Closer

by purplefeen

Spike/Willow
rating: Adult

date: Dec06-Jan07
time frame: s4 of BtVS
warning: implied bondage

disclaimer: song belongs to Nine Inch Nails
summary: Spike tries to find himself in his new life with the chip.

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Chapter 1: You Can Have My Isolation

You can have my isolationYou can have the hate that it brings You can have my absence of faithYou can have my everything

He sits in the chair, smoking, watching her sleep.

He takes in her long, shining hair; glowing like firelight in the muted coming rays of dawn.

He takes in her soft, pale skin, now bruised and marked. He can see imprints of his fingers on her arm. He knows there are others on her hips, back and ankles, even though he can't see those. They aren't marks of pain, they're marks of passion.

He smiles. She now bears his mark. Two perfect holes, bruised and scabbing over at the moment no doubt, but in a few days, that will be gone, replaced with scar tissue that will never fade, never wash away. She is *his*. No matter what happens, no matter what anyone thinks or says.

She is *his*, will always be *his*. And she isn't afraid to show it.

*She has so much courage.*

More even than he, but he'll never tell her that.

After all, what had *he* ever done but become the image that someone else wanted him to be? He became a killer, as Angelus taught him to be. Calculating and ruthless.

But never cold, to Angelus' disdain. Angelus had viewed the killing as an art, with the millions he slaughtered as his canvas. William had never been able to do that. William didn't want it to be impersonal. William had wanted to kill those *deserving* of death. William had wanted to study; to become judge, jury and executioner to the lowest of the low.

But no. To Angelus, people were *food* and presentation was everything.

So William had folded himself up and put himself away, like a suit of clothes. He'd taken off 'William' and donned a new ensemble, 'Spike'. 'Spike' could be cold, 'Spike' could be heartless, 'Spike' could be anything Angelus wanted him to be.

'Spike' could dish it out and take it back and not say a word.

Of course, 'William' had always been there, in that closet in his mind, trying to be remembered. Even 'Spike' could only take so much of Angelus before he'd need to rebel. Need to scream, need to shout, need to head out on his own for a few days and let 'William' out of the closet, so to speak.

But then, being the perfectly trained puppy that he was, Spike would go back to Angelus and take his punishment. Punishments that he learned to tolerate, sometimes even enjoy.

Spike had become the perfect lover for Drusilla. For everyone.

He'd been the gentle but passionate romantic that Drusilla needed her white knight to be.

He'd become the strong playmate that was loving but not hurtful that Angelus needed him to be. He'd often wondered what Darla did to Angelus in their time together that made this need so strong in him. He'd always seemed so afraid of getting hurt. Physically and emotionally. He wanted an equal - almost. Angelus always demanded being the dominant one, but Spike always felt like Angelus needed him to be a little rebellious. So that's what he'd become.

And Darla? Darla had wanted to him to be her pupil. She'd wanted to teach him everything she'd learned in her chosen human profession. And he'd learned his lessons well. He'd gotten to where he could make even Darla cream her knickers with just a look. He didn't remember himself as being anything especially nice to look at when he'd been human. But Darla fawned over his looks. His hair, his eyes, his cheekbones, his hands. Taught him to use every single muscle in his body to fullest advantage.

Because William had been cultured and refined as a human, he was more the sort Darla liked to take with her when she was scheming some rich aristocrat. Spike, being partly William, could walk the walk and talk the talk. He fit in places that Angelus, with his working class background, never could. Spike became, through his cultured tones and his pretty face and his newly acquired skills in being the perfect whore, Darla's accomplice; the handy diversion when one was called for.

But that wasn't who he was now. He wasn't a killer, he wasn't a lover, he wasn't a prostitute. He'd only become all of these things for other people.

Or was he? Maybe he was - is, a bit.

He doesn't know anymore.

He looks over to Red's sleeping body.

What is he then?

*'M a neutered vampire with no reason for unliving. Except one.*

He's a vampire, therefore a killer, if only by necessity. But it wasn't necessary anymore. Now he gets his food by takeout.

*And thanks to Red, no more pig swill.*

Bagged isn't warm and alive and pulsing, rushing down his throat; but it's better than pig or cow. So many things are better since Red came into his life.

*I don't have to pretend; don't have to be something 'm not.*

His whole existence had turned upside down the day he'd been chipped. He was a killer who didn't kill. A lover who didn't love. A whore with no one to satisfy. He had no family, no associates, no one he could talk to, communicate with, discuss where to go or what to do.

So he'd done the only thing he could think to do. And it had all been because of *her*. She'd shown him compassion when he couldn't bite her. She'd felt sad *with* him, not for him. She hadn't staked him or called out for the slayer. She'd talked to him and tried to find the reason for the problem.

So he bit the bullet and went to the group of humans who had the most reason to hate him for help. And hate him they did. But they'd still helped.

But all in all, he'd lost everything that day. Everything that made him what he thought he was supposed to be. And so he'd become something else again. He'd become bitter and sad and pathetic. He'd sought out their company when the isolation became too unbearable, because he didn't have any other choice. Even Harmony didn't want him when she found out he was chipped. Hell, if he couldn't make it work with Harm, there was no hope of any other demon accepting his condition.

He looks over to the St. Andrew's cross against the wall. He smiles.

And then one day Red had come to bring him some blood and ask for a favor.

• • • • • • • • flashback • • • • • • • •

"Spike?"

Spike yawned, stretched and sat up, making sure his nude lower half was covered. He ran his hands over his face and scratched his scalp. "What brings you here at this ungodly hour, Red?" His internal clock told him it was about four thirty in the afternoon. Over two hours until sunset.

*Bloody soddin' hell. If I walked in an' woke them up at four thirty am I'd be staked!*

He saw her eyes widen at her first glance of his half-naked self and smiled. Darla had taught him so well he must do it without thinking about it.

"Um, uh, um…"

"Don't speak 'geek', Red. Spit it out in the Queen's English."

She looked a little affronted.

*Girl has spirit.*

"I am not a geek - okay, yeah, well, maybe I am, was! But hey, semi-powerful witch here!"

Spike rolled his eyes and silently chuckled, not wanting to hurt her feelings - too much. "Yeah, right. So, oh powerful and mighty Red, what's with the blood?" He stood, pulling the sheet with him, and reached for it. She held it back. He twitched an eyebrow, "*You* gonna drink it?"

She conceded defeat and handed it to him. "But there's a catch," she told him.

He threw the packet in the frig and turned back, "There always is."

She was staring at him again. He couldn't resist teasing her a bit. He stretched again, scratched his chest. Her mouth was gaping now.

"See something you like, Red?"

"Huh?"

