Not In Plain Sight

by purplefeen

Spike/Tara  
rating: Mature adults only  
**warning: incest**  
time frame: alternate reality  
summary: William and his younger sister have feelings for each other that do not conform to society's strictures.

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banner by VamptasticA



**Part 1**  
*London, 1862*  
  
  
Rupert held his three year old son's hand and gently led him across the street, through the maze of carriages and horses, shopkeepers and deliverymen.  
  
"I don't want to, Papa", little William cried, eyes starting to tear and thumb going automatically to his mouth as it always did when he was upset.  
  
Rupert smiled indulgently, leading the boy through the door of the shop.  
  
"It's quite all right, William. I assure you, this is a perfectly safe place to be. No one will harm you here, I promise." He looked down at his son, face flushed and dark blonde curls hanging in his eyes. If only the boy didn't get so upset every time he tried to have it cut.  
  
"But Liam said-" the child began, but his father interrupted him.  
  
Taking off his glasses and polishing them with a fury that showed his anger toward his brother's only child, Rupert bit out, "I am quite aware of the nonsense your cousin Liam tells you whenever you spend time with him, but I promise you, there are no such things as vampires, William! Nor werewolves nor witches nor any of those other fanciful supernatural creatures that boy invents to torment you." Rupert took a breath and calmed his voice. "Look, Will, its daylight. So even if there were such abominations, they can't get you now, correct? Aunt Darla says this place is perfectly charming and the seamstresses here can make you some new clothing that will fit you better. Won't you like that, Will? You've been telling me forever that you don't like short pants and would like some trousers. How about if I ask the ladies to make you a pair of trousers, William? Will that help to earn your cooperation?"  
  
William considered, looking around the shop. It was daylight after all and the only two women in the shop looked harmless enough. Neither of them seemed to have the long teeth that Liam had said a vampire would have. The curtains in the back shifted and the most beautiful woman William had ever seen stepped through it. Warm rosy skin and long dark hair, with a smile that lit up the room. When she turned toward Will, she winked. At him. He smiled back.  
  
"I want that one, Papa," he told his father, pointing to the lady.  
  
Rupert turned and looked, wondering what had caught his son's attention. When he saw the lovely woman in the blue muslin dress, he had that same thought - 'I want that one.'  
  
But he couldn't say that, of course. In fact, he couldn't seem to say much of anything as she walked over and introduced herself as Jenny. With much stuttering and stammering and blushing, Rupert finally managed to convey that his son needed new, better-fitting clothing and they would very much appreciate it if she would assist them.  
  
Jenny took Rupert and his son in the back and measured William for his new clothes. Through a series of perfectly pleasant, disinterested questions, Jenny learned that Rupert was a widower, his wife having died in childbirth. She learned that William was three but his birthday would be in another two weeks. William, charmer that he was, invited Jenny to dinner for his birthday and Jenny accepted.  
  
Jenny learned that William greatly admired his cousin Liam, who was a sophisticated boy of seven, but was a little afraid of his Aunt Darla, who Will was sure had poisoned her husband, Papa's brother.  
  
After leaving the selection of cloth up to her and preparing to leave, Rupert was delayed from leaving when Jenny exclaimed, "Oh, just a moment, sir, I think I might have something for William." She turned and walked into the back room and Will peeked through the curtain as Jenny looked at her notes of William's measurements before touching a bolt of cloth. Suddenly, a small pair of trousers that hadn't been there a moment ago appeared in her hands. She turned and saw Will's wide eyes and open, astonished mouth. She smiled, winked and then held her finger up to her lips in a movement that made Will proud that she thought he could be trusted with such a great secret. He nodded and Jenny walked back to Rupert with a smile on her face.  
  
"Sir, I did hear you tell sweet little William that he could have a pair of trousers made, didn't I?"  
  
Rupert nodded.  
  
"Well, one of our girls made these by accident last week and I just checked and they are exactly William's size."  
  
William giggled, knowing that none of it was true and admiring Jenny's ability to make up stories so easily.  
  
Rupert just looked at her gratefully, having forgotten about his promise to his son.  
  
Jenny wrapped them up with paper and handed them to Will, asking if he was big enough to carry his own packages. He assured her that he was.  
  
Seeing them to the door, Jenny "accidentally" put her hand on Rupert's arm and they both felt the heat that passed between them. William saw their blushing faces and smiled.  
  
Rupert and Jenny were married five weeks later.  
  
  
  
*Two years later*  
  
William paced and paced in his room. This was horrible. This was the worst thing he had ever encountered in his five years on earth.  
  
It was taking forever. They had promised him a new baby brother. Had been promising for years. And now it was time and they would not let him see his mum. He heard her crying and he knew she must be in great agony and it was all his fault. He had asked for a brother and so Mum and Papa had gone and gotten him one and had it placed in Mum's tummy so it could grow and now it was time for it to come out and he didn't see how that would even be possible!  
  
His own dear mother had died giving birth to him, hadn't she? How could he have been so selfish as to ask Jenny to go through the same thing. He'd killed her, he just knew he had!  
  
But his new mum hadn't seemed frightened by his request, she'd seemed very pleased. So had Papa. They had smiled and blushed and Papa had promised to work on it that very night. He didn't really know how one acquired a baby. Liam had said that parents had to go somewhere and kiss and then the mum could get her baby. But William knew for a fact that such nonsense was not true. From the very beginning, the very day of the wedding in fact, he had seen Papa and Mum kissing all the time when they thought he wasn't looking.  
  
He had once even walked into their bedroom after a bad dream and had watched as his father kissed Mum's breasts by candlelight and she was making the softest, gentlest sounds that had warmed Will's heart. His parents truly loved each other, he knew that. If love and kissing wouldn't do it, he had no idea what else it would take.  
  
But now they'd gone and done it because he had pleaded and pleaded, not letting up until Mum's tummy was getting round and full and she let him put his hand on her tummy and had jumped with excitement when he felt the babe move within her.  
  
And so here he was, sent to his room because his mother's cries had made him cry as well and he wanted to go to her and beg her forgiveness for making her do this.  
  
What if she died?  
  
He couldn't bear that. And poor Papa! To lose another wife. He would be heartbroken!  
  
William vowed that no matter what happened, he would take care of the babe. If Mum… if Mum… and then Papa… it was his fault, his responsibility. He would raise his brother to be a good man, just as Papa said he wanted Will to be. He vowed never to ask for another thing as long as he lived, if God would just help Mama and his brother live through this.  
  
Suddenly, the door opened and his father walked in, a bundle of sheets in his arms.  
  
"Is…" he swallowed the lump in his throat, "Is Mum all right?"  
  
Rupert smiled down at his son and confirmed that yes, Mum was sleeping peacefully.  
  
"Is…" another lump to be swallowed, "Is that my brother?"  
  
Rupert's grin grew wide as he shook his head, "No, William." He sat down on William's bed and allowed the boy to see the pink and perfect baby in his arms, "This is Tara, your new baby sister."  
  
William was ready to be very indignant, he hadn't wanted a sister. Told them over and over again to get a brother, not a sister. But then he saw her. Delicate and tiny, looking up at him with shining blue eyes.  
  
He was afraid to touch her, she seemed like she would break. She was an angel, a goddess.  
  
"Very pleased to meet you, Tara," he told her softly. "I am William, your big brother, and I will protect you always."  
  
  
  
**Part 2**  
  
Will kept his word and was more diligent than even his parents in looking after Tara's welfare. When the nanny was late getting Tara from her nap because the old harpy was having tea in the kitchen with Cook, William would sit with Tara until the woman returned, then promptly scold Nanny for her dereliction of duty.  
  
When Mr. Collins, their tutor, made Tara cry because she misspelled a word on her lesson, William kicked the man in the shins and took Tara down to the kitchen for some cookies and tea.  
  
When Papa insisted that Tara ride a pony that Will was sure was much too big for his sister, William got on first and let Tara ride in front of him to keep her safe.  
  
All of William's shenanigans amused his parents.   
  
Whenever Rupert would get it into his head that Will was becoming overprotective, Jenny would promise to talk to the boy and make sure he understood that Tara needed room to grow on her own. Personally, she believed that Tara would be more desolate than Will if she didn't have her champion by her side at all times.  
  
Jenny, Will and Tara often took walks together in the woods. Will was especially fond of these times, because his Mum would show him more of those wonderful tricks she did. She could make flowers appear out of nowhere or use herbs and vines that she found to make scars go away. She taught them both about the magic of the world around them and how there were things in this world that were special - every bit as real as what the rest of the world saw - but you had to look closely for them.  
  
Special things, she told them, sometimes had to hide what they were from the rest of the world.  
  
The more special something was, the more you had to protect it. As she told them this, she lifted a leaf from a tulip, and there, sleeping underneath, was tiny faerie with opalescent wings. Tara had clapped and giggled and the poor thing had become frightened. Until Jenny held out a hand and promised it no harm. It climbed into her palm and made a stool of the fleshy part near her thumb, smiling and making funny faces for the children. Will, Jenny and Tara had spent many hours that day learning about the fae and meeting those that lived in the Giles' garden.  
  
Every day was filled with new wonders for Tara and William and every day they grew closer to each other and farther away from everyone else. It was an idyllic world.  
  
Until it was time for Will to go off to school. At thirteen, when William should have been excited and preparing for the excellent school in Paris that his parents had arranged for him to attend, the boy had instead spent much time wandering the grounds with his sister, the two of them talking and laughing and delighting in making their parents worry over them. In the end, Rupert and Jenny had no choice but to relent and let Will continue on with Mr. Whitcomb, the seventh in their long line of tutors.  
  
Will and Tara did everything together - except bathe. And Tara had been very upset that this was denied to her. William, Rupert was glad to note, had stopped wanting to help bathe Tara when he was about eleven. It was about that time that William got very self-conscious about anyone being near when he bathed as well. He would have preferred it if no one even suspected that he ever did such a thing.  
  
In his thirteenth year, William had begun following one of the new tweenies around and Jenny had had to scold him several times to leave the poor girl alone. Finally, she set Tara on his trail, with instructions to follow her brother everywhere and to intercede if he should try speaking to Mary Ellen.  
  
That did the trick. Will, not being able to deny his sister anything, gave up his pursuit of the older fifteen year old woman and settled instead for teaching his eight year old sister how to fish and climb trees and build rafts from fallen branches.  
  
Tara, for her part, came to hero worship her older brother even more than she had before. One night, during a dinner conversation, Tara announced that she wanted to marry William. Papa had smiled fondly, but told his sweet daughter that such a thing was not possible. Will, he told her, would one day find a charming young woman that he would come to love, as she would, in turn, find a very honorable man who would adore her as well.  
  
Tara harrumphed and said under her breath that *she* was charming as could be and Will was more honorable than any man ever and she would show her father just so when she and Will were old enough to wed. During dessert, she mumbled that she already loved Will and didn't need to find anyone else. Will, she said, adored her more than other man ever would, including her papa.  
  
She was sent upstairs to bed without finishing her dessert.  
  
That night, after the house was asleep, Tara came to Will crying. He pulled her into bed with him and tried to comfort her, telling her that it was only a dream. She confessed that in the dream, Will had fallen from a horse and died. She would not be comforted, she could not be stilled.  
  
Until Will held her tightly in his arms and kissed her on the mouth. Soft and slow and strong.  
  
She had quieted and both of them had fallen into a peaceful sleep soon after.  
  
Tara had never looked at him the same way again. She was both more ardent in her admiration and more timid in her demeanor when they were alone together.  
  
Two years later, when it was time to leave for university, Will gave no complaint.  
  
Will came home infrequently, spending many of his school breaks with his friends from school. When he did come home, he always brought a pack of boys home with him. Many of them made comments about Will's beautiful and blossoming baby sister. Each and every one would receive a punch in the nose for his insolence.  
  
He began to be teased about his relationship with Tara, even back at school. So Will went about making a reputation for himself that would leave no doubts about his feelings toward all women. As a pretty and convenient yet temporary receptacle for his urges. As his reputation as a rake increased, the teasing stopped. His protectiveness toward his sister was never questioned again.  
  
And with absence and an abundance of women at his disposal, he hoped these feelings he had for Tara would fade.  
  
By the time he was nineteen, he had convinced himself that they had.  
  
  
  
**Part 3**  
  
It was August. One of those days when the air is heavy and you can feel it against your skin. Every move, every breath, every beat of your heart is intoxicating and the slide of a bead of perspiration running down your neck is amplified so that you feel its descent with passionate sweetness.  
  
Will walked along the garden path, seeing his mother and sister heading for the pond. He smiled, remembering when Tara was very small. How she loved to kick her feet in the cool pond on a hot summer's day.  
  
He remembered the same sight last summer. It had incurred quite different feelings in him. He turned and headed in the opposite direction.  
  
Some hours later, as Tara walked toward the garden, she saw Will sitting on the path, perfectly still. He seemed to feel her approach, because he turned and put a finger over his lips to quiet her before nodding for her to come closer. He wished there were some way to prevent her from joining him, but the only way to do that would be to create a situation that would lead to his being discovered here as well.  
  
He could do this, he could. Just a little self control.  
  
He settled her on the ground in front of him, pointing to a spot where the azalea bushes were thinning and one could see through to the clearing on the other side.  
  
Hawkes, the stable master, was there with Leatrice the downstairs maid. And they were nude; kissing and touching each other and making the most wonderful sounds, like nothing could be more rapturous than what they were doing. The sun glistened on their sweat streaked skin, making their bodies glow in the haze of the bright summer light.  
  
Tara gave a quiet startled gasp but Will leaned in close and shushed her again.  
  
Turning her head so that she could whisper directly into his ear, she asked "Should we be watching this?"  
  
More than the sound of her voice was the feel of her lips on the skin of his ear. She'd touched him before. They'd always touched as they'd done things together growing up. It was nothing different really.  
  
Or rather, it shouldn't have been.  
  
But it was.  
  
Gathering his control, Will shrugged, answering, "I don't see why not. They're outside. If they didn't want anyone to watch, they'd be behind closed doors."  
  
