

The Tomfoolery of Professor John Frink

"So what's the new Giles?"

Giles, predictably, reacted to that mangling of the English language with both a sigh and a pinch of his nose, much to the amusement of Xander.

"Woo Hoo, that's got to be a new record, 3 whole words and the Tweed Guy is already exasperated!"

There was silence, the sort of silence that normally only occurs after a group of Jehovah's witnesses suddenly come across the nude miss world contest – only to find that their Pastor is helping with the suntan oil.

"What?" Xander asked, unnerved by the silence.

"Ex-has-per-ated?" Buffy enunciated slowly, proving her hearing was still working.

Xander blushed: his face mimicked a chameleon crawling through Willow's hair.

"Yeah...well..." Xander stuttered.

Giles just looked on, hiding a slight smile; he felt his irritation fading as it normally did when he looked at the young people before him.

Buffy Summers, the beautiful bottle blonde, was laughing softly. She was dressed in a skirt that was classified as a belt in some countries and a tight cut away t-shirt.

Her choice of clothing always made Giles wonder how she managed to both fight demons *and* not expose herself at the same time.

Willow Rosenberg, the slim red-head who was possibly the smartest person he had ever met, certainly smarter than those Muppet's who ran the Watchers Council. Her invaluable help both with the dreaded computer and research had helped saved the world on many occasions.

Xander Harris, the class clown, a man who sometimes made scared elephants look graceful. But he was always there when anyone needed him, sometimes displaying a remarkable lack of anything even remotely resembling self preservation skills.

Xander also was totally in love with the first member of the trio. She was slowly recovering from the break up with an en-souled vampire named Angel. How a vampire slayer ended up with a vampire, Giles was still not sure, but secretly he was relieved it was over. Despite his public protestations to the contrary Giles had never forgot Jenny Calendar, the wonderful lady he had been slowly falling in love with, and what Angel had done to her.

Giles decided that that was enough teasing for now.

"Dreadfully sorry to interrupt," the British Watcher interposed, a small ripper-ish piece of sarcasm drifting faintly through his accent. "But we do seem to have a new demon prophecy."

"A minor maniacal Minotaur or a deadly, death to all, demon?" Xander asked with a playful smile.

Sadly, his smile was not long for this world, as he was whacked in the face by a pillow thrown across the room with the sort of skill and speed that was normally only utilized in the art of placing small slithers of wood in a heart shaped moving target from 20 yards.

Almost looking gratefully at Buffy, the thrower, and after a small prayer of patience to a few minor deities, Giles continued.

"Yes. The prophecy is unusually specific. It appears that in the next three days, two demons are going to be summoned in a small town in western State. We are going to have to go there and find a way of stopping the ceremony or deal with the consequences - should the summoners succeed. These are reportedly two of the most intelligent demons we have ever faced. Not much is known about them, except that they are large, green and have many tentacles. Unusually they are reportedly not planning on destroying the world..."

Giles was quickly interrupted by 3 distinct sounds of disbelief, luckily, or not, Willow's years of babbling and quick mind meant that she was first

"What? I though all demons wanted to destroy the planet and then get all of their breathe in." Thankfully, God's design of the human body suddenly made sense. The need to breathe was normally required to get oxygen into the blood stream. In this case it had a much more important role: to stop willow's babbling.

As she gasped for breath Giles stepped in again. "Stop." A hand, held up at a direct right angle to his body, enforced his exclamation. "Ok, all of you wait. Xander, that includes you".

Xander frowned as he sat back down, pouting slightly at the lost chance to exercise his wit.

Buffy leaned over and patted his knee in sympathy.

Giles took a deep breath and continued, ignoring their disbelief. "Luckily, there is an exhibition of Egyptian culture in the local town museum. For some reason, major cultural art shows often start their tours of the America there, before moving on to more famous location. They will even have the Isis Esphere on display."

"What's that," Xander asked. "And why is it lucky?"

"No one knows exactly what it is. It's a rather strange mystery. Hopefully, we will have time to visit the exhibition, once the demons have been vanquished."

The 3 groans that followed that statement would have been enough to dent the enthusiasm of even the most distinguished scholar. Giles however, had been in this position many times, and had grown the sort of hide that would have made a male rhinoceros jealous, and a female rhinoceros horny. This being the Hellmouth, Giles was extremely lucky...there were no female rhinos around.

"It's lucky, because," Giles said, amazed at his own ability to keep the structure of his sentence despite the distractions. "I have talked to the council, and we have tickets to fly out today. I have also talked to your parents and they are willing to entrust you all to my care for the duration of the week."

"Both of your parents," Giles nodded towards Willow and Buffy, "were reluctant, till I informed them that, respectively, each of you was coming along as well."

"I emphasized the excellent educational opportunity that this exhibition offers, and how it would help with your college tour. Mrs. Summers expressed surprise that Buffy would be willing to go to summer school but was most gratified all the same".

Xander sighed slightly, a crooked smile appearing and looked Giles in the eye for a second. Giles nodded and moved on. "So, may I suggest that we meet back here in 2 hours, packed, and I will explain exactly what demons we are facing?"

As all 3 of them stood, Xander suddenly jumped into the air. "ROADTRIP" he yelled, before dashing out, followed by the two excited girls.

Giles just watched them go, a slight smile apparent in his eyes.

The man stood in the middle of a pentagram, alone. From one side, another looked on, a slight frown on his face.

"Are you sure we should be doing this, Sir?" he asked.

"Of course you imbecile, I can be young and virile again, this is the only way."

"You're quite virile now, Sir. No one would suspect that you are 104 years old."

The man in the middle looked suspiciously at the younger man. "Yes," he drawled, "anyway, after this my control over this town will be total."

His laughter, tinged with insanity, echoed around the room.

*He's the greatest guy in history.
From the town of Sunnydale .
He's finally got a chance at buff-ey ...”*

Buffy danced up the steps to her house, there was something about a road trip that meant you could forget all your problems, both romantically and scholastically.

She dashed into the kitchen, and saw a note on the fridge. Buffy decided to read the note later, and opened the fridge door, not noticing the small post-it notes on the ice maker. She grabbed the milk, and poured herself a glass, before finally reading the note. She smiled to herself and finished her glass, wandering upstairs.

'Hmm, scandalously short skirt,' she giggled to herself. She continued to pack, picking a few more outfits that were a little more respectable, just in case.

Willow walked though her empty house, it wasn't really surprising that her mother had let her go with Giles. Like a true Jewish woman, she was always out crusading about one issue or another. She rarely had time for her daughter.

The upside to that was that Willow had a lot of freedom, which came in very useful when her hobby was both the practicing of the Wiccan arts and the slaying of the undead.

Willow sighed and started to pack her more sensible clothes. It wasn't that she didn't have any sexy clothing; Oz had loved it when she had worn that skin tight shorts and top outfit. When it came down to it, slaying the undead often ended in either a large amount of dust, or a large amount of gore and phlegm. Both of which she hated with a passion, so sensible clothing it was.

She thought a little enviously of her slayer friend, obviously the ability to avoid being gunked was yet another of the Chosen One's skills.

Back at Giles's apartment, the tweed-wearing Watcher looked at his watch impatiently. He had misread the tickets earlier.

As he saw his three charges arrive, Giles grabbed his suitcase, his wallet, the tickets, and his car keys and rushed out the door.

"I misread the damn tickets, we have to get to the airport quickly," he said, opening the door to his car.

The three kids jumped into the rust bucket, then braced themselves as the frantic Englishman pressed the accelerator to the floor. The car took off, well, the car certainly started to move.

They made their flight with seconds to spare, but did not sit together on the flight, the last minute nature of their booking, combined with the infrequency of the planes from Sunnydale to their destination, meant that seats were quite scarce.

Curiously enough, their target was a major international hub for Indian air travel, with planes arriving every 5 minutes.

They arrived, tired and irritable, and picked up their rental car. As they drove to the Palace Hotel, Buffy and Willow fell asleep in the back.

Giles was just happy to be in a car that actually had an engine that responded to the use of the right pedal.

Xander looked over and exchanged a wry smile with his elder friend.

The driver suddenly hit the breaks hard, desperately trying to avoid a collision with an orange sedan, which had suddenly performed an illegal u-turn in front of him.

"What the hell," Giles exclaimed loudly. "I know you American's have trouble driving, but that is really inexcusable."

The orange car carried on regardless.

The sudden breaking had woken up Buffy and Willow in the back.

"Erm, Giles?" Willow asked hesitantly, her voice carrying a note of confusion.

"Yes, Willow?" Giles replied, trying to calm down a little. 'No point in letting Ripper out to play over a minor traffic incident.'

"Where does that Escalator go?"

Giles looked up and blinked. He pulled over to the side of the road and looked up again. He closed his eyes and removed his glasses and cleaned them. With a feeling of dread he re-applied his glasses.

"Well, it doesn't seem to go anywhere," he replied quietly, not quite believing that a 200ft escalator would be in the middle of nowhere.

Xander watched as someone rode it to the top, and then winced as they fell off the top. Their scream echoed through the air. Unable to watch, he turned his head, only to see something equally disturbing.

"So, Buff," Xander started. "What does that sign say over there."

Buffy looked and read the sign aloud, "Springfield tire fire est. 1989...What?"

It was Giles who pointed out the last thing

"My word!" As everyone looked at him, Giles pointed into the distance. "Isn't that a mono-rail?"

"Why would a small town have a mass transit system?" Willow asked, confused. "And why is it not being used?"

"Giles, where are we?" inquired Buffy slowly, not really wanting to know.

"The town is called Springfield."

A suddenly tapping at his window diverted Giles's attention. Winding down the window, he looked at the two police officers.

"Can I help you" he asked

"A Brit eh?" The white cop asked, looking at his colored colleague.

"I hear there was an unsolved murder in London," his colored colleague replied

"What?" Giles asked, visibly spooked by the start to the conversation. "A lot of murders have happened in London."

"So, it sounds like you know a lot about it, eh Jack?"

At this, Giles patience, already strained by the day, snapped. He engaged the engine and simply drove off.

"Well, Lou," one of the cops said. "Shall we call it in?"

"Nah, Eddie," the other replied. "It's time for donuts anyway."

The Next Day

Montgomery Burns and Weyland Smithers were in the luxurious office in the heart of the Springfield Nuclear Power plant, staring at the bank of monitors.

"Well Smithers, all we need is one more sacrifice and I will be young again".

"Yes, Sir," Smithers agreed, the brightly polished tips of his shoe attempting to follow him in his sycophancy.

"How about that Neanderthal?" the octogenarian asked, pointing at the screen. A large man, sitting with his feet up on his complicated looking control panel, was happily asleep.

"Homer Simpson, Sir?" Smithers asked, surprised. "He's one of the employees on the Simian

Replacement Scheme from sector 7G, are you sure you want to use him?"

"Simpson, eh?" Burns asked. "Good man? Has a family? Would he be missed?"

"Well Sir, he's saved your life many times. Blown up the plant, been promoted and fired more times than any other employee on record. He lost your trillion dollar bill to the Cubans and partnered you in last years work retreat. You tried to use him as the brain for you killer root the year before that."

