to look around, making it look like he was looking for someplace to cash in his tokens. There were two more circling the floor on the other side, this time a man and a woman but the man's hair was too short and the woman's gait was too...off.

He had to get out of there and find Spike. Now.

He still took the time to get together his stuff. Nothing would make him look more suspicious than if he just left a thousand dollars worth of tokens. He made is way to the exit, trying to look as normal and touristy as possible. Maybe he should have gotten an old shirt like he used to have, there seemed to be a plethora of Hawaiian shirts in the casino. It would have made great camouflage.

"Excuse me sir. If you'll follow me to the office we can help you get those tokens cashed in."

Oh shit, oh shit, oh shit. The mantra circled around in his brain. Three men had stepped out of the isle and were trying to be so very helpful. Yeah right, he might not be as old as his mate but he wasn't stupid. Still he'd have to play along.

"Gee, thanks...that's nice of you guys lead the way."

Okay three guys with him, and four others were floating around the slot room. Not good. What he

needed was a distraction. Fortunately for him he'd watched way too many spy movies. He saw just the distraction he needed right up ahead.

It was a tour group of women. Middle aged women with too tight pants and too much make up trying to look younger. He knew the type; in fact his Mother was the type. Sweet faces and sweet words but underneath the façade total bitches and would do anything to get what they wanted.

He followed his escort meekly, babbling about how he never won anything and how lucky he was and what a great hotel and mainly trying to look as harmless as possible.

Just as he passed the group of harpies he let his foot catch on one of the chairs. He tripped and made sure to give the bucket of tokens an added flip. Tokens spilled all over the twenty or so women, rolled into the floor and generally made a serious mess.

The effect was instantaneous. Bodies flew off the chairs and into the floor as spandex clad women fought and grabbed over the money. One of his guards was pushed over and the other grabbed his elbow to help him off the floor. Xander used his weight against the man and pushed as he pulled and the man fell. The third man was quickly moving in and Xander kicked at his knee, only a glancing blow not enough to cripple but enough to drop the man.

Working quickly he got out of the area, moving to the edge of the room and headed for the exit. One of the people fighting over tokens had an oversized jacket and he picked it up as he passed, putting it on. He needed to find Spike and they needed to leave. Like five minutes ago.

As he made his way to the table game room, he noticed more people headed to where he'd just been. They were probably covering the exits now.

As he neared the blackjack tables he saw his mate's head swivel towards him, and the vampire immediately got up leaving his hand at the table unplayed.

"Xander?"

"We've got company Spike, of the olive green variety. Did you get the laptop?"

As they spoke they were both moving towards the door and Xander immediately felt better with Spike rubbing against his shoulder.

"No Pet, picking that up later on the other side of town."

"Good, let's get the hell out of here. You think the spell on the rings stopped or something?"

He watches as Spike looked down to the rings the witches had spelled for them. "Dunno. Maybe these just help cloud their perceptions, but if they saw you it didn't help. We'll figure it out later eh?"

They made their way to the lobby and Xander could see all the military personnel in civilian clothes. He could see how they were armed and right about then he would have loved to have some sort of weapon. Yeah a knife and stake was all well and good when you fought demons, but these were humans.

They passed one set of soldiers looking the other way and Xander snorted to himself. Thinking "these are not the druids you're looking for" wasn't going to help much. The hyena in his head was growling and he was certain if he could see his alter egos in the real world she would have been saying, "I told you so!" He recognized his restlessness from earlier much have been because he'd sensed something was coming. Xander made a mental note to listen to his brain more often.

Finally, after many doges and detours they made it to the exit and tried to look nonchalant. Xander looked at his mate wearing his beloved duster in the lobby of a hotel in the middle of a desert.

“Spike! Take off your coat and carry it.”

“No Xander, not the duster, don’t even think it!”

“I didn’t say leave it Blondie, I said carry it. For god’s sake only the dead would be wearing black or clothes like that in this climate. We may be going to the underground garage so you don’t have to worry about the sun but it looks funny and they’ll notice! Take it off!”

He rolled his eyes as Spike growled at him. Whatever. He knew that the Initiative had ways of tracking being with lower body heat, but he hoped the fact that Spike had been in a small room filled with people had masked that or confused it or something.

But now they were going into the garage where there weren’t many people. Bad because they’d stick out more, but good because if they were caught they could fight back.

He came to a stop before leaving the crowded room and acted like he was tying his shoes while Spike kept watch. He was wearing a long sleeve shirt so he was able to slip the ankle sheath holding his knife off quickly and attached it to his wrist. It didn’t fit right, but it was better than nothing. Standing up he let Spike lead the way.

“We have got to get me some better weapons.” Xander muttered to himself. He couldn’t risk the baby by fighting hand to hand unless there was no choice.

The garage looked empty but that restless feeling was back. Spike could feel something as well, he could tell because his lover’s eyes was more gold than blue and he could feel the growl that was so low he couldn’t hear it. At least they had gotten to the car okay though.

“Stop right there.”

Fuck. It was a casino worker at least but he was on a little walkie-talkie saying that he found someone suspicious. Before he could finish talking though Spike had moved and the man was on the ground, either unconscious or dead he wasn’t sure and he didn’t have time to look. Since he had the keys to the car he got to drive and he pulled away while Spike was still getting in the car.

A big truck moved to block the entrance but Xander managed to move around the front, the sides of the car scraping on the concrete walls as they drove away.

“And Elvis has left the building! Damn that was close! Where to now Spike?”

“Dunno Xander...guess just drive around or something. Are you okay Love? Fuck how did they find us? Sodding hell!”

He watched helpless as Spike took out his frustrations on the dashboard. He could feel the tension vibrating off of his lover and there wasn’t except anything he could do about it. Spike was the type to either kill what was bugging him or shag until it stopped bugging him and well they were in a car driving. Not the best place to have sex no matter what Charlie Sheen did in the movies.

“Yeah, I’m okay. Scared as hell and worried but okay. Hey you think there’s anything on the car, like bugs or tracking devices or something?”

"I doubt it Pet. They didn't know which one we were driving. Still we may need to switch cars, did you have to hit the wall back there?"

"So sorry Spike, next time I'll stop for the nice men in green." He gritted his teeth. He knew Spike was just worried but that didn't give him the right to snark. Most of the time they got along but every once in a while they'd end up bitching at each other till one or the other left to go kill something and blew off some steam. Or they had sex, either one.

Still the problem was they couldn't do that right now, which left snark. Which he didn't feel like right now but evidently his mate did.

"Don't have to get so huffy Xander. Just think I should be driving that's all."

"Well by all means let's just stop so we can switch. I'll be happy to park somewhere nice and bright."

Okay maybe he felt like snarking too.

The drove in silence for a while, and Xander was regretting his words. When he stopped at the next red light he turned to his lover and spoke.

"Sorry Pet."

"Spike..."

They looked at each other and finally laughed, and the tension ended somewhat.

"Still need to do something about the car Pet, that nice scratch down the side will make us easy to identify."

"Is there someone you can call to arrange for another? Gotta admit I like this magicked glass."

Spike sighed and leaned his head back on the seat. "Yeah, we might be able to get one from the same lady who's doing the laptop up for you. I'll ask and see when we go to meet her. She'll know where we can get one at any rate."

Xander fiddled around in his pocket while trying to drive, finally finding the cell phone and tossing it in Spike's lap. "Call her and see, maybe we can get the car or at least hide out there till we can find one."

"Good idea Pet." Spike picked up the phone and was looking at the front while Xander had to move through rush hour traffic.

"Xander...how do you get this bloody thing to work?"

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Chapter 5 by Amejisuto

Defense

Spike winced at the sounds of gunshots and covered his ears. He understood that Xander wanted to be better prepared to deal with the Initiative but he really hated the sound and scent of a gun. The scent would probably linger on Xander long after he had finished practicing, gun oil and powder. A slick, metallic scent that didn't seem right on his Xander.

But he knew Xander needed better protection for himself. The boy could probably take any human on in hand-to-hand but the soldiers didn't play fair. Tazers and tranq guns and they just

couldn't let them get that close to Xander, couldn't risk the baby.

So when they changed their car over Xander had arranged for weapons. He'd taken a few shots with the 9mm, and would use it if he had to but he found the whole idea of guns...distasteful.

If you were going to kill something it should be done close up. Killing wasn't something that should be neat and clean, it was messy and violent. Maybe that was what was wrong with the world, too many people had forgotten that.