"Earth to Red. Come in, Red." He carefully pulled the sheet up and around his whole body. As much as he wanted to play with her, he didn't think pushing her would be a good idea. Not this girl. He could set the stage, but he had to let her do the work.

*Damn soddin' chip!*

Her brain clicked back in. "Giles wants you to come to his place tonight. They've got a lead on the commandos and he wants to know if you saw something inside that lab. Something about a project 314?"

Spike shook his head. "Only things I saw were the inside of a plexiglass cage and the exit sign."

"Still-"

"Don't worry, Red. I'll be there," he assured her.

She was looking around his crypt now, desperate for something, anything else to look at besides…

"What's that?" she said, pointing to a large wooden "X" leaning against the wall. It had heavy chains hanging from the top and bottom with leather cuffs with buckles at the end of each of the chains.

"'S called a St. Andrew's cross, Luv."

Willow looked confused, "A *what*? A *cross*? Why do you have a cross in your crypt?"

She looked concerned for him. "Is it hurting you? I could take it out… well, drag it out, it looks heavy."

Spike laughed, "No, pet. 'S not hurting me. Well, it's *supposed* hurt, that's the point of it, but no, you don't have to take it out. It's not that kind of a cross. 'Sides, it's Harm's. She left it."

Willow didn't know where to start, so she started where she always started when she was confused - in the middle.

"Not a cross? But you said it was a 'Saint something'? Do saints *have* crosses? I'm Jewish, what do I know? And of course it's supposed to hurt, you're a vampire, crosses are supposed to hurt vampires. I'm not sure why. Why a cross? Why not a Star of David? Or a pentacle? Why would a cross hurt and not other religious symbols? And Harmony? Eww, Spike! You have really bad taste in women, you know that? It looks kind of expensive, why wouldn't she take it with her?" She stopped, catching her breath and he laughed.

"Sorry," she apologised. "None of my business, I know." She turned to leave.

"See you tonight, Luv?" he asked before she got out the door.

She turned and smiled at him, happy that all her babbling hadn't pissed him off. "Yeah, Spike. I'll be there. Seven thirty?" she confirmed.

"Can't wait," he told her and she left.

"I think my taste in women is improving, Luv," he said to the air after the door closed behind her.

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Spike's reminiscing stops when he feels her eyes on him.

"Morning, Luv."

She smiles at him, the smile that would have taken away his soul, had he had one.

"You seemed kinda lost there for a minute," she says happily.

He does a slow perusal of her from head to foot.

"Not lost, Luv," he says, standing and walking to her. He lies down by her side and kisses her shoulder, then nips at it with blunt teeth.

"Not lost - Found."

Chapter 2: You Let Me Complicate You

You let me violate youYou let me desecrate youYou let me penetrate youYou let me complicate you

He smells blood, his own and others. He smells humans; *Xander, Anya, Giles, Captain Cardboard*. He smells the stench of a human/demon hybrid, *Slayer*.

He smells love. *Red*.

On the vague peripherals of his consciousness, he knows he's in Giles apartment. He remembers the fight. They'd won. They must have, as they were all still here, him included. If the Initiative had won, he for one wouldn't still be here. If Adam had won, the humans would be dead. If the demons had won, the Slayer would be history.

*There's a nice thought.*

He has trouble moving, so he stops trying, just squeezes tighter to the hand that holds his. He thinks he hears her joyously scream something about a hand before he slips into unconsciousness. He'll ask her about it when he wakes up.

• • • • • • • • flashback • • • • • • • •

"Spike?"

He'd been waiting for her. Somehow he knew she'd be there again today and he was prepared this time.

He sat up, as he had yesterday, yawned and stretched. Made sure the sheet was covering his naked dangly bits.

"What's the problem today, Red?" he asked her. She didn't seem to notice he was more awake today than he had been yesterday at this time.

"Um, uh, um…"

He smiled and told her to either turn around or enjoy the view; then he stood quickly and reached for his pants. She "EEP"d and turned around - but not *too* quickly, he noticed.

When he was zipped but not buttoned, he walked over and took the blood from her hand. Walked to the frig, dropped in the blood bag, turned and stretched - all to best advantage. *His* best advantage.

Darla really knew her stuff. How to walk, how to move, how to turn his head just so. It was all there, in the recesses of his memories, just waiting to be recalled whenever it was needed.

But was it really needed *now*? Did he have to be standing here, half naked in his crypt, teasing a nineteen year old human girl? There was nothing to gain. No blood, no money, no territory, no political position, no jealousy to incite or advantage to achieve; hell, he'd not even get a good shag out of all this posing.

So why was he doing it?

*Just something to do, I s'pose. Sad lack of that of late.*

He looked at the girl who was staring at him with wide-eyed admiration. Suddenly he didn't want to play this game anymore.

Fuck Darla and her years spent messing with his mind and his body. This wasn't who he was, who he wanted to be.

He thought of William, the William he'd been when he was human.

*Not goin' there again for all the blood in China, mate.*

So what was it that he was, now that he was nothing?

And what the fuck did he think he was playing at?

Looking over at the St. Andrew's cross on the wall, he knew this could never go anywhere near the place it would have inevitably gone while he had his bite.

*Bloody hell, wouldn't be standin' here, in this fuckin' horrible excuse for a place to unlive, thinkin' 'bout… nothin' that will do anyone any good, if I was a* real *vampire*.

He decided to focus on the topic at hand. *Which was…?*

He moved over to the corner where a cracked pipe trickled water into a basin. He turned his back and brushed his teeth, letting her regain control over her hormones.

The normalcy of what he was doing seemed to help and she explained that Buffy had seen a demon that had said something strange and since Spike knew Fyarl, Giles was hoping he'd recognize the language, helping them to identify the demon.

"Seven thirty?" he asked.

"Yeah, I guess," she said, but her mind had wandered… over to the big wooden "X" against the wall.

"What did you say this is called?" she asked, walking over to it.

"A St. Andrew's cross," he told her, afraid to move.

He wanted to - *oh, how he wanted to*. But he couldn't. He didn't know his own mind right now; playing mind games with the Slayer's witch was stupid.

*That never stopped me before.*

Let her do this at her own speed; if he looked too eager, she'd back off.

Willow reached up and fingered the chains, the leather cuffs. Spike's body got ahead of him when she sniffed the leather. He almost broke down and went to her.

*Not yet.*

"What did you…?" her eyes turned to him but she found she couldn't look at him and talk - and she really wanted to ask this question, so she turned her face back to the wood and metal and leather.

"What did you… did Harmony do with this?"

"Nothing," he told her honestly.

She looked skeptical, so he explained.

"Hell, luv, you've known Harmony longer than I have. Would you let 'er truss you up in that thing?"

Willow smiled and said, "No," without thinking. But then the image of Spike being… trussed up… made her brain forget everything else. She gasped.