"Hmm, doesn't ring a bell. He'll do fine." The old man moved over to the public address system.

Homer Jay Simpson awoke with a yelp as the public address system screamed out, "Simpson, Homer report immediately to the basement for sacrificial offering."

The public address system stopped abruptly, low murmuring was heard behind it, "Oh, alright then," it continued. "Correction, please report for Jello and Ice Cream"

"Woo Hoo" Homer yelled, jumping into the air. He seemed to vanish with Slayer like speed. All that remained was a Homer shaped dust cloud as the bald man ran to the basement.

Springfield Palace Hotel

Xander woke up slowly, it seemed that sharing a hotel room with Giles was not as bad as it had first seemed.

It always seemed strange to Xander, that the Council, which was supposedly extremely wealthy, what with the castles in England and operatives all over the world, were the tightest bunch of penny-pinchers he had ever heard off.

The brown-eyed teenager walked into the bathroom and turned on the shower. He climbed in, after divesting himself of his clothes. As he stood under the shower, the almost scalding water cascading over him, Xander's thoughts slowly drifted back to the blonde who owned his heart next door.

He had a choice. He could try and approach her again, as he had before, although he worried if that he could handle the rejection another time. The only other option open to him was to stay, watch her back, and front he acknowledged with a smile, and hope that one day she would see him differently.

The very thought of leaving either her or Sunnydale never entered his mind. Despite the almost constant death he faced on a daily basis, he knew he could never abandon either her or his Willow.

Giles too.

When Xander thought about it clearly, something even he admitted he did very rarely, Giles was the father he had always wanted, Willow his sister. Buffy, well, even if she never was in reality, in his heart she was his love.

As he climbed out of the shower, Xander wrapped a towel around his waist and started to shave. He could hear Giles moving around in the bedroom, so he hurried, only cutting himself twice.

Xander re-entered the bedroom, to find that Buffy and Willow had joined them.

Buffy's hair was wet and slicked back a little carelessly into a pony tail. Along with her pink toenails and shorts, Buffy looked small and vulnerable, and extremely cute. A complete contrast to the Slayer, a warrior born, the scourge of the night.

"So, Giles," Buffy decided to get the morning on track. "Who are these two demons that are being summoned?"

"Well," Giles stated, moving into Lecture mode with the same ease in which a cat moves onto a mouse. "Kang and Kodos are two brothers that are reported to use technology. Once brought back into this dimension, they will try to enslave the world, and then rule it as kings. Little else is known about them."

"Ok," said blonde Slayer. "That doesn't really help much. Why is someone trying to raise them?"

"It is believed that Kang and Kodos can grant eternal youth on a subject, if they so wish. The ceremony to call them involves a human sacrifice and a number of extremely rare ingredients."

"So," Xander summed up. "Were looking for a rich old person, with no morals and access to a lot of people?"

For the second time in 24 hours, everyone looked at Xander, shocked. The sort of shock that had last been seen when it was revealed that Bill Clinton had a 'thing' for cigars.

"Quite," Giles agreed.

"Well, if its due to happen over the next few days, I could hack into the police records and see if anyone has been reported missing," Willow said, excited to have a chance to show off her skills. At Giles's agreement, the red-headed witch dashed out of the door, returning shortly with her laptop. She plugged it in to the power supply, and attached it to the phone line, and waited for it to boot, bouncing happily.

Xander and Buffy, their motions strangely synchronized, both settled down on to the two beds, preparing for a dull wait. As they did, Xander accidentally hit the TV remote, causing it to blare into life.

*"They fight! And bite!
They bite and bite and fight!
Fight, fight, fight!"*

Bite, bite, bite!
The Itchy and Scratchy Show!"

Xander watched, entranced.

The animation showed a black and white cat, who walked on its hind legs, sitting at a computer. The large logo on the monitor showed that the feline was reading its email.

A flashing light appeared across the scene, followed by the words, "An Email From Itchy." The cat sighed happily, an expression of contentment spread across its features.

The camera zoomed in on the cat, as it moved the computer's mouse and double-clicked the icon, opening the message.

Suddenly a klaxon blared as a small blue mouse appeared on the screen.

The screen flashed bright yellow, the word "VIRUS," appeared.

A blue mouse suddenly appeared on the screen, in one corner. It started to eat the warning message.

The cat clicked wildly at the delete button, its face showing terror, as the virus started to spread over its computer.

The mouse stopped eating, and with a tangible malevolence, stared directly out at the cat. It grinned evilly, and then started to multiply. Soon, there were thousands of them, all staring out at the panicked cat.

There was a moment's silence, before the screen exploded. The glass caused gaping wounds in the cartoon cat's chest.

The small mice ran out of the screen together, and dived into the cat's chest. They mimicked the eating movements from earlier, as they quickly devoured the flesh of the cat, leaving only a glistening skeleton.

As the cartoon ended, it switched to an audience filled with 8 year olds, all screaming their pleasure.

Xander looked at Buffy. "What the hell was that?"

"This is impossible!" Willow almost screamed in frustration.

"What is?" Giles asked, concerned. "Are you unable to access the police records?"

Willow glared at him. "Giles, they don't have any computer records, at all!"

"Oh." For once the normally erudite Watcher was lost for words.

Xander perked up. "Hey, why don't the Buffster and I go down to the station, see what we can find there. We can pretend to have lost our dog or something." He said, talking to the responsible adult of the group. "You and Willow can stay and do that research thing you both love."

The boy grinned, and completely ignored both Giles and Willow's despairing look. He bundled Buffy out of the room, "get dressed quickly." He grabbed his clothes and retreated to the bathroom, dressing himself.

He walked back out of the bathroom, and grinned cheerfully. The Watcher was engrossed in a book that made the Oxford English Dictionary jealous, while Willow was accessing multiple websites, searching for references to Kang and Kodos.

He grabbed the keys to the hire car and, walked out.

He knocked on the door to Buffy's room, and waited patiently after she yelled, "One Minute."

Xander tried very hard, with partial success, not to imagine the blonde haired girl in various states of undress.

Xander and Buffy walked up the wide steps to the police station. They were surprised to find the entrance unguarded, leaving them free to walk in. There was no one to be seen, although they could both hear loud laughter from one of the rooms at the back.

Already un-enamored by this town, the decision to explore was an easy one to make. Buffy signaled for Xander to be quiet as they slowly crept towards the room they could hear the laughter coming from. Vampire tuned skills came to the fore, as they moved as silently as the demons they normally killed.

They looked around the door together, Xander's head above the smaller Slayers. They both stopped, and did identical double takes.

They turned and stared at each other.

"Buffy," Xander whispered. "What did it look like was happening in there?"

Buffy slowly digested what they had seen. "It looked like one of the cops from earlier had several small creatures running around his pants, which appeared to be taped at his ankles."

Xander nodded in agreement. "And the rest of the people in there were watching, and placing bets on him?" he asked for verification purposes.

"Yep," Buffy agreed. "And we thought Sunnydale was weird!"

They decided to abandon their sneaking, as there didn't seem to be any point, with the police

being otherwise occupied.

“Where the hell do they keep their records?” A frustrated Slayer demanded.

Xander shrugged, and was about to reply when an old fashioned answer phone suddenly sprung into life.

"Hello, is anyone there?" A female voice asked. "My husband has gone missing. This is Marge Simpson from 742 Evergreen Terrace. Homer was supposed to be back from work last night, but didn't come home all night. His bartender hasn't seen him, nor have the people at Krusty Burger. This is not like him; he hasn't missed a meal in 21 years."

Buffy looked at Xander, "That was lucky!"

Xander grinned back, and reaching up, he deleted the message. "Whoops."

Buffy laughed as they casually walked out the door, the gambling cops forgotten.

They got back in the car together, Xander reluctantly conceding the driving seat to the stronger, more determined Slayer.

"Look, Buffy," an excited Xander yelled. "A Kwik-E-Mart, I heard that they had all been closed due to their health and safety records. Let's go in, please?"

Buffy shrugged and pulled into the spaces lined up in front of the store. They entered together, looking around the store.

The owner, an Indian watched them carefully from behind a counter, his badge extorting them to ask about their pickles.

"NOBODY MOVE!" a voice shouted as a large shaggy haired man with tattoos on his forearms burst into the shop. "That means you too, Chicky-Pie" he said, pointing the shotgun at Buffy.

"Chicky-Pie?" a clearly outraged Buffy exclaimed. "Chicky-Pie!?"

The robber looked at the ceiling, carefully examining it. It was then that his thought process caught up with him. He replayed the actions of the last thirty seconds.

He had entered the shop shouting, as normal.

Pointed the gun at the clerk, as normal.

Then the girl moved, kicking his shotgun out of his hands. She had spun with the kick, jumped and smashed her sneaker clad foot into his head.

All he could say as he lay on the floor was a heartfelt "Oh no!"

The store keeper looked shocked. "You have saved me from being shot for the fifteenth time; my humble thanks go to you. My Name is Apu Nahasapeemapetilan and I am in your debt."

Xander and Buffy were very silent as they drove away from the Kwik-E-Mart.

Surprisingly so. When you lived in Sunnydale, a town that was situated on top of an ancient gateway to hell, strange things were going to happen.

Buffy herself was an example of that. A tiny blonde who looked like she should spend her time cheerleading, shopping and getting ready for her first year at college, had, with her close friends and ex-boyfriend just blown up a high school to stop their town Mayor becoming an all powerful demon.

To an outsider that would be surprising.

Take her partner, Xander, even his love life was surprising. An ancient Egyptian mummy, a giant mantis disguised as a human, the school bitch and a psychotic slayer.

Yet, as strange as that all was, it looked like they had found a weirder town.

Xander was starting to regret letting the Slayer drive. Buffy's preternatural skills allowed her the ability to hit a target perfectly with any weapon. The strength and speed to match any vampire.

Sadly, it didn't appear to allow her the ability to control a car down a street safely.

Xander glanced at Buffy's face and decided to keep quiet, her expression clearly challenging him to say a word.

A flashing light filled the room and a siren was heard from behind them

"Sure, single me out" grumbled the slayer, pulling the rental car over to one side.

An extremely large cop climbed out of the police car behind them and waddled over. His uniform pants appeared to have a chocolate stains over them.

"Ok, Miss," the policemen seemed to snort as he looked down his pig like nose at her. "Where's the fire?"

Looking up, Buffy pointed and replied, "Over there." It could clearly be seen that 'Springfield's Finest' place of business was on fire.

"That's it, Miss, I'm writing you up on a 3:16. Pointing out police stupidity. Or is that a 3:17, no I think it's a 3:16 after all."

It didn't take Buffy long to realize that Giles had had the correct idea earlier, she drove off.

Chief Wiggum, stepped backwards from the departing car and lost his balance. He fell on to his ample butt. He ran, well, trotted, ok, walked, damn it, crawled, back to his police car. Exhausted he picked up the microphone.