Still he had to admit watching Xander practice with several guns was a sight to behold. He could handle the small .22 that went into an ankle holster, the other 9mm, even a fucking glock with armor piercing bullets. The soldier in Xander was in the driver's seat and Spike just loved it when he was so domineering. This was a sight the Scoobies hardly ever saw. Xander had pulled it out during the final fight with the Mayor last year but it always seemed like his friends forgot how deadly he could be.

They had other equipment to check out, but Spike was leaving it all to Xander while he kept watch. They were out in the middle of the desert, having finally slipped out of Las Vegas after picking up the laptop, car and Xander's toys. Spike still wasn't sure where to go, and Xander hadn't had time to check the weapons so they had stopped.

"Here Spike, put these in your duster pockets."

"Huh?" He looked down at the small round things in confusion. "Xan? What are these?"

"Just some smoke grenades. I was afraid to get the flash ones, the sounds would hurt you more than any human but with these you don't need to breath so you'll be okay. Just hollar at me if you're going to set one off so I can hold my breath."

Spike just shook his head and put the grenades in various pockets. "What no gas mask for yourself pet?"

"It should be in the box with the two Kevlar vests. I just really don't feel like testing it right now."

"Xander! Kevlar vests? I don't need one of those, vampire."

His mate looked over at him in all seriousness. "Yes you do. A round to the chest would put you out long enough for them to get to me. You are our first line of defense Spike. If they take you out no matter how many guns or tricks up my sleeves I have they'll get me eventually. I'm just hoping they don't find us again but we have to be prepared."

Spike gave a wry grin. "Always the boy scout eh Pet?"

"Ha ha Spike. I'm sure they have merit badges for C4."

"Fuck! Xander I know you have this love of blowing things up after you did your high school but that shit is dangerous!"

Xander just laughed and dismantled the glock, cleaning and reloading. "Don't worry husband-mine. It's only dangerous if the timer is in; it's the good stuff. It could have been worse, remember I have a fondness for rocket launchers too."

"Fucking hell Pet, I don't know whether to run from you or shag you to death right now." At the image in his head he actually had to adjust himself in his pants. He really loved it when Xander got this way, all powerful and confident.

Xander shook his head. "Desert shagging means sandy lube. Let's figure out where we're going and we can fuck on the way."

Spike thought for a moment. "Well we could probably get to Mesquite with some hard driving, find a motel and hole up for a bit and figure things out from there; travel from Utah or Arizona either one. I'd like to go east, get as far away from the army bases as we can."

Xander opened his mouth to say something when his cell phone rang and Spike had to laugh. He really didn't want to know how Xander had programmed it with the Addams Family theme but it was kind of appropriate.

He laughed even harder when Xander couldn't find the phone and had to dig through the stuff in the front seat of the car for it. He felt a swell of pride in his chest when instead of the bird he was given the two-fingered salute. His boy was learning.

"Yeah, yeah, laugh it up Blondie, we'll see if we get a room with a single or a double at the next motel." Xander turned his attention to the phone. "Hello? Willow?"

Spike could hear the steady stream of babble emerging from the little witch and moved closer to hear what was being said. It didn't work, because the girl was babbling faster than the speed of light. Even Xander was having problems.

"Wills! Willow rewind that and play it back at normal speed please?"

"Goddess Xander are you two alright? I got home from classes and figured out that the...green guys had found out where you were from the tracers I left from their files. Did you have any problems?"

Spike rolled his eyes. Surely by now she'd realized they were okay, otherwise Xander would not have answered the phone. Still it was nice to know that Xander's friends cared.

"Yeah we met up with our friends, but we managed to get out of town. We're okay."

"Good, that means I can yell at you now. Xander Harris what the hell were you thinking!!!"

"Huh?"

"Don't you 'huh' me mister! I expect Spike to be all grrr, 'cause you know, vampire. But you! You killed someone Xander! I read the police reports!"

Spike growled. He knew he should have killed those other two gits in the alley but at the time he was more worried about Xander than anything else. They'd have to be more careful.

"Willow its not that simple. They were attacking us, we merely protected ourselves."

"Xander one of them was drained! That's not protecting! That's Spike eating the locals!"

Xander sighed and leaned up against the car and Spike felt bad that he had to deal with this. He was tempted to take the phone and talk to Red himself but he figured Xander knew what to say to the girl more than he did.

"It's not that simple Willow..."

"Then tell me! Talk to me Xander, it's like you're this whole different person with Spike, one I don't know and I hate that. We're supposed to be friends!"



“Because you haven’t wanted to know Wills, there’s been times when it was obvious what was going on with me and you just never noticed.”

Spike wandered off to re-read one of the books they’d bought the other night. He could tell Xander was going to be a while.

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“Red okay now?”

Xander sighed and sank down to sit by Spike on the desert floor. “I guess. I don’t know, she’s hurt and mad and I can’t blame her. But then again there is a part of me who wishes she would have noticed the changes in me before.”

Spike wrapped an arm around his shoulders and he leaned into his mate gratefully. Xander had always hated lying to Willow, but in a way it was true. They knew about the soldier memories staying but they never asked about the hyena. Just like they had never noticed he’d moved out of his parent’s basement, or that a lot of his time was spent with Spike.

“Spike? Am I that different? I mean I don’t feel that different, I’m just me, but the way Willow was reacting you’d think I’d been taken over by pod people or something.” He hated being this insecure. Unfortunately it seemed to happen a lot around his friends.

“First of all, there is no way you are just anything, get that straight in your head Pet. Are you different? Yes and no.”

Xander chuckled. “Thanks for clearing that up for me Spike.”

Spike poked him with his free hand. “Not done talking yet git. To me you’re the same; well you’ve changed a bit but time does that to people, even demon type like me no matter how much I say it doesn’t. But I can see where your mates might think it was just this overnight thing. You’ve never come out and advertised your real self Pet, you’ve hidden it behind jokes and banter. I can remember when I first started getting interested in you, I found it fascinating to watch as you shook off your clown mask when you were by yourself and become this confident person.”

Xander grinned despite his odd mood. “Is that when you were stalking me?”

“Wasn’t stalking, it was observing your enemy.”

“Right.” He felt Spike rumble in his chest as if he was keeping in a growl. “Don’t worry, I was freaked out at first but now I think it’s cute.”

“Cute! Take that back!”

“Don’t worry, it was scary at the time...well at first.”

“Yeah, well...the point is Xander that I saw the real you when the others weren’t around, and you’ve never really hidden it from me. Didn’t hide it that much from Angel, he’s just a daft git for not noticing. They’re just shocked ‘cause it’s new to them. What do you think the Watcher or Red would say if they saw you out here doing target practice and playing with smoke grenades?”

“Heh. Ask me if I was possessed again most likely.” In fact Xander really didn’t want to think about it, it had freaked Willow out enough to be reminded of the hyena. He had made a passing reference to the soldier but she hadn’t said anything and Xander didn’t volunteer. “You’re right you know.”

“Of course I am. About what Pet?”

Xander positioned himself so he could really look at Spike. “That I don’t let them see all of me. I mean just now, with Wills... I told her everything she didn’t know, about the hyena, us. But I didn’t remind her about the soldier and I really doubted she would remember. I just didn’t want to bring it up.”

Spike kissed him lightly on his temple and it made Xander feel better somehow. “If it makes you feel any better Xan, you know you’re the only one who sees the real me.”

Xander smiled. “It helps Spike, it helps.”

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Xander woke slowly and looked blearily out the front windows. They’d been driving for two days, traveling by day and stopping at night hoping that the Initiative wouldn’t think to look for them during the daylight hours.

So far it had worked. There had been a roadblock on the border of Nevada but they didn’t get a second look since the sun was high and from the outside it looked like there was nothing covering their windows.

Of course it probably helped that Spike had traded in his duster for a jean jacket with pockets and was in a short-sleeved tee shirt underneath. Xander wasn’t sure if he liked the new look but he understood his vampire had done it to fit in a bit better with humans. It probably worked; Xander didn’t think he would recognize him without the leather unless he watched him get dressed.

“Hmm. Where are we?”

Spike looked over at him and Xander had a moment of weirdness seeing the vampire with sunglasses on. Necro-tempered glass was so cool. “Just about to Denver Xan. You okay?”

“Mmmm-hmm. Just tired. Are we stopping in Denver for a while?”

“Yeah Pet, we need to figure out what to do next.”

Xander shifted in the passenger seat. “Good ‘cause my ass is tired of all this driving.”

Spike reached over with one hand to run his fingers through Xander’s hair, keeping his eyes on the road the entire time. Xander leaned into the touch, mumbling happily.

“You seem to be sleeping better Love.”

Xander opened one eye to look at his mate. “Well of course I am... someone insists on staying awake and soothes me out of my nightmares. You know you’re going to have to sleep soon.”