Still, Spike didn't move.

"But… why?" Willow asked, both wanting and not wanting to know.

"Why do you think, luv?" Spike asked as gently as possible.

"Isn't it… scary?"

"Can be. Depends."

"On what?" she asked, genuinely curious.

"On who's there with you."

"Harmony?" she asked, not able to stifle a giggle.

"Definitely scary," he confirmed. "Too scary for me, anyway. That's why the cross's still, pardon the expression, virgin."

She laughed. A real laugh. Full and uninhibited.

Then her eyes met his.

"It's for pain," she said, but it was a question.

"Pain can be a good thing," he told her earnestly.

*This is the bloody stupidest idea in the history of the world, ya git. Remember the Judge? That smurf was a mere blip on the radar compared to this. If the plan with the Judge had worked out, I'd still've be hale and hearty and undusty at the end of it.*

"I've been in pain, Spike," she told him honestly. "Occupational hazard. It's never a good thing."

Spike's eyes smiled at her as his mouth said, "Not that kind of pain."

"There are different kinds?" she asked, ever the student requesting more knowledge.

Now was the time.

*But do this right or you'll never get another chance. Because you'll be in a Hoover.*

"Can I come over there?" he asked her, hand waving at the distance between them. "I won't touch you."

She nodded, suddenly shy - more shy.

He slowly walked the distance and she backed up as he got closer, until her back was against the cross.

He put his hands up on the cross, on either side of her but he didn't touch. Leaned in, just a little; enough to invade her personal space, but not enough to make her run.

"Put your arms around me," he said, still not touching her.

Ever so slowly, she put her arms around his neck. Still very wary, but he wasn't touching her, so... "Like this?" she asked.

He took a breath, reigning himself in, then, "Behind my back."

Her arms went around him again, this time her arms under his unmoving ones. He didn't let go of the cross.

Everything Darla had ever taught him about erotic seduction went through his mind in an instant. Every soddin' love poem William had ever written took less time than that. He didn't want to use Darla's techniques right now, he wanted to use his own. But his own had been for shite.

He closed his eyes and inhaled her scent.

Let *Essence of Willow* go through him like a hurricane. He opened his eyes and said the first thing that came into his mind.

"If I made love to you," he whispered, mouth closer to her ear than she'd thought he was and she gasped, "Calm down, Red," he said gently. "I said 'if'."

Her arms were still around him, a very good sign. He continued, building the fire, breathing her in between each new thought.

Every word was a caress; a slow, deliberate wave of air that he released from his body and sent out to wrap around hers.

"If I made love to you…"

She closed her eyes.

"If I kissed you breathless for hours until you had no memories of anything but my lips upon yours, my tongue embracing yours…"

Her body relaxed but her heartbeat sped up as she let out a deep exhale.

"If I put my mouth on you and licked my way down your body, tasting your sweet, salty skin…"

A small sound escaped the back of her throat, something between fear and desire. She didn't know it, in the dream world behind her closed eyes, but she had relaxed her head, and subconsciously bared her throat to him.

"If I touched you, every inch of your soft skin with my fingers, learning your curves and your hollows, my fingertips mapping your body. Where you're ticklish, where you like to be touched, places you don't even know are erogenous zones because no man's ever explored you that thoroughly before... "

Her knees got weak and her hands gripped his back to keep herself upright.

"If I tasted you, every sweet crevice with my lips and my tongue. Loving the feel of you, the taste of you. Making your body flush with heat…"

He watched a trickle of sweat run down her neck, from behind her ear to the hollow between her breasts.

"If I made you hot and got you wet and slid, slow and hard, inside of you…"

Her inner muscles contracted, feeling him there. His voice was doing something to her; it felt like it was physically inside her, a palpable being doing all of the things he was whispering in her ear. She wanted to open her eyes, wanted to ask him what he was doing to her. But it felt too good and she was too afraid of what she might see in his eyes. Too afraid of what she might not see.

"If I touched you everywhere you need to be touched…"

Her back arched, inadvertently pushing her soft breasts up into contact with his still naked chest. He gripped the cross tighter, but couldn't resist angling his hips just a little, bringing his denim-encased crotch into contact with her cotton-covered abdomen. She whimpered at the contact; still not moving away, still not releasing her now almost painful hold on his back.

"If you let me love you every way you need to be loved..."

His breath moved the words across her skin and down inside her body, filling her up as surely as if he'd been making love to her in a bed.

"If my cock skimmed the surface of your womb over and over again, going deeper than you knew was possible, touching places you never knew existed…"

She felt it, felt something, something moving inside her - just a whisper really, but it was there, hitting all of her nerve endings.

"If your body held mine snug inside because you, only you, can make me that hard, that desperate…"

She clenched around him, around it, around whatever it was that was inside her, making love to her.

"If the feel of your quim squeezing me blew my mind and my body; holding me in your grasp until I couldn't control myself any longer…"

His seductive voice in her ear, his breath on her throat, the feeling inside her body and the images inside her mind were too much - not enough…

"If you, what you do to me, how you make me feel and react made me erupt inside you, my cum filling you…"

She gasped, then moaned, it was consuming her from the inside and she didn't want it to stop.

"If my coming inside you made your body tighten and shudder, made you fly apart into a million pieces, made you orgasm, made you climax - made you feel for one perfect moment like…"

He could feel her, so close.

"If I fucked you, Baby, fucked you hard and slow and soft and long and made you come, made you come around me…"

His voice broke and she whimpered, the thing inside her was desperate now, begging for her release.

"If I make love to you like I want to…" he whispered.

He stopped because she was coming.

*Fuck! It worked!*

Standing there in Spike's crypt, fully clothed with her arms around him and his hands not touching her but gripping a piece of wood, Willow Rosenberg came.

And as she did, her head fell forward and her fingernails clawed into his back, tearing the skin, raising angry red welts that bled - dripped blood.

He dropped his head to the crook of her neck, smelled her sweat and her blood, just beneath the surface. He wanted to kiss her, he wanted to…

But he didn't. He just stood there until she got her breathing back under control.

When she opened her eyes and looked at him again, he said, "There are all kinds of pain, Willow. Some are more pleasurable than others." He turned and let her see what she had done to his back.

She gasped.

He stepped back - and let her go.

Because he really wasn't sure right now how much of that was Darla and how much of it was himself.

She walked to the door, still shaking. "Seven thirty?" she asked, turning, when she reached the door.

"Seven thirty," he promised. And she went.

He really hoped it was all him.

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The burning in his back wakes him up again. It wasn't the good kind of pain.

"Red?" he asks.

"Right here, Spike," she tells him, entering the room with a mug of warm blood in her hand. He looks around: *Giles' apartment*.