"This is Papa Bear. Put out an APB for a female suspect, driving a...car of some sort, heading in the direction of...you know; that place that sells chili. Suspect is hatless. Repeat, hatless!"

"And cut," the director said to the camera man. He turned off his camera, which had been focused on the police chief. Through the car, the theme music to the live action program, played loudly.

"Bad cops, bad cops.

Bad cops, bad cops.

Springfield cops are on the take.

But what do you expect for the money we make?

Whether in a car or on a horse.

We don't mind using excessive force.

Bad cops, bad cops.

Bad cops, bad cops."

"I hate that music," sighed Chief Wiggum.

Ten minutes later, Buffy and Xander arrived back at the hotel.

They walked back in to the hotel room Xander was sharing with Giles. The two adventurers shared a fond look. Some things never changed, and Giles and Willow working together were two of them. They had hardly moved since the two had left them, although the pile of books the Watcher had been reading had gone down on one side, and increased on the other.

"What's the what, Giles?" Buffy asked expectantly.

"Well, we appear to have reached an impasse. I'm afraid that our efforts have been frustratingly fruitless." The tweed wearing Brit showed heroic composure to not react to the teenage mangling of his mother tongue.

"Yeah," Willow agreed, sounding a little down. "I've searched all over the net for anything that would help, and couldn't find a simple thing. We haven't been able to get a clue, and no one seems to know anything about them."

"Well," Xander decided he would give a quick recap. "Apart from a run-in with a masked gunman, an over-the-top store owner and a cop who I am guessing, because of his badge, was chief of police, we managed to find out that someone went missing yesterday. The police here are worse than Sunnydale's."

Giles and Willow both looked up, disbelief written clearly across their heads.

Giles spoke first, "Are you sure? Our police are pretty good at ignoring and covering things up."

"Giles," Buffy replied pointedly. "They were gambling about how long one of their officers could stay still, with some sort of small animal down his trousers."

The silence that followed that statement was absolute.

A minute's silence at a church ceremony featuring the pope would have looked enviously at this silence.

"Anyway," Xander continued, breaking the silence. "We have found a clue. One Homer Simpson has gone missing; his wife phoned and left a message on the police answer phone. I don't even want to know why the police have an answer phone.

"He lives at 742 Evergreen Terrace."

"Excellent," Giles replied, stretching as he stood. "I suggest we go there now and see what information we can acquire from his wife."

They paused for Willow to put on her shoes, then left. Thankfully for Xander's nerves, Giles drove.

Buffy and Xander sat in the back, allowing Willow to look around the strange town they were currently in.

"How are you holding up, Buffy?" Xander asked quietly.

Buffy looked at him quizzically. "I'm fine, nothing bad has happened recently."

"That's not really what I meant," Xander said quietly.

Giles and Willow were having their own conversation, in the front of the car.

"I was really talking about the sadness I can see in your eyes when you think no one is looking, the slightly frown that creases your forehead sometimes, and the few times your voice is a little off normal."

"He's gone, Xander and he's not coming back." Buffy replied; her heart in her eyes. "And I'm not sure how I am supposed to feel. All I've done for the past two months is examine our relationship, over and over, going over every little detail."

"Any conclusions?"

"I'm confused, Xander, and a little scared."

"Scared? You? You know what inscription we will put on your gravestone after you die of old age?"

"What?" Buffy asked, a small smile played on her lips, grateful for the unconscious gesture of support.

"She saved the world, A Lot."

Buffy laughed softly.

"Seriously, Buffy, you're the bravest person I know. You never hesitate to throw yourself against the latest big bad, and you always come out fighting. You've faced monster, demons and assassins without backing down. And even if you start to feel unsure, remember that I will always be right behind you, covering your back."

Buffy nodded, the smile still playing around her lips as she thought to all the times that Xander had done already done that. The times the brown eyed boy had saved them all, he was the quiet hero type.

She had talked to Giles about that a few weeks ago, trying to get a handle on the person who she was supposed to know really well. Her problem was, as she was finding out, was that she didn't know her Xander shaped friend at all.

Her life had existed around Angel almost since the start and she had accepted Xander as she had found him. But now, with Angels influence gone, she had been forced to start examining herself, and because of that she had looked closely at her friends as well. She had found that Xander wore his personality like a clown costume, and she was getting more and more determined to find out exactly what was underneath the outfit.

When she had asked Giles about Xander's silent heroism, Giles had just looked at her and recited from memory. "True bravery is shown by performing without witness, what one might be capable of doing before the whole world. La Rochefoucauld said that, Buffy, I'd advise you to at least think about it."

And she had.

Angel had always been the showy sort, appearing to kill the bad guy in the nick of time, a flash of white teeth, a shake of his head and he had gone.

Buffy was young, and still was she admitted to herself, and that had been all it had taken to get her interested in the centuries old vampire. As she had found out more about Angel she had fallen deeply in love with him. His endless quest for redemption, combined with his good looks and ability in a fight and totally over whelmed her.

So much that she had surrendered her virginity to him, given him the biggest gift she could give anyone, only for him to turn evil shortly afterwards.

That was perhaps the day when Buffy started to question, deep inside her, whether or not Angel really was the one for her. But one of her finer points, her incapability to accept defeat, almost made it very hard for her accept that she was wrong. She had pushed herself to accept what she felt was her destiny.

Now, a few months later she was looking at her Xander-bear closer and really starting to like what she was seeing. Behind the humor was a rock, a rock that she could cling to in the darkness of the night and relax on during the light of the day, a rock that would always support her and never leave her.

The very fact that she could associate day light with him was a big plus.

So, that was the core of Buffy's confusion and her fear, she did not like admitting to herself the possibility that Angel was only a harsh schoolgirl crush, she had hoped that with her being the Slayer she was immune to that.

Added to that was her admiration for her hidden Xander and you had fear as well, not just the fear of admitting that she might be wrong, but the very real fear of opening her heart, and possibly, eventually, her body, to another man again.

Still, looking at Xander she smiled reassuringly at him. "I'm getting better every minute, Xan." Buffy leant forward and gently kissed him on his cheek, before settling back down and looking out the window, leaving a reassured Xander.

This left Xander time to think. If you had asked the people who knew him best, they would have said that Xander was incapable of this. But like everything else with Xander, his collar and cuff's did not match.

Buffy had had a hard time over it recently, but it was still his own decisions that haunted him.

Simply put, the question he asked himself over and over again harked back to the year before. "Why did I send Angel to hell?"

Xander had never had a lot of self confidence, and because of this he was concerned about his motives.

Xander Loved Buffy, those words were etched both on his heart and soul; there was nothing he could do to deny that.

Inscribed in smaller letters was 'Xander will not hurt Buffy'.

When he had been asked to tell Buffy that Willow was performing the soul restoration spell again. Xander had not known what to do.

He was scared that if Buffy knew the truth she would not fight as hard as she could and might get hurt. That was the first problem, the second problem was that if Angel succeeded in using the ancient portal only his blood could seal it, and if Buffy couldn't then hurt hew newly-souled lover,

then the whole world would have been sucked into hell.

Add to that his hatred of the yo-yo-souled demon and you had his quandary.

In the end Xander had over ridden his heart and decided that no matter how much it hurt Buffy, the rest of the world was more important than both his friendship with her, and more important than the both of them as individuals.

But that voice, deep inside him, would not remain silent.

"You wanted Angel to go to hell, it was the only way to get him out of your way".

If he had perhaps been older or hadn't grown up in an atmosphere that caused him to doubt himself at the very lowest level Xander might have not worried so much about himself....no one else did.

Darkness slowly descended over Springfield, as Giles drove towards Evergreen terrace.

The drive had taken a lot longer than expected as, to Xander's great amusement, Giles had gotten totally lost and they had had to stop and purchase a map.

"Giles, Stop" Buffy shouted suddenly, her body jerking out of the half asleep rest she had been enjoying in the back of the car. "Vampire!"

Giles swerved the car to a stop. Before the car was stationary, Buffy had opened the door and taken off in a fast run towards a dark alley, Xander a few seconds behind her. They were followed by Willow who was chanting something softly under her breath as she ran.

Only for Buffy to stop. Dead.

Xander immediately put on the brakes himself, narrowly missing Buffy.

Willow was not so lucky, caught up in her 'light' spell she didn't notice the stationary slayer and Scooby member in front of her. She ran straight into Xander's back and bounced off. She ended up on the floor. About to complain, the red headed girl looked up and stopped; mouth half open, as she sat on the grounds, only the folds of her loose skirt preserving her dignity.

Giles finally caught up with them, and simply said, "oh my."

Before them were four vampires fighting one man. It wasn't that the man was winning that was causing their surprise, it wasn't even the fact that he was topless and heavily muscled that had caused them to freeze.

It was quite definitely the fact that he was wearing a kilt and speaking about himself in the 3rd person that had done it.

"Och, ya think ya can take Willie de ya?" the man screamed, his red hair and beard showing in the

dim light of the alley. "Well, I'll tell ya, ya beasties. There's nary a demon alive that can outfight a greased Scotsman!"

True to his word, they could all see that this Willie was definitely greased, his shiny torso was highlighted as the last remaining vampire swiped his claws over Willie's chest, only for the Scotsmen to breath in allowing the clawed hand to slide gently across the skin.

Willie followed it up by pushing the arm, increasing the vampires momentum. As the vampire overbalanced, the Scotsman thrust the stake in his hand hard into the chest of then undead creature, and then grinned as it dusted. Curiously, none of the dust stuck to the greased chest.

Willie finally noticed them looking at him in shock.

"Go home kiddies, nothing to see here, merely a mugging attempt."

He moved towards them, and then paused as he saw Giles.

"Rrrriper?" he said, rolling his R's like the true Scotsman he was.

Giles winced slightly, "Hello Willie, been a long time."

That was as far as Giles got, before he was firmly reminded what it was like to be hugged and spun around by a greased Scotsman.

"Willie, you've been eating Kipper's again." Giles groaned from the tight grasp, "I've told you before about doing this when you have had kippers".

"Och man, nothing but the finest kippers from me. You still with the council?" Willie asked, his accent fading. (A/N: mainly because I can't type Scottish).

"We had a slight disagreement," Giles explained, he was about to continue when he was grabbed again by the Scotsman.

"Really? That's ruddy marvelous, I told ya ya'd see things my way. Nah, who are yah bains?"

Smiling slightly, Giles introduced them proudly. "Willie McFadden, I'd like to introduce you to my charges. The youngster here on my right is Alexander Harris, although please call him Xander. The young lady currently sitting on the floor is a Wiccan by the name of Willow, and this is Buffy Summers."

At Buffy's name Willie gasped with shock, "Buffy, the Vampire Slayer? It's an honor to meet ya Lass, I've heard so much about ye."

Wiping his hand on his kilt, Willie offered his hand respectfully to the stunned Slayer, who shook it tenderly. "T'is a might fine grip you have there."

Buffy just smiled, a little overwhelmed by the half dressed man in front of them.

Giles meanwhile continued, "Don't let Willie's appearance fool you, or that dratted mode of speech he employs. When he wants to, Willie speaks the Queen's English better than anyone I've ever met. We studied at Oxford together for 4 years, and he has a degree in psychology."