Tara couldn't argue with that logic. Besides, she was fascinated. Body on body, skin on skin. She'd imagined of course, but her childish fancies were nothing like this. Not tanned skin turning pink from the heat of passion. Not lips, soft and succulent, wrapping around a breast and suckling as a babe did. Not hands sliding across slick skin and soulful moans and a back arching as if the body itself were trying to bring her lover's touch closer.  
  
This was nothing like what she had imagined.  
  
It had always been Will, in every dream, every harmless fantasy. This wasn't a fantasy. This wasn't harmless.  
  
But she still wanted it to be only Will.  
  
Hawkes wrapped a hand around Leatrice's breast and used his finger and thumb to gently pull on the nipple.  
  
Will watched as his sister's hand went unconsciously to her own breast. Which, he also noticed, had become fuller and more womanly in his absence. No doubt his sister had grown in other ways as well. He closed his eyes and prayed for strength.   
  
God, he had always loved touching her soft skin when she was a baby. Touching her and wondering that this tiny miracle could really be his. They had always been very close, much closer than any other siblings he knew; it embarrassed him at times. Embarrassed him when he was with his mates, never when he was with her.  
  
He suddenly remembered a time when he was fourteen and she nine. She awoke from a nightmare and came into his room crying. No matter what he tried, he couldn't get her to forget the dream. So he did what his father always did when his mother was upset, he kissed her. And she had kissed him back. As innocent as could be. And it had been… wonderful. More wonderful than he ever imagined it would be.  
  
But she never came into his room on her own again.  
  
He couldn't get that kiss out of his mind now. What a difference five years had made. She was now a fully developed young woman of almost fifteen and she was sitting practically in his lap as they watched two lovers make love not twenty feet from where they sat.  
  
Tara was sighing and squirming and his trousers were suddenly tremendously tight.  
  
"Will, it's beautiful," she sighed softly in his ear. When she turned back to watch, he couldn't take his eyes off of Tara. Big, soft blue eyes and honey blonde curls that fell down her back. How had he never noticed how soft and pink her lips were before? And her throat, a canvas of alabaster begging to be kissed. The motion of her hand across the top of her breasts, brought his attention back to them. God, to be a babe and suckle at…  
  
"Good God!" he cried softly to himself, luckily not disturbing the couple on the grass before them, but Tara turned and smiled as if she knew what was wrong. She put her lips on his ear and whispered, "I've loved you my whole life, Will."  
  
He pulled his hands behind his back and said, "We can't, Tara, it's not allowed. It's not- not natural."  
  
"Have you ever touched a woman, Will? Ever done what they're doing?" She nodded in the direction of Hawkes and Leatrice.  
  
Without meeting her eyes he nodded, then looked up as she looked away.  
  
"I never wanted anyone but you," she told him. She stood and walked away. The next morning when she awoke, he had returned to school. Without even saying goodbye.  
  
  
  
When he returned at Christmas, Tara was very quiet and withdrawn. Papa took him aside and told him that he and Mum suspected that Tara was ill. Doctor Mayburn had seen her, of course, and found nothing wrong, but told them that very often some illnesses do not manifest themselves until long after the patient has begun feeling some of the effects. Papa said Tara herself had not claimed to feel ill, but she had been very withdrawn the last few months and, as was obvious by looking at her, she had lost too much weight. She was not normally exceptionally thin, but she had been very finely proportioned and could not afford the weight loss.  
  
Rupert asked William to speak to her and a few minutes later, when Tara retired to her room for the night, Rupert and Jenny sent him up after her.  
  
He stopped at his room on the way to hers and grabbed a box from his wardrobe.  
  
His time away from her had been fraught with indecision. He wanted her. God, how he wanted her. Especially since he now knew that she saw him in the same light.  
  
But they couldn't. It wasn't allowed. It was against everything they'd ever been taught. He had cursed God for his feelings. He had cursed himself. He couldn't do it.  
  
But she was his sister and he could not just abandon her because of their wrong feelings. After endless lonely and sleepless nights, he came to a decision.  
  
If God had indeed made him as his father had told him repeatedly when he was young, then God would just have to learn to deal with how he handled the life He gave him.  
  
Tara looked up when she saw the door open and when she saw the box, she remarked, "Christmas is still yet a fortnight away, Will. You're too early." She gave him a small smile, which encouraged him.  
  
Sitting next to her on the bed, he gave her the box. "I missed your birthday, baby."  
  
She took it and smiled, sitting up. She took her time opening the box, knowing how impatient Will always was to see her face when she opened his gifts. She gasped when she saw it and quickly stood, pulling it out of the box with her.  
  
"Oh, Will, it's absolutely beautiful," she cried, holding the penoir up in front of her. "But it's indecent! I can't wear this, its practically see through!"  
  
Will smiled, "You're not a little girl any more, Tara. And you can wear a robe over it. I couldn't resist, I thought of you immediately when I saw it," he admitted, laughing.  
  
Tara stilled and crooked an eyebrow his way.  
  
Will knew what she was thinking. Had he been shopping for another woman when he saw this? Had he been with another woman when he saw this?  
  
Neither, in fact. He had done nothing but think of her while he was away. His studies were suffering, his friendships were suffering.  
  
He was suffering.  
  
When Robert had pointed out that the tart Will had bought for the night bore an incredible resistance to his sister, Will finally relented.  
  
She was his. She had always been his and he wanted her always to be his.  
  
She had practically offered herself to him the last time he was home. But she was still young and he was determined to do nothing that couldn't be undone until Tara was old enough to know her own mind.  
  
Not that he could bear the thought of her leaving him for another man.  
  
But her appearance, her obvious distress at his absence had convinced him that this was the right thing to do.  
  
"I can't wear this," she said, looking crestfallen. "I've lost too much weight."  
  
"No, sweetheart," he told her. "It'll still fit. You can't have lost that much. Try it on." He rose to stand, moving toward the door.  
  
He closed it and locked it before turning around and waiting for Tara to undress.  
  
Now that the time was here, she hesitated. Will didn't want to push her but he had waited too long for this to let her nervousness stop it.  
  
He went to her and sat on the bed. Pulled her toward him and lifted her shift over head. He barely looked at her before he reached for the new penoir and pulled it over her head, letting it settle about her shoulders as he lifted her arms into each sleeve.  
  
It really was as diaphanous as he had hoped it would be.  
  
He smiled and she returned it.  
  
His large hands moved to her neck, massaging the tense muscles there before moving to her shoulders. Ever so slowly, he roamed down her body, molding the soft fabric to her curves.  
  
"You are exquisite, Love," he told her. "Everything I imagined you would be."  
  
"You - you imagined me?" she asked tentatively.  
  
Will looked up at her from beneath his lashes. One hand found the soft, small mound of a breast as his fingertips brushed the hardening nipple.  
  
"Didn't you imagine me?" he asked, eyes and smile teasing her.  
  
Her delightful blush answered his question.  
  
Just before his mouth closed around the nipple that was now too irresistible to ignore, he told her, "Mum and Papa must never know. No one must ever know. We're too special, Tara. This has to be something that needs to be kept out of sight."  
  
Tara never answered as his mouth closed around her aching breast through the translucent fabric of the gown.  
  
Her arms wrapped around his head, pulling him closer.  
  
He pulled back, his blue eyes searching out hers to make sure she understood what was happening.  
  
"We have to be careful, Love. There are… certain things… that we can't do, Love, not ever. But this, we can do as much as we like. Kissing, touching, making each other feel loved. I love you, Tara, I always have. Just as you have loved me. Tell me you understand me, baby."  
  
Tara wanted to tell him yes, but she really didn't. What couldn't they do? And why?  
  
Will saw the indecision in her eyes. "Just tell me you understand, Love. I'll explain it better later, I promise."  
  
She smiled and nodded, pulling his sweet mouth back to her breast.  
  
He went down an hour later to wish his parents good night.  
  
As he lay in bed, he stroked himself thinking of his sister's exquisite body. Well, almost exquisite. She really was too thin. He had convinced her to eat by telling her that he couldn't wait to feel her breasts filling his hands. Wanted to fill his hands and mouth with all of her and she'd need to get well in order to satisfy him.  
  
Although, he had a feeling that her illness was caused by her unfulfilled desire for him and no further incentive would be needed. But he wanted to make sure.  
  
He hadn't pushed her tonight. Had sated her young body with just his mouth and hands on her breast and a few sweet kisses before letting her fall asleep.  
  
But God, how he'd wanted to spread her open and sink into her body. The body that had been made just for him. He'd wanted her and God had fulfilled his every desire. From the moment he had seen her, he had been delighted that she hadn't been born a brother and now he knew why.  
  
He brought a fantasy of her to mind as he grabbed himself roughly and pulled harder and harder on his cock. He had a feeling he was going to become a master a self-satisfaction until he had the time to tutor his sister in the art of making love.   
  
He closed his eyes and let the fantasy wash through him. The true fantasy, the one that could never happen, the one where he filled her and felt her maidenhead break for him. He wanted to ravage her body until she was weeping with exhaustion; her blood and their combined juices soaking through the sheets.  
  
He almost laughed with joy at the fountain of fluid spurting from him, now that he'd finally allowed himself release while consciously thinking of her.  
  
As he searched for a cloth to clean himself up with, he admitted to himself that his fantasy could never come true. That is the one thing he could not allow himself to do. The one thing that would shatter the world as they knew it.  
  
Which was probably why he wanted it so much.  
  
  
  
**Part 4**  
  
As expected, Tara got better and his parents letters were filled with stories of her escapades.  
  
Tara's letters were filled with longing. Longing for things she didn't understand, but Will did. It made the separation almost unbearable.  
  
Every night Tara took her special nightdress out from under her mattress and slid it on underneath of her regular one. Every night she slept, thinking of Will's gift, and Will, and the way her brother had kissed her and touched her at Christmas.  
  
She remembered all of the things she'd seen that day in the garden between the lovers and she wanted to do all of those things with Will.  
  
So far, he'd only allowed himself to kiss and suckle her breasts and only allowed her very careful touches to his chest and shoulders. She hadn't been allowed to explore his body and she could never get him to touch that ache that formed low in her belly every time he kissed her.  
  
She wanted so much for him to come home. And when he did, she'd contrive every way she could to get them time alone together.  
  
When May arrived, so did Will. But, to Tara's utter disappointment, his friend Robert accompanied him. When Tara ran up to hug him and welcome him home, he laughed and spun her around as he had when she was a child.  
  
"He's only staying a week," he whispered before surreptitiously sucking her earlobe into his mouth.  
  
That night, while Robert was still downstairs talking to their parents, Tara snuck into Will's room. He had just removed his shirt to undress for bed. When he saw the door open, he instinctively pulled the shirt back up, but when he saw it was her, he let it drop. Giving a low growl deep in his throat, he held his arms open for her.  
  
She ran into them and they welcomed each other they way they'd longed to. With a kiss that got more passionate by the moment. Will coaxed her mouth open with his tongue, running his hands down her back, cupping her bottom. When she opened and let him invade her sweet mouth, he pulled her against his terminally aching arousal, letting himself rub against her for a moment, before letting her go.  
  
"Tara, Love, we have to stop."  
  
Tara lifted herself onto her toes and pulled him down for another kiss. Will let himself be drawn in, wanting desperately to be able to go on like this all night.  
  
Finally, forcing himself to take a step back he told her, "Robert may come up at any moment."  
  
"I don't care, Will," she begged, "I've missed you so terribly." She took his hand and brought it to her breast, feeling his heat through her gown. He let himself feel her, loving the weight of it, so much fuller now that she wasn't starving herself.  
  
He pulled her to him again, taking her mouth for a brief kiss.  
  
Not releasing her breast, he promised, ���We will, baby. I have so many things I want to show you. We have all the time in the world now. I'm home for good." He let his hand trail down her body, letting it whisper over that spot between her legs that ached so badly whenever he was near.  
  
Just then, the door opened and Robert stepped in, quickly looking to the floor when he saw Will and his sister standing so closely together.  
  
Later that night, from his bed across the room, Robert grinned at Will and asked, "So, are you going to tell me I was right?"  
  
Will tensed his jaw and ground his teeth together, not answering.  
  
"I knew it," Robert said smugly, before turning over to go to sleep. Will waited until he heard Robert's soft snores before rising. As he turned the door knob, he heard Robert's chuckle. "Tell your lovely sister I wish her a pleasant night."  
  
Will was only gone a matter of minutes and he never rose to leave the bedroom again while Robert was visiting.  
  
Seven days later, as Will shook his friend's hand to say goodbye, Robert confided, "Did I ever tell you I lost my virginity to my father���s sister?"  
  
Will smiled. "No, you never mentioned it."  
  
"And I haven't now," Robert said, letting go and alighting into the carriage that would take him home.  
  
As the carriage pulled away, Will turned and strode into the house calling for Tara. No one had seen her but his father warned that it was perhaps best to leave her be. She had been sullen and insolent for the last week; Jenny explaining the moods away as normal for a young woman of her age. Rupert didn't much care about the reason, he just didn't want to have to deal with her himself. Every time Jenny sent him to talk to her, it cost him another dress. It was the way his father had always fixed his mother's moods when he was a young boy.  
  
Luckily, Will smiled and said he'd talk to her. Rupert smiled, so happy to once again have his son at home.  
  
He found her in the garden, wandering around quietly, looking very sullen indeed.  
  
"Is he gone?" was all she said.  
  
"Yes, baby," he answered, obviously very pleased about it.  
  
Tara raised her head and gave him a very saucy look from beneath her lashes.  
  
"Catch me if you can," she tossed gaily over her shoulder as she ran toward the trees - and farther away from the house.  
  
He found her standing beside a large oak tree, hands folded behind her, keeping her dress from becoming soiled on the tree.  
  
He stopped, leaning one hand against the tree, and looked her up and down.  
  
He ran his tongue behind teeth. "You're looking much… healthier, than when I was here last."  
  
"Mmm," she agreed, seemingly disinterested. More like speechless. He was finally home, finally hers.  
  
Will leaned in and whispered, "Are you wet for me, baby?"  
  
"W-w-wet?" she asked, not quite sure what he meant. She had discovered that she got shockingly heated between… down there… when she thought of him. And it felt, when she rubbed her thighs together, as if the area might be slick with moisture, but she had never actually… checked.  
  