Anya fussing over Xander's bandaged but bloody arm over by the kitchen. Giles patching up the Slayer's wounded head over by the chair. Riley sitting next to her like the lovesick lapdog he is. He can smell the Slayer's blood and the soldier's. The whelp's is there too. But not Red's, she hadn't been hurt, thank… whoever. Willow settles herself under his head, holding him up so he can drink the blood.

"We won then?" he asks when the mug is empty.

"Yes, Spike," Giles answers, packing up his first aid kit, "We won. The spell worked perfectly. Excellent work, Willow," he compliments her.

Willow blushes at the praise; he can't see it, but he can feel it.

"Who or what hit me?" he asks, wondering what kind of demon could do this much damage without him remembering the fight.

Xander laughs, "A bazooka."

"A what?" Spike asked.

"An FIM-9 Stinger shoulder-to-air missile," Riley clarifies. "It's meant to take out aircraft. You're a hero, Spike, you saved us." He looks pained as he says this last.

'*Oh. That's all right then'* Spike thinks and falls back to sleep.

Chapter 3: Help Me

Help me - Tear down my reason
Help me - It's your sex I can smell
Help me - You make me perfect
Help me become somebody else

He sits atop a gravestone and watches her go.

She's in a circle, protecting Xander where he fell when the Zanthatraltic demon bit him. That's not how it's pronounced, but it's as close as he could get in English.

The bite's not fatal, but Willow doesn't know that yet. She closed upon the whelp like a mother hen and starting shooting green orbs of … something or other, he's not sure what. But it's working. With every hit, the stupid thing gets smaller and its too dumb to run. Any minute now and the Slayer'll be able to kick its ass by stomping on it.

But with every hit, she's getting weaker. Demon girl was smart enough to see it and moved up behind his girl, letting Willow drain her energy. He'd have done it, but he really doesn't give a shit about the moron. He knows Willow does, and Demon Girl does and the Slayer prob'ly does. Let them donate their energy. He's gonna need his to take care of Red when she's done with her little vendetta.

He definitely made a right move with this one.

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She didn't come the next day. Or the next. By the fourth day, he'd given up.

He knew what he *should* be doing. He *should* be out there going after her, not waiting for her to come to him. He had always been impatient. Angelus had taught him to sit tight, not let the prey know it was being stalked. The blood was so much sweeter if they walked into the trap than if they'd been forced there.

But she wasn't his prey and all Angelus' bullshit meant nothing in the life he had now. She was a fragile human girl that he'd played. He hadn't meant to; didn't even realise he'd been playing really. But she'd said what she'd said and he'd fallen back on a century of instinct.

*Want. Take. Have.*

So why hadn't he taken her?

Why hadn't he stalked her like Angelus had taught him to? Led her slowly but surely into his clutches? Why hadn't he used Darla's training to seduce her and use her?

He thought about what he'd said, later, after she left.

He'd made so many mistakes. The object was to give them everything they didn't know they wanted. Take what you had learned about them and turn it upside down. Use their desires and their insecurities to make them think that they had all the power. That all of this was the inevitable conclusion of their inherent sex appeal; that there was no other choice - they *had* to give in because the desires he told them he felt were of their own making. They'd been too sexy to resist.

But he hadn't done that with Willow. He'd surrounded himself in her and his training had been forgotten. He'd looked at her, smelled her, felt her presence and… let himself go. Let himself admit his own heart, not take hers.

He'd broken the cardinal rule.

*Never believe your own line.*

He looked up at the cobwebs lining the ceiling and followed the path of a spider as it advanced on a ladybug caught in its web.

*Set a trap. Go in for the kill. Death goes on.*

He was awake because he'd been waking every day at this time since she'd been here the first time, only six days ago.

*Seems like a month since I've seen her.*

He stood and pulled on his jeans, then went to the refrigerator and pulled out lunch. Before he had a chance to sink his teeth into it, she was there.

She held out a bag of blood. He took it, disappointed. He'd been hoping…

Didn't matter what he'd been hoping.

*'M a vampire, she's an innocent. An innocent I can't turn.*

"What's the watcher need now?" he asked, throwing the bag of blood into the frig along with the one he'd been going to drink.

"Don't know," she replied, walking over to the big "X". "He told Xander but Xander forgot by the time I met up with him. Seven thirty, though, I guess." Her hands fingered the chains.

He tilted his head, concentrating, trying to get into hers. "So where's Xander then?"

"Don't know," she said absently.

"He busy?" Spike asked, determined to find out why it was *her* standing in his crypt.

"Don't know," she answered. She unbuckled one of the cuffs.

He held his breath and didn't move.

"Spike," she finally said, turning toward him, "Why haven't you gotten rid of this?"

He shrugged, "Didn't think about it. Didn't really notice it much 'til- Maybe I'll sell it, could get a few quid for it, I s'pose."

"If you… got your bite back - would you use this on your victims?"

He shrugged again; he'd never spent this much time contemplating Harmony's toys; even when Harmony was here playing with them.

"Prob'ly not. Don't know that I'm all that into that scene." He put his hands in his front pockets, determined not to give himself away. He'd shown her too much already. "Why?"

She shrugged, identical to his. She turned back to the cross, "Just wondering."

She slipped her wrist into the cuff and tried to buckle it using her other hand.

"Red, what are you doin'?"

"Buckle this for me, please," she said instead.

He hesitated, but finally walked over and fastened her into the leather cuff. "You want the other-" he started to ask.

"No," she said, but after a pause, as if she'd considered it.

Seeing her there, the sweet little witch buckled into a soddin' bondage cross was too much. He told himself it was just his curiosity that got the better of him. His dick knew it was a lie. So did he.

"Red, please tell me what the fuck it is you think you're doin' here because you're startin' to scare me."

She turned toward him, eyes wide. Tears brimmed. Her fingers raced to undo the buckle but she couldn't manage it, so he did it for her. She didn't run, but she did walk exceedingly fast toward the exit.

"Red, please?" he asked desperately.

She stopped, turned. He hadn't moved from his spot near the cross. When she stopped, he sat, too tired to play any more games.

She sat too.

They sat staring at each other.

The sun slowly set, and there they sat. Neither one able to speak, but neither one able to leave.

"You confused me the other day," she finally said when a hawk screeching startled her. A light from the world outside came through the stained glass window, bathing the room in a purple glow.

He tilted his head again, wanting to give her time to go on without scaring her off by saying something stupid.

"When you…" she didn't know how to say it.

"Talked to you," he finished for her.

She blushed. "You made me…" and hesitated, looking at him. Waited.

"Come," he said, no expression on his face.

"That, yes! Thank you," she said, breathing a sigh of relief. She got quiet again, then, "What were you trying to do?"

"Make you come," he said, smiling.