“I’ll sleep when we get to Denver, get us checked in. You need the rest Xander, you know that.”

Xander crossed his arms over his chest. “Hmp. Not gonna be a damsel in distress, no matter how knocked up I am. We’re equals and you need rest as much as I do.”

Spike laughed. “Pet I don’t know of any damsel in distress that is as well armed as you are right now. You make that Linda Hamilton woman from the second Terminator movie look like she’s going to a tea party.”

“As long as we’re straight that me being pregnant is not going to effect my masculinity we’re

okay.”

Despite his words Xander drifted in and out of sleep the rest of the way into Denver. He figured he'd keep watch while Spike got some sleep. The sun was just setting as he checked them into the cheap motel. They had the money for something better, but were trying to keep a low profile. Besides it wasn't one of those places that rented by the hour, it just had hideous purple bedspreads and décor.

“Fucking hell Xander! I'll be more than happy to sleep, the less time spent with my eyes open in this place the better!”

“It could be worse Spike, there could be tassels; and at least this place seems clean, the bathroom looks okay.”

“Still, purple?”

Xander started unpacking a few things from one of his bags, they hadn't even bothered to bring everything in. “It's a theme hotel chain and purple is supposed to be the color of royalty. At least the outside isn't purple. See, that would be worse.”

An hour later and Spike was asleep while Xander answered yet another email from Willow. He felt like writing her and saying, ‘See! This is why I never said anything, I didn't feel like becoming one of your projects!’ But in the end he answered her questions, mainly because he knew she really cared for him and was worried.

Between her contacts and Giles's though they had a large list of people that would be able to handle medical care of a sort for a male pregnancy. Which was really surprising, he didn't think it happened that often. And he really didn't want to think of why it might be needed.

Problem was they had to decide where to go, who to see. It wasn't as if there was much about their personalities or anything like that along with the information he was given. He didn't want to be treated like a freak, or like a science project. He wanted someone that would care for the baby and him as if they were a normal pregnancy, well as normal as he could get.

There were lots of people in New Orleans, but he wasn't too sure about that. Chicago wasn't too far but there were only a few practitioners there. He didn't want to get near Cleveland; he so did not need more Hellmouthy stuff to happen. Richmond, Virginia might be cool, but in the end he thought the New England area might be good. There were quite a lot people in New York, and Boston and Providence had quite a few choices as well.

Add to that fact were there was a lot of people in a small area, it would be easy to blend into the crowds. Good hunting for Spike too. He knew that Spike would go anywhere he wanted. Decision made he started looking at the take out menus he'd found in one of the drawers of the cheap dresser. It looked like they were New York bound.

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Chapter 6 by Amejisuto  
Planning

“Well if anything that guy at least didn't have a problem with you being a vampire.”

“Yeah, well he was nuttier than a fruitcake luv, and wanted to know if the baby was up for sale after it was born so I'm saying no. Hell, no.”

Xander laughed. “I'm surprised you didn't eat him, or at least maim him slightly.”

“Might still yet, I'll put it on my to do list, ‘kill smarmy git’.”

“At the rate we’re going, to kill all the smarmy gits you’ll have to kill half the people on that list and the greater population of Brooklyn, Bronx and Soho.”

“Don’t forget those daft buggers in Queens pet.”

They had been in New York for three weeks, talking to healers, mages and any idiot that had any knowledge of mystical pregnancies. The problem was that most of them in the greater New York area were either crazy or disliked the idea of working with a vampire. Xander would have been welcome but he would have had to go to their offices without Spike. That wasn’t going to happen.

Spike steered him towards a bench and went to flag down a cab. Parking in most of New York was terrible so they usually traveled by cab or subway. By Willow’s estimation he was nearing his thirteenth week and they really needed to find some sort of doctor soon. While he never experienced morning sickness he was tired almost all the time now, and cold even though it was getting to be late May.

Willow said it might be anemia. Willow said lots of things actually, Xander had a feeling that she read more about pregnancy than he and Spike put together did and it was their baby. But it was good, they were friends like they hadn’t been in years and Xander even talked to the shy Tara and became friends with her. He hated that he didn’t get to see them, but he’d figured out by now that sometimes it was easier to talk when you didn’t see each other. All the things that you would say with body language couldn’t be translated over the phone or email. They’d had to put things in words and in writing to make it right between them.

The situation in Sunnydale was getting odder by the day. Giles and Willow barely saw Buffy at all anymore. Oh she was still patrolling, but it was with Riley and the Initiative. When Watcher and Slayer did meet it was tense. Willow was worried that Giles would go back to England without a purpose in America so Spike and Xander had gotten together and bribed the man. Actually it had been Xander, he asked if Giles would be the Godfather of their baby and from what Willow had said the stuffy Brit had been struck speechless.

She had also said there was a spare room in his small apartment being cleaned out. It was nice to know they had a home somewhere.

Finally Spike flagged down a car and waved him over. The cab ride to the hotel was made mostly in silence, but Xander could sense Spike’s frustration. He understood it too, they had planned on finding a doctor of some sort and then get an apartment nearby and just...rest for a while. Instead they stayed for a week and a half at the Plaza before moving to Hotel 31.

Hotel 31 was smaller, but less expensive and less noticeable. It was also close to Midtown so it made hunting for Spike easier. Still Xander was tired of living out of suitcases, of living in a place that wasn’t his. It was awful but in a way Xander wanted it all to be over, not the pregnancy so much as the constant worry about being found or caught.

When they got out of the taxi and started to walk under the red awning, Spike opened his mouth and then closed it.

“What Spike?”

“Its just...wait, let’s just get to our room first.”

“Okay.” Now Xander was really, really worried. Spike didn’t usually watch what he said so closely; he would say even the most inappropriate things in the middle of the street for all to hear. Just thinking about it made Xander blush but he followed his lover to their fourth floor room willingly.

Before they talked there was what was becoming their usual routine. Spike had bought portable wards and he activated them all so that no one would be able to approach their room without them knowing and, more importantly, no sound would escape. Xander took to getting comfortable, taking off his outer shirt, Kevlar vest, then his undershirt before carefully putting away all of his other...accessories.

The longer Spike waited the more worried Xander became. He pilled up on the bed and pulled the comforter around him. "Just spill it Spike, it won't get any easier if you wait. What is it?"

Spike actually ran a hand through his hair and sighed. He was pacing at the end of the bed and Xander's neck hurt from watching him.

"This last git...Xan I think he was serious. He really thought I'd sell my child. And that one two days ago...he was talking about how powerful the little one would be and, fuck Xander none of these buggers want to help us unless they can get some sort of connection to our child. If I fucking well though that Red and the Watcher could deal with this I'd pay to have them flown out here and set up house, all of us."

Xander thought about that. It would be nice to see Wills and Giles and even Tara. "If you want...I can call Willow and ask later on. I mean, they can't be any worse than what we've been dealing with? But...it's not fair to ask Wills to quit school. Maybe..."

Spike all but seized on the idea. "What pet?"

"Well Willow, she got accepted to a lot of schools. I mean a lot. She decided to stay in Sunnydale with Buffy and all that but now..." Xander looked Spike straight in the eye. "How much cash do you have, from the bad old days and now?"

Spike actually ducked his head. "Remember Xander it's ours, not just mine. Let's just say that we are very well off, if I were human I could give Trump a run for his money. Some of it's tied up in stocks, investments and the like but, well whatever it is you have planned we can do, probably."

Xander chewed on his lip as he thought. "Well, we still have names to go through, but I agree that New York tends to attract the weirdoes, so I'm thinking we should leave. There were a couple of names in Boston, one of them was a regular nurse midwife and the only reason Wills put her on the list was because she's outspoken in the community about equality for pagans and gays. The thing is that she's a normal midwife, which would be good but she probably isn't used to men waddling through the door. Plus, MIT is there, if we help her get a scholarship, and one for Tara, well they might come after this semester's finished in Sunnydale."

"And the Watcher would follow. Brilliant luv. That just may work. We'll call tomorrow and talk to that nurse woman, see what she's like before making any decisions. When you talk to Red you can suss out her plans for this summer."

Spike came up and Xander leaned forward so his lover could sit behind him, allowing Xander to lean on his cool chest. He snuggled into Spike's embrace and could hear faint purring. HE felt a bit better too, the last three people they'd visited had scared him quite a bit, making him feel less like an intelligent person and more like a prized breeding cow.