His gaze drifted to her mouth and she self-consciously licked her lips. He groaned.  
  
"Lift yer dress for me, Pet," he encouraged.  
  
"L-lift m-my…"  
  
He leaned down and gave a sweet kiss to the flesh below her ear. "I promise you'll like it."  
  
Tentatively her hands dropped and she took the fabric of her dress and underskirts into her hands. Before she complied, she looked at him once again, needing confirmation that this was indeed what he wanted her to do.  
  
He nodded, then returned to her neck, tasting her in one of the few ways he would allow himself. For now.  
  
As her dress started to rise, his left hand moved to her thigh, waiting. Her hands slid the dress up, but he didn't feel the soft skin he was expecting. In his eagerness, he'd forgotten about her knickers.  
  
"Baby, I want you to stop wearing these, all right?"  
  
"B-but what about when my dress requires a crinoline?" she asked. The crinoline required drawers for modesty's sake. Her normal clothing made due with only a petticoat or two, but her fancier dresses were made for a fuller skirt.  
  
"I don't give a damn about modesty. Wear more petticoats, if you must. I'll fight through anything to get to you. But the knickers have to go, Love."  
  
He had said it with such obvious sincerity that she could do nothing else but acquiesce.   
  
"Good girl," he praised as his hand moved and sought out the fasteners at the crotch seam that held them together.  
  
He felt her dampness even before he started to open them. By the time he got them open enough to fit his hand in, his fingers were coated in her.  
  
He pulled his hand back up so that she could examine the evidence.  
  
"Wet, see?"  
  
She stared, either completely shocked or completely fascinated, he wasn't sure which. For his part, he was completely fascinated. He drew one of his fingers into his mouth and Tara gasped.  
  
"Will?" she asked, not at all sure what he was doing.  
  
He smiled back at her. "You're delicious, Love." He offered his fingers to her, but she closed her lips tight. He bent to kiss her and opened his mouth, knowing she would do the same. She did, and he slid one of his fingers inside.  
  
She was scandalized, but she did as he wished and let her tongue lick the liquid from it. It wasn't anything like she'd expected. Just a mild flavour that didn't sway her one way or the other.   
  
But the feeling of Will's finger in her mouth, letting her suck on it, was heavenly. And she think she got more of that ���wet' that he had talked about as she did it.  
  
It seemed to have a profound effect on him as well. His eyes rolled back in his head and his knees got weak and he looked like he just might faint. Tara smiled.  
  
He ruefully shook his head. "Oh, little girl, you are going to pay for that."  
  
His hand returned to her open knickers, fingers gently caressing the curls he found there.  
  
"So perfect, Love" he complimented as his fingers separated her curls and found the soft folds hidden within. Her hands moved to his shoulders, needing some stability so that she didn't fall. What he was doing was outrageous and shameful and oh so wonderfully glorious.  
  
He smiled as she rose up on her toes and her eyes fell closed. "That's it, Pet. Just ride it." He brushed her clit over and over, letting the feeling overwhelm her. He wanted her to have an real orgasm, feel how good it could be. The teasing kisses they'd shared last year had been satisfying enough for her then, but now that he was returned for good and would be able to make love to her every day, he was anxious for her to experience everything they could dare to attempt.  
  
Using his thumb to keep up the pressure on her clit, he sank one finger and then two inside of her, as far as he dared without chancing to break her hymen. That was one thing they could never fix, it would damage her beyond repair if all of this turned out to be a passing diversion for her. God, he hoped not.  
  
Slowly, he eased in and out of her and it didn't take long before the inexperienced girl was panting and screaming out her release. Knowing he shouldn't, because it would make his hunger for her even greater than it already was - if that were even possible - he took his time sipping her juices from his hand as she recovered her wits.  
  
"Oh, Will," she started, intent upon telling him how wonderful she felt, "That was-"  
  
But he interrupted her with a kiss. Open-mouthed and passionate and made her sated hunger reignite. She dropped her skirts so that she could wrap her arms around him, her dear William, the only man she had ever loved.  
  
As the afternoon grow late and they walked back to the house hand in hand, Tara stated boldly, "Come to me tonight, Will. Please."  
  
He looked uncertain, not wanting to raise anyone's censure, should they find them together.  
  
"That's not a good idea, Pet. We can't let anyone see us, remember? We have to keep this part of our relationship away from everyone's eyes."  
  
Tara just smiled. "Don't worry, brother dear, I shall arrange it."  
  
  
  
Jenny walked in the room, Rupert close behind her. Everything had been quiet for a while, so they assumed that Will had found a way to calm his sister down.   
  
They saw their children, asleep together, Tara's head resting on Will's shoulder. It was still so beautiful to see her children together. Rupert had argued that at twenty and fifteen, they were too old to be sleeping in the same bed, even for only one night. But they had always been so close and Will was home so infrequently from his studies at university that they had both agreed that it really could do no harm this once.  
  
"I told you William could handle her," Rupert whispered before leading Jenny from the room and off to bed. Tara seemed to be so shrewish in the week Will had been home, temperamental and always on the edge of reason. Not at all the sweet, introverted girl she was when he was away. But William alone seemed to be able to calm her down.  
  
When the door clicked closed, Will snuggled in closer to Tara and even though she was now peacefully asleep, his hand didn't stop its motion between her legs, bringing her gently to another sweet climax as she slept on.  
  
  
  
**Part 5**  
  
Jenny smiled as she put down her fork. All of her family, together, living happily under one roof again. It was worth a smile at least.  
  
"What are you smiling about, Mum?" Will couldn't help asking.  
  
"Just happy," she confided. "It's been too long since we were all here together. In the past, you'd be here but your mind would be wandering. Or Tara would be having one of her adolescent snits and take off to the Lord only knows where after a meal. But now, we're here, we're happy, we aren't going anywhere."  
  
Rupert smiled at his wife indulgently. "Well, only until William decides to take a wife. And Tara will be preparing for her debut soon."  
  
Both children looked up with identical expressions of horror.  
  
"But I don't want a wife!" Will bellowed as Tara replied, "I will not be trussed up and paraded around for whatever over-bred peacock takes a fancy to me!"  
  
"Tara," he decided to start with her, ladies first being the acceptable custom. "You will not be forced to marry against your will, you know that. Your mother and I want nothing but your happiness. You may take your time, my dear and find a man who is acceptable to your tastes and standards."  
  
"I won't do it," she stated.  
  
Will needed to do something ��� anything ��� to stop this farce. Tara was his and would not be put on display for other men to ogle.  
  
"Perhaps she's just not ready, Papa. She is a bit of a brat still. Give her another year or so to grow up a bit more." Tara stuck her tongue out at him in protest of his remark, but when he fidgeted in his seat, she saw it did not have the effect she had intended. She grinned in malicious glee.  
  
Rupert looked to his wife, who shrugged. "Well, perhaps we could give you a small delay. Wouldn't want some poor chap to have to hire a governess for his wife." He laughed at his own joke but no one else did.  
  
He moved on to Will's declaration to stay a bachelor. "William, I know you've always been a bit shy with women," Rupert knew nothing of Will's exploits at university, "and I can understand your reluctance. You probably don't remember this as you were quite young at the time, but I was much the same way after your mother died. Luckily, I got up the nerve to ask Jenny to court her."  
  
Will laughed. "You did no such thing! I invited her to dinner because I thought she was the most beautiful woman I'd ever seen." He looked across the table to Tara and his eyes and voice got very soft. "Like mother, like daughter, it seems."  
  
Neither of their parents was comfortable with the look that passed between their children then, but being parents and loving them as such, they did not understand the meaning of it.  
  
Later, in bed, Rupert and Jenny tried to talk about their concerns; but since they didn't have the foggiest notion exactly what it was they should be concerned about, it was a short and choppy discussion that got them nowhere.  
  
In the morning, when Rupert found Tara in William's bed, he assumed she had had another bad dream. He thought nothing of it when he shook Will's shoulder to waken him for their day visiting some of the Giles' business concerns. Luckily for his children, he didn't stay and see Tara shuffle to find her nightclothes or see Will pull Tara back into bed.  
  
  
  
"Don't you dare!" Will hollered when Tara came to the stables in a pair of breeches and called for her horse. The stable hands looked at Master William with varying degrees of concern. They were used to their mistress riding thusly attired, but apparently, seeing as how he'd been away, he had not been informed of her preferred mode of dress.  
  
Tara, also being accustomed to wearing this outfit, looked at Will with a look of confusion.  
  
"Get yer arse back in that house and Change. Your. Clothes." His voice was clipped and his jaw was tight. Tara knew he was greatly distressed, but she wasn't about to change.  
  
"I can't ride astride in those skirts, Will. And don't even try to tell me to use a sidesaddle. Papa once spent more than a month regretting that very same decision."  
  
Leaning down so that she would not misconstrue his meaning, he bit out, "Tara, I am your…" he just now remembered their audience. "…brother and I must insist that you change that revealing clothing into something more appropriate."  
  
Mischief danced in her eyes and she lowered her voice. "I am going riding in the country with you, dear… brother. And I think this revealing clothing is more than appropriate for that, don't you?"  
  
That was more than he was willing to allow and as he moved to dismount, Tara made a run for it. Not being entirely sure what he intended to do with her once he found her, she wasn't sure where she should hide. If that fire in his eyes had truly been anger, she was thinking that maybe White would hide her in his butler's pantry. Or even better, Mrs. Simmons, the housekeeper, could hide her in her rooms.  
  
If he wasn't quite as mad as he let on, then either his bedroom or hers would be a good place to hide. She split the difference and went to the barn and hid in the loft. It took him a while to find her and she had ample opportunity to get through one of the bottles of Papa's vintage wine that she had hidden up here over a year ago.  
  
The delicious feeling the wine left her with made it easy to disregard all of the voices that seemed to be calling for her outside as if in urgent distress. She couldn't discern exactly why they would be distressed; after all, she wasn't really hiding, she was in the barn. And as soon as anyone came into the barn, she would be happy to tell them she was here.  
  
She woke up, still very inebriated, to find herself on her stomach, perched over someone's knee and her breeches being lowered to her ankles. But those were Will's boots down there, so it must be Will and this must be another new game. She was about to say hello when she felt the first slap, hard across her bottom.  
  
"Don't you dare ever hide from me again," he spit out as he hit her again.  
  
"I am your love, I am your life ��� as you are mine. And you will not worry me like that again!" The third and fourth smacks weren't quite as hard as the first two and by the fifth, his hand was lingering just a bit on her bottom.  
  
The next spank was more of a smacking caress and with Tara's moan, the hurtful touches stopped and the melting caresses began.  
  
"I can't stand to have other men see you like that, can't you understand that?" He explained, voice soft as his touch. His tender stroke moved to between her thighs, where her juices were practically running down her leg. She heard his stifled chuckle.  
  
"Liked that, Love? Shall I spank you more often? Turn you over my knee and lift your skirts and paddle your delectable bottom?" Fingers moved inside and it took some control on his part not to go too far in. Once again, he wanted to forget about propriety and what was right. He loved her, with all of his soul and he wanted to be the one to take her maidenhead. His fingers alternated from her soft, swollen clit to her sweet, juicy cunt, each brush against her bringing her closer to the climax that would prove that she was his and only his.  
  
When she found it, her body shook as he held his hand over her mouth to prevent them from being interrupted.  
  
  
  
Will left to tell their parents that Tara had been found hiding in the barn. He admitted he had been angry about her breeches and she was hiding because of him. Rupert and Jenny smiled and shook their heads, having already predicted just such a scene when the overprotective Will got sight of how his little sister normally dressed for riding.  
  
When he returned to the barn, Tara had fallen asleep and he lay beside her, pulling her into his arms and joining her in slumber.  
  
"Will?" Tara asked later when she felt her brother start to stir.  
  
"Yes, Love, what is it?"  
  
Suddenly very shy, which, given their activities of the last two weeks was rather a feat, Tara finally gathered her courage and asked, "How do you, men I mean, how do ��� do you ��� what I mean to say is… That exquisite thing you do to me ��� when, when you touch me - that makes me fall apart and float up to the heavens ��� can you do that? I mean, I know you can't do that *exactly*, I don't think ��� men are built differently after all. But can you do that ��� can I do that to you?"  
  
It had taken her awhile but she had finally made her meaning clear. She hoped.  
  
Will smiled. Thank the gods above, she was finally ready to touch him. He thought he was going to go mad waiting for her. He pulled her under him and wound the soft hair at the nape of her neck through his fingers. Lowered his head for a kiss, wanting to slowly build up her passion so that when he finally began to show her what to do, she would want it as much as he did.  
  
The kiss started out tender; each feeling like this was new, no matter how often they did it. The gentle nudge of lips and tongue built the heat and Tara's unsure exploration of Will's lower back fanned the flames. Will reached around to take Tara's hand, wanting to show her just how much he needed her to touch him.  
  
"Master Will! Miss Tara?" Hawkes voice rose up from below.  
  
The siblings split apart in a flash, sliding their bodies to an appropriate distance away.  
  
"Hawkes, up here," Will called and began stretching as Tara feigned sleep. Hawkes climbed up the ladder and smiled when he saw his mistress' peaceful sleeping face.  
  
"I'm sorry, sir, but your father's been calling for ya."  
  
Will nonchalantly shook Tara's shoulder, grumping out, "Wake up, brat. Papa wants us," before standing and following the stable master out. At the door, he stopped, turned toward the loft, and giving his sister a smile that had captured the hearts of many a young lady, promised, "Until tonight, Love."  
  
  
  
**Part 6**  
  
Will sat on the carriage seat and tried to pretend he was anywhere else but where he was. His mother's smiling face didn't help with that. After this morning's… diversions, he forgot all about their dinner plans with Aunt Darla and Liam. Instead of spending the evening entertaining his sister, like he had promised, he'd be spending it trying to ignore his cousin Liam's thinly veiled insults.  
  
God, how he hated Liam. The poncy bastard had spent much of his life trying to make Will feel like an utter git and, until he'd left for university, it had been working. Once he thought about it though, with Tara now by his side, Will knew that there would be little the wanker could do to upset him.  
  