"Och man, ye be givin' away all my secret's. Have you told ya wee one's about the time you had one to many, miscast that spell, and ended up dangling from a flagpole?"

Giles blushed slightly. "Erm, No! And I'd rather not go into that either, is there anywhere we can go to talk, Willie?"

Willie grinned unrepentantly, at Giles, and nodded, walking down the alley.

Xander looked at Giles, then Willie, then Giles again. He flashed a grin at Buffy and Willow and ran after large man.

"Willie, man, wait up," catching up with him, Giles faintly heard Xander ask. "So how many stories about Giles do you have?" Willie's loud laughter echoed back down to the others.

"Oh God," prayed Giles, removing his glasses and pinching the base of his nose. "Not Xander and Willie, I'd rather face a hundred vampires than them two together."

At that, Buffy and Willow exchanged a glance, and took off after the other two, leaving Giles to follow.

They arrived at what could only be described as a hut, in the grounds of Springfield Elementary school. Opening the door, they all walked under the Celtic cross that was guarding the entrance from unsavory visitors of the night.

"It's a bit basic isn't it, Willie?" Xander asked, never one for using that much tack.

As they looked around the single room, the others found it hard to disagree, there was a bucket and some soap in one corner, but apart from that, it looked like it would have made a Spartan run home to his mommy.

"A little," Willie agreed with a grin. "But when you are a school janitor ya can't afford much."

"You? A janitor?" Giles asked, shocked "But - "

"Aye, I know," Willie interrupted with a grin. "Which is why I have this."

Willie slid the bed to one side and pressed a button.

Xander had only what happened next in a James Bond movie. The whole room started to slide downwards, coming to stop after about 30 feet, opening into a cavernous room. It was filled with both computers and a library that would have made the now destroyed Sunnydale High School library burst into tears of envy. All Giles did was smile slightly.

"That's more like what I expected, Willie."

"Make yourselves at home," Willie pointed to 3 couches arranged in a u-shape. "I'll be right back."

As they sat down, Willow was the first to ask what was on their minds. "What, I mean, who is he?"

Giles, looking at home on the couch as only an Englishman could, replied "Willie is another person who fights the good fight. He found out about vampires and demon's the same time I did, after that he pretty much dedicated his life to wiping them out. In a way it saved him.

"When we first met, he was young, very rich and drifting, nothing really appealed to him, apart from trying to find out exactly how much it would take for a man to drink himself to death. When he saw the vampires, and understood, it was the first time I had ever seen someone have a full revelation. He stopped drinking immediately, he only has the occasional glass of scotch, and started to throw himself into his studies.

"We both looked through the occult together, and joined the Watchers Council at the same time. Willie never trusted them, I didn't know why then and I still don't. We drifted apart when I joined the Council full time."

"And as for all of this," Willie said, reentering the room. "I have a small inheritance that keeps it up. I took a janitor's job as no one ever suspects me as anything but a stupid jock who cleans the drains."

Willie settled down, and seeing the rapt expression on all of their faces realized that he would have to complete his story.

"After Giles joined those bloody tossers in the Council, I traveled the world for several years, helping out where I could before I ended up here. You may have noticed that the town is a little strange?"

At the heartfelt nods of all four, he continued. "Well, it is, and I decided to find out why, and I'm no closer to knowing now than I was when I got here 5 years ago."

"But" he added with a grin "I've had more fun and killed more vampires over the past few years than anywhere else on the planet. Something about this place means that they come in, three to four every other week.

"So, what bring the legendary Ripper to my neck of the woods, I take it from your surprise that you had no idea I was here?"

Before Giles could reply, Xander butted in, "What's with your accent?"

Willie laughed, "Like I said, no one would ever suspect that a simple Scotsman was a fighter, it gives me freedom, and besides, Ripper here hates it."

"Yes," Giles said in complete agreement. "We're here because there is a prophecy that two demons are going to be raised. It was an extremely unusual prophecy in that it stated when and where, and gave some hints at who. We couldn't find anything else about the two demons, or who would be raising them. All we have to go on so far is that a 'Homer Simpson' is missing."

"Simpson?" Willie asked with laugh.

"I could have told you that, the central point for everything strange that goes on in this time is that family. I checked them out a few years ago, because I thought that they must be some form of cunningly disguised chaos demons, but they are human. Homer was that guy who went up in NASA's program to show that space was accessible to the ordinary human last year"

"That was him?" Willow looked shocked, "He did some really weird speech about the planet of the apes on national TV. Balding fat guy?"

"Aye, that's him. Since I've been here they have been to every continent except Antarctica as a family, Homer went once when he ended up in charge of a nuclear submarine."

Holding up his hand he forestalled their inevitable questions. "I found out how he became captain, it was just a series of bizarre coincidences." Willie reached over and picked up a large folder "This is the psych profile I did of him, along with his medical records. As far as I can tell, he has an abnormal Corpus Callosum."

Willie switched to lecture mode with the familiarity of one who had dealt with unruly students for most of his life. He held up an x-ray of a skull for them to see. Xander and Buffy exchanged a glance at each other and relaxed back on the chair. Absently holding hands, they grinned as Giles and Willow both leaned forwards eagerly.

"What's that around his brain?" Willow asked, confused

"That's a layer of subcutaneous fat, like the hide of a walrus, I believe it was a genetic disorder. It means that you could hit Homer around the head with a baseball bat and it would hardly hurt him."

"Wait a second; didn't he fight in Dreaderick Tatum's return fight?" Xander asked, shocked as he suddenly remembered the highly publicized fight.

"Aye, that was him," Willie acknowledged before continuing. "The area in question is here, joining his right and left cortex together." Willow nodded, looking at it, "What's different about it?"

"Well, from what I can see, normally it passes messages slower than the average human; it gives him a short attention span and limited short term memory. Randomly and in times of stress his cortex operates at maximum efficiency, changing him from an idiot to a genius.

"It means that either his stupidity gets him into all sorts of trouble, then when he is in great danger, or is bored, his brain kicks in, dumping a vast amount of data into his cerebrum. No one

Several minutes later, as the three recovered, with the occasional snicker as the only remainder, Willie handed them some badges.

"These are Springfield Special Deputy badges, they will help you talk to Marge Simpson. Now be off wit' ya, I have more patrolling to do."

The four left, taking one last look at Willie's apparently Spartan living quarters.

They arrived at Evergreen Terrace at around 8:30 in the evening.

Giles, being the eldest, and despite Willie's story, most respectable rang the doorbell.

The Carpenters' "Close to You" echoed out.

It was a sign of the effect that Springfield was having on them in that they didn't react as they might normally.

Seconds later, a lady with incredible blue hair opened the door. Managing not to react, Giles flashed his badge.

"I believe you reported your husband missing Mrs. Simpson?"

"Oh, Yes, I did. Won't you please come in? And please, call me Marge"

Giles smiled at her charmingly, "I would be delighted."

Marge giggled, then blushed, escorting them into a plain although well sized living room. In one of the corners a brown greyhound and a black cat were lying next to each other. As one they lifted their heads, stared at the guests then placed them back down again, going back to sleep.

A small baby wearing a bright blue all in one and sucking a red pacifier walked over to them, falling down every 3 steps. The baby got up again and stared solemnly at the four strangers. She paused for a second then moved in front of Willow and held up her arms demandingly.

Surprised, Willow bent down and picked her up. The baby smiled behind her pacifier and promptly fell asleep.

"That's Maggie," Marge introduced with a smile. "Can I make anyone some tea?"

"Oh yes please" said Giles eagerly.

Buffy, Willow and Xander all politely declined, thinking it a little strange that Marge didn't want to get right to the point, and was not nervous about having four special deputy's in the house.

"Have you heard from Homer yet, mom?" A young voice preceded an entrance into the living room. A 10yr old boy, wearing shorts, walked in. He looked curiously at the other till his eyes

came onto Buffy where he stopped immediately.

"Aye Carumba," he said under his breath, before vanishing suddenly.

Xander laughed quietly "That's smoother than my first impression; he didn't even hit his head."

Buffy smiled at the memory of a star struck Xander skateboarding into the school railings, followed by his memorable first words to her. "Can I have you?"

For the first time, Buffy wondered what her life would have been like if she had said "Maybe."

A short time later, a younger girl came in, wearing a red dress. "Mom, why is Bart having a shower?"

She too stopped when she saw the strangers, but having a little more self control than Bart approached them and said "Hi, I'm Lisa."

Xander smiled at her gently, "Hi Lisa, This is Buffy, the one holding your sister is Willow and the elderly gentleman next to me is Giles. I'm Alexander Harris, but you can call me Xander."

"Oh, Thank you," Lisa squeaked. "I too have to go...now"

With that, Lisa exited the room, and with her slayer hearing, Buffy could hear the sounds of another shower being run.

In an impressively short time, both Bart and Lisa reappeared, at the same time as Marge did with the tea. Lisa was wearing a new dress and had a bright flower in her hair. Xander winked at her and Lisa suddenly felt her face go red.

'No, mustn't let him know I like him,' Lisa thought to himself. 'He'd never like a geek like me'.

It was Bart that caused Giles to do a classic double take. The boy was wearing what could only be described as an English smoking jacket on top of silk pajamas. He looked like a small version of Hugh Hefner, complete with pipe, which when he put his mouth and blew, emitted some bubble's.

"Marge, allow me to introduce myself, I am Special Deputy Giles, these are my assistants, Willow, Buffy and Xander. Can I ask when the last time you saw your husband was?"

"Well, let me just say that I love you accent."

Giles smiled, only his eye's showing his slight wince.

"I last saw Homer as he ate his breakfast this morning. He was running late so he just ate a few sausages that he had dunked in syrup, kissed me then ran out the door."

"I see," Giles said encouragingly.

"Homer normally arrives home straight from the bar, where he stops at on the way home." Bart continued, only to stop as Buffy smiled encouragingly at him and he lost his train of thought completely.

Sighing in disbelief at her brother Lisa continued. "We realized something was wrong when Moe, the barkeep at Moe's Tavern phoned to ask where Dad was. He is paranoid that Dad will find a new bar and he will lose his second best customer."

Lisa herself had to fight to remain coherent as Xander rewarded her with a smile. A smile that to him was a 'Thank you for the information' but was interpreted by Lisa as 'I'll wait for you till you are 16, then we will get married and have children'.

Continuing, Lisa said "Well, with Dad not at the Bar, we called Apu's"

"The Kwik-e-mart" Xander and Buffy said together. "We were there earlier."

"Yes, with Dad not being there either we thought we'd try a long shot and call work."

"Why is calling work a long shot?" Giles asked, puzzled.

"Because Dad is hardly ever there when he should be, and he would certainly not work late."

Giles nodded with understanding, already picturing his worst ideal of an American middle-class male.

"Would there be anyone from your Dad's work that we could contact to find out what time your dad left?" Xander asked Lisa, all four of them realizing that Lisa was definitely the most intelligent.

"Well, we could call Lenny" Marge piped up.