She blushed even harder.

He didn't know what to say that would placate her, so he lied, sort of. Told the truth, sort of.

"I was trying to make you think, Red. You seemed interested in the cross, but I didn't think you'd want to hear what it was designed for; you're so innocent, too innocent. Then I thought maybe you needed to understand."

He paused and looked at her and she seemed so childlike right then.

"Red, I don't… I don't know what to say here. How to say this. I wanted to explain why some people can get off on pain, on bondage. You stood there, you didn't move," he was talking faster now, the words coming out as soon as he thought them. "You could have, I wasn't touching you - wasn't forcing you. You could have walked away but you didn't want to, did you?"

He was saying this as if it was something he had thought about, considered. But he hadn't, not at all, not until right now, right as he was saying it.

"You wanted to be held there, not being able to get away, letting me do whatever I wanted to you; letting me force my way inside your head, inside your body. I wanted you to see things in a way outside the safe little brain you've lived in. I wanted you to see… I wanted you to see…"

She angrily stood and walked over to him, sat down on the cold concrete floor in front of him. "What did you want me to see, Spike? I'd really, really like to know."

"Me," he said, hanging his head.

She didn't know what to say; she hadn't expected that.

He hadn't either apparently.

She thought about him - really thought about everything she knew about him. There wasn't much.

"Why?" she finally asked.

He looked a little shocked. Why did she think?

*Why* did *she think?*

He stood and started pacing; this was insane. *He* was insane, letting himself even consider…

"Do you want us to be friends, Spike?" she asked, getting even more angry at his unwillingness to answer her. "Do you want us to be… something else?" she stood now too, suddenly just as restless. "Do you want to date me, Spike, is that what you want? Do you want a girlfriend or a toy or a fuck buddy or a… what? What do you want? You're a killer, Spike, a serial killer at that! You've tried to kill me, my friends, my whole town! You drink blood and insult my friends and assemble demons that destroy humanity and you're the God Damned Scourge of Europe, Spike! Please tell me, is that what you wanted me to see?"

She had stopped pacing, now was just screaming and panting.

In the silence following her outburst, all he could hear was her heart beat and her breathing.

"That's not who I am, Red," he told her quietly. "That's who they made me to be."

For some strange and cosmic reason, she understood exactly what he meant.

Maybe it wasn't so strange; not entirely cosmic. *Aren't we all the product of our upbringing? Don't we change and adapt because of our situations?* She hadn't wanted to be uber-responsibity girl who had to raise herself. But her life forced her to accept that role. She hadn't wanted to spend night after night chasing down the things people's nightmares are made of, but she'd begun doing just that when she found out the truth about what went bump in the night in Sunnydale. She'd never believed in magick until Ms. Calendar's notes told her that it was real.

So accepting that Spike had started as something other than what he was now hadn't been too terribly hard. Especially to someone who'd been in Angelus' clutches.

"Then who are you?" she asked.

He was at a loss. "I don't know," he said, insecure for the first time in a hundred plus years.

She ran her hands through her hair, trying to think.

"Tell me what I'm supposed to do here, Spike, because I really don't know."

Spike slumped to the floor and held his head in his hands. "I don't know, either, Red. Just… just go. Go home, forget you came here today. Forget everything that's happened between you and I this last week."

She walked around in circles for a few minutes before walking over to the refrigerator and pulling out a bag of blood and two bottles of beer. She would have preferred a Pepsi, *but when in Rome…*

She walked back over to Spike and handed him the blood. She sat back down on the floor and tried to open the beer but when she couldn't open it, she held it out to him and he opened it for her, then handed it back. She sat the other beer on the floor in front of him.

After he had emptied the bag, she held out her hand as if to shake his. He obliged her.

"Hi. I'm Willow Rosenberg and I'm a nineteen year old human girl with good grades and magickal powers. I'm friends with the Slayer and my best friend since childhood is in love with an eleven-hundred year old ex-vengeance demon. My parents have forgotten I exist and frankly, I prefer it that way. My father-figure used to be called 'Ripper' and I once restored a vampire's soul."

She took another sip of her beer. She looked right into his eyes.

"Who are *you*, William?"

• • • • • • • • end of flashback • • • • • • • •

"Hey, Spike," she says softly, because it hurts too much to talk louder.

"Hey, Red," he whispers and kisses her temple.

"Where are we?" she asks, too drained to even raise her head and look around.

"Watcher's apartment, they wouldn't let me take you home. You gave us all a right fright - don't do that again," he tells her, but there's no malice in his voice.

"Xander?" she asks.

"Boy's fine," he explains, still whispering. "Bite wasn't toxic or fatal. Passed out more from fright than anythin' else."

Willow smiles, "That's our Xan."

She cuddles into Spike for a few more minutes until Giles knocks on the door.

"C'min, Giles," Spike calls as quietly as he can.

"Oh, Willow, good, you're awake. I brought you some juice," he says, handing her a glass of orange juice. "Have to keep up your Vitamin C."

She smiles and drinks it down, the cold liquid cooling her dry throat.

"Where is everybody?"

"Oh, they're ah," Spike growls and Giles lowers his voice. "They're all downstairs. Asleep. They didn't want to go home until they knew that you were… but you are, so that's that."

Willow looks around for the first time and sees that she and Spike are in Giles' bed.

"Oh, Giles, I'm sorry - here," she says, sitting up but getting dizzy, trying to give him back the use of his bed.

"Oh, no, Willow, it's fine, really. Stay, please, you need your rest."

"Nah" she tells him. "I can rest at home." She holds up her arms and Spike picks her up in his.

"Home, William. But circle once around the park first."

Chapter 4: I've Got No Soul to Sell

Help me - I broke apart my insidesHelp me - I've got no soul to sellHelp me - The only thing that works for meHelp me get away from myself

"If this don't beat all," he says, more to himself than anyone else.

Buffy looks over at him and smiles. "Bet you never thought you'd find yourself *here*," she teases.

"Can say that again."

"Bet you never thought you'd find yourself here," Xander teases.

"Watch it, Whelp," Spike warns, but they both know it's an empty threat.

Willow leans into his side, "Aren't they all so beautiful, Spike? Felicia is so lucky. And Stewart too, of course," she says, looking at the proud daddy.

Spike looks through the glass to the sea of babies, and then looks at the smiles on everyone's faces. He looks back, trying to see what they see.

A tiny hand reaches up and innocent blue eyes look at him like he's another wonderful new thing in this wonderful new world it found.

"I guess they are kinda cute at that."

• • • • • • • • flashback • • • • • • • •

"I love this part, look!" Xander told them, as the screen showed a sea of broken humans and aliens covered in blood.