Tara had never been swayed by Liam's cheap shots at William's demeanor; in fact, she had often leapt to his defense. Those actions to protect him used to infuriate him. But now that they were older, and had admitted their true feelings for each other, it filled him with pride.  
  
As long as he had Tara, nothing else mattered. If only he could keep from showing that to everyone tonight.  
  
Will's gaze turned toward Tara and all he could think about were the wickedly delicious ways he wanted to use her body. And the even more depraved ways he wanted to teach her to use his.  
  
The sound of his father clearing his throat brought Will back to reality and the fact that he'd been sitting here ��� in his parents carriage ��� having achingly erotic fantasies about his sister ��� while his parents sat right there and watched him, was making him… hard as a rock.  
  
He groaned and turned, looking out the window, trying to focus on nothing but the sound of the birds and the sight of the green grass. He could practically feel it when Tara smirked at him.  
  
Damn girl was having fun at his expense because she didn't know what she was missing. Yet. But he'd do his damnedest to teach her.  
  
Later tonight.  
  
  
  
"Spike!" Liam greeted his cousin with the devil's own smile. "Welcome back into the fold," he extended a hand but Will pointedly ignored him and moved to kiss his aunt's cheek.  
  
"Liam, please refrain from using that disgusting moniker for your cousin," Aunt Darla bit out to her son. William had always been a shy and polite boy and she did not wish for him to feel uncomfortable in her home. "Poor William was six years old when he ripped his coat in the railroad yard. Pretend to be an adult and let it go."  
  
Will knew that after his mother's censure, Liam wouldn't dare use the nickname ��� where she could hear it.  
  
"That's all right, Aunt Darla," he offered kindly, "I'm sure Mommy's little Angel just can't resist remembering the glory days of his childhood." He turned to Liam with a sympathetic frown. "Life hasn't been good to you since you hit puberty, has it, old boy?"  
  
Rupert rolled his eyes as he took his wife's cloak. "Oh, dear Lord, they're at it again. I had so hoped they'd outgrow this one day."  
  
Darla smiled and with a twinkle in her eye for her two favourite young men, she replied indulgently, "Boys will be boys, Rupert. Let them alone."  
  
It was that comment that made Will regret his statement. He didn't want Tara to think him vulgar or childish, and he turned to her to apologise for his immature behavior. When he saw the laughter in her eyes, he stopped.  
  
"Make him pay," Tara encouraged softly as she handed her cape to a footman and followed her parents into the lounge.  
  
Will turned back to Liam with a malevolent grin. Allowing Liam to precede him, Will whispered, "Let the games begin."  
  
Dinner went smoothly, with the parents carrying the bulk of the conversation. Will was smart enough to spend time in conversation with everyone, except Liam, and not concentrate entirely on the girl whose presence made him want to find a quiet room for just the two of them.  
  
They had to uphold the proprieties.  
  
William not only informed them about some of his more socially acceptable adventures at Oxford, he made sure to boast of all of his family's recent accomplishments and drew Aunt Darla into revealing her plans for her next regal dinner party.  
  
After dinner, Rupert and Darla adjourned to the study to discuss some business matters while Jenny headed to the kitchen, to see about the staff and see if any healing poultices or medicinal herbs were needed. Both households had come, over the years, to rely on Mistress Jenny and her seemingly magical remedies.  
  
The children therefore went for a stroll in the gardens. Even though two of them were grown men of twenty and twenty-four, they still behaved as children when they were around each other. Tara began to feel as if she had stepped through time into the nursery.  
  
"Do you remember falling out of that tree, Spike?" Liam asked, pointing to a magnificent oak several hundred feet further into the grounds of the estate.  
  
"No, I don't, Angel. But I do remember that red-headed maid slapping your face behind that privet hedge."  
  
"You never did get anywhere with that maid you had a crush on, did you?"  
  
"How much are all your bastards costing you now, Angel? You're up to, what? Three? Or is four? Has Miss Devenaeu delivered yet?"  
  
They got quiet for a few more minutes.  
  
"So, my lovely cousin Tara," Angel asked, to break the unbearable silence, "are you excited about your debut next spring?"  
  
Tara stopped and, where Angel couldn't see, she grabbed Will's hand and squeezed it, stopping him from intervening.  
  
"No, dear Angel, I have managed to put my parents off for another year and I will continue to put them off until they understand that I don't wish to wed anyone, let alone some oafish brute who spends his days chasing women and his nights playing cards. Perhaps I'll use you as an example, do you think that will help?"  
  
Spike's laughter was really pissing Angel off.  
  
After another short and silent reprieve, Tara asked, "So, Angel, did you ever manage to woo into your… good graces that young woman you were stalking?"  
  
"What woman?" Spike asked, hating that he was out of the loop. If there was unfavourable information to be had about Angel, he wanted it. And "stalking" sounded very unfavourable.  
  
"No one. It's nothing," Angel answered shortly, sending pleading looks to Tara to let it drop. He should have known better.  
  
"Spike, you remember Reverend Hargrove's daughter, surely? The youngest one?"  
  
Spike barked out his laughter. "Drusilla? Drusilla Hargrove? That batty bint who thinks the stars can talk and other nonsense? Hargrove and his wife have tried to ship her off a couple of times, but she keeps finding her way back, I hear."  
  
Tara giggled and nodded. "The very same."  
  
Angel ignored them. "She's not that bad, Spike. Misunderstood, that's all."  
  
Spike looked incredulous.  
  
Angel, who really did care for the girl with an intensity he didn't understand himself, hoped to get some measure of civility into the conversation. He proclaimed lightly, "Well, she does agree with you on one point, cousin. She calls me her ���Angel'."  
  
Spike tried and failed to hide a smile. "S'all right, cousin. Many women have called me ���Spike'."  
  
Tara and Angel were frozen, shocked into place. Spike pulled out a cigarette and continued on into the house, intending to coerce his father into making their way home immediately.  
  
  
  
**Part 7**  
  
It wouldn't budge.  
  
No matter how many times he knocked or rattled the door or whispered his pleas through the keyhole, Tara's door stood firmly resolute against him. She couldn't be asleep; he'd made enough noise to practically wake the dead. And that only because his parents were firmly nestled in their own beds on the other side of the house.  
  
He'd known there was a problem. The entire way home from Aunt Darla's, Tara had been decidedly cool. Almost glacial.  
  
Sometimes his mouth just took over his brain and he said things before he'd had a chance to weigh their impact. If only Angel hadn't been so damned infuriating. Hell, Angel was always infuriating, had been from the time Will was born. He should have been prepared for it and not just blurted out whatever nonsense came to his mind to win his never-ending game of one-upmanship with his cousin.  
  
Not that what he'd said wasn't true.  
  
One of the blokes at school had known of his nickname and, given Will's prowess with women, the name had stuck. And spread. By the time he'd been in his third year, almost everyone had forgotten he'd had a name other than Spike. And it hadn't hurt his chances with any of the ladies he chose to seduce into his bed either.  
  
Will growled in frustration. This was getting him nowhere. He didn't want any of those other women, he wanted Tara ��� always had. It was just that obsession that had led him to seek the company of all of those women.  
  
This circular thinking was not going to get him inside Tara's bedroom. He had to focus. If he were a door, how would he open himself?  
  
  
  
Tara couldn't suppress a smile when she saw the door open. From the wrong side.  
  
"William, what did you do?" she scolded, as loudly as she could given that it was the wee hours of the morning.  
  
Will handed her the pins from her door before sauntering past and making himself comfortable on the bed, as if he hadn't a care in the world.  
  
She looked at the pins and then at him.  
  
"Why you vile, overbearing son of a cow! You had no right to do that! You had no right to come barging in here after I'd barred my door to you! You had no right to-"  
  
"Jealous?" he asked quietly, already knowing the answer.  
  
Tara hung her head. There was no way she could answer that question and save her pride. She had no right to be jealous, she knew that. She wasn't his… jealous wife. Even if she felt like it.  
  
In order to distract herself from an argument she didn't want to have, she held the door pins aloft, whispered, "Redux" and the pins returned to their original place in the door hinges.  
  
"I love that you can do that," Will told her softly, with pride. It was a special gift, she knew. Mum had taught them both from the time they were small that this was one of those things that had to be kept out of plain sight; only shown to those who could be implicitly trusted with the knowledge. Will was one of those people.  
  
Will patted the bed beside him and she came over and sat, very careful not to touch him. He wasn't having any of that. He pulled her close and wrapped his arms around her, resting his chin atop her head.  
  
"Tara, Love, I want to tell you a story. It's about a bloke who had feelings he couldn't explain for someone who he knew he couldn't have. Not only was she still a child, she was also a very close blood relation. Things too taboo for his provincial mind to contemplate. He couldn't touch her, he couldn't have her, and even the thoughts he was having made him spend so much time on bended on knee at chapel that he was walking funny." Tara giggled just a little and Will smiled before continuing.  
  
"What was the bloke supposed to do, I ask you. He was away from home for the very first time and all he could think about was her smile and her eyes and her hair and her hands… The git even took to writing some bloody awful poetry in her honour. One day, he was fumbling over trying to find just the right word to use in his stanza, when he looked down and realized he had used the word ���sister' in his love poem. He was appalled. If he was found out, he'd lose everything, including the one girl he couldn't live without, even if their relationship would forever be only a platonic one. So he ripped the paper into strips and ate it. Destroyed all evidence that such a poem had ever existed. And then he threw himself into forgetting her. Into forgetting how much he wanted her."  
  
Tara lifted her chin and looked at him. "And did this forgetting include the bedding of many women?"  
  
He hung his head, ashamed. "'fraid so, Love. He's a router, I'm sorry to say. No good ���til the end."  
  
She smiled, "Very bad, was he?"  
  
Will snuggled into her and let his lips brush the softness of her neck. "The very baddest."  
  
"I rode horses," she confessed.  
  
"To forget me?"  
  
"Well, maybe not forget. But to work off my frustration anyway."  
  
"Still frustrated?" he asked, biting her ear.  
  
She giggled. "Mmm, very. Did they really call you Spike?"  
  
He lay down on the bed and pulled her with him. Her nightdress traveled up and he took her hand and placed it on his thigh before he placed his warm hand in the same spot on her leg. "You tell me, Love."  
  
He slid his hand up just an inch and looked at her face, waiting for her to follow his lead. She had known this was coming. She'd asked for it. But now that the time was here…and she could see just how much she affected him…  
  
With a hesitant holding of her breath, Tara's hand moved up an inch as well. Another inch, as Will moved up also. When finally Will was cupping her small mound, Tara hand encircled Will's linen covered erection. And it grew even larger in her hand. She smiled.  
  
"That's it, Love, take your time." He was feeling her heat and her excitement filling his palm and he didn't care if she took days to do this, it was better than he had hoped it would be. Hell, he'd spent years thinking there was no way in heaven this would ever come to fruition. He'd never been so happy to be wrong before.  
  
With unsure touches, Tara explored Will's body. With a little courage, she got up the nerve to unbutton his trousers. She worried her bottom lip with her teeth as she peeled the cloth back and was disappointed to find another layer of soft, cream-coloured silk underneath it.  
  
"Now I know why you asked me to stop wearing knickers," she told him with a frustrated groan.  
  
"Do you want me to take them off?"  
  
She smiled with all the innocence of her fifteen years and it caused him not one iota of guilt to slide his trousers and drawers down and off, slipping his socks off as well. He looked down at himself, lying in the lavender silk of his sister Tara's bed, wearing nothing but a gray silk shirt, now unbuttoned completely. Beautiful Tara was next to him, bare to the waist, nightdress around her waist, taking deep breaths to calm herself at the sight of him. He said a quick and silent ���thank you' to the gods.  
  
Her hand finally reached out and tentatively touched a fingertip to the head of his cock and he inhaled in a long hiss at the sensation. Bolder now, because of his reaction to her first touch, she wrapped a fist around the head and gently squeezed, watching his face the whole time.  
  
Every touch made him sigh or groan or smile or hiss and every touch made her love him a little bit more. A drop of fluid escaped from the tip and, wondering if it was the same substance that made her "wet", she lifted a finger to her mouth and tasted it.  
  
The groan Will gave made her giggle but subsequent tastes made her wet. Will had given up on touching her. This was too new, too exciting, too nerve-wracking to do anything but lay back and try not to come too quickly.  
  
He knew what she was going to do, he could see it in her eyes. But come hell or high water, he could not have made himself stop her when she leaned down and ran her tongue from base to tip before taking the head in her mouth. That was all he could take and he exploded with a roar into her mouth as she gasped then swallowed. It was much saltier than what had come before and she pulled away before he had finished.  
  
Watching his body shudder and twitch gave her a great feeling of serenity and feminine pride. She had finally made him feel as wonderful as he had been making her feel.  
  
When his body calmed and he looked at her from underneath of those long eyelashes of his, she thought she would die.  
  
Using a hand to guide her back, he laid her down on the bed and pulled the nightgown off her body. Getting himself comfortable between her legs, he put his mouth to her *there* and Tara felt like the universe had opened up and swallowed her. She didn't know just lips and tongue and teeth could create such marvelous feelings and even though Will tried to postpone her release, she came with sobbing breaths, back arching off the bed like a bridge.  
  
Will didn't want to leave her, even to go back to his own bedroom, but he didn't think their charade would be able to withstand being found together in bed again so soon. So he kissed her and held her until the sun came up. As he rose from the bed, he bid her sweet dreams.  
  
"And to you as well, Spike."  
  
He smiled all the way back to his room and had very sweet dreams indeed.  
  
  
  
**Part 8**  
  
"William, would you come in here for a moment?"  
  
William sauntered down the last two steps and turned to join his father in the library.  
  
"Yes, Papa?"  
  
"William, I'm afraid Mr. Wilkins has not been forthright with us. I have been going over these manifests and the goods sold do not equal the goods we shipped. I am afraid I have a previous engagement with Ethan this afternoon, but I would like this taken care of immediately. Could you go into town today and have a chat with him please?"  
  
William's blue eyes turned to an icy blue. This was his favourite part of dealing with the Giles' business dealings. Making someone pay for fucking with them. His father didn't have the stomach for it, but William relished going in for the kill.  
  