Spike hands made their way down his midsection. He wasn't really showing anything yet, but they could both tell the difference. His belly wasn't quite so flat anymore, and Spike had read in one of their books that cocoa butter helped stretch marks and had taken to rubbing his stomach twice a day with it. Xander didn't point out that it really wouldn't help till he did start showing, he figured it was a way for Spike to touch their child. Plus a couple of times it led to lotion in other places as well and that was always of the good.

“Hey Spike?”

“Yeah luv?”

“There’s someplace I want to go shopping for the baby before we leave New York, and it’s supposed to be rainy tomorrow, can we?”

“Sure Xan, whatever you want.”

“You sure about that? Because you’re going to hate it, I can always go by myself.”

“Fuck no, we ain’t splitting up ever again, got that? If I’m going to hate it, you’d better make it worth my while.”

Xander turned in Spike’s arms and grinned. “I think I can handle that.” His hands started down to his lover’s waist as they kissed and in the back of Xander’s mind he hoped that Spike wouldn’t kill him tomorrow.

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“No, fuck no! Xander! You tricked me!”

“Uh uh, I said you wouldn’t like it and that was the truth. Come on, this is a once in a lifetime experience for me, and you’re not going to ruin it.” He turned and gave his most pleading expression to his mate. “Please, I never got to go to toy stores as a kid.”

“You owe me more sex for this pet.”

He just grinned at Spike’s surly tone. He figured once they were inside his lover’s inner child would come out to play, and more sex wasn’t a problem. “Okay, come on!”

Xander turned from Spike’s horrified face to the storefront. FAO Schwartz had always been a dream for him; he was lucky if his parents dropped by the Toys-R-Us. The front windows had giant teddy bears hanging in them, and he just grinned as they walked through the doors out of the spring rain.

He ignored Spike’s swearing as they walked past the singing clock tower and saw what he’d been looking for. He walked towards the display with the stuffed animals hurriedly, dodging people in the crowd and heard even more swearing as Spike tried to keep up.

He stopped in awe. There were stuffed animals bigger than he was, and small teddies, cats, dogs, anything a child would want.

“Xander?” His face must have shown Spike something; his tone had changed from the snark he’d been using just a moment ago.

“I never had a teddy bear, Dad said they were for wussies and crybabies. Willow and Jessie gave me one for my fifth birthday, right after we became friends, and Dad found it. He ripped it apart with his hands, pulled the stuffing right out and it felt like he was pulling the stuffing out of me. I...I want my baby to have all the stuffed toys that he or she could ask for and more.”

He could feel Spike’s arms wrap around him and a kiss was pressed to the back of his neck. All the anger at being dragged to a toy store had seemed to have left him. “This place have toys for little nippers too you think?”

"I don't know, I just was going to get a bear and get out."

"Let's find out then, shall we?"

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Spike felt every nerve on edge in this place, it was filled with humans, running and shouting and little kiddies all but climbing the shelves. Xander had pointed out that at least it wasn't after Thanksgiving; the place would have been five times as bad.

He hated being there, but the lost look on his mate's face as he remembered his parents had made him twist inside and he would do anything to make Xander happy again. Which apparently meant following him around and giving his opinion on toys. A sharp sales clerk had recognized that while the two men may not have been well dressed they were there to spend money and had been helping them for the past two hours.

After encouraging Xander his mate was going just a bit crazy. At least he'd passed on the giant Siberian tiger, for now at least. The clerk had assured them they could purchase over the Internet. Still Spike loved that look of happiness on Xander's face, and understood wanting to give their child everything in the place.

At least they agreed on most things. They had even decided on a theme for any future nursery they might have, figuring the child of two men shouldn't have pastels or clowns and bunnies they'd decided on a jungle theme. Of course the toy tiger and leopard for babies with a rattle inside had helped with that choice, and his demon approved of the thought of his offspring being surrounded by predators.

There were other tigers, white and regular, a black panther, lions, just about every fierce cat as well as a wolf or two had made their way into Xander's pile of shopping. There was a My First Teddy bear, a bigger teddy, and a musical Steiff that played a lullaby. They'd bought CD's of other lullaby's, and they have moved on to the baby area where Xander was excitedly clutching some little green bear that was soft and flat for babies.

"Spike look! Leather diaper bags!!"

In the midst of pastels and baby animals there it was, looking like a regular backpack with more pockets. "Right, get that please. Don't think I can handle something fuzzy for the little nipper."

Xander laughed. "Right, besides even if we wanted pastels we don't know what to get, blue or pink. Hey do you want to know? If it's a boy or a girl."

Spike pulled up at that thought. "Dunno, hadn't thought about it really." A grin made it's across his face. "Guess it would be nice to find out, so we can plan names and the like. Then again it would be nice to be surprised. What do you think Xan?"

"I don't know, I'll have to think about it some. Come on, let's just go look at the prams and things, to see if we want to order one later!"

Spike shook his head at Xander's continued enthusiasm. He would be more than tired tonight; his energy levels had been dropping more and more. Still Spike didn't have the heart to call an end to his excitement. Xander was having too much fun.

He couldn't help but wonder, a boy with Xander's looks, a little girl with honey blonde curls? It was something to think about all right.

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Chapter 7 by Amejisuto

Interview

Spike moved silently through their new apartment, trying to straighten up the few personal items they had before he went to wake up his lover. Xander was tired all the time now, and Spike was at his wit's end. He hated leaving Xander alone, but it was no longer safe for Xander to go out hunting with him at night. In desperation Spike had taken to drinking bagged blood again for part of the time, and only made quick trips to Chinatown or Roxbury to hunt.

If he had believed in the power of prayer Spike would have been using it for the past week. The move from New York to Boston had been bad for Xander, and Spike was worried about his pregnancy. They both wanted this child so much; if anything happened to it they'd grieve for years at the loss of their one chance at a family, no matter how it came about.

But what scared Spike more was the loss of Xander.

They had finally found the spell to keep Xander, Xander when he was turned, when Spike was captured by the Initiative. They hadn't had the opportunity to do a damn thing about it and now that Xander was pregnant they couldn't dare do it. Spike was deathly afraid that Xander would die carrying their child and Spike would be without the one person who made him whole.

He shook off his melancholy thoughts and went to wake Xander up. That's why they were in Boston, to make sure nothing happened to Xander or the baby. Tonight they were meeting with that midwife woman. He could only hope that she would be understanding, from what Red and told both him and Xan even though she was aware of demons and vampires she wasn't used to mystical pregnancies, just mundane ones. Still that more than likely meant she didn't want a pound of flesh from him or the baby, and that was more than all right by Spike.

He looked at the clock and sighed. Time to wake up Xander if they were going to be at the café to meet this woman in an hour. Their flat was in an apartment building in the North End, and they didn't have far to go to meet her. The difficult part was waking Xander up.

He walked into the bedroom and sat on the edge of the big bed and just watched Xander for a few minutes. Xander didn't have a glow that most pregnant women had, but he had a slight rash around his eyes, and when he was tired there were deep circles under them.

Spike smirked. Xander had been really good with his nutrition the past few weeks, even to the point of giving up on his sodas and coffee, something that even a vampire like Spike would find hard to do. He was undead, that didn't mean he didn't get addicted to caffeine. As it was he was chewing through pencils trying to quit smoking so the baby and Xander's lungs wouldn't be damaged. Not even born yet and the little nipper inside his lover's tummy had him wrapped around it's little finger.

But it was this McCoy woman who set up the meeting place when he'd talked to her this afternoon, and Spike knew for a fact that Xander wouldn't make it through the night without breaking his diet. Mike's Pastry was famous for it's sweets and there would be no controlling Xander. Spike figured it would be okay as long as it was only a one-time thing.

Spike caressed his Xander's abdomen and felt the slight swell that was their child. "Xander? Xan luv, wake up."



“Hmmp? What time is it?”

“Time to get up pet. Gotta meet that bint in an hour and I want you to have some dinner before we go out. Lots to do tonight, remember?”

“Five more minutes Spike...” Xander’s voice was muzzy with sleep and Spike chucked at the almost petulant sound of it.

“Nope, lots to do tonight. Getting you and the nipper here checked out and getting some furniture for this place is another. The bed is nice but I’d like a telly and somewhere to sit too pet. Not that I don’t like it when you sit on my lap but it’ll get old after a while.”

“Not to mention that in a few more months I’ll be as big as a whale. All right, I’m up. But I’m protesting being up at this hour, whatever it is.”

Spike all but pulled Xander out of bed and to the bathroom and then went to fix his dinner. Or breakfast; however you looked at it. It was past eight in the evening after all, but for a mortal on vampire time it was breakfast.

Xander came in pulling on an oversized tee shirt, as Spike was finishing slicing bananas to go on top of his cereal. They still needed to go shopping for a better fridge and groceries, when they’d moved into the building it was empty, that’s what made it so perfect.