"Eww!" Buffy said, getting up. "Looks like a perfect time to go slay. See you guys when it's-" she turns to the screen and another poor soldier gets blown in half, "- over." She hurried out the door.

Willow briefly glanced at the screen, but it's just as disgusting as she thought it would be, so she quickly turned back to Anya before she threw up.

"Go fish."

"Oh, darn!" Anya said, clearly annoyed, "I was sure you had that seven!"

"'M gettin' hungry," Spike mumbled, rising and heading for Giles' refrigerator. He took out a bag of blood and dumped it in a mug and sat it in the microwave, hitting the buttons that will bring it up to body temperature.

When he pulled out the mug, the smell of Spike's snack wafted over into the living room and hit Xander's olfactory senses as another body fell on the screen and the ground became covered in blood.

"Oh GOD!" Xander screamed, holding his hand over his mouth and running to the bathroom.

"What?" Spike asked.

Anya jumped up and ran to help her boyfriend, but when she saw and smelled what was happening in there, she quickly closed the door.

"Spike, how could you!" she whined.

"What?!" Spike asked again.

Willow smiled at his ignorance, then reached for her jacket. The blood, she's used to, but the smells emanating from Giles' bathroom are too much for her.

"I think I'll join Buffy on patrol. Coming with, Spike?" she asked.

Still confused, he drained the mug and rinsed it in the sink. "Yeah, luv, sure thing."

He figured its best to get out while the gettin's good.

Anya, who made a second attempt to go to her boyfriend's side in his time of need, decided to go with them.  On the way, they explained to Spike why Xander had gotten sick. He still didn't get it, and determined that humans were damned funny creatures.

It wasn't long before they caught up to the Slayer, who shushed them and pointed Spike in the direction of a copse of trees. He nodded and went. Willow and Anya pulled out stakes and stood where they were.

After twenty minutes, an inhuman scream and a loud crunch, the girls ran toward the trees, where Spike was covered in blood. He was under the beast, his hands on either side of its head, holding onto the horns he used for leverage while ripping its head off. He didn't seem to be in any hurry to get up.

"That's a Connoveya beast," Anya told them.

"Uh huh," Buffy said, then added, "Actually, it's an ex-conveyor belt."

"Con-no-vey-a beast," Anya restated, enunciating each syllable. "Their livers are highly prized for their restorative qualities."

"Yeah?" Spike asked. "How prized?"

"Thousand plus apiece, depending on size. That one's little. Maybe five thousand."

"That right?" Spike asked, looking down at the "little" demon. Looked awfully big while it was looking down on him.

"You're a pig, Spike," Buffy said before walking away.

"What?!" he yelled, calling after her. "Demon's gotta earn a living, don't he?"

"I can point you to a broker," Anya told him. "For ten percent."

"Willow?" he asked. If Buffy got upset, maybe she would too.

Willow looked down on the thing with distaste, but said, "A demon's gotta earn a living somehow."

Spike smiled and put his fist through the Connoveya's chest. Wouldn't do to damage the liver and he didn't know this demon's physiology.

"But I don't have to watch," she said, and hurried after Buffy.

It was almost dawn before he made it back to the crypt and Willow wasn't there waiting for him.

*I knew it! I knew she was gonna get upset about that liver thing!*

He threw the money down on the floor behind his bed. He took off his boots and threw them down also. His shirt and jeans followed in the same manner.

*What'd ya expect, ya git?

She's a human girl, you're a demon!

Did ya think she was gonna love ya forever?

Live happily ever after?

Crypt sweet crypt?

Sooner or later it was bound to happen -* had *to happen really*.

Humans were *food*, hadn't Angelus literally pounded that into his skull? You think of them as anything but your next conquest and you won't last any longer than they do.

*But Red's not just any human.*

And some humans were special. You had to think of them as more than food if you wanted to keep them, turn them, make them childer. Angelus, the wanker, had obsessed over them, killed their families, drove them barmy. Even he admitted Dru was special.

So Willow could be special too. Even Angelus couldn't fault him for thinking so. Not that he cared what Angelus thought!

*Girl like that's got no use for a has-been neutered vamp!

Better it ended now before you* really *got your heart broken.

What heart? You have no heart!

No heart, no soul, no anything that a human girl needs to make her happy.*

The tears were threatening when he told himself, *You should have stayed dead*.

He tossed and turned and by sundown, he'd had no sleep at all. He didn't want to get up, didn't want to get dressed, didn't want to exist.

But he didn't want to give her the satisfaction of knowing that it was her that brought about his end. So he got up, got dressed, found his favourite double headed axe and headed out the door. An hour later, he'd found nothing with the strength or honour to befit the end of William the Bloody.

He headed back to his crypt to get some blood and another pack of cigarettes before heading over to All Souls. The first thing that caught his eye when he walked through the door was that god-damned, mother-fucking, soddin' St. Andrew's cross. He stalked across the room and raised the axe to it.

"Spike! Spike, what are you doing?"

His arm stopped in mid-swing, but the momentum brought it down more heavily than he intended and it fell with a tremendous clatter to the floor.

"Red?"

"Hi," she said, leaning in to kiss his cheek. He pulled away.

"Get out of here." It wasn't a declaration of undying love, that's for sure.

"Spike?" she asked, clearly hurt.

"You heard me," he yelled, then morphed into the demon's face to drive the point home. "Go the fuck home, get out of here!"

Her tears were killing him but he couldn't stop now, he knew what he was doing. Hadn't he spent most of the day telling himself exactly what he had to do?

"I thought… I thought I was home," she said sotto voce. Her knees gave out and she slumped to the floor but he didn't stop.

"Home? This is a crypt, Red! Demons live here, not humans! Humans live in nice, safe white houses with nice, safe white picket fences and nice, safe, boring accountant husbands! Humans live on air and vegetables and carpools! Demons live on blood! Blood and death and violence! We don't do nice, we don't do safe, we don't do nine to five! We kill! We kill to live and to eat and to get money! That's no place for a human."

Willow was so lost; she didn't know what to do. She had heard what he said, heard every word.

*Is that what he needs?* Had she been denying him this? *It's my fault!*

He was just so kind to her and so gentle and so loving that she forgot he was a vampire. Well, not forgot really, just kind of disregarded his needs as one.

She stood quickly and walked over to where she knows his duster lays when they were… when he was home. She pulled something out of the pocket and he was so stunned that she was still there that he didn't realise what she was going to do until after she'd done it. She stopped in front of him and opened the switchblade. In one smooth stroke, she cut a line into her arm and held it out to him, offering him the thing she's been so selfishly denying.

He roared - and screamed - and the demon face melted away as he pulled off his tee shirt, ripping it into strips. "Oh god, Red - NO! No, please don't - that's not-"

He broke off, he was so frantic to stop the bleeding, stop her from whatever insanity made her do this!