"Of course. Would you like me to put an advert in the paper for a new shipping manager while I'm there?"  
  
Rupert barely looked up from his papers. "I suppose you'd better. It will save us the time next week. And if it gets in today, perhaps we can have it settled before the South African shipment arrives two weeks hence."  
  
William turned to go change; he didn't want to get blood on his dove grey suit, Tara liked him in this suit.  
  
"Oh, and William?" his father called after him. Will took a step back and looked back through the doorway.  
  
"Yes, Papa?"  
  
"Would you mind terribly taking Tara with you? I still owe her two bonnets and a dress from her temper tantrum last week."  
  
Will smiled, knowing exactly why his sister had been acting up. She'd been missing him, missing his touch, while Robert was visiting.  
  
"I'd be delighted. Where is the little hellion now, do you know?"  
  
Rupert sighed. "Try the garden. Your mum said she was going to gather some spices to dry today. Perhaps she took your sister with her."  
  
Will took a left in the hall instead of a right, heading to the kitchens and the gardens that lay beyond them. He stole an apple as he went by, winking at a scullery maid as he did, and the poor girl blushed to the roots of her curling blonde hair.  
  
Opening the door, he saw his mum and his sister both on their knees in the garden, gathering leaves, berries, and seeds and placing them in a long garden basket.  
  
"Oy! Tara! I'm to take you into town and buy you things for being a wicked girl last week!" Then he turned and re-entered the house. Tara's eyes opened wide in shock for a moment until she realized that Will meant 'wicked' for her fits of temper, not wicked for what they'd been doing behind closed doors. Because really, what he was doing to her was reward enough.  
  
She shook herself out of this dangerous train of thought and excused herself to her mother to go upstairs and change into a dress presentable enough for the city.  
  
She didn't see Will as she went up, but her maid Tessa was there to help her change so Spike must have told her they were going into town. Tessa was packing a valise with a dinner dress, a traveling dress and cloak, her sleeping gown and another day dress.  
  
"Master Will said you'd be gone overnight so I'm packing your trunk for you, Miss. I'll put your ribbons and things in the blue hatbox. Are you sure you don't want me to go with you, Miss Tara? It's no trouble really. Master William said I wouldn't be needed but a lady needs her maid to help her dress; men don't seem to understand that."  
  
Tara held her smile back as she wondered what Spike had in mind for tonight if he told her maid and presumably his valet to stay behind. That would only leave Mr. and Mrs. Talbot, the in residence butler and cook at the city house as chaperones. Well, not that they \*needed\* chaperoning, they were brother and sister after all. She did laugh at that.  
  
"No, Tessa, I'm sure I'll be fine. You take the rest of the day and tomorrow off. I'm sure Mrs. Talbot can help me if I need assistance."  
  
"If you're truly sure, Miss Tara?"  
  
"I'm sure. Now help me into the lavender muslin, it'll be comfortable for the carriage ride into London."  
  
When Tara opened the front door, Will was there waiting for her. Moreover, there was no coachman in attendance.  
  
"Where's Jason?" she asked as he jumped down from his perch on the driver's platform.  
  
"I gave Jason the day off. As I gave your Tessa the day off and my Stephen a day off. I'm perfectly capable of handling a carriage and four."  
  
He pulled the step down and held out his hand to assist her up into the seat.  
  
"I'll take your word for it, dear brother, as I have never seen you even attempt to drive a carriage on your own."  
  
Spike kissed her hand and gave her a sly wink. "I've got all kinds of skills you have yet to see, milady. Now allow me to be your humble and most appreciative servant today." He replaced the step and closed the small door of the phaeton. "I shall endeavor to please you in any way I can."  
  
Tara giggled madly as Spike took his place on the driver's seat.  
  
He maneuvered the team with great skill she was pleased to note, even on the hilly turns near the river. She'd just been getting warm and comfortable in the sun, just beginning to doze when she heard him slow the horses and stop the carriage.  
  
  
  
**Part 9**  
  
The carriage pulled to a stop and Tara looked up to see Will pivoting in his seat. When he had spun half-way round, he climbed down onto the bench opposite her and his over-serious expression gave her pause.  
  
"Will, is something wro-"  
  
"Tara, Love, we have to talk."  
  
She'd read enough of the Bronte sisters works to know that when a man wanted to have a serious talk, it was never a good thing.  
  
"Is something wrong?"  
  
"I am sorry to say that there is. Something is very wrong. You see, I'm supposed to be driving you to London, but-" He suddenly grabbed her hand and pulled her into his lap. "I find that I just cannot keep my hands off of you long enough to do it."  
  
Tara's sweet giggle didn't last long when Will pulled her down for a kiss.  
  
He knew, deep down, that he shouldn't be doing this. He knew that they were breaking every moral rule there was. He knew that if anyone found out, there would be hell to pay and his father would probably literally kill him - if the law didn't get him first. He knew he was going to Hell and that pit was going to get deeper and hotter every time he touched his sister.  
  
He didn't care.  
  
One touch of her lips, one caress of her fingers and his mind and body were gone, to a place outside of this mortal existence.  
  
He gently persuaded her mouth to open and he swept inside to take possession of her in some small measure of retaliation for the way that she seemed to completely control him. Her soft moan and the relaxing of her body let him move his seduction forward and turn her so that her skirts were around her waist and she was straddled on his lap. Her arms went around his neck, pulling him closer. His hands went to her thighs, kneading soft flesh and warming it to his touch.  
  
She was driving him insane and she'd barely laid a finger on him. He cupped her bottom and pulled her in closer, letting her feel just how mad he was for her.   
  
But what he wanted to do most, he couldn't do. At just this moment, the argument for saving her virginity was wearing thin. She was his, would always be his. She'd never have another man. Never marry. Never have children and a family of her own.  
  
His hands dropped to his sides and he pulled away from the kiss. Confused, she sat back, looking wounded.  
  
"No, Love, come here." Wrapping a hand behind her neck, he pulled her in close until their foreheads were touching. The only sound for a few minutes was the deep, heavy breathing from both of them as they tried to calm their raging emotions.  
  
"Do you want children?" he asked, seemingly out of the blue.  
  
"Children?" Her brain was still focused on kissing him and she had a hard time catching up.  
  
"Do you," he repeated, "or did you ever, want children?"  
  
"Um, I guess, I hadn't really thought about it. Why?"  
  
"Because, Love, I can't give you children. That's the reason siblings are disallowed to marry. In-breeding. I can't give you children." He sounded so sad and she wanted to reassure him.  
  
"Will, its all right. I don't need children. I have you. You are all I want. All I've ever wanted."  
  
"Love, it's not that simple. There are devices I can use, a barrier to stop you from conceiving, but they aren't always true; they don't always work. We can't take that chance."  
  
"What is it you're saying? I don't understand. Are you saying we can't be together anymore because you're afraid of something that may or may not happen at some point in the unforeseeable future?"  
  
Will sighed. The thought of never being with Tara this way again, never touching her, never kissing her, was more than he could bear. Even if it took away her chance for a family of her own. "I don't know what I'm saying. I think I'm saying that I love you and I don't ever want to hurt you. But I want you so badly that I'll probably end up doing just that."  
  
Tara ran a hand through Will's soft brown curls and they twisted themselves around her fingers as they always did, welcoming her.  
  
"We've done well so far, Will. We'll keep on as we have been and we'll satisfy ourselves in other ways. Every other way. Whatever they have, we'll do it. Please, Will? Anything. I'll do anything; give up anything, everything to be with you. Don't you love me that much too? Please say you do."  
  
Will pulled her close and held her so tightly he was afraid he might break her, but he couldn't let go. "Of course, baby. I just worry that you'll tire of me. Tire of my not being able to give you what you want, what you need."  
  
She smiled against his shoulder. "You are all I'll ever need."  
  
  
  
Will delivered Tara to the house on Seville Street, and then walked to the offices of his father's shipping company. He was somewhat glad he hadn't spent all of his energy in the carriage with Tara, as he had intended to before he started worrying too much, because Richard Wilkins needed some convincing that his services were no longer required and that he would soon be in Ruthin Gaol for what he had stolen from the company.  
  
"And Wilkins," he warned as he wiped the blood off his fingers, "Don't try running. Because if you do, not only will the Bow Street Runners be after you, but I'll come after you personally."  
  
William put a timid but honest fellow named Levinson in the main office temporarily until the manager's position could be filled once again. The boy seemed eager to prove his worth and William had never known him to shirk his duties. He was eager to do well and had an excellent working knowledge of the administrative end of the business.  
  
"Well met, Jonathon. If you need anything, send a message to my father's home on Seville Street and they will get word to us, all right?"  
  
"Yes sir, Mr. Giles. Thank you."  
  
The unpleasant task attended to, Will made his way home, stopping at the Times to place an advertisement for a new manager. The route took him past much of the city's commercial district and the warm sun and the prospect of a night alone with Tara had him whistling a tune and window shopping.  
  
He stopped in front of a shop with a display of ladies boudoir potions in the window. Creams, powders and accessories in different colours and fragrances, all wrapped up in very feminine packaging. Stepping inside, he avoided the shopkeeper and browsed around, hoping to find a surprise for his sister.  
  
He found it in a collection of products with the apt name of ���Eternal Love'. The scent was heady and romantic and perfect for Tara. He called the shopkeeper over and told her to wrap up one of everything in the collection. Very pleased with himself, he couldn't help smiling, thinking how delighted Tara would be with the gift.  
  
The shopkeeper, thrilled with having a client who could afford to say "one of everything" as if it were of no consequence, smiled also.  
  
"She must be one very special lady."  
  
"She is."  
  
"Wife?"  
  
"Sister."  
  
Anya frowned. Men didn't usually get smiles like that for their sisters. Maybe he was thinking of someone else. He was probably buying this as a birthday gift for his sister but thinking about his own special lady. Hoping for more sales to a man who not only had money, but also had more than one important woman in his life, Anya engaged him in conversation while she wrapped his purchases.  
  
"Is it your sister's birthday?"  
  
"No."  
  
"Anniversary?"  
  
"No."  
  
"Special day of another kind?"  
  
"No, just a gift I think she'll like." The lecherous grin that formed on his face then, as he talked about his sister, made Anya shut her mouth and wrap his purchases, vowing to herself that she didn't care what her customers did once they left the store, as long as they spent lots of money while they were here.  
  
  
  
**Part 10**  
  
"Good night, Talbot. That will be all for tonight, I'll see you and your missus on the morrow." Will turned to head upstairs but his butler forestalled him.  
  
"But Master William, Miss Tara will need Mrs. Talbot's assistance with her boudoir."  
  
William laughed. "I assure you, Talbot, Miss Tara is perfectly capable of getting herself ready for bed. Don't worry yourself. Go spend what's left of the night with your lovely wife."   
  
With a smile he answered, "As you wish, sir," before hurrying off to find his wife.  
  
Will smiled and continued up the stairs, removing the gold and pearl studs from his shirt as he did. He pulled out the cufflinks as he entered his bedroom, appreciating the expanse of his oversize bed. Not that they needed that much room, but it was nice to know it was there if he chose to be experimental.  
  
He threw his shirt on a chair and dropped his studs and cufflinks onto the bureau before kicking off his shoes and letting them drop on the floor by his bed.  
  
Turning back the way he had come, he went in search of his errant sister. She'd dismissed herself immediately after dinner, just as he'd been fantasizing about eating her for dessert. He took a left in the hall, heading for her bedroom. It was empty, not even a sign of her dinner dress in evidence. He crossed the room and heard the sweet sound of her humming as he neared the bathing chamber. One of Erik Satie's compositions if he wasn't mistaken.  
  
She was in the next room. In the bath. Warm. Wet. Naked.   
  
He silently entered and closed the door behind him. Smiled as he watched her relax. Clouds of steam rose from the water, making succulent salty droplets appear on her skin. She was rosy and flush from the heat. Skin that he knew was soft and perfect in its imperfection. Small freckles on her arms and shoulders, the scar of a cut from when she tried to teach herself to whittle on her thumb.   
  
The moisture permeated the air, making soft tendrils of hair curl on her nape. Eyes closed, she sighed softly and let her head lull to the side. She looked so comfortable, he almost didn't want to disturb her.  
  
Remembering his gift, he silently retreated to his own chamber and returned to her room with the boxes of lotions, powders, bath salts and oils. He placed the lot on a recamier and choose a bottle of the seductively sensuous-smelling soap crystals.  
  
Returning to her bathing chamber, he let himself in as stealthily as he had the first time. Tara was still peaceful and serene; not even humming now, she appeared to be asleep. William knelt by the bathtub and took her bathing sponge in hand. As his sister's eyes slowly drifted open, Will played the intimate ladies' maid, soaping up the sponge and using it to wash Tara's body. If his touches lingered longer than a bona fide maid's would - if his fingertips brushed places a maid's wouldn't dare, neither complained.  
  
Tara wished several times that she'd had the nerve to speak, but the air seemed charmed in a way, and the slightest sound might break the spell that was engulfing them both as easily as the steam from the bathwater. His hands caressed her, his fingers teased her, his touches brought her to the edge and tumbled her over.  
  
When he'd had his fill, Will reached into the water and lifted Tara, lowering his head for their first kiss of the night as he turned toward her bedroom. Her arms, languid from the heat and his touches, found their way around his neck, her fingers tangling in the hair curling at the nape of his neck.  
  
When he reached the bed, he lowered her to it, following her down immediately, covering her heated body with his own. More kisses followed the first, each one unhurried, the two lovers savouring the taste of each other.  
  
Mouths allowed access, lips embraced, tongues made love. William luxuriated in the only carnal penetration he could permit himself.  
  
Unless…  
  
He pulled himself away from her willing body and stood, walking into the next room and retrieving one of his gifts. When he returned, he placed the bottle on the nightstand and leaned down and kissed her before removing his trousers and socks.  
  
Crawling back onto the bed, he kissed and licked his way up her body. Finding the sensitive pulse point on her neck, he ran his tongue over it once before opening his mouth and biting down gently. Sometimes he felt like he could happily devour her, taking her into himself and joining them for eternity.  
  