Spike bought the entire building outright, and they had plans to remodel and then rent some of the other apartments. Of course they were on the top floor and had the biggest space. The other two apartments they were going to fix up for the Watcher and Red and Tara when they finally made their way to Boston.

“Thanks Spike, this looks good. Well as good as cereal without marshmallows can be.”

“Pet those marshmallows in some of those cereals are hard as rocks. Besides this is one of those poofy cereals that’s got all the vitamins a woman needs, according to the box at least. Has to be good for you.”

“You know for a male couple we have some of the strangest conversations on this earth.”

“Try not to think about it Xan, it’ll give you a headache.”

“We’re going shopping for stuff for a nursery at the same time we’re getting the other stuff, right?” Xander had a fake look of innocence on his face and Spike sighed and shook his head, a fond look on his face. “Gotta be at a furniture place anyhow aren’t we? I’d rather not take more than one trip.”

“Cool!” There was what it was all about right now, making his mate happy and smiling. Spike couldn’t help but think what a complete poof he was becoming. He was going to have to visit Roxbury and eat some wanna-be punks to get rid of the sweetness in his mouth.

After buying baby furniture of course. Their apartment had two bedrooms, a big bath and then a huge room that was kitchen and living room all in one. It had big windows, but a few arrangements with some of his contacts and a good bit of money had electric shutters installed in two days.

“Shift your arse Xan, we’re gonna be late to meet this nurse woman if you don’t hurry.”

Xander picked up his bowl of cereal and drank the milk while Spike grabbed his duster and the

laptop that contained all the information Willow had gathered about the baby from the Initiative. "Can we stop somewhere else for something to eat later? I'm still hungry."

"Somehow Xander, I really don't think it's gonna be a problem. Come on." He had to fight to keep the smile off his face as they rode down the elevator. Xander was going to love where they were meeting this woman.

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Xander's mouth hung open as Spike tugged on his hand. "You'd better not be teasing me Spike! I'd better get to order something damn it, or you will have one very grumpy pregnant man on your hands."

Spike squeezed his fingers and laughed. "Would I do that to you pet?"

"Yes, damn it you would! You are evil after all. And meeting someone that may or may not care about my nutrition in Mike's is an awful, awful thing to do to me."

Spike held the door open and ushered Xander in. "Wasn't my idea, was it? This woman wouldn't meet with a vamp in her home or come to ours. This is nice and public but with so many people in here we'll never be noticed."

"So she knows you're a vampire? Whoa. Does she know the other part yet?" They sat down at one of the café like tables and looked at a menu.

"Nope, it was hard enough to convince her it wasn't a trap or that I wasn't gonna try to eat her. Suspicious woman, you've got to admire that."

They ordered, earl grey and a slice of cherry pie for Spike and chamomile tea and a slice of strawberry cheesecake for Xander. He figured it at least had dairy and fruit so it wouldn't be too bad for him. Although the looks of some of the chocolate cakes had him changing places with Spike so his back was to the pictures and displays.

Before their desserts came a woman walked up to the table, and both his and Spike stood up as she had a seat. She was average, not too tall, and not too skinny, with a strong jaw. But her face had a kindness in it that more than made up for any flaws and Xander found himself really hoping she would help them. Black hair framed her face and she had bright blue eyes.

"You must be the two men wanting to meet me. Hello, I'm Joanna McCoy."

The next few minutes were filled with introductions and small talk while Joanna ordered a Boconnotto and a cafe Mocha and Xander tried not to drool on her. As it was he was thankful that Spike didn't order his usual hot chocolate.

"So why would a vampire and his human consort need the help of a nurse? Especially one in my field?" Joanna's accent was wonderful, a mixture of New England and a soft Georgian drawl. From what he knew of her, she had been all but driven from her hometown outside of Atlanta just for being pagan.

Spike took on of Xander's hand on top of the table and the other was fussing with the edge of his duster. Xander knew that his mate was nervous, he was too and he decided he had better start. "See it's like this, I'm from Sunnydale, have you heard of it?"

"Not really, just enough to know that it's not a place for a empath to be."

Spike snorted but didn't say anything so Xander continued. "See Sunnydale stands over the

mouth of hell, literally. I went to high school over the Hellmouth itself. It wasn't fun, but hey my best friends are witches and one of my friends was the vampire slayer and most of my class survived, giant snake demons at Graduation aside."

Xander stopped and looked to see if she was buying any of it. Her face was impassive, not showing anything that might be going on in her head so he took a deep breath and continued.

"There's a lot I could tell you, but long story short I fell in love with Blondie here, despite the fact that he's a vamp."

It took a long time to tell the entire story. Most of the people they'd talked to before didn't care, so Xander was really feeling some hope that they had found someone who would help him.

By the time it came to talk of their joint escape Xander's voice gave out and Spike nudged his teacup closer to him as the vampire started the tale. Spike told everything and then slid the laptop over to the dark woman. Joanna took a deep breath, looked at both of them and without saying anything started going through the information.

Xander fidgeted, painting patterns with the edge of his fork in the leftover strawberry sauce till it made an awful scraping sound, causing all of them to flinch.

"Sorry." He gave a sheepish smile and Spike squeezed his hand in reassurance.

"That's okay, I can tell you both are nervous." Joanna smiled at them both and closed the laptop. "So why me? I mean why not someone else whose used to dealing with...unusual circumstances?"

"Because the ones we've talked to are all bloody idiots. Wanting something from me or Xan, hell even wanting the baby." Spike spoke with a growl in his voice and this time it was Xander squeezing his hand in reassurance.

"What it is, we want this baby, not for what it may or may not be able to do, or if it can be a sort of advanced human, or anything like that. We want it because it's ours, it's our one and only chance of having something made from both of us and we don't want to lose him or her."

For the first time since starting their story, Joanna smiled. "Okay, I believe you. I don't know how much I can help you, but I believe you."

"Does that mean you can take care of them?" Xander smiled at the obvious concern in Spike's voice.

"I really don't know. I'll have to look over these files and record more thoroughly, maybe even talk to my Dad. Don't worry, the only people he'll tell are his two best friends and they won't say anything. They're retired Navy, my Dad was a ship's doctor, so he'll be able to help me with the military jargon."

"You sure they won't say anything?" Xander couldn't help but worry; he wasn't a fan of any branch of the military at the moment.

"Let me put it this way, Uncle Jim was an Admiral but he didn't like some of the things the government was doing. In the end he got busted back down to Captain right before he retired. He always got in trouble because he had what Dad called a 'White Knight Complex'."

Spike snorted in amusement. "Sounds like someone else I know, always doing things for the good of humanity over here."

“Hey!” Xander blushed and Joanna laughed at the both of them.

“Okay here’s what we’ll do. I assume you’ve been watching your diet and all that?”

“Yes, except for tonight and I fully expect Spike to force something icky and healthy on me, like liver and onions, in return for the cheesecake.”

“Well I hate to say it but protein is very good for you.”

Xander made a face. “Yeah, I know. It’s just...well I’ve been craving rare steaks and meat, probably has to do with my...history. And I know it’s not good for me but it’s driving me nuts to cook the stuff.”

“Umm, history.” The woman’s voice was hesitant, as is she really didn’t want to know. Xander looked at Spike and his vampire nodded.

“Yeah, well in tenth grade, I was kind of possessed by a hyena spirit. I kinda ate the school mascot, which wasn’t as bad as the rest of the kids who were possessed because they kind of ate the principal.”

“How the hell do you kind of eat a principal? Wouldn’t you either eat him or not?”

Xander blinked at the woman while Spike out and out laughed at her question. “Thanks Fang. Yeah, okay I ate a pig. The thing is I still have a bit of hyena in my head, along with a soldier possession I once had. It’s kind of crowded in my brain.”

Joanna was still chuckling. “Well for right now, cook the meat, please. I want you to come to my office after sundown tomorrow.” She pulled out a business card with a downtown address. “I take it you’re on a night schedule with Spike?” Xander nodded. “Good, I want you to fast eight hours before coming in, nothing but water okay? We need to get blood tests, amnio, the works. I want you to go home tonight and write down a complete medical history for your family. Also write down any questions you might have, medical, nutritional, anything. That way we’ll spend less time thinking of questions to answer. Okay?”

Xander and Spike looked at each other and answered at the same time. “Great.” “Sounds good.”

Joanna just laughed again. “Yep, I can tell you two are married, you’ve got that whole talking without words thing down to a tee. See you tomorrow night. Oh, and decide if you want to find out if it’s a boy or a girl or not.”