They were both crying as he lowered her to the ground, tried to stabilize the bleeding, tried to wrap his arms around her and protect her and ask her what in the world possessed her to do such an insane thing!

She clawed at the bandages, tried to pull them off, said, "No, Spike, please. You need this, you need me to give this to you. I'm so sorry, I didn't think-"

"No, Red. Not- I never meant-"

And he realized that *he's* what made her do this. Her blood was all over his floor because of *him*.

His body slumped; he'd almost lost her - almost threw her away - because of his insecurities.

He saw the blood drip down her arm and, calmer now, he went back to work.

"Shh, Luv. It's all right, let me get you patched up. I'll explain in a minute, pet, all right? Let me get you cleaned up first."

"But, Spike, I want to," she told him, still crying.

"I know you do," he told her, remaining as calm as he could, and he was surprised his voice was still there. "And you will, luv, but not now. Not like this."

"Did I not do it right?" she asked and it was the voice of a six-year old child who's afraid she's displeased her beloved uncle.

"You did it just fine, luv," he told her. The blood had finally stopped and he thanked deities he stopped believing in a long time ago for that.

He got her a bottle of soda out of the refrigerator and sat her on a bier.

"I thought you'd left me," he told her quietly.

"What?" She couldn't believe he'd just said that. "Why?!"

"Because you weren't here this morning when I got back."

"I had to study. I had a coding test this morning. I fell asleep- Oh, Spike, I'm so sorry. I was with Suki, at the dorm. I left you a note."

"What?" he said, "There was no-"

She pointed to the refrigerator. And the note stuck to it with the daisy magnet with the smiley face that she had bought for him.

He shook his head, feeling like a fool. Again.

"I thought you left me because of last night."

Her eyebrows furrowed and her face frowned. "Last night? What happened last night? Spike," she said, suddenly alarmed, "Did something happen last night?"

He laughed then, he couldn't help it. "Apparently not," he told her.

*This is so very not funny.* "Spike you'd better explain what the heck you're talking about or I'm gonna, I'm gonna - invite Xander over for Parcheesi!" It was the worst thing she could think of.

He laughed again and told her, "I am a fool, luv."

She smiled at him. "And you think I'd leave you for that? I already knew that, Spike."

"No, I thought you'd left me because I'm a demon."

She still smiled, "I knew that too."

"Did you?" he asked.

"What do you mean?" she really wanted to know.

"I haven't been acting very demonic lately."

"You're also a man, Spike," she told him.

"And I've been acting like one. Almost completely. That night we talked - when you asked me who I was?"

She nodded, remembering.

"I didn't know that night. I knew what I'd been taught to be, what I'd been conditioned to be. I was whatever Dru or Angelus or the Queen Bitch wanted me to be. When I was alive, I was what my mother needed me to be. But I didn't know who… what… who, I was without them."

"And have you figured it out?"

"I think so. Some of it. But I was still being what I thought others - what I thought *you* wanted me to be, a man."

"Oh, Spike, no." She pulled him onto the bier next to her and straddled his lap. "You're… a vampire. You're a very unique vampire with the extraordinary ability to love. I know that, I've always known that. And I'm sorry if I made you think you had to suppress that other side of yourself. But do you remember what first brought me here?"

He looked over at the St. Andrew's cross; the one that earlier tonight he'd thought would look better fitting nicely into a hot wings bucket.

"I like that little bit of danger, Spike. If I wasn't attracted to the demon in you, do you think I would have come back?"

"So, you like a little danger, huh, Red?" he asked, bringing the demon out to play.

She nodded, "When it's you, yeah, I do."

"I'd never hurt you, ya know."

"Maybe just a little? After all, there are all kinds of pain, Spike. Some can be more pleasureable than others."

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"So, Red," he asks as the group makes their way out of the hospital, "Ever get a nigglin' to have a rugrat of your very own?"

"Nah," she tells him, "I like them much better when you can cuddle them and play with them, and give them back when they start to smell funny."

Everyone laughs - except Spike. He gives a mental sigh of relief. It's the one thing he can't give her no matter how human he acts sometimes.

"I completely agree, luv," he says before kissing the top of her head.

"Who's up for pizza?" Xander asks enthusiastically when they hit the parking lot.

"I'll buy," Spike offers, "But no garlic. Deal?"

"You're on, Junior," Xander says, giddy with the prospect of free pizza.

Chapter 5: You Get Me Closer to God

I want to fuck you like an animalI want to feel you from the insideI want to fuck you like an animalMy whole existence is flawedYou get me closer to god

*one year later...*

"I *love* this song," Anya squeals as 'Closer' by Nine Inch Nails comes on the jukebox at the Bronze. "It makes me horny! Xander, let's dance," she orders, standing and pulling her boyfriend onto the dance floor with her.

"Me, too," Willow sighs and leans back into Spike. It's pretty easy, since she's sitting on his lap.

"Wanna dance, luv?" he asks and at her happy nod, he helps her stand and then leads her to the dance floor and takes her into his arms.

"Don't know why this song would make someone wanna shag," he says as he leads her around the floor. Then he smiles, "Well, everything makes *me* want to shag, 'specially when you're around."

"Spike, listen to the words," Willow says, not believing even he could be so dense. "I wanna fuck you like an animal," she whispers, still too bashful to swear in public.

"'S not about sex at all, Pet," he tells her.

"Whatever," she says, overlooking his obviously silly statement. He is a *guy* after all, and they're notoriously insensitive about these things. She just holds him tighter and enjoys the feel of him pressed so closely against her.

He shakes his head at her - over her head, where she can't see him.

*Chits! Don't look past the ends of their noses, they don't.*

Usually he'd be more than happy to debate the point with her; one of the things he loves about her is that she's not afraid to say what she thinks, even if she disagrees with him. He smiles inwardly - especially if she disagrees with him. There's that spirit that he saw the first day in his crypt. Both of them, so passionate about everything. Like two flints constantly striking - always making a spark.

He hears the shower running. He goes to the front door, locks it. Puts out all the lights. He likes their apartment, likes the comfort it provides. He'd like it even better if he'd been able to kill the residents and appropriate it from their corpses, but you can't have everything. Instead, he kills demons, sells their internals to the highest bidder, gives Anya her share and the rest of the money to Willow and pretends. Pretends this isn't all legal and above-board because that's just no *fun*.

He walks up the stairs and sees Willow on their bed, combing through her wet hair.

He pulls his customary black tee shirt off over his head, sits on his side of the bed and pulls off his boots. He moves so that he's sitting up against the headboard, just watching her. Watching her move, watching the candlelight shine in her hair, watching her turn toward him and smile in a way that makes him remember the sun.