The carnal mating of teeth and skin made emotions rise in Tara that she'd never felt before. Seductive. Womanly. Earthy. Passionate. Primal.  
  
Her breath quickened and her pulse raced and Will felt the new rhythm under his tongue.  
  
He bit into her shoulder. The hollow of her throat. The side of her breast.  
  
He suckled her and bit harder into the soft mound when she arched into him. Moving southward, he found all the places that made her moan the loudest; the places where only he knew she liked to be touched.  
  
She was feverish, getting light-headed and slightly delirious; she'd never felt this bold, this wanton, not even in his arms.  
  
The sudden chill when he sat up confused her.  
  
"Spike?"  
  
He looked her over with hooded eyes; ran a hand down her throat and between her breasts, settled it on her hip.  
  
"Turn over, Love."  
  
As she turned, she saw him reach for something out of the corner of her eye.  
  
"I bought you a present today," he told her. "Just some things for your toilette, but I think the woman in the shop suspected something. She asked who it was for and I told her it was for my sister. I think something in my voice made her hear 'my lover' in my words."  
  
She didn't say anything.  
  
"Was I too indiscreet?" he asked. While waiting for her answer, he poured some of the bath oil into his hand and warmed it. "No," she said finally. "It's all right." She wasn't sure if it was or not. Did brothers normally buy such items for their sisters? She and Will had always been very intimate, even before they'd become��� intimate. She didn't think it odd if he bought her very personal items like penoirs or perfume. Maybe the rest of the world wasn't like that.  
  
"What would they say, do you think?" He asked, hands - now slick from the oil - running down the curve of her back. Lowering his head, he licked a trail down her spine to the top of her derriere. "If they knew what we were doing?"  
  
"Who?" she asked, but her voice raised an octave because his tongue had just pushed into the crevice of her bottom.  
  
"Them. The world."  
  
His hands, still warm and slick, spread across her backside and kneaded the flesh, opening her up for his questing tongue.  
  
He'd never done this before, never really wanted to, there was no need. A woman was a woman was a woman. Any woman who wasn't Tara, that is. And his urges didn't require any particular outlet: a hole was a hole.  
  
But the normal course for making love was forbidden to them, making it so much more covetous for being impermissible.  
  
But that made the less��� conventional methods of love-making seem more legitimate.  
  
His mouth moved to scrape teeth along her rounded bottom as his hands found their way to the entrance he sought.  
  
"How would they feel if they knew we loved each other?" he asked, as if no hesitation had come to their discourse.  
  
His lubricated finger pushed past the ring of muscle to the heated tightness within. Her body tensed slightly so his other hand found her clit and massaged it gently. "How would they feel if they knew I touched to like this? If they knew you let me? If they knew how much I want you?"  
  
She was conscious of his words, but not of their meanings. The ideas behind them made her subconscious imagination flame with longing.  
  
His finger was inside her, but not in the place it normally occupied when it was inside her. She didn't know, she didn't care; she focused on how good it felt once the initial pain had subsided somewhat.  
  
His finger was joined by another and she felt herself being stretched. It was so different from the other thing, so much more intense. She felt his penis slide along the cleft of her buttocks. She knew then where this was going and she may have been alarmed except that it seemed they were finally - at last - going to be joined as one as she wouldn't have stopped it for the world.  
  
It hurt. Considerably.  
  
Something that large wasn't meant to fit in a hole that small. But her body stretched and loosened, accommodating him. And it didn't hurt anymore. It felt��� like heaven.  
  
He held himself still with every ounce of will he possessed. Let her passage conform and welcome him.  
  
Joined. As one. No end and no beginning.  
  
"I love you," he hissed, as if the words could not be contained. "I've loved you since I was fourteen. I've needed you, I've needed this���"  
  
He couldn't hold back any more and with great care for her virginity - so to speak - he moved slowly, propelling slightly further in before retreating again.  
  
She cried out and words, nonsense words, spilled from her mouth. Words that didn't make any sense, but did.  
  
*Brother*, the most common among them.  
  
He smiled. She was so very bent.  
  
If he didn't distract himself, he was going to spill himself before she'd reached her pleasure. He angled himself into a comfortable position and leaned on an elbow so his other hand could find her womanly flesh. Alternating between her clit and her wet quim, he brought her closer to the peak.  
  
"Would like that, would you?" he insinuated in a hushed whisper. "To let them all know that I'm your lover? To tell all of society that your brother and your lover are one and the same. That you let your brother kiss you, take you, fuck you insensible."  
  
She nodded.  
  
"Want to tell them too," he admitted, his own climax imminent. "Want to take you out and show you off and tell the world how much I love my own sister."  
  
He couldn't hold off any longer. "Love you, Baby," he told her and bit into her shoulder, making her muscles clench around his cock as they found completion together.  
  
They kissed and touched each other as they came down, separated and turned so that they could lay with him holding her in his arms, cradling her head on his chest.  
  
"I love you so much, Will," she whispered, later. "Is that so wrong? Or wrong to want to tell everyone what you mean to me? I treasure having you in my life, having had you all my life. But if I had not, we could truly be together. We could be wed and live together as man and wife as we were meant to."  
  
He closed his eyes, willing away the pain. Man and wife. As dear a dream as it was, it would never be. But they would have everything else. He would make Tara happy for the rest of their lives, in whatever way he could.  
  
"My love, you are the wife of my heart, my body and my soul. If I could make that in law I would but I can't. It will just have to be as it is. Can you accept that?"  
  
She nodded but didn't speak. He felt her tears on his skin.  
  
Pulling her up to him, he set about distracting her from her pain the best way he knew how.  
  
He just hoped she wouldn't be too sore tomorrow, they still had to go dress shopping.  
  
  
  
**Part 11**  
  
The sunlight in his eyes woke him. Tara must not have drawn the curtains sufficiently the night before. He'd have to warn her about that. A stray eye in the darkness could reveal their secret and then all would be lost. London was more densely populated than their country estate and you never knew who might be out and about at night.  
  
He reached a hand out to her side of the bed, but the sheets were bare and cool. Smiling, he rose and strode into his own bedroom, pulling a pair of chestnut-coloured trousers from his wardrobe, along with a crisp white shirt and his Hessian boots. He dressed quickly, humming a tune to himself that was quite light-hearted. He felt as if the world were spread out before him like a beautiful kingdom and all he needed was to go and find his queen.  
  
She wasn't in the morning room or the kitchen and Mrs. Talbot assured him that she had yet to see the mistress that morning. Thinking perhaps she had gone riding in the park, Will smiled and went to the stables, it would be delightful to be riding beside his love on this fine morning, greeting their neighbors and being seen together out in the open, even if no one else saw them as a couple.  
  
Tara's horse, Guinevere was still in the stall beside his stallion. His mind flashed with all the places she might still be. He strode back into the house, still humming that merry tune.  
  
"Good morning, Talbot," he greeted his butler cum valet cum footman cum jack-of-all-trades when no other staff was in residence at Giles House in London. "Have you seen your mistress this morning? I think she's playing a game of hide-and-seek with me." He smiled, a bright toothy grin that made his servant smile as well.  
  
"No sir, I'm afraid I haven't. I haven't seen her since last night when Lady Darla Giles arrived."  
  
Spike frowned. "Aunt Darla? She was *here*? Last night?"  
  
"Yes, milord," Talbot assured him. "The early hours of this morning it was. In a great state she was too, but still wanting to be courteous. Wouldn't come in until Miss Tara came down and assured her it would be all right. They went into the salon and I planned to wait, but the mistress told me it would be all right and I should return to bed."  
  
Will looked very thoughtful. He hadn't known Darla and Liam were in town. Or his aunt at any rate, the man had said nothing about Angel.  
  
"Was Angel with her?"  
  
"Who, milord?" Talbot asked, quite puzzled.  
  
"Angel, I mean Lord Liam Giles. Was he with Darla?"  
  
"Not that I saw, sir. He may have been waiting outside, but considering her distressed state, I would think that if the gentleman were present, he would have tried to help ease her sorrow."  
  
Will dismissed Talbot and ran to the salon, hoping to find either Tara or some clue as to her whereabouts.  
  
Throwing open the doors, the room looked absolutely normal. As if it hadn't been disturbed. And no sign of his sister.  
  
He went upstairs to her bedroom and checked her wardrobe. All of the clothing she'd brought with her was there, except for her nightgown and robe. She did kept several dresses here in case an occasion arose that he had not anticipated and he bellowed for Mrs. Talbot to see if she could tell him which pieces were missing. There was a riding habit here, but if she kept two in residence then he would know that she had dressed for a long ride.  
  
What he couldn't figure out is why she hadn't awoken him to assist or why he hadn't even heard her dressing.  
  
Mrs. Talbot assured him that everything was in order. Miss Tara kept three day dresses, two gowns, five dinner dresses and a riding habit in the wardrobe. All of her shoes were accounted for as well. Her night things were kept in the chest under the window. Mrs. Talbot checked and all of those were accounted for. Of course Miss Tara had brought a night dress with her and that was missing, as well as the robe Mrs. Talbot had unpacked yesterday when they arrived.  
  
The woman seemed quite disturbed about her mistress and suggested sending Mr. Talbot to alert the police, but Will assured her that wouldn't be necessary; he was sure there was a simple explanation.  
  
There had to be.  
  
He'd ride to his aunt's townhouse and talk to Darla. He was sure she would be able to shed some light on the mystery. Tara, after all, was just as gifted with healing as their own dear mother and someone had perhaps taken gravely ill and it was necessary for Tara to go at once to assist. Liam probably was holding the carriage right outside the door, Will assured the dear lady who had served them well for as long as he could remember. In a life and death crisis, his sister would think nothing of just rushing out to the carriage without a thought to her own welfare.  
  
The explanation seemed to placate Mrs. Talbot and she went back to her duties, but still a mite distressed over what could have been so important as to make the mistress leave the house in her nightclothes.  
  
Spike headed for the stables.  
  
He pushed Lancelot harder than he ever had before and reached his aunt's London house in mere minutes. Severe banging upon the door brought Smythe, and Will pushed past the reserved butler, demanding to know as he did so the location of his sister.  
  
"Mistress Tara Giles is not in residence, sir," Smythe told him haughtily, not taking kindly to being pushed aside like that. "No one is in residence except Cook and I and Andrew the footman. We have not seen her ladyship in more than a month."  
  
Will turned and stared at him disbelieving.  
  
"You're lying. She's here. She was at my home last night and spirited my sister away because of some crisis. I demand to know what's going on."  
  
Without waiting for an answer, he flew through the rooms one by one, but found nothing disturbed, not a person to be found. He startled Cook in the kitchen and asked her where her mistress was, but Cook reiterated Smythe's story that that hadn't seen any member of the family for quite some time.  
  
Sneering at her lies, he ran up the steps and checked the bedrooms and nursery, but once again, there was nothing and no one to be found.  
  
Without speaking to any of the servants, he left the house and rode hard for home.  
  
The Talbots listened to his story and were overcome with grief. Something sinister had happened they were sure of it. Mr. Talbot imagined some intriguing story involving stolen jewels and Lord Liam being shot and needing Miss Tara's assistance, but Will highly doubted that his relations were jewel thieves.  
  
He admitted that he had always thought there was something odd about his aunt. He remembered being a child and thinking she had poisoned her husband, but he couldn't remember where he had gotten that fanciful notion.  
  
The three of them made a closer inspection of the house, and the grounds, hoping for some clue, maybe even a note, as to the what could have happened to Tara but no sign was in evidence.  
  
Will sent Talbot for the police and had a messenger sent to their parents. He considered delaying the message to his parents until after he had spoken to the authorities, but knew that they would want to know immediately. If she were found before they arrived, another messenger could be sent to intercept them on the road.  
  
  
  
**Part 12**  
  
It had been three days and questions had been asked and answered several times over. Strangers had inspected every inch of both their home and Darla's. Every available officer and detective was on the case, asking questions, passing out pictures of the beautiful blonde girl who had disappeared so mysteriously.  
  
Darla Giles was missing as well and Liam Giles, found at their country home, had been questioned and detained, but his mother had disappeared the week previously and he had no idea where she was. As this was quite normal for his temperamental mother, he didn't think to question it.  
  
Yes, he told them, his mother was quite fond of Tara, but in no uncommon way. In fact, it was William she always seemed to have the highest regard for. Liam was no help at all.  
  
Questions had been asked on the first day about why William's bed had not been slept in the night before. Mrs. Talbot interrupted to say that she had made the master's bed that morning but with Miss Tara missing, she had completely forgotten to finish her duties.  
  
Will didn't know why the woman had lied for him, but he was grateful. He supposed that all of the staff were used to Tara's fits and nightmares and were accustomed to Will being the only one who could comfort her at such times. He supposed that the dear woman was only trying to help soothe over something that outsiders wouldn't understand.  
  
If they knew the truth, no one would understand.  
  
On the third day, Rupert Giles hired every available Bow Street Runner to find his daughter.  
  
But still, she wasn't to be found.  
  
Two weeks in, almost the entire staff had moved into the London house. Rupert took care of business as best he could, but William was useless to anyone. He would not be placated, not be consoled. He slept, *when* he slept, in Tara's bed and no one had had the nerve to comment on it.  
  
Friends and neighbors had called round to offer condolences and ask questions out of morbid curiosity but William had no patience for them and it was left to Jenny or Rupert to deal with the busybodies.  
  
Three weeks in most of the ships they had contacted had reported back that they had discovered no stowaways or suspicious passengers. Except for the missing women, life in London was going on as it always did.  
  
Except for William and his parents. Rupert and Jenny had accepted the fact that their daughter was dead and it was only a matter of time now before the police arrived one day to tell them they had found her body.  
  
But William would not listen. He raged that they were unfaithful, that they didn't deserve her, that when she returned he would spirit her away from the faithless parents who would give up on her so easily.  
  
They knew it would take time for him to adjust. They gave him time.  
  
Day after day Will rode to the police station and to the headquarters of the Runners. Day after day there was no news.  
  