A chorus of "Ohh yes, Lenny," came from Bart and Lisa, the sound of worship in all three of their voices. Marge leaped up and walked into the hallway to call Lenny

Buffy looked at Bart, then past him, to several pictures on the wall. She frowned, walking over to them. She looked down at Bart and smiled "Is that your dad?"

Bart looked up at the picture "yep, Home-boy was in the B-Sharps."

"My dad used to love them" Buffy said, smiling at the memory, suddenly looking a little vulnerable and very, very cute. Bart, seeing this expression was totally lost, a strangled sound escaped him.

Above the heads of Bart and Lisa, Xander and Buffy exchanged a glance. Xander supporting, Buffy receiving. It never occurred to them that those looks were significant; they just accepted and gave them to each other.

Willow meanwhile was playing with the newly awakened baby.

"Maggie, can you say Lima? Lima." Willow giggled as Maggie played hide and seek with her. "How about Ze-bu, Zee-Bu."

"You know what a Ze-BU is?" Lisa asked, with surprise.

"Of course" Willow replied.

"Willow has never had anything other than an A+" Xander interrupted, his proud smile at her obvious. "She's the smartest person I've ever know. My Willow's been trying to teach me as well, but well, my brain doesn't work as fast as hers" Xander finished with a self-deprecating smile.

Lisa had trouble now. She had seen that Xander cared deeply for Willow, who was definitely a geek, albeit a beautiful one, which meant that she had been wrong earlier, he could and did care for a geek, that alone was overwhelming, but she wanted to say something to counter him putting himself down, surely he didn't mean that, but how could she say anything.

Luckily she was saved as both Buffy and Willow growled at him.

"No Putting Yourself Down, Xander" Buffy said, a hint of steel in her voice.

Xander backed off, nodding with a nervous smile.

Buffy leaned down and stroked her hand through Bart's spiky hair, "So what do you do when your bored Bart?"

Bart's grin was pure evil. "Well," he said, "I have been known to make the odd prank phone call."

"Really?" both Xander and Buffy perked at this. Pleased to be centre of attention again Bart nodded. He moved over and picked up the phone on the other line and quickly dialed a number from memory.

"Hello, Moe's tavern" A rasping voice could be heard over the phone. Grinning, Xander leaned forward to listen closely.

"Can I speak to Amanda Huggenkiss please?"

Moe sighed, and then could be heard to shout "Uh, Amanda Huggenkiss? Hey, I'm looking for Amanda Huggenkiss! Ah, why can't I find Amanda Huggenkiss?"

From a distance, a voice shouted "Maybe your standards are too high!"

There was a second's silence, before Moe shouted, "You little S.O.B.! Why, when I find out who you are, I'm going to shove a sausage down your throat and stick starving dogs in your butt!"

All Moe could hear was the laughter of three girls and two guys...and the long suffering sigh of

someone else.

Bart hung the phone up and looked at Lisa. "You know Leece, You'd think he would use caller id to find out who I am"

"True" said Lisa, her follow up statement was however lost forever as the front door opened and a raspy voice echoed throughout the house.

"Marge? We heard that Homer was missing, so we bought along a replacement."

Two ladies walked in, both heavy set. They paused when they saw Giles and turned to the seedy looking man who had walked in with them.

"Beat it Pedro, Marge has already got a replacement."

Pedro looked around the house then, to the amusement of Xander, literally flounced out of the house.

"I'm Patty, this is Selma," the one on the left introduced herself. "I see you're not married."

Giles, suddenly looking a bit wary nodded in agreement.

"Well, he passes the Selma test!"

They both moved over to the couch, flanking Giles. As Buffy and Xander quickly got out of the way, they forced the Watcher down, sandwiching him tightly on the couch.

With a simultaneous action that only twins can do, Patty and Selma both reached into their purses and pulled out a cigarette, lighting them, they both took a deep drag, exhaling, they sighed happily, and then turned their attention back to Giles, who was trying very hard to control his expression.

"So, who are you?" Patty asked.

"Rupert Giles, I'm a - " Giles explanation was cut off by Selma.

"Fascinating" she drawled in a manner which would have only be attractive to a passing hippo. Sadly for Giles, there where currently no escaped hippo's wandering the Simpson household.

"Tell me," she continued, trying her best to sound sexy through a voice box the size of a horse that had been trampled into submission by 20 years of chain smoking.

The effect could best be described by the drawing of fingernails down a chalkboard. Giles expression started to resemble a ferret that had been caught and was about to be used as an object of gambling by being released down a police officer's pants.

"Tell me, have you ever watch McGuyver?" Patty asked; both of them seemed to hold their breaths, awaiting his reply. As Giles looked at Patty, Selma, completely forgetting the rest of the crowded room's occupants undid a button at the top of her dress.

"Aye Carumba" Xander said, only with a completely different tone of voice to the reverence Bart had displayed when he had said it earlier. Buffy shot him a look of agreement.

"I'm afraid that I do not watch much television," Giles replied, honestly.

Patty and Selma exchanged a look over Giles head.

"Good enough," they said in unison.

Giles turned to look at Selma, only for her to thrust her chest forward emphasizing her cleavage. Behind him, Patty inched up her dress, showing a lot more leg than would be considered polite.

Bart looked repulsed and turned and buried his face against Buffy's leg. Buffy reached down and patted his hair. The boy then decided that he was never moving ever again.

Lisa, her quick mind seeing Bart's success immediately did the same to Xander, who understanding that the site of Patty's legs would make a sailor who had been at sea for 18 months sign up for another three years, gently stroked her as well, offering comfort.

The comfort he though he was offering was very different to the comfort that Lisa received.

Both Buffy and Willow wished that that the anti-deforestation protestors could be here to see a prime example of why forest maintenance was really healthy.

Giles meanwhile was trying desperately not to look at Selma's suddenly gaping cleavage, but like a snake before a mongoose he was hypnotized. He glanced down for a split second and for the first time in his life gave serious contemplation to turning gay. He had seen cow-hide's with better and more attractive skin.

Turning back to Patty, Giles turned a little red and started to wish that the Hellmouth would open and swallow him. It was a sign of the situation that Giles was in that he thought the end of the world was preferably to sitting where he was.

Which ever Deity Giles had prayed to was obviously in a good mood, as Marge chose that moment to return.

"Lenny said that Homer hadn't been seen since Mr. Burns had called him to the basement of the power plant," Marge announced. She frowned slightly as she saw her two elder sisters surrounding Giles.

All of the tweed wearing Englishman's years of training and work suddenly paid of. With a speed that Buffy could only envy, Giles was up and across the room standing next to Marge.

It was fortunate for Marge that Patty and Selma only looked like trolls, because if they had been, their younger sister would have surely been eaten in revenge for interrupting their attempts at seduction.

"Who is Mr. Burns," Willow asked, Maggie was by this time burying her head in Willow hair and making contented noises.

"He's a cantankerous old coot that owns the nuclear power plant" Marge said, a hint of disappointment and dislike in her voice.

"He's rich then?" Xander asked.

"Richer than Avarice," Lisa agreed, reluctantly turning from Xander's leg.

Xander, Buffy, Giles and Willow both exchanged a glance, and then separated slightly.

Giles moved with Marge into the Kitchen and settled down at the kitchen table.

"So Bart" Buffy said, desperately searching for an excuse to leave the room.

"Want to see my tree house?" Bart blurted out.

Buffy smiled. "Sure."

As Buffy and Bart left, walking through the kitchen, Xander turned to Lisa.

"What's your favorite hobby Lisa?"

"I play the saxophone," Lisa said with pride.

"Really?" Xander looked impressed.

"Of course, I'll show you". Taking the escape route as well, they left towards the empty garage.

In Willow's arms Maggie squirmed to be let down. Surprised Willow released her. The baby grabbed the bottom of Willows skirt and moved purposefully towards the door, Willow followed her, shocked that a baby could know what she wanted so well. Seconds later she was in Maggie's room happily playing Peek-a-boo.

In the front room, Selma and Patty looked at each other and sighed. Lighting up their next cigarette they wondered how everyone had vanished so fast.

"So, Bart," Buffy began, having managed to climb up to the tree house without exposing herself to the world. She sat in a corner, legs folded under her, "Who is Mr. Burns?"

Bart's voice wavered a little, but quickly firmed up. "He owns the Power Plant, he almost adopted

me once"

"Really?" Buffy asked with a smile.

Entranced Bart continued "Yes, he wanted an heir who would be like him, and I've been known to pull the odd prank or two. I failed the audition and he was rude to me, so I destroyed his statues with a hose."

Buffy laughed at that

"He was impressed with the destruction so invited me to live with him. I had everything I wanted, including my own car, but I missed Homer and Mom so in the end I dropped him down into his own pit."

In the garage, Xander relaxed against a wall as Lisa played her heart out in a complex jazz piece that screamed out her feelings.

The brown eyed Scooby member rocked back and forth slowly, his appreciation for the skill needed to play well radiating from him.

Like all good musicians Lisa reacted to her audience, pushing herself harder than she ever had, losing herself in the music.

As she finished Xander clapped loudly. "Tell me about Mr. Burns" Xander said with a grin.

"Well, I once worked with him. He lost all his money and started to live with Mr. Smithers, his assistant." Lisa laughed embarrassedly, "for reason's I can't remember he asked me to help him get back on his feet. I thought he had changed, as he was into recycling, so I did. It turns out he was turning all the animals he could dredge up to from the ocean into Li'l Lisa Slurry. I was horrified and stopped helping at once, but it was too late, he had money again. He rules this town really, the judges are scared of him, the Mob avoid him and the police are on his payroll."

Xander smiled his thanks at the girl, then asked her to play some more.

In the kitchen Giles was sipping his tea.

"Mr. Burns was once shot by Maggie" Marge announced suddenly. It took all of Giles's considerable self control not to spill his tea.

"Grandpa's gun was in the car and when Mr. Burns tried to steal Maggie's candy, Maggie shot him."

Giles thought for a moment about that sentence. It was possible the most preposterous thing he had ever heard, yet after a day in this town, he decided that it was probably true.

"It could have been anyone though, they found oil beneath the Springfield Elementary school, the school was going to finally be out of its poverty for the first time ever, only Mr. Burns got to the oil first, and made more money at the expense of a school."

"His personal assistant, Weyland Smithers, follows him around like a lapdog. Homer thinks there is something inappropriate going on between the two of them, but I'm not sure, Mr. Burns is too old."

Giles smiled and stood. "Thank You for your help Marge, we will find your husband for you."

"I'm not too worried," Marge said with a smile. "Homer gets into this sort of trouble a lot, but always gets out of it".

Calling loudly for the others, Giles walked towards the front door.

Willow bought Maggie back down and handed her to Marge. Maggie did not want to let go and unleashed her devastating sorrowful look at Willow.

Willow shuddered softly and looked at Maggie, her eyes promising she would return. Mollified Maggie immediately went to sleep.

Xander and Lisa returned from the garage.

"Thanks for the concert," Xander said and leaned down and dropped a kiss on Lisa's forehead. Lisa giggled softly.