Additional Author’s Notes: Joanna McCoy is not mine; I’m just borrowing her and her family from another favorite fandom of mine. Chocolate goes to the person who can guess what.

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Chapter 8 by Amejisuto

Results

Xander sighed and fought the urge to throw his book across the room. He was bored. Bored and

nervous and scared and worried and tired of waiting for the results of what seemed like half a million tests.

He'd spent over two hours talking to Joanna that first night, and this was after the woman had gone over every file they had from the Initiative. Then he'd been poked, prodded, tested, and had enough blood drawn to make Spike growl at the woman. That was on top of not being able to eat and having to drink what felt like a gallon of water for an ultrasound during which he did get to see his baby, but it looked rather like a blob. An alien blob at that.

That didn't keep him from feeling all sentimental though, or from having Spike nearly crushing his hand to keep from showing his poofish-ness to a woman. It also didn't keep them from getting pictures of said alien-blob and having them copied. There was a picture tacked up on the fridge, one framed in the bedroom and they'd gone out and bought a memory book and it was on the first page.

Not to mention, Joanna had copies of the ultrasound on CD and the files had been emailed to a certain red head who assured him that they also graced Giles's refrigerator as well.

"After all," she had said, "you're the first in our group to have a baby, and therefore everyone will be spoiling it."

Spike, of course, had been eavesdropping on the phone call and had started asking when "you and Glinda are gonna pop one out. Our little nipper needs a best friend, after all." Which caused Willow to go totally speechless for the first time Xander had known her.

The only problem was, now they were stuck waiting for the results to all those test to come back. About five days after the first round of tests he'd been called back to Joanna's office and had them done all over again. It had been two weeks and Joanna was actually coming by the apartment tonight.

So they were stuck waiting. Actually, as soon as the sun set Spike had set out to go grocery shopping and Xander couldn't go with. His blood pressure had been a bit high and, while he wasn't under bed rest, Joanna had told him to keep off his feet. With Spike being growly and overprotective, he was lucky his mate let him walk to the bathroom.

It was a Wednesday night in mid-July, and the Red Sox weren't playing. Which meant there was nothing on television worth watching. He had been trying to read, but reading pregnancy books just made him worry more, which probably didn't help his blood pressure.

As it was, he was now living with hardly any salt or sugar. He figured he was getting a good base of guilt to use against the baby when he or she turned into a teenager. Not that he'd use it all the time like his parents did, but maybe when said child wanted to do something stupid, like slaying demons five times its size.

Then again, this was Spike's kid they were talking about. And his. Combined with whatever vamp powers the kid might have, demon slaying might just turn into a family outing, complete with pictures of baby's first kill.

Xander shook his head and reached for another book. The lack of sugar was making him warped.

He fought the urge to talk to himself while looking for baby names. Despite the radio being on, it was too quiet without Spike's usual presence. Usually his husband made lots of noise, sang under his breath, talked and swore and generally filled up a room with his...Spikeness.

He flipped through the book, looking for a name that he and Spike could agree on. William Jr.

had been passed because then the poor child would be called Willie at some point in time and they had promised not to be cruel. Xander had issues with any form of Alexander, thanks to his parents, so anything like Alexis or Lex was out.

Plus he might be a geek but he was doing his best to not name his child after comic book villains. Heroes maybe-- James, Diana and Mathew were all good names-- but not villains. That knocked Edward, Harry, Norman, Wilson, Emma, and Pamela out of the running as well.

Selena was a maybe. After all, Catwoman was damn cool. He'd suggest it at least, just to watch Spike's head spin. Xander laughed to himself, remembering what had happened when he'd suggested they name a boy after John Sheridan from Babylon 5. His mate had absolutely refused to allow any "progeny" of his be named after anyone who might have a convention and fan following.

Out loud he had argued with Spike that John was a very nice name, very English. Inside, however, he was giggling and wondering if it was a girl could they get away with calling her Delenn. He was waiting till later to suggest it, though. He actually liked the idea and D's were traditional for the females of the Aurelius line.

But there was no way in hell any boy of his was going to be named Damien, no matter how well that fit.

He was thinking about the merits of Danielle/Daniel when the security alarm rang. He rolled out of bed, something he knew he would have problems with later when he was big as a whale, and walked quickly into the living room.

They had both gone to extremes with the security in their building, one of the reasons they'd bought the small apartment building. There were cameras in the stairwells, and security sensors and only people who had a key could use the only elevator. Those were just some of the security precautions they'd taken on the building itself, not even mentioning their private apartments.

Then there were the magical wards Spike had cast on the place. If anything tried to break in, be it human or demon or even a ghost, one way or another it would be fried.

In one of the monitors they'd had installed in the foyer was Joanna. He didn't want to buzz her in while he was alone, but he wasn't keen on letting her stand outside in the dark either. Fortunately, before he could make the decision Spike walked up, carrying several bags.

Ten minutes later Spike was putting up groceries while Xander was lying on the couch, trying to make small talk instead of pouncing on the midwife for answers.

"So...you never did say how crazy your Dad thinks you are now, helping a vampire and his consort."

Joanna laughed. "Actually, he believes in the supernatural. He blames his friends who keep quoting Hamlet at him. Well, that and one of his friends isn't exactly human. But you should have heard him swear about secret government organizations and messing with things that were against nature and playing god. He went on for over ten minutes; it was fun to watch."

Xander laughed with her and Spike had a smile on his face as he brought drinks in from the kitchen. "Sounds like your Da has some sense, then." Spike sat on the other end of the couch and put Xander's feet in his lap. "All right, we did the polite bit. Out with it."

Joanna sat up straight and put her hands in her lap. She had a bag beside her that looked half-briefcase, half-medical bag. "Okay, first of all the fetus is healthy. It has some odd vitals but that is to be expected. It's a bit on the small side, but again that's expected. There are no signs of

Downs Syndrome or any other genetic anomalies. It appears the genetic tinkering the Initiative did was designed to make the resulting child stronger, faster, and virtually disease resistant.”

Xander felt a whoosh of air leave his lungs and he felt instantly lighter. He could feel Spike’s hands on his legs spasm, and then grip even tighter. “That’s good, ducks, but I hear a but coming...what’s wrong?”

Joanna took a deep breath and Xander instantly got worried all over again. “What’s wrong is the fact that human males are not designed to carry a child, much less give birth. The scientists that thought of this little process really didn’t care about that, they just cared that any implanted zygotes would thrive in the artificial womb they created. So this is going to be very, very hard on Xander. You already have signs of high blood pressure, thankfully not pre-eclampsia, as well as gestational diabetes. I’m very glad that you’ve both been careful about nutrition and changed your normal eating patterns. As it is, your kidneys are at high risk, as is your liver. Men aren’t made to be able to filter out the added waste in your system that carrying a child causes.”

Spike’s grip on his legs had gotten painful but Xander didn’t move. He needed that grip to help him feel connected. He knew this was going to be difficult, but not that bad.

“In addition, you’re severely anemic. I brought prescription strength iron pills that are safe for you but I doubt if even that will help. Diet will help to a certain extent, but most of the red blood cells in your body are being used as...well, as a nutritional source for your fetus. With Spike’s permission, I’m going to take a few samples of his blood and do some experiments, see if I can add it to some red blood cells and give you a transfusion to see if that helps the situation any.”

“Wait...we already share blood, doesn’t that count?” Xander was beginning to believe he should be taking notes or something. Did everyone else get so confused and frightened in situations like this or was he already failing as a parent? In the back of his mind, he couldn’t help but wonder what he was doing wrong that he couldn’t give his unborn child enough.

“Not really. You’re drinking it so it’s going into your digestive system. Yes it helps, and it changes your blood, but not enough for the child. I’m hoping putting it directly into your veins will help more. You don’t mind donating, do you, Spike?”

“Fuck no. You can drain me till I’m near dry if it helps him and the nibblet. Will it help?”

Joanna leaned back in her seat and ran a hand through her hair. “Hell if I know. The transfusion, sure, but I don’t know if adding your blood in will help or hurt. I just figure it’s worth a shot. I do know that I want Xander on bed rest, not total bed rest but he doesn’t need to be running around the city or doing any heavy lifting here. I also want you to drink more water, as much as you possibly can. That will help your kidneys and liver filter impurities out and flush your system.”

“Umm, I don’t know if you realized but more water plus bed rest does not compute.” Xander already felt as if he was wearing a rut in the flooring from how many times he visited the bathroom. “And may I just say, eww, I hate water? It doesn’t taste like anything.”

Spike snorted at that and some of the tension went out of the hands on Xander’s legs. “He’s telling you the truth, it’s getting so I think he spends more time in the bloody loo than he does with me.”