On the fifty-first day, Mrs. Talbot served roast lamb, Tara's favourite dish. On the fifty-first day, Will fired Mrs. Talbot. Jenny ran after the sobbing woman, assuring her that Will's mandate would not hold; that she was mistress here and Mrs. Talbot would always have a position in her home.  
  
While Jenny was away, Rupert lost patience with his son for the first time, demanding to know what right he had to give orders in his father's house. Demanding to know what made Will's grief more terrible than their own. Demanding to know why William thought his affection and his alone made him worthy.  
  
"Because I love her!" Will screamed.  
  
"I know," Jenny said quietly as she re-entered the room.  
  
"We all love her," Rupert yelled back in frustration, but William just sneered at him.  
  
"You don't get it, old man, you are so fucking blind! I LOVE her! She is my life, my love, my world! I LOVE HER!"  
  
Rupert was speechless.  
  
"I know," Jenny repeated, compassionately. "And she loved you too, but -"  
  
Will smiled but it wasn't a comforting smile. "But what you don't know, do you, is that we were together. We had consummated our love. We were going to be together for eternity." He looked at his father and sneered. "She wasn't going to marry some well-placed popinjay with the right connections. I wasn't going to find some dowdy miss and settle down to a lovely house in the country and have you a dozen grandchildren. *She* was the one for me. She wasn't my sister, you self-righteous bastard, she was my wife!"  
  
Neither of them moved as William ran from the room and slammed the door behind him.  
  
When Rupert recovered his wits, he asked his wife, "What just happened here? Why did our son just say those vile things to us?" He was desperate for an answer that made sense.  
  
Running a calming hand through his hair, she explained, "He's hurting, Rupert. He's hurting so badly and I think he wants someone to hurt as badly as he does."  
  
"So those things weren't true?" he asked hopefully, "He was just -"  
  
"No, they were probably true," he interrupted with a forced calm in her voice. "They've always been unnaturally close. I didn't know it had gone that far, I promise you I didn't. But they are our children, Rupert. And we have to love them no matter what they do. This isn't a passing fancy for them. For him," she amended sadly, thinking of her dead daughter. "They've been devoted to each other their whole lives. There was nothing anyone could have done or said to stop it. He truly loves her in that way and he's mourning her as if he has lost a wife. We have to find him and help him, Love. We have to see this through. We've already lost one child."  
  
It took a while to process, a while for Rupert's mind to wrap itself around all that had been revealed tonight and, if not accept it, at least realize that it didn't matter. What Jenny said was true. They had lost one child already and no matter what, he loved his son.  
  
He called for Talbot and found that William had left on horseback some minutes ago. Settling in the carriage, they made their way through town, trying to decide where to look. So intent were they on their son, that they didn't even see the lorry that turned a corner too quickly and ran them down.  
  
  
  
**Part 13**  
  
*Three months later*  
  
  
Jonathan Levinson pulled his coat tighter around his neck. The days were getting shorter and nights were getting colder. The closer he had gotten to his employer's country estate, the darker the skies had become as clouds foretold of a harsh storm to come. Jonathan, being a bit timid and superstitious, couldn't help feeling as if it were some sort of omen.  
  
He'd only been summoned here once before, not long after the tragic death of the elder Mr. Giles and his wife. He was told by the Giles' family solicitor that in light of the mysterious disappearance of his sister, followed so closely by his parents tragic death, the younger Mr. Giles was naturally not in a state to adequately see to his affairs and that until further notice, Jonathan was to report directly to himself, Mr. Ethan Raine. Mr. Raine would be keeping a close eye on all of the Giles' business affairs and that all accounts would be audited quarterly by an accountant. Since Mr. Levinson had been doing a superb job of running the shipping company since the dismissal of Mr. Wilkins, would Mr. Levinson be adverse to keeping that position - will a substantial raise in pay, of course.  
  
What could he say?  
  
So he had been promoted and took over the business completely. Mr. William Giles never stepped foot into the offices again and he was left to make all of the decisions regarding imports, exports and sales of goods himself, but he was proud to say he had done well by his employer and the business was thriving.  
  
Which made today's visit so surprising. He'd received the note just yesterday, personally written by Mr. William Giles himself, asking for his presence at his home in the country. He'd been invited to dinner.  
  
Dinner! As if he were an equal to the peerage and worthy of being socialised with!  
  
But he couldn't refuse, so here we was, pulling his coat closer around him and waiting for someone to open the door.  
  
The door was opened by the man himself, looking completely unkempt and in a state of great��� drunkenness?  
  
"Mr. Giles?" he asked, not being quite sure that this was the formidable employer he'd admired so often in the past. There was an unruly length of beard on his face and his hair was long and stringy, as if it hadn't been washed or cut in months. His clothes too were wrinkled and dirty and his shirt was even unbuttoned a bit and Jonathan was appalled that he could see at least half of the man's chest in the opening!  
  
"Jonathan, my boy, come in, come in," Mr. Giles told him, as if he were a dear friend he had been expecting. "I've been waiting for you. The celebration can't begin without my honoured guests."  
  
Jonathan was led into a formal parlour, where two other people stood holding glasses of what appeared to be sherry. They looked very uncomfortable, even more uncomfortable than Jonathan himself felt.  
  
"Jonathan, my boy," Mr. Giles said, putting a hand on his shoulder, "What would you like to drink?"  
  
"I'll get it, Mr. Giles-" the man in the room interrupted but William just waved him away and walked to a table that held many decanters.  
  
"Port, sherry, whiskey, whatever you like, my boy, I have it here somewhere." He looked at Jonathan expectantly.  
  
He looked for guidance to the woman and her eyes misted over as she nodded at Jonathan, informing him that it would be proper for him to answer. A strong drink seemed called for, but he really didn't want to lose his wits before he discovered what the devil was going on.  
  
"A sherry will be fine, Mr. Giles. Thank you."  
  
As William poured, he replied, "Call me Will, please. All my friends call me Will."  
  
Before Jonathan could stop himself, he said, "But we're not friends, Mr. Giles."  
  
Will's hands stopped their motion for a moment and sherry poured onto the table and then the floor before he regained control and told him softly, "But you are, Jonathan, you and the Talbot's are all the friends I have left."  
  
Jonathan took the glass he was offered and walked over toward the kind woman while Mr. Giles and the other man cleaned up the liquid that had spilled.  
  
He didn't even have to ask the question.  
  
"Mr. Talbot and I are the servants that were in residence," she explained in a whisper, "on the day Miss Tara died, I mean to say, disappeared. You, my dear boy, are the last sole he spoke to in the world, besides us, before he lost his beloved sister. Between that and the death of his dear parents, Mister William's mind just hasn't been the same."  
  
She broke off as they were joined by the two men and a knock sounded at the door followed by a young woman, announcing that dinner was ready to be served in the ballroom.  
  
Jonathan wondered if fancy people always served dinner in their ballrooms, but the decorations told him that some kind of celebration was in order.  
  
They all ate while going over trivial conversation, Jonathan now understanding the role he had to play. Poor Mr. Giles, to be so young and to loose everyone you love so quickly. His unkempt appearance made better sense now too. He obviously cared for nothing, not even his own hygiene since the loss of his family. This macabre party was another testament to his unhinged state.  
  
Time and again, Jonathan wanted to ask what the occasion was, but time and again, he lost his nerve.  
  
When at last dinner was through, champagne was brought to the table and Mr. Giles instructed that everyone's glasses were to be filled.  
  
At last he stood, and raised his glass.  
  
"Thank you, my dear friends, for coming today to help me celebrate my sister's sixteenth birthday." His eyes filled with tears and he had to pause to clear his throat.  
  
"My beloved Tara, wherever she is, has become a woman. Sixteen is such a grand age for a young lady. The time when she fulfills every promise her parents ever had for her. The time when young men look and see the woman she has become." William's eyes were overflowing with tears now. "On Tara's sixteenth birthday, wherever she is, she knows that I love her and that I will wait for her no matter how long it takes. She knows that��� that she is the light in my life and I will never let that light go out. Happy birthday, beloved, wherever you are."  
  
On Tara Giles sixteenth birthday, four people raised their glasses and with tears rolling down their cheeks, drank to the anniversary of her birth.  
  
On Tara Giles sixteenth birthday, she died.  
  
  
  
**Part 14**  
  
Snow blanketed the bleak countryside and chill winds howled through the darkness.   
  
It was nearing midnight on Christmas Eve, and William Giles sat in front of a dwindling fire, not even feeling the cold or the damp. He'd dismissed White and Talbot a few hours ago, both men were behaving like nursery governesses and hovering about him at all hours. It would have annoyed him if he had bothered to care.  
  
The full contingent of servants were still on staff, mostly because he hadn't troubled himself to dismiss them. Their duties were confined to making sure the decanters were always full.  
  
He no longer ate, he no longer slept, he no longer saw the walls or the floors or the sunlight in the daytime. He lived in a world full of memories. For months after the deaths of their parents, Tara had come to him in daydreams, promising to return if he would only have faith.  
  
But she no longer came, not since the morning of her sixteenth birthday. He now lived in a grey world that held no escape.  
  
He sat his glass down with his right hand and looked at the pistol in his left. Maybe there was one escape.   
  
He'd sat here just like this on many nights, wanting so desperately to end the torment, but unwilling to lose faith in his beloved Tara. If he did it, it would be disloyal to her and no matter what he did, he would never give her cause to doubt him.   
  
So here he sat, wanting to leave this wretched plane of existence, but not willing to be faithless to his love.  
  
Sounds of commotion reached his ears and he turned to see his two butlers, White and Talbot, fighting each other to be the first to reach the front door. Together they pulled it open and William heard a familiar voice ask to see him.  
  
Will stood and made his way to the front door, wary of what he would find.  
  
"Master William," White called with a cheery voice, "Your cousin is here to see you."  
  
But that was impossible. Angel had disappeared months before, much the same way as Darla and Tara had done, vanishing in the middle of the night.  
  
"It can't be," William said very quietly to himself, but a booming voice answered him, "Get yer arse out here, Spike, before I come in there and give you a sound thrashing."  
  
Will looked to the doorway - Angel was indeed standing there.  
  
"Merry Christmas, cousin. I have brought you a gift, may we come in?"  
  
"We?" Will asked.  
  
A woman was at Angel's side, a delicate woman with dark hair and penetrating eyes.  
  
"Aye, cousin - we. This is my wife, Drusilla."  
  
"Your wife?" Will replied, smiling. One mystery, at last, was solved. Angel must have eloped with his bride and taken an extended honeymoon. Drusilla was visibly shivering in the cold and Spike reached a hand out and welcomed her into his home, chastising Angel for making his lovely wife stand out in the cold for so long.  
  
As soon as Drusilla moved into the doorway, the woman behind her came into view.  
  
William stood dumbstruck.  
  
Angel laughed and gave Will a hearty pat on the back. "I see you've discovered my gift."  
  
"Tara."  
  
The word didn't actually make it past his lips, he had no air to speak it. But the vision smiled at him and held out her hand and Will crossed the threshold and went to her, lifting her into his arms as a new round of snow began to fall.  
  
"Hello, my love," Tara said in her sweet voice, eyes shining as she once again faced the only man she'd ever loved.  
  
Before he kissed her he swore, "I never lost faith, Love, I swear to you I didn't. Some nights were harder than others but I promise you that I have held you in my heart all the long while you've been away."  
  
"I know," she said, believing, "As did I."  
  
And then, without a care for whomever might be watching, the lovers kissed and it felt as if they'd come home at last.  
  
  
  
**Part 15**  
  
Will sat looking at her, unable to believe his eyes. Angel was talking, telling them all of his travels, but Will wasn't listening.  
  
His Tara was back. Here she sat, in his lap, her arms around him and laughing at something Angel had said.  
  
She was perfect, a glowing picture of health. Her skin was so near his face and he could smell the clean, fresh scent of it. His own lack of grooming in the last��� how long had it been since he'd bathed? His stench must be overwhelming her, but she, his precious love, had said nothing about it.  
  
Easing her from his lap, he stood and interrupted his cousin's narrative. As much as he hated to let her out of his sight, he felt ashamed for the way he looked, sounded and smelled. Look what he had become: a shell of the man he once was. A shell not worthy of her. Something within him felt the deep need to show her that he was unchanged, that he was still the same sane man who had promised to love her for the rest of their lives.  
  
"Excuse me, you must think me a terrible host. Would anyone like a drink or some refreshment? I'm sure most of the staff have been awakened by my faithful butlers and if there's anything you would like���" He left the sentence unfinished.  
  
"I am a bit ravenous," his new cousin-in-law Drusilla admitted. "Would you mind terribly if I-"  
  
"Of course not," Will said happily and upon turning to tell White to have the kitchen make a feast for his guests, he saw that Talbot was already rushing to do it.  
  
White gave him a stern look from head to foot and Will took the hint.  
  
"If you will excuse me for but a few moments, I was not expecting visitors and I must clean myself up a bit."  
  
Tara smiled, "Thank you. I was wondering how to politely ask you to do just that." She smiled and winked and his heart and his world filled with magnificent light once again. He kissed her again before he left, not even considering that all the others saw them as brother and sister and that kisses and touches such as they were sharing were inappropriate even when they were alone, but unabashedly immoral in front of company. He didn't care. He had her back and he was never going to hide his feelings for her again.  
  
It didn't occur to him until he was situated in a shallow but hot bath that Tara had yet to tell him where she'd been. The reason it occurred to him is because Stephen, his valet, asked quite plainly, "Where has the mistress been, milord? White says she looks quite unharmed and is in good spirits."  
  
Will frowned, considering. "I don't know. She hasn't said. But she's here now, isn't that what matters?"  
  
Stephen thought that where she had been all those long months mattered considerably, but he knew better than to say so. Instead, he helped his master groom himself, and was delighted that Master William allowed himself to be shaved of what Stephen assured him was a quite horrid and unappealing growth of facial hair.  
  
He took his time dressing, hoping that Tara might make an excuse to join him for a few moments of privacy, but his hopes where in vain. When he returned to the salon more than an hour later, he heard her laughter and was dismayed to see her standing a little closer to Angel than he thought was appropriate, but her smile when she saw him was full of love and he instantly forgot the breach of etiquette.  
  