With thanks, the three of them left the house, the door closing behind them.

Lisa spun on the slot, a huge grin on her face. Marge looked down and decided not to say anything. The signs of her daughter's first crush were very obvious.

The blue haired mother however, had caught the odd look between Xander and Buffy and recognized that something was happening there.

In the tree house, Buffy heard Xander calling her. "I've got to go Bart" she said, then with a grin, turned and dived straight out of the tree house. She completed a full somersault and landed gracefully on her feet.

Bart just watched, impressed and shocked.

With a jaunty wave Buffy walked around the side of the house and stopped out of site.

Buffy now had an opportunity. She could go one of three ways. She could ignore what had happened earlier or tease Xander about it.

Normally that would have been her two options, but recently she was considering the third: flirt with Xander.

Buffy, despite being the slayer, was still a woman and liked to feel both attractive and appreciated. She also liked the feeling of being in control and flirting to get what she wanted. Xander, she knew, had always found her attractive and she wondered if he still did. She was pretty sure he did, his looks were evidence enough, but the Slayer suddenly felt the need to see if she could make him totally tongue tied.

"Xander, could you come here a second?" Buffy asked loudly.

Smiling at the other two, Xander jogged immediately around the corner, only to see Buffy framed by the moonlight.

"Buffy?" he asked hesitantly, unsure of the expression on her face.

"Xander, I saw your face when Patty and Selma were doing THAT thing earlier" Buffy said with emphasis, playing with the top button of her shirt, she slowly undid it, completely aware of the fact that Xander's attention had focused completely on her.

Leaning forward a little, Buffy showed Xander a little more cleavage than normal, moving her free hand down and stroking her skirt up a little, showing off her smooth legs. She smiled as Xander stopped breathing. Walking up to him she kissed him gently on the side of the mouth.

She whispered, "Just wanted to give you something to remember tonight" and walked off, doing her top button back up.

Xander stood there for a second, the bulge in his jeans evident.

All he could think was, 'This has been the best day of my life.'

Outside, Xander followed Buffy back to the car thinking 'wow, unmistakable flirtage' and 'God she is so hot.'

As they all got in the rental, Giles turned around and looked at them. "So, Marge confirmed that this Mr. Burns is the person we are looking for."

The others nodded in agreement. Xander and Buffy both explained what Bart and Lisa had respectively told them.

"The only question I have" Buffy announced, "is how high was Marge's hair?"

They all laughed, Marge's Blue Dye #56 hair was exceptionally impressive. It put most hedges to shame with its perfect shape and texture. Gardner's had been known to weep with envy as the women walked past.

Willow looked at Xander "Did Bart and Lisa remind you of anyone?"

Xander flashed his trademark goofy grin at Willow. "Change the sax for a computer, teach Bart

the snoopy dance and they are there."

Willow laughed, Buffy and Giles watched them from the front, not in the conversation but admitting to themselves that no matter what happened, Willow and Xander knew each other like chocolate knows a peanut in an M&M.

Buffy was both a little envious and reassured, after the fluke incident Xander and Willow had reclaimed their friendship, deciding that although illicit smoochies were fun, a lifetime friendship was a lot more important than that. It helped that they were both in love with other people anyway.

"Lisa is as cute as you were, Wills"

"I know, Bart too, although you never wore those cute little shorts."

Strangely enough, that was when Buffy zoned out of the conversation, something about that had reminded her of the Speedo incident, and the PIP in Xander's jeans only. She giggled to herself, 'pip is definitely a Pretty Impressive Package'.

The blonde felt herself blushing slightly and was grateful it was dark in the car as the suggestive part of her mind started sending her images of the PIP pressed against certain spots and a rough approximation of what warm flesh might feel like. She was extremely curious, while she had made love to Angel; the prospect of warm flesh was something that would still be new to her. Besides, Buffy had been reading romance novels for many years, and all of them said that making love was good.

In her limited experience it hadn't been. Her first time had ended up with enough psychological damage to make the legendary Debbie (of Debbie does Dallas fame) join a sisterhood. In the deepest part of her soul, where the essence of the slayer sometimes whispered to her, she had been glad that she couldn't sleep with Angel again. It was partly the reason for their breakup. The relationship with Angel had scarred her deeply in places held so private that no one knew they existed.

Buffy herself only acknowledged them at times of deep introspection. Simply put, she knew there had to be more to it than she had experienced and she wanted and needed to know herself if she was capable of pleasing herself and a partner.

Despite Angel's curse stating that only a moment of perfect happiness could break it, releasing the demon Angelus, Buffy wondered if the words were only a euphemism, because she sure as hell hadn't experienced that moment of perfect happiness.

She suddenly stopped her thoughts. She was thinking of Xander and Sex, which was new.

Did she want this? She asked herself.

'OK brain, why Xander?' she asked herself. Her brain replied "Because he is everything you

thought Angel was. He might not have super strength, but for a human he is physically strong and where Angel was supposedly mentally strong, Xander was the real thing. Nothing gets him down no matter what people throw at him. Angel was good at mysterious smoochies in a cemetery, cold kisses that were hot; but the way Xander had looked at her earlier, when all she had done was undo a button and slide her dress up a little had made Buffy feel like she was the most attractive woman in the world.

His total appreciation of her and absolute focus on her had pointed out to her very clearly that he thought she was hot. His physical reaction to her as well had affected her deeply. Little scars had started to heal. Her soul was crying out to her to try it again, to try it with Xander and for the first time Buffy made an adult decision in a relationship.

She had weighed up the advantages, compared them to her fears then tried to think of disadvantages. They were a few, Xander could be infuriating at times, he could have the most inappropriate humor, but at other times he was their salvation with the same humor when the darkness tried to overtake them.

He would not lie down at her feet; whether that was a good or bad thing she wasn't sure. She suspected that that was her youth talking more than anything, Angel had often kowtowed to her and while it gave her a feeling of power she suspected that someone standing up to her out of love might just make her feel incredibly safe.

Buffy was not worried about Xander's dalliance with Willow while dating Cordelia. That was out of his blood and she knew that he would carry the scars for that for a very long time, the same as she regretted her relationship with Angel. The old saying of what doesn't kill you only makes you stronger definitely applied here. The Slayer felt that they were both at a point in their lives where they could enter a mutually beneficial adult relationship with each other with the view to the long term.

Xander was loved by her mother, that was a good thing, Buffy knew. As she thought about that, she realized that Xander had happily flirted with her mother. That made her frown imperceptibly as she tried to associate it in her mind with something positive.

Suddenly something occurred to her. What was Buffy's mom but a much older version of herself? Xander found an older version of her attractive. This logically meant that even when she was older, Xander would still find her attractive. She smiled to herself happily, bouncing a little in her seat.

But that brought another thought to the forefront. If she let him into her heart that deeply what would happen if he left her? Her Dad and Angel had left her; the two most important men in her life so far, would Xander? Buffy absently chewed her lip as she contemplated this, hardly aware that Giles had started the car and that they were driving. Xander and Willow were still talking quietly in the back.

Could she risk letting Xander in, if he might end up hurting her. Buffy suddenly frowned at herself, she had thought she was growing into some form of maturity, but this thought took her

back down.

She gave herself a mental shake and told herself firmly that the idea of avoiding something positive because it might not work was childish. She was going to give Xander an opportunity to be with her permanently, and if that meant she had to spell out the obvious to him, then that's what she had to do.

But first, she was going to need to talk to Willow alone. Besides she grinned to herself, she might have something I don't know about Xander that would be useful in a relationship, like where his ticklish spots were.

Giles found the power plant very easily, in a small town like Springfield the two great cooling towers were a great landmark. As he got out the car he could see two lights bouncing towards him. A jogger came into view, then stopped next to him.

"Howdy neighbourino" the jogger said, his sneakers had personalized tags announcing him as Ned, not that Giles could see that from where he was standing.

"Having problems with the old auto-amdilly?"

"Excuse me?" Giles said, having been lost at the Howdy

"Oh don't mind me that's pure flanderism, I was just asking wat'cha diddily-doin', friend"

Luckily for Giles, Xander had by then disembarked from the car and wandered over

"Hey, cool sneakers" he exclaimed.

"You know, they've got the Velcro straps, a water pump in the tongue, built-in odometer, reflective sidewalls, and little vanity license plates! The handles Flander's but everyone calls me Ned."

"Nice to meet you, Ned," Xander said, a little perfunctory. He was a little wary of such open friendship from someone he had never met.

"Okily-Dokily," Ned smiled. "I was just having a jog-ididly, when I saw you stop here, I didn't want to be suspicious-allouicious, so I thought to myself 'Flander's old boy, the bible says that helping others is like helping Jesus himself', so I jogged over here with a 'Fe-Fi-Fo-Fom I smell the need for a Christian chum, and decided to see if you good folk's needed some help out of a dilly of a pickle."

It was a testament to Xander's intelligence that he managed to piece together what Ned had just said

"Thanks for the kind thought good buddy, but we're just tourists a-didly, taking a few pictures of God's goodness in giving us the wisdom to build such large chimneys."

"Well, if that doesn't put the 'dink' in 'coinkidink!'" Ned said with a huge smile. "I'll leave you folks to your business." With one last smile, Flanders started to move off, before stopping. "Hey, We're going to fire up ol' Propane Elaine and put the heat to some meat!, Nummy-nummy-num!, on Saturday, why don't you folk come-diddly-um-come?"

"Thanks," Xander replied "But we will have moved-idly on by then."

"Righty-o!" said Ned, running off in to the distance.

"Xander," Giles said, turning to look at the young man.

"Yes, Giles?"

"Remember when I said that American youths have the most irritating speech patterns?"

"Yep"

"I take it back; you have the second most irritating. I had the most irrational urge to punch Mr. Flanders."

"Ok, how are we going to break in?" Buffy asked, her early decision making meant that she was now in the mood for kicking some undead ass.

"Oo, I could do a spell," Willow said excitedly. "I could make a whole in the fence."

Giles was about to agree when Xander gave a loud sigh. "Haven't you noticed this town is weird yet?"

"Well, of course Xander," Giles said, his irritation obvious.

"Just follow me," the boy said and started to walk towards the main gates which where protected by a security guard.

The others looked at each other, and then caught up. It was getting pretty obvious that Xander understood more than they did what was going on here, and as scary as that thought was, it was less disconcerting than everything else that they had seen.

They could see the guard through the windows as Xander approached. The guard dropped something and bent over to pick it up as Xander calmly walked straight past the check point.

Nervously the others followed. They were around a corner by the time the guard had found what he had dropped.

"Ok, Xander, spill," Buffy demanded. "How did you know that you would just be able to walk in here?"

Xander just grinned.

Down in the basement Montgomery Burns was not having a good time. He was wondering exactly why he had picked Homer J Simpson as his last victim. It had seemed such a good idea at the time.

After putting the call on the public address system, Mr. Burns and Smithers had taken their special route down to the basement. This had involved the octogenarian billionaire tilting the head back on a bust and pressing a bright red button. A panel had slid back in the wall revealing two poles.