"Remember I told you that night," he doesn't have to specify what night he means, they talk about "that night" all the time. The night they talked, the night they told each other all of their secrets, the nights they both confessed they were lost and confused and sometimes felt like they'd never find their way. The night he had to figure out who he really was inside because she wanted to know.

"…that I was a poet," he continues.

"Mmm hmm," she says, turning toward him.

"I had lots of favourites back then. Too old school for you to appreciate, of course," he grins wickedly when she looks offended. "Just kiddin', Red." She's finished combing through her hair and she moves up the bed to sit facing him. "Still, I like the new poems, too," he tells her. "Can I tell you one I like?"

Her face glows; every new facet about him excites her. She enthusiastically nods, not wanting to say anything and break this strange mood he seems to be in.

He pulls her down next to him and kisses her mouth gently before laying her down on the bed. He stands and walks over to the bathroom door and switches off the light. Now only the light from the two candles illuminate the room. Everything seems warm and soft when bathed in the candlelight - even him.

He looks down on her, at her glowing skin and shining hair; at her expressive eyes that look at him like no one has ever looked at him before. Like he's worth something, like he's real, like he's the reason she's alive.

He lies back on his side of the bed, facing her. He leans over her body and pulls open her nightstand drawer. She smiles when he shows her what he took. A cloisonne case that he bought her a few months ago. It holds a straight razor that he keeps perfectly sharp. He hands it to her and she waits for him to show her where.

He smiles and points to her chest, right above her left breast. She's gotten good at this, so much better than the idiotic attempt to give something to his demon all that time ago. She pulls the razor against her skin, not cutting deeply, this is more of a ritual than a sacrifice. It's not food, its passion. It's an act of faith and of love.

His tongue sneaks out and licks up the stripe of blood that appears, he can't help groaning low down in his throat. It's not the blood - well, it *is* the blood - but it's more that she willingly gives herself to him this way.

They've discovered that he can bite her, but only during sex, only when she's in the throes of an intense orgasm; luckily, it seems all her orgasms are intense these days. Any bite other than that, any attempt to taste her outside of sex, still triggers his chip. And so, the razor. Because she wants to. Because she needs to. Because she loves a demon and will give that demon anything he could ever desire with an open heart. (She makes him listen to Norah Jones, so it comes out about even.)

He takes the razor from her and replaces it in the box.

He goes inside of himself and pulls William the poet out of the closet. Not so much a closet any more. More of a… waiting room. All the pieces of him ready and waiting, knowing that they will be accepted.

His hand travels up her leg to her stomach and then a lone finger traces the cut she just made as he begins in the smooth, cultured voice of the poet he once was. "You let me… violate you."

He holds up her wrist, which still has a little bruising from the handcuffs they played with last night. "You let me desecrate you."

His hand takes hers and he waves them together in a smooth arc through the air, saying a line quietly in Latin as he does. As always, when they do this together, a bright purple swirl like a firecracker lights up the room; he's so much a part of her now that some of her magick is inside of him. "You let me penetrate you."

His hand cups her sweet face, "You let me complicate you."

He lies down on the bed and pulls her onto his chest.

"Help me," he says, reciting the words that have come to mean so much to him since he met her, "I broke apart my insides." He takes her hand and brings it up to his mouth, kissing her fingertips. "Help me," he continues softly, "I've got no soul to sell." She smiles against his skin and he feels it and her capacity to love a soulless demon thrills him and touches him - and scares him.

"Help me," he says when the lump leaves his throat; sometimes her trust is too overwhelming. "The only thing that works for me; help me get away from myself."

His mind travels back to his lonely existence in his crypt, before her smile came into his life. The next words come out stern and sober, and oh so true. "You can have my isolation; you can have the hate that it brings. You can have my absence of faith," he lifts her face up to look her in the eyes, "You can have my everything."

He moves them again, laying her back on her pillow and stretching her body out for his gaze.

"Help me tear down my reason," he says, his eyes traveling her body. His fingers trace the path his eyes have just forged as he says, "Help me, it's your sex I can smell." His hands go back up, fingers caressing her jaw and her ear. "Help me, you make me perfect," he says and it sounds so sad when he says it. She nods at him, letting him know that he is perfect but he shakes his head back, letting her know the truth, even if, thank those deities again, she doesn't see it.

"Help me become somebody else," he pleads, once again alluding to "that night" when he was still so lost.

He lays down beside her and puts an arm across her stomach, looks deep inside her eyes, he wants her to understand this next part the way it was meant to be, not the way it's been corrupted. That he loves her so desperately that he'll do *anything* to be near her, to be closer to her, to physically demonstrate the intensity of the passion he feels for her.

"I want to fuck you," he says reverently, then with an intensity that echoes that reverence he continues, "like…" he pauses, as if searching for the perfect word, "an animal."

With a sweetness that she never knew existed within him, he says, "I want to *feel* you - from the inside." The emotions are so raw in him that he can't hold them in any longer. His voice cracks and he has to swallow a lump in his throat but he wants her to know how desperately he loves her.

"My whole existence is flawed," he says and it's an admission, one the Big Bad he once was would never have made.

He tries to conjure up feelings from his human existence, the ones he had when he was in the chapel of his church and he was so sure someone was listening, that someone heard him and cared what he had to say. The feelings that made him feel that no matter how plain his outward life was, someone out there knew what he was inside; knew the passion that he worked so hard to hold inside because it simply wasn't proper for a gentleman to feel those things, to want those things. When he found poetry, when he found a voice to free some of the inner conflict, he'd gone to church. He'd sat in its hallowed cavern and thanked his god for giving this gift to him. He *wasn't* alone; he didn't have to suffer silently; someone, some thing, was out there and understood.

And he now held that someone in his arms.

"You get me closer to god," he says with a quiet reverence that makes her feel loved and worshipped.

He stops, and breathes, hoping that he did the poem justice. Hoping that he's shown her what the song is *really* about, not what a few shallow creatures have distorted it to be.

She turns to him and without a word between them, she makes love to him. Showing him in her own way that she feels the same way about him. That she knows what he is, she understands what he was and will help him become however he wants to be.

When her body finally gives out and she falls into a warm, contented sleep, Spike rises and finds his cigarettes.

He sits in the chair, smoking, watching her sleep.

He takes in her long, shining hair; glowing like firelight in the muted coming rays of dawn.

He takes in her soft, pale skin, now bruised and marked. He can see imprints of his fingers on her arm. He knows there are others on her hips, back and ankles, even though he can't see those. They aren't marks of pain, they're marks of passion.

He smiles. She now bears his mark. Two perfect holes, bruised and scabbing over at the moment no doubt, but in a few days, that will be gone, replaced with scar tissue that will never fade, never wash away. She is *his*.

"You bring me closer to god."

The End