“I know, I know. Still, it’s needed. And if you don’t like the taste you can mix in some fruit juice or something. Just be careful that the juice doesn’t have too much sugar. I think with meditation and deep breathing techniques we can keep the blood pressure under control, and diet will help with that and the diabetes. It’s not bad yet, but I want to keep an eye on it. I also suggest V8 as well as cranberry juice. You’ve already started drinking tea; I brought a couple of special herbal brews, green tea mixed with chamomile, raspberry leaves and rose hips, things like that. I want you to

start on those as well. Rose hips are a great source of potassium.”

Joanna pulled her bag to her and started unpacking tins and stacks of papers and tubing and syringes. Xander gulped really hard. He'd had enough things poked at him in the past year to do for a lifetime.

“Relax, Xan, it's probably for me, not for you.” Spike was actually smirking at him. It helped calm Xander down and gave him a sense of normality.

“Good. I was beginning to think I had pincushion on my forehead in invisible ink.”

Joanna laughed as she pulled more supplies out of her bag. “Sorry, Xander, I didn't mean to scare you. The papers and the tin of tea are for you, the rest is for Spike. I made notes and instructions. If you're anything like normal parents, when I first started mentioning complications you zoned out a bit. This gives all the information you'll need, instructions, things you should add to your diet for more protein and calcium like tofu and soy.”

Xander wrinkled up his nose and grabbed the papers, flipping to the nutritional stuff first. Looking through it, he saw a lot of omelets, peanut butter sandwiches and bean salads in his future. And the fact that prune juice was high in iron just frightened the hell out of him.

He put the papers down, knowing that Spike would be the one to shop as well as cook since he was supposed to be taking it easy. He'd just worry about eating whatever icky nutritional thing was set in front of him. Although if Spike tried to feed him prunes and tofu on the same day, his husband would find out how well Xander could control his gag reflex.

He looked over at Spike. His mate was letting Joanna take an entire pint of blood for testing, it looked like. He quickly looked away; he'd never been big on needles but after his stay at the wonderful Chez Nazi he really, really hated them. The only thing that had kept him from running and screaming from the room the last two visits with Joanna had been the fact that he really wanted his child to be healthy.

The possibility that he wasn't doing enough for his child, that the baby might not be getting enough nutrition from his blood, made Xander promise to himself that he'd eat whatever disgusting thing Spike set in front of him. Even if it was tofu and liver.

He couldn't help but worry, though. Talking with Joanna and getting the tests back eased his mind in some ways but made him even more frantic in others. Seeing that Joanna had finished and realizing he'd missed part of a conversation, Xander tuned back in.

“...Until we find out how the transfusion helps, I'd wait, Spike. Besides, I kind of thought he's been too tired for a few weeks now. The medicine and blood should help with that but nothing too strenuous.”

Okay, Xander thought, Spike had asked her about sex. Now was the time for the couch to turn into a black hole and swallow him up. To tell the truth she was right, for the past two weeks he had been too tired to do anything; Xander knew Spike didn't mind...flogging his own log, but he missed that feeling of intimacy.

Still, he gave Spike a dirty look and his mate tried to look innocent. Bastard. He turned to Joanna, trying to ignore her snickering and his own embarrassment. “I do have one question, kind of...”

Joanna immediately paid attention and he was glad. This was something that had been bothering him. He took a deep breath. “If the baby is okay, why haven't I felt it move yet?”

She smiled. “There are a couple of reasons but that's a good question. Most first time mothers



don't feel anything until they are at least 18 to 22 weeks pregnant, but it's different for every mother. People who are thin tend to feel movements more and you aren't thin so that sort of dampens the feeling of any movement that's happening. Plus, well, you might be feeling it but think it's gas or other...digestion processes. You're different, Xander. The artificial womb and the blood supply that is flowing to it is situated in front of your stomach and large intestine. As you get further along you might even have problems eating except in small amounts because the baby will be crowding out most of the room in there."

Joanna shifted in her seat on the couch. "There are other complications as well, concerning digestion. What I want the two of you to do is sit down and read all that and write down any questions you have and when I come back for the transfusion you can ask me anything you want. Getting everyone through this as healthily as possible is going to take a lot of good communication on all our parts. It won't work if either one of you is embarrassed to talk to me."

They both nodded at her statement but Xander couldn't help but blush. He had a feeling he knew what kind of complications she was talking about, and that he'd be drinking the prune juice.

"One last thing before you go, Doc." Spike had taken to calling Joanna Doc, despite the fact that she kept on protesting she was only a midwife and registered nurse. "Since the little nipper is alright, you said you were gonna tell us the sex of the baby. It isn't right to keep calling it...it."

"You really want to know?"

They both said yes and Xander found himself grinning. They'd argued back and forth for days but finally Spike had won out. He said it was going to be a surprise if they found out now, just as much as when the baby was born and this way they could pick a "proper name".

"Gentlemen, I'm happy to say you're going to be the proud parents of a baby girl."

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Chapter 9 by Amejisuto

Nesting

"What about Calli? It's short for Callista, which means most beautiful, and Kali, the Hindu Goddess of Death and Destruction. That's pretty and it's all...scary-like."

Xander's voice floated into the room that would be the nursery and Spike paused in his painting. "No, luv. Too much like collie, and the first buggler that calls my little girl a dog I'll have to rip their lungs out."

Xander had wanted to help with fixing up the nursery but Spike had put his foot down. Taking it easy did not mean painting and letting his all too-human lungs fill up with smelly chemicals. As it was, Spike was having a hard time dealing with it and had to take breaks to get the scent of it out of his head.

They had chosen a light green to pain the nursery in, with a border of jungle animals to match all the damned plushies Xander had bought in New York. Still, at least it wasn't pink. The furniture they'd ordered had arrived and they were keeping it in one of the empty apartments until they had everything ready for them to just move it in.

They had bought a crib that would convert into a toddler's bed in oak with a changing table, dresser and armoire to match. At first Spike hadn't understood why they would need so much storage for such a tiny creature but, after reading they would need crib sheets, retaining blankets, bibs, and towels, not to mention a variety of baby clothes, he now worried that they wouldn't have enough room. There was a cradle that rocked to keep the baby in the living room and kitchen area and something called a co-sleeper to put the child in bed with them on nights she would be fussy that would convert into a playard. Whatever the hell that was.

It was a good thing he was besotted with his little girl already; otherwise he'd be feeling like a right poof, playing with colors and moving furniture around.

"What about Catherine? It means pure. Wasn't she like a Russian Queen or something?"

Spike snorted. "Or something. Is that with a C or a K?"

"Either way would be good. Why?"

"Katherine was the woman in Taming of the Shrew. Like the idea that my girl is a she-demon." He grinned at hearing Xander's chuckle from the other room. Xander did have a bit more energy after two weeks and two transfusions of blood with Spike's added to it. The fun thing was that it had given the baby inside him a growth spurt. At the beginning of August he was seventeen weeks along and looked it.

"Okay, I'll put that down on the maybe list. What about Charlotte?"

Spike shook his head and then realized Xander couldn't see it from the other room. "Too girly. Either that or she'll end up getting called Charley and I'm not doing that to her."

"You know, we could just go for the funny and name her Lucy or Mina."

Spike could tell Xander was baiting him, could hear the laughter in his voice, but he couldn't stop himself. "You do that, Xander, and I'm divorcing you and claiming full custody. That would be downright cruel to my girl."

The laughter he was expecting rang through the apartment and Spike put down the roller he'd been using on the wall and went to lean on the door to the living room.

He couldn't help but smile at the image he was presented with. Xander was lying on the couch, pillow behind his back, wearing a pair of sweat pants that had been cut off at the knees. They had only been awake for an hour or so and Xander had yet to comb his hair, giving him a tangled look that made Spike's fingers itch to run through it.

Spike could see obvious signs of his mate's pregnancy. Xander was heavier, only by about ten pounds but his face had rounded some. The skin around his nipples had darkened but they were both glad of the fact that it looked like there would be no milk production. Xander had said that he was stretching his masculinity enough by having a child; he didn't need to be turned into a buffet for the baby after it was born.

What made Spike so amazed was Xander's torso. It was obvious that he was pregnant; well, a normal person might think there was something wrong with his liver or something, Xander being male and all, but there was a definite swelling in his stomach that made Spike fascinated. He loved rubbing the bump with lotion, soothing any stretch marks Xander was getting, just wanting to touch. And the fact that Xander didn't even try to hide it just made him love his mate so much more.