In unison the two had ran to the poles and slid down. As they appeared the other end, they had changed into more heroic clothing. Or at least that had been the plan. They ran for 2 steps before stopping. Smithers looked down at himself, then at Mr. Burns.

"Err, Sir?" Smithers asked, wondering why he was wearing a hot pink tutu, white tights and a leotard. Not that he was complaining, he hadn't been this comfortable in some time, but one part of his mind was thinking that it probably wasn't the sort of costume that would inspire fear in two demons.

Burns hadn't fared much better himself. He was wearing tights as well, and ballet shoes, but his clothing's stand out feature was definitely the huge codpiece he was wearing. The fact that his tights were white and the codpiece red only emphasized it.

"I'm thinking that asking the cleaner to put our uniforms back after we had fired her was not a wise decision," Mr. Burns stated. It's hardly worth noting that Smithers agreed.

A quick change later, Mr. Burns and Smithers were in their proper attire: long white coats and goggles.

They walked into their laboratory/crypt crossover. Homer was already there, eating. Well, gorging. Being ultra efficient, Smithers had ordered a vast quantity of Jell-O and Ice Cream, more than a class of hungry grade schooler's could eat.

Smithers and Mr. Burns froze, watching the spectacle as Homer ate and ate.

"It's mildly hypnotic isn't it sir" Smithers said quietly.

"It is," Mr. Burns agreed "Did you put the tranquilizer in the Jell-O as I asked?"

"I did, Sir"

Mr. Burns placed his fingers together. A well placed thunderclap could be heard outside as he suddenly looked very evil. "Excellent!"

Two hours later Mr. Burns looked at Smithers. "Well, why isn't he unconscious yet?"

"I'm not sure; there were enough tranquilizers to knock out an elephant in that Jell-O."

"Well, I'm bored of this." Monty Burns moved forward with purpose. He picked up a baseball bat and moved behind the still eating Homer. He swung the bat with all his might. It was an impressive swing, the bat got all the way to within two foot of the balding fat-guy before Mr. Burns strength gave out, causing the head of the bat to swing down and lightly tap Homers leg.

Homer looked up, said, "Can't talk, eating," and went back to his ice cream. "MMMMmm, chocolate!"

The old man tried again, this time he did attract Homers attention.

Seeing who it was, Homer went pale. "Eeek, err I mean Hello, What are you doing, sir?"

"I'm giving you the beating of a lifetime."

"Oh," Homer replied, "Ouch?"

Smithers sighed and went and picked up a vial of pure tranquilizer. He moved behind Homer and injected it smoothly in the largest possible target.

"Ouch," Homer yelped, clutching his Buttocks.

"Why you lit..." was all Homer got out before he collapsed; the echo of the thump his body made reverberating around the crypt.

"Come on, Smithers, this is no time for dilly-dawdling, the hands of the father clock is ticking. Get him onto that table."

Smithers dragged Homer along the floor, grunting. "He is extremely heavy sir, if I could have a little help?"

"Smithers, you lolly-gagger. Now, if you can get it through your bug-addled brain, jam that second mephitic clodhopper of yours forwards, now the other! Now pump those scrawny chicken legs, you stuporous funkler!"

Following Mr. Burns insults, Smithers soon had Homer in position.

The two would-be-demon-raisers changed clothes again, into deep purple robes.

Smithers lit the candles that surrounded the complicated diagram painted onto the floor. Mr. Burns nodded with pleasure as Smithers finished, reading from a huge book in front of him. "Jellocious," he Intoned grandly, beginning the spell.

Before he could continue with the rest of the incantation, Homer twitched and started to drool. A low murmur could be heard.

"MMMMMMmmmmm Jell-O."

Before anyone could blink Homer was up and running towards the table with the food, shoveling the Jell-O into his mouth with both hands while making gross sounds of pleasure.

Mr. Burns and Smithers both visibly winced as Homer had knocked over 2 of the candles in his mad dash, if that had happened a few minutes later...

"Oh now this won't do," Mr. Burns snapped. "Smithers, are you incapable of doing anything right?"

As the drugs hadn't worked, Smithers reluctantly resorted to violence. Choosing the same route as his boss had earlier; he picked up the baseball bat and reluctantly swung it with enough force to send Homer into next week.

"Oww." Homer responded, after a slight delay. "Why do people keep hitting me?"

Deciding to try a different track, Mr. Burns approached soon-to-be-victim. "Homer old chap, I'll bet after all that food your feeling a little sleepy?"

"Well, actually Mr. Burns, I am kind of tired," Homer said, a little nervous.

"That's ok my good fellow, I've got a bed over here for my prize employees."

"Sorry, Mr. Burns, but I don't go in for these backdoor shenanigans. Sure, I'm flattered, maybe even a little curious, but the answer is no!"

"What?" Mr. Burns spluttered. "I wasn't asking you to...you nimcompoop"

"D'oh" exclaimed Homer loudly, slightly embarrassed at misinterpreting. Laying down amicably Homer soon drifted off to sleep; only his drool gave any idea of what he was dreaming about.

Buffy, Xander, Giles and Willow were now in a full-on sprint, somehow sensing that the time was near.

They had been aided in their discovery by finding a map to Mr. Burns office on the wall in the company restroom. In there they had found a complete schematic of the power plant.

Xander was more and more amused as this continued. Walking over to the only bust in the room he calmly moved it back to reveal the button.

"We are going to have a very serious talk about this, Xander" Buffy said firmly, referring to the fact that he seemed to know exactly what he was doing.

"I know Buff, but for now trust me that I do know what to do here."

Seeing Xander in charge was a big change for all of them, but he seemed to be enjoying it.

Shrugging slightly, Buffy grabbed the pole.

"Stop!" Xander yelled. Buffy froze as Xander frantically looked for something. Finding a switch, he flicked it and grinned at her. "Now you can go, I just turned off the automatic clothing changer."

Buffy smiled her thanks at Xander and released her hands, sliding down the pole.

With a very youthful grin Giles followed her.

"After you, Wills," Xander said with a sweeping bow.

"Why thank you kind sir" Willow said with a cute grin, She curtsied briefly then laughed and jumped for the pole, Xander matched her and slid down next to her.

Buffy and Giles had both moved out of the way by the time Willow and Xander arrived at the bottom.

They could all hear chanting coming from around the corner. Their humor forgotten, they slipped into hunt mode with the efficiency of people whose lives depended on the next few minutes. Buffy went first, Xander and Willow just behind her. Giles brought up the rear.

Stakes and Holy water appeared from pockets and crossbows were readied.

Buffy shot one look over her shoulder, glad as always that she didn't have to do this by herself.

With a nod from the other three, Buffy burst around the corner.

"Hold it right there, Mister!" she shouted.

"Who the devil are you?" Mr. Burns shouted.

"I'm Buffy," Buffy announced with pride. "And I'm going to stop you raising those demons."

"Smithers?" Mr. Burns called. "Distract them!"

With another deep sigh, Smithers walked towards them. "I'm very sorry, but would you mind leaving?"

"What?" the surprised gasp came from all of them. They had been prepared for threats of violence and even violence itself, but being politely asked to leave had left them a little stunned.

It didn't matter though. With a dramatic flourish the old man finished the spell.

"Look," he called excitedly. "The energy will feed on young Homer here, leaving him an empty

husk and Kang and Kudos will arrive."

Pretty much as Mr. Burns had described, and shockingly fast as well, Kang and Kudos both appeared.

It was then that everyone had three things to stare at, and no one really knew which one was more important.

Kang and Kudos themselves were the first thing. They were large and green and had multiple tentacles for legs and possible for arms. They each had one giant eye each and an exceptionally large mouth. The fact that they had what appeared to be a large glass helmet on was only moderately surprising.

The second thing was Homer, instead of draining him to an empty husk; it appeared to only have burnt up his superfluous body weight. The man in question was sitting up and feeling his stomach.

"I feel like I lost 200 pounds" he called excitedly, his hands on his hips and he twisted and turned, trying to see himself from all angle. It was fortunate for all this his hands were where they were, as a half naked homer is a site only Marge could love.

The final thing that was shocking was that both Kang and Kudos were holding futuristic looking guns and were pointing them at everyone.

Buffy was never a person to let things like common sense get in the way of a good fight. She ran forward and leaped as high as she could; as she did she twisted gracefully, throwing one sneaker'd foot out.

Drawing her arms in, she accelerated her spin, her foot having traveled nearly 360 degrees by now and was moving with a lot of force.

Either Kang or Kudos, they didn't know which one was which at the moment, simply slid a tentacle up and grabbed her foot, mid kick, and raised it high off the ground.

Suddenly realizing she was about to dangled upside down, Buffy did the only she could, she grabbed for her skirt and kept it in place.

Any move the others would have made were instantly halted by the sight of Buffy hanging there, swinging lightly.

"Can you believe it, Kudos?" Kang asked the other demon. "These humans with there pitiful weaponry tried to attack us." His voice was deep and booming.

"I know, Kang, what shall we do with them?"

"Erm, excuse me" Mr. Burns said. "I brought you here - you work for me now; the book says so."

His response was a deep laugh from each of them. "Foolish earthling, you think we would be under your control? No we shall enslave the earth and rule it like gods, like gods."

"So I'm not getting my virility and youth back?" Mr. Burns enquired politely, he had negotiated with lawyers before, surely two hideous demon's couldn't be any worse.

"No," Kang replied bluntly. "Now runaway earthling before I use my gun on you."

Understanding the threat, Mr. Burns called Smithers and they left.

As they walked out of the room, Smithers said, "Sir, we've just left those strangers and Homer to their doom, and possibly ruined mankind's chance of survival in a vain attempt to get your youth back, what are we going to do?"

"Hmm," Mr. Burns replied deep in thought. "Money fight?"

Back in the strange laboratory/crypt Kang turned to Kudos. "Do you have control over our ship?"

"Yes Kang, I shall beam us all there," and with that, everyone, Homer included suddenly vanished.

They all appeared in similar positions to the one's they had been in before, except for Buffy who was now the correct way up.

"Cool," Xander grinned as they reappeared on what was obviously a space ship.

Kang and Kudos removed their helmets. "Welcome to our ship Human's. Before we enslave the human race, we will give you a tour. Don't think of escape, you wouldn't know how to work are dedistanceagoer. You'd be stuck here for ever. Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha."

Xander rolled his eyes, thinking that a quick death would be preferable to this comedic double act. Following Kang and Kudos dutifully, the tour began.

"We built this ship thousands of years ago before we were banished from this dimension, it has sat here, avoiding your primitive race's pitiful attempts to explore space ever since."

"Space?" Homer asked. "Blurhg. I've been there, done that. I suppose you want to probe me? Well, you might as well get it over with." He started to undo his belt.

Kang, raised a tentacle: "Stop! We have reached the limit of what rectal probing can teach us!"

"Can I ask a question?" Giles asked. "How are you speaking English so well, most Demons' don't have that a fine grasp on the language?"

"We are not," Kudos intoned. "We are actually speaking Rigelian. By an astonishing coincidence, both of our languages are exactly the same."

"Over here we have the entertainment section; where we have taken your primitive tennis and

moved it to a computer." Kang waved a tentacle at a console, starting his tour.

"Hey, Wills, its pong, we used to play this for ever." Xander said, moving Kang out of the way as he grabbed for the controller.

"I don't suppose you have something a bit more up to date, do you? You know, a Mario game, something by ID software? This game is so 1970's."

"Ok," Kang frowned, very annoyed. "Anyone from a species that has mastered intergalactic travel raise your hand."

Both Kang and Kudos raised one of their tentacles.

"Now, while we make plans for the end of your planet, you will be locked up in here."

Kudos pointed with his 3rd tentacle, the second still covering them with the gun.

They moved into the cell and sat down, their blood froze as the door shut and Kang finished his statement. "Where you will be left to die. Ha ha".

It had been five minutes since Kang and Judos had locked everyone up inside a prison cell on their space ship. The five minutes had been spent watching Homer examine his new body with the sort of glee normally only found when a five year old is handed the keys to a candy store and told to knock themselves out.

"Stomach goes in, stomach stays flat," said Homer again and again, obviously enjoying himself.

"Hmm, hungry." Homer turned and looked at the others who were watching him.

"I'm Homer Simpson" he introduced himself cheerfully.

"Xander," Xander introduced himself, and then with nods around the group he introduced the others.

"Homer, You do seem very perturbed by this, why is that?" Giles asked

"Per-what now?" Homer asked.

"You seem to be taking this very well, the whole being abducted by alien's thing" Xander translated.

"Oh, that. Weird stuff happens to me all the time." Homer gave them all a smile, "It would be more unusual if something didn't happen to either me or the boy. Now, what do we have to eat?"

The Scooby's looked at each other, before Willow ventured, "Erm, we have no food."

"Ok," Homer replied, a little quieter. His smile's decreased in intensity a little, "What about TV, is there a TV here?"

Buffy shook her head to answer this one.

Homer frowned, "What about beer? There has to be beer?"

Xander shook his head, kind of curious to find out what would happen next. "Sorry, Homer, no food, no TV and no beer."

"Hmm, Homer no function beer well without".

Giles stopped listening, deciding that until he got back to his library in Sunnydale he would not pay attention to the Neanderthalic utterances of these barbarians.

Homer was getting more and more distraught "No beer and No TV make Homer something something."

"Buffy, Giles, Willow stand well back, get away from the door."

Everyone followed Xander's advice without questioning.

Homer was starting to sound enraged now, "NO BEER AND NO TV MAKE HOMER SOMETHING SOMETHING," he shouted.

Xander smirked and whispered to his friends. "Brace yourself." He raised his voice as he turned to Homer. "Go Crazy?"

Homer's mental state snapped, he twitched twice, jerked once, and his face spasemed.

He suddenly let out a high pitched squeal and ran straight at the door.

Buffy and Willow winced, expecting Homer to bounce off, Xander just watched calmly.

Seconds later there was a Homer shaped hole in the door and an echoing wail as Homer went on the hunt for beer or a TV.

Xander walked over to the door, carefully fitting himself through the gap, he looked back at the others. "Coming?" he asked and started to whistle.

The others waited for a second

"I take it we shouldn't be scared?" Willow asked, watching Xander go.

Giles sighed "I guess not, it's most frustrating to be following Xander and have him so relaxed about this. Does he not realize that we are on a space ship, in space?" He asked rhetorically.

"I kind of like 'Take Charge Xander'," Buffy admitted. "He did get us out of that jail and I bet he knows how to get us back to earth. I just wished I knew why and how."

As Xander wandered into the control room Buffy, Giles and Willow had caught up with him.

"Watch" he said, indicating the scene in front of him.

Xander leant against the wall and watched as Homer grabbed the controls and forced the spaceship into a wild dive.

"Stop! Earthling," Kang demanded, a note of concern evident in his voice.

Homer ignored him, and pulled the controls at the last second, the ship slid to a halt in the middle of a large park in the centre of Springfield, it hovered over a statue of the town founder

"Give me that," Kudos shouted, wrestling Homer out of the way. Outside the towns people where beginning to congregate.

Kang finally managed to get his gun and point it at Homer, who instantly stopped.

"Well, Kudos, Earth's conquest starts here," he grinned, his teeth gleaming wetly in the artificial light.

"Who's that?" Xander asked, pointing to a view screen and coincidentally distracting Kang and Kudos from the fact that they where no longer incarcerated.

As they watched, a man wearing a purple sash approached.

"Turn the volume up, Kang." Kudos said.

"Visitors from another planet. I am Mayor Quimby and I'd like to welcome you to our planet, if you have any desires we can sort them for you, and if you have any exotic alien chick's that need impregnating then I am willing to sacrifice myself."

Out in the crowd, Mrs. Skinner turned to her son and said, "Seymour, are you wearing clean underwear?"

"Mother," he replied, exasperatedly. "I am 42 years old; I am quite capable of looking after myself."

"No, you're not," his mother replied, irritated. "And don't smart mouth me spanky, you're not too old to be spanked."

"Yes, mother," a defeated Seymour replied, turning to his partner. "So Edna, what do you think they will look like?"

Edna Krabappel folded her arms over her green cardigan. "I don't care, I just wish they would

hurry, I'm missing good TV over this."

Near to them a man wearing what looked to be a giant bumblebee outfit shouted, "Los espero no he venido esclavizarnos todos."

He was ignored though as a camera crew barged past, "I'm Kent Brockman and you're watching Channel 6 action news as we report from the heart of Springfield. A giant green spaceship has just appeared from the sky and is currently hovering above the statue of our beloved town founder." The reporter spotted a famous face in the people gawking at the space ship. "Krusty, Krusty, Kent Brockman. What do you think of this unprecedented event in the history of mankind?"

Krusty, a large man in a clown outfit with 2 tufts of hair, growled at Kent for a second before spotting the camera.

He turned and launched himself at it. "Hey Hey kids," he laughed, pulling a custard pie from somewhere and throwing it at a man with a bone in his hair next to him.

As soon as the pie left his hand Krusty forgot about it and faced the camera again. He was not aware of the pie turning in mid air and the metal base of it smacking Sideshow Mel firmly in the face. Sideshow Mel did the only thing possible under those circumstances, he passed out.

"Krusty," Kent said again. "I'm giving you an opportunity to give your views at this unique moment in history."

"Oh, I'm sorry, Kent," Krusty replied, it was impossible to tell if he was blushing or not as his face was totally white. "It just when I get in front of a camera I just...Hey Hey."

Back inside the ship, Kang and Kudos each picked up a weapon and opened the hatch. As they exited the ship they started to fire indiscriminately towards the crowd.

The crowd, showing a remarkable affiliation for self preservation, split in many different directions and started to run.

"Shouldn't we stop them?" Willow asked Xander.

"Not yet, give em a few more minutes first, then I'll stop them".

"And just how do you plan to do that?" Buffy asked, her hands going to her hips.

Xander just grinned, "Watch me".

Homer burst into Moe's Tavern, a seedy dive bar nearby.

"Emergency" he yelled to the barkeep. "Quick". Homer collapsed onto a stool in front of the bar.

"What's the matter Homer? And what happened to you, did you grow some new hair?" The

proprietor of the bar asked.

"No, Moe," a drunkard already at the bar yelled. "Homer's lost a lot of weight," there was a silent pause before an earth shattering burp echoed from deep inside his stomach.

"Oh my God. Quick, drink this."

As Homer took the first sip, one of the other patrons said, "So where ya been Homer, we were worried about you."

"Yeah Homer, your wife called me asking where you were?" A guy sat next to him continued.

"What did you tell her Lenny?" Homer asked, downing his beer and getting another from Moe.

"That Mr. Burns had called you down to the basement."

"Good work there, Lenny," the guy next to him said.

"I hear that, Karl," Lenny replied. They then high-fived before going back to their beers.

Homer was about to order his 3rd beer when loud rock music suddenly started to fill the bar. Bottles started to dance and the door exploded open.

A well built man burst in, followed by two scantily clad ladies. They all started to dance to the music; the well built man was wearing what looked like a blue superhero costume, complete with cape.

"Are you ready for some Duff Love?" The man yelled, everyone in the bar cheered.

"Duff Man has a keg of the finest Duff beer, for the man who could tell me 'What drink is made from Hops?'"

Lenny and Karl looked at each other "Well, I'm stumped."

Homer looked at them, and the beer in Duff Man's hand. "Mmmmm, Beer," he drooled.

"Beer!" Duff Man shouted. "That's the correct answer. Here's the barrel Duff Man promised."

Two lackeys rolled in a keg of beer on a trolley, Homer picked it up and started to chug it down, to the surprise of Duff Man. "Oh Yeah, that's a man who likes his duff."

By the time he was finished, Homer had regained all the weight that had been sucked out of him.

Back at the ship, Xander yawned. "Ok, I'll round up Kang and Kodos, you three wait over there."

Xander walked out of the ship and down to the earth. He walked over to a fence and kicked it

hard, breaking a piece of wood with a nail off. He hefted it a few times and shouted, "Kang, Kodos!"

The two demons stopped and turned around saw Xander waving the board.

They fired their guns, but they had no effect on the wood. They both looked at each other for a second and started to run back to their ships.

As they took off, Kang said "It seems the earthlings won."

Kudos replied, "Did they? That board with a nail in it may have defeated us. But the humans won't stop there. They'll make bigger boards and bigger nails, and soon, they will make a board with a nail so big, it will destroy them all!"

They both laughed for sometime.

Back on earth the townspeople were gathering around Xander and the others.

The chief of police came up to them, "Hey, thanks for saving our lives there."

"No problem," Xander said.

The crowd around them was very vocal in their agreement as Smithers approached them. Homer, Marge and the Kids could be seen joining the crowd.

Willie burst through the crowd, "Och man, I've just heard," he started, addressing Giles directly.

"Kang and Kudos were only a distraction; someone from Springfield is trying to open the Hellmouth".

"Who?" Giles asked.

"Professor John Frink, he arranged for the rumor that Kang and Kudos would grant vitality to be given to Mr. Burns, knowing that you would come here, giving him free reign."

Deep below the surface of the earth, beneath full skeletons of dinosaurs, buried treasure and a cavern of small molelike people working on computers, was an alien spaceship.

Inside it was a large quartz rock. It pulsed, and up on the surface Homer said, "Hear that Kids, their home town is in trouble, you know what this means...The Simpson's are going to Sunnydale".

"But," Giles spluttered.

"I said 'The Simpson's Are Going To Sunnydale'." Homer emphasized firmly.

A fat guy looked around and chuckled to himself "Simpsons' in Sunnydale?"

He turned and looked at the fanfic readers. "Worst Crossover Ever!"

“Springfield, Springfield, it's a hell of a town:
The schoolyard's up and the shopping mall's down.
The stray dogs go to the animal pound,

Springfield, Springfield!
Springfield, Springfield!

New York, New York!
New York is that-a-way, man!

Thanks, kid!
It's a hell of a...toooown!”