Although it was a good thing that Xander was staying inside. Spike had seen how some humans would just walk up to a pregnant woman and rub her belly, even if they didn't know her. If that happened with his Xander he'd be forced to rip their arms off. No one was going to touch what was his.

"What about Darcy or Daria?"

Xander's voice shook him from his musings and Spike walked to the couch, picked up Xander's

feet and sat down. He put his lover's feet in his lap and started rubbing. "Not naming our baby after a cynical cartoon character."

Xander snorted and he swung his legs up off Spike's lap and sat up. "I'm just glad we know it's a girl, that narrows the name field down a lot."

He stood up and Spike pouted. "Oi! I just got here, where are you going?"

Xander's voice called out over his shoulder. "Where I'm always going these days, Spike, to the bathroom. I swear to god I would get a freaking gallon jug and put it by the bed at night if it wasn't so messy. I see the bathroom more than any other room in this apartment."

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"Hey, look at this!" Xander pointed excitedly at the laptop's screen. They were in the kitchen, Spike was cooking a steak with baked potato, broccoli and carrots on the side and he was trying to distract himself from the thought of vegetables. He was getting used to it, but he still didn't like it.

"M'busy pet, what is it?"

"It's a pram that turns into a stroller when your baby gets old enough to sit up. Best thing is that its all-terrain, will go over rocks or whatever."

Spike flipped the steaks that were on the grill set into the middle of the stove and looked over and snorted at him. "Yeah? Planning on taking the nipper hiking or something?"

Xander laughed. "Lover, I have never went hiking in my life, and I don't plan on starting now. But it does have a really neat look, is sturdy and...it comes in red and black. Very manly looking. Think of it as the SUV of strollers."

"Yeah? That would come in handy like, especially if we take the nipper out for a walk and end up fighting off any nasties. Bet we could get Red and her witch to put some protection charms on it, maybe even find a way to store some weapons on it. What do you think?"

Xander cocked his head to the side and looked at the picture on the screen. "On one hand I'm seeing some definite weapons making capabilities. I bet we could hide some sort of sword or something in the handles. On the other hand it's a stroller, not a tank. Then there's the fact that it's called a Runabout Pram, and that's making me flash back to a few Deep Space Nine episodes and that's just my weird brain talking."

Xander shifted in his chair. It was padded but he was starting to have problems being comfortable. "Plus it's just odd, I mean, an All Terrain Stroller? Wild. Still, we haven't gotten anything like that yet and I think it's just what we would need."

"Sounds good to me, Xan, whatever you want. Now clear that stuff away and eat."

All through dinner they talked of normal things, sitting side by side. More names for the baby, what else they needed to buy, their appointment with Joanna the next night. It was nice but weird. And certainly something Xander would never have thought in a million years they'd ever be doing. Traveling the world, eventually being turned and Spike teaching him how to hunt and how to deal with being a vampire he'd been ready for. Discussing what kind of high chair they'd need had never been on the list of things to plan for.

He found himself picking at the bowl of fruit that was his dessert and felt Spike nudge him. He smiled wanly at his mate.

“Xan, luv, what’s wrong?”

“Spike, tell me the truth, are you okay with all this? This domestic stuff?” He chased a slice of strawberry around the bowl, not wanting to look up in case Spike was disappointed somehow.

“Course I’m okay with it Xan, you’d know if I wasn’t. Why do you ask?” Spike had reached over and stopped his nervous twiddling and held Xander’s hand with his own.

Xander looked up and searched Spike’s face, wanting to know if that was the truth. “It’s just...this isn’t what we had planned. We talked about a lot of things we’d do in the future; you taking me on a tour of Europe and all sorts of things, but buying baby clothes and staying home all the time... that was never what we wanted.” He took a deep breath. “I just...don’t want you feeling trapped, that’s all.”

Spike looked at him and Xander could tell by the way his mate’s head was turned to the side that Spike wasn’t just going to reassure him to make him feel better, that he was actually thinking about his answer.

“Xander, when you live as long as I have you learn to deal with the unexpected. Not well all the time, mind you. When Dru kicked me to the side I was a right mess. But in time I was thankful for that, because her actions made me notice you. I wouldn’t give you up for all the world. But falling arse over teakettle in love with a human was unexpected. Just like this has been. Never wanted a little one, most of them are screaming little balls of shite and snot. Then they learn to talk and get mouthy and things go downhill from there.”

Spike leaned over and put his hand on Xander’s belly, caressing it ever so slightly. “But seeing this, knowing that there’s something that’s been made out of both you and me? I get the feeling that it won’t matter how much she’ll scream and snot, because she’ll be ours. It’s the one and only thing I’m grateful to the bloody Initiative for, and I’ll admit there are days when that sticks in my craw. The fact that the people who caused me the greatest pain have given me my greatest happiness.”

Spike’s eyes were that impossible intense blue of the ocean and Xander knew in his heart his lover was telling the truth. He smiled softly and leaned forward, kissing his mate lightly while covering the hand on his stomach with his own. By the time they pulled apart he felt reassured and contented. “Thank you, Spike, I know it sounds clichéd and sappy but I’m glad you’re glad.”

Spike stood up to clear his dishes, but not before pressing a kiss to the top of Xander’s head. “Git. I’m glad that you’re glad that I’m glad. Now, go sit in the living room and find something violent for us to watch on the telly. Any more sweetness and my fangs will have cavities.”

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“What about Stephanie Xan?” They were lying in bed, Xander’s head on Spike’s chest, and Spike found the words he’d told his mate earlier to be doubly true. He might hate the Initiative with a passion but holding Xander in his arms, both hands resting on the curve of his stomach, that was as close to heaven as Spike ever wanted to get. The television was playing some early morning news show and he tuned out the chatter to listen to Xander’s heart.

Xander shifted in his arms and turned the page of the baby name book they’d been looking at. “Are you kidding? There were two Stephanies in the Cordettes. Along with an Aura, a Harmony and a Tiffany. I so don’t need to be reminded of my time of emasculation. What about Sylvia? After that poet, Sylvia Plath?”

Spike shook his head and Xander turned the page and then another. “There aren’t that many

great T names are there? I mean Tammy is just so...blah. And I really can't see a little girl with your curls with the name of Tallulah or Tangia."

Spike smiled into the back of Xander's neck and grabbed the book out of his hands. "Right then, let's see..." He began to flip pages more quickly. "Teresa? No, knew a Teresa once, she was a ball breaker, that one. Tonya? No. Trista? Hell no. I'm not even going to look at the U's. Valerie? No. Veronica? No, too Archie. Victoria, maybe. She made a right good Queen. Violet, no. Vivian, maybe. Wanda, hell no. Yoko, double hell no, I don't care if it is a Japanese demon. Zelda no but Zoe maybe. Is that enough of a list to go with the others now? Can we please stop the torture soon?"

Xander was giggling quietly, trying to contain his laughter and Spike fought off the urge to tickle him, even a little. His poor mortal lover couldn't handle it anymore, or rather his bladder couldn't and Spike had quietly admitted to himself that, while he could face down many demons with no fear, his mate's bathroom habits were his own.

He did, however, nudge the man in his arms, just a bit. "And just what are you giggling at?"

Xander took a deep breath and composed himself enough to answer. "The thought of you reading Betty and Veronica!" And then he was off on his giggling spree again.

Spike just shook his head. "Used to sell them at all the newsstands, couldn't help but see them."

"Sure, Spike, keep telling yourself that." Spike just softly squeezed his mate and went back to looking through the book. Xander settled down finally and lay there in his arms.

A little while later Xander had been almost asleep when suddenly he jolted from his place. Spike shook him gently. "Bad dream, luv?" It was getting to be morning, the usual time they slept, but Xander shook his head.

"No, I just felt...weird. Like I was being tickled from the inside." A quick hiss of indrawn breath and Xander grabbed at his middle. "It did it again! Spike, I think that was the baby!"

Spike placed his hand by Xander's and they both went still. They waited like that for some minutes before Xander turned disappointed eyes on him. "I guess she finished turning around or whatever she was doing, I'm sorry you didn't get to feel it, Spike."

Spike brushed the hair out of Xander's face and kissed him softly. "Don't worry, pet, I'm sure I'll have plenty of chances."

Xander smiled ruefully. "I'm sure in another couple of months we'll both be sick of it." Xander squirmed and made a move to get up. "And I think what I felt was our little girl stepping on my bladder."

Spike shook his head as he watched Xander make yet another trip to the loo. His poor lover was going to make a track in the rug, and he wasn't even five months peggery yet. He really hoped Xan's blood pressure was better when they visited the sister/midwife tomorrow. He didn't think Xander could handle drinking any more water.

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