"How have you all managed in my absence?" he asked his guests, being the perfect host. Moving to Tara's side, he put a proprietary arm around her waist and sent Angel a look that made it infinitely clear that Angel was not to try to take any liberties with what was rightfully William's.   
  
Angel raised an eyebrow and inclined his head and the women laughed at the ridiculous behaviour of their men.  
  
The same small and nervous looking maid who had once invited Jonathan Levinson and the Talbot's into ballroom for dinner, joined them then to tell them that refreshment was being served in the dining room. With good spirits, they made their way there and spent the next several hours enjoying the hearty repast and talking and laughing as if no time at all had passed since they'd been together.  
  
As expected, many of the servants made excuses to come into the dining room and see for themselves that their beloved mistress was indeed home and well. Will and Tara indulged them and let them come, knowing that it was inevitable.  
  
It wasn't until the rays of dawn were just passing the horizon that Angel suggested they all get some sleep and take up their reunion after a short rest.  
  
Will, eager to be alone with Tara, thought this a splendid idea and looked to White and Talbot to take care of the details.  
  
"Right this way," White instructed Mr. Liam Giles and his wife. "Adjoining rooms have been prepared-"  
  
He was interrupted by his employer's cousin. "White, my wife and I share a bed. Two rooms will not be necessary."  
  
White, as if this were an everyday occurrence, didn't miss a beat. "In that case, sir, I shall put you in the Wellsford Room, as it is larger and will more adequately serve two people well."  
  
White, ever the perfect butler, of course did not mention that the new Mrs. Giles wore no matrimonial ring on her finger. It was not his place to nay-say his betters. It was not his place to tell any of the Giles family where they could or could not sleep.  
  
In fact, the question of the legitimacy of Mr. Liam Giles' marriage did not bother him for one moment; for his heart was heavy with the gut-wrenching intuition that it was going to be Mr. William Giles' sleeping arrangements on this night that were going to cause him no end of heartache.  
  
  
  
**Part 16**  
  
Will closed Tara's bedroom door behind him and looked at her, walking so peacefully across the bedroom floor.  
  
"Where were you, Love?"   
  
He had to ask. He had to *know*. She was here and she was whole and she was so very alive. He had to know where she'd been, why she had left him.  
  
She turned and smiled serenely at him as she placed a hand on the winding ribbon of pearls wrapped around her neck. Her hand slowly dropped to her collarbone and she saw his eyes following it.  
  
"Does it matter *tonight*, Spike?" Her fingertips slid lower on her chest, skimming over the ruffle that covered her breast. "Is that all you want from me tonight? To know where I've been? To have me waste precious time on things that no longer matter?"  
  
Her eyes looked hurt but seductive at the same time and so many different emotions stirred within him that he was left feeling unbalanced.  
  
"No one's called me Spike in a very long time," he said with a smile, wanting to ease this tension between them.  
  
It didn't matter, he told himself. It didn't matter where she'd been or what she'd done. It didn't matter. All that mattered was that she was here - now - and she was looking at him with that same love and desire she'd had before she left. It didn't matter, not tonight.  
  
It didn't matter that she had torn his life and his heart apart. It didn't matter that he had searched for her, night after night, day after day, month after month only to have her slip further away from him. It didn't matter that he had tormented his bereaved but adoring parents because of his pain and they had rushed out in the night to their deaths.   
  
It didn't matter that he'd spent the good part of a year imaging every possible scenario for her disappearance; ones that involved her in pain, being tortured, raped, killed; ones that involved her being spirited away by the faeries to live with the ethereal beings that she belonged with; ones that involved her escaping from Will with their aunt's assistance because he disgusted her; ones that involved her eloping with another man and now living happily in the country, being this other man's wife and having his children. It didn't matter that he had held a pistol in his hand every night for months, praying for the strength to not pull the trigger.  
  
It didn't matter, not tonight.  
  
But it did. It mattered more than anything.  
  
Her eyes not leaving his, she crossed the shining parquet floor, her slippered feet silent on the wood. Her hand cupped his cheek, telling him she understood his pain. Her hand slid much lower and he forgot all the pain.  
  
Explanations could wait.  
  
Her fingers skimmed over the cock he'd almost forgotten he possessed. He'd completely ignored it for so long; no urges in that regard had overcome him since he'd last seen her. But now that she was back���  
  
"Tara," he hissed out, through clenched teeth, his jaw tense. This was too much, too soon.  
  
She didn't answer, just smiled sweetly as she unlatched his breeches.  
  
"Tara," he hissed again, knowing he wouldn't last if she touched him.  
  
It had been so very long.  
  
She ignored him and fell to her knees, taking him immediately into her mouth.  
  
He fisted his hands in her hair and blasted his come into her mouth.  
  
He'd never done that before; he'd never made her swallow him, never forced himself on her like that. He was repulsed, but what choice had he had?  
  
Tara, licking him clean, didn't seem offended.  
  
His mind snapped.  
  
Grabbing her roughly by the arm, he lifted her and practically threw her onto the bed.  
  
His ardour had not depleted with his climax, he was still just as hard, just as desperate, as he'd been before.  
  
He lifted her skirt and feasted his eyes on the swollen, wet woman's flesh of her pussy. She was ready for him. Taking him in her mouth as she did had been enough to get his little Tara hot and wet for him.   
  
The control he'd held in check for so long was gone.  
  
He'd denied himself for so long. Denied taking the one thing of hers he wanted more than anything. And where had it gotten him?  
  
Without even warning her of it, he climbed between her legs and thrust himself inside. He saw the shock in her eyes, felt the barrier break, felt the new liquid that surrounded his cock inside of her.  
  
Her blood. Her blood had been spilt for him.  
  
It was about time. He'd spilt enough of his for her.  
  
His eyes grew dark and mean and he punished her with his thrusts. Punished her for leaving him, for making him responsible for the death of their parents. Punished her for making him worry, for making him want to die, for not telling him where she'd been. He punished her for allowing his despised cousin Angel to be the one to bring her home.  
  
*He* was the one who was supposed to have done that.  
  
*He* was the one that was supposed to save her from the dragon and swath her in pearls.  
  
Him, not Angel.  
  
He wanted her to pay.  
  
But she wasn't paying.  
  
She was lying below him, head thrown back and panting, with her legs wrapped tightly around his waist. She was begging him for release as her insides gripped him with a power he'd never felt before.  
  
She was beautiful. She was his. She was more even than she'd been before. She was everything - glowing, effulgent.   
  
How could he ever despise her for what had happened?  
  
She was right, it didn't matter.  
  
He lowered himself to her and forced open her mouth in a kiss as, for the first time, his passion spilled into her womb and they were joined as they'd always been meant to be.  
  
  
  
**Part 17**  
  
The firelight splashed across their nude bodies as they sat in a leather wing chair in Tara's bedroom, she astride his lap and riding his cock with a new sensuality he'd never witnessed in her before.  
  
Her hair was loose now, falling down her back and longer than he remembered. But then it would be, wouldn't it? She seemed even more beautiful than she had before, even more tantalizing. As if some mystic force now infused her body, her skin.  
  
She was flawless and she was still his. That's all that mattered.  
  
He fingered the trail of pearls that fell between her breasts.  
  
"I like your new necklace, Love," he told her, a sparkle in his eyes as her cunt clenched then unclenched around him. "It suits you."  
  
It was the only piece of her wardrobe she'd hadn't allowed him to remove and seeing her wearing it fueled his lust even more. A decadent rope of matched pearls, wrapped round and round her long, slender neck and then falling in lazy loop between her mouth-watering breasts.  
  
He grabbed her hips more tightly and leaned forward, taking one into his mouth and sucking, loving the way her back arched, the way a sultry sigh escaped her lips as he did it. All he'd ever wanted in his life was to please her.  
  
He sat back again and her eyes fell on him. "Do you want to know what I saw while I was away, Spike?"  
  
Now? She wanted to talk about this *now*?  
  
"Of course I do, Love," he told her, pushing a lock of hair from her face with one finger. "But only when you're ready to tell me." She was clenching around him again and he wasn't sure he'd be able to give her words the attention they deserved.  
  
"Darla kidnapped me," she began, voice calm and soft as if she were telling a bedtime story to an infant. "She took me to a man she called The Master. His home was a cave, a cave way below the ground. He-"  
  
Spike was paying attention now. "Did he hurt you, Love?"  
  
"No," Tara said sweetly, still in her bedtime story voice. "He wanted me to stay with him, to join them."  
  
"Them?" Spike asked. "He and Darla?"  
  
"He was The Master there, Spike. There were people, well, demons. He was a demon. He wanted me to become a demon too."  
  
Spike's eyes softened. His poor sister. Whatever they had done to her had caused her mind to become unhinged.   
  
"They kept people in cages there. Several people to a cage. They kept them nude and well fed. The demons, they fed off the blood of the people in the cages."  
  
Spike's mind pictured her words. Pictured many people together in a cage, both men and women, laying together without their clothes. He pictured the vampires his cousin had told him about when he was a child, the beautiful vampires who fed off the blood of their victims.  
  
He pictured beautiful demons fucking and biting their human captives and his blood ran hot and his softening cock surged inside her once again.  
  
She smiled at him, feeling him stirring to life inside her.  
  
"But they didn't bite me. They wanted me, you see, wanted me to be like them. Wanted me to be a strong demon and in order to be reborn strong, you have to want it, you see. You have to want to become one."  
  
"Why did they want you, Love?" he asked, deciding to humour her delusion. If this was the way she was from now on, so be it. He would let her live in her dream world inside her head and he would join her there.  
  
"Because they wanted you."  
  
His fingers grabbed and bruised her hips. She didn't know what she was saying, that didn't make sense. What had really happened to her?  
  
"Darla always wanted you, you see," she explained, still not concerned at all that her story was distressing him. "So she took me to get you. Because she wanted you to want to be a demon like she had become. She knew the only way to get you was to get me."  
  
She kissed him, slowly, gently, as if she did not blame him at all for her fate.  
  
"They kept me captive, but they kept me safe. Sometimes," she confided, "Sometimes I wished I was one of the people in the cages. One of the people who knew their place, knew they had nowhere to turn, knew that their days were numbered and took whatever solace they could in each other."  
  
Spike looked shocked once again as his imagination took in that information.  
  
"What did they do, Love?"  
  
She leaned in and whispered in his ear. "They had no shame, Spike. They would kiss each other, touch each other, groups of them together in the cage. They would make love, touching, licking, sucking. There would be a tangle of people and you couldn't tell who was inside of whom."  
  
As she'd been confiding this, she'd started riding him again, riding him harder than she had before and God help him, he was getting off on it. On her body, on her words, on the images behind his eyelids of a mass of people fucking each other with no care for love or spiritual fulfillment. Only wanting to satisfy the need their bodies felt.  
  
He grabbed her hips roughly and thrust, pouring his release into her body, trying not to be ashamed.  
  
"And then Angel saved me."  
  
Shocked, Spike opened his eyes and standing behind Tara, with his hand on her shoulder, was Angel, Drusilla at his side.  
  
It mist have been the power of his orgasm, the pure satisfaction he felt at being inside Tara where he belonged.  
  
Because he found he wasn't upset that they had company. And in the recesses of his mind, he wasn't really surprised.  
  
  
  
**Part 18**  
  
William was once again sitting with Tara on his lap, in the company of their guests, listening to his cousin tell of their adventures. But in a demented bend in reality, this time he and Tara were sitting and listening patiently, utterly without clothing as his guests, in very insufficient nightclothes, told a twisted and nearly unbelievable tale.  
  
"The day I arrived, The Master had lost patience with Tara's reluctance and had some of his minions���" here he paused, choosing his words carefully, "try to change her mind."  
  
Angel backtracked. "Let me begin at the beginning. My mother had returned home, completely unbalanced and rambling about things that made no sense. I pleaded with her to see a doctor. She said she'd consider it, but even as she said it, I knew she was lying. That night, she laced my food with belladonna and when I was listless and groggy, she came to me and seduced me."  
  
Will seemed shocked by this and Tara laughed. "You and I have been lovers for how long, Spike? And yet a mother seducing her son shocks you?"  
  
She had a point and he allowed Angel to go back to his story.  
  
"She kept me drugged for days, making me think I was going insane, for after a while, my body would react to her of its own free will. One night, she had me begging for it. I would have done anything she asked. She asked me if I wanted to be with her for eternity and I said yes. That's when she gave me this." He pulled his collar aside and there, on the side of his neck, was a ragged scar of two round holes, similar to an animal bite.  
  
"She was a vampire, Will, The Master had turned her. And when she had my consent, she turned me as well. When I awoke from my death, we were in a carriage riding through strange mountains at night. I was still a bit confused and I asked how the driver could keep us from tipping over the edge. She laughed and told me he could see quite well. That's when I noticed that I could too. I could see perfectly. And the sounds, the smells, everything was as if my senses had been intensified. It was if the world was a whole new place and I had been going through it in a fog until that moment.  
  
"Before the sun rose, we arrived at a hillside in Ireland. I learned I had been dead for two days and that we had been traveling almost from the moment of my death. She told me she wanted me to meet The Master and that this was his home."  
  
"As soon as we entered, I smelled her, smelled your Tara. I asked Darla about it and she laughed and told me the entire plan. How she had gone to your home that night hoping to entice you from your bed to be with her. How Tara had come down instead and how she smelled your body all over her. How she had taken Tara in the hopes that Tara, being young and impressionable, would submit to her and choose to live in darkness with her and how, through her, she would finally have you.  
  
"But her plan backfired and The Master had gotten impatient and ordered her gone to find new blood. Darla had made The Master promise in blood not to turn Tara until Darla returned. You see, Darla was hoping I could succeed where she and the Master had failed. She was hoping I could entice her to join our new "family". All to get to you."  
  
Even as a demon, there was hurt in Angel's eyes. How it must have felt to realize that his own mother had used him. Used him as she tried to use Tara - to get to Will.  
  
All of this had, indeed, been his own fault and Will couldn't take anymore, the tears began to fall.  
  
"Why?" he had to ask. He didn't know whom he was asking - Tara, his cousin - maybe God himself. How could God have allowed this to happen? What had he ever done to -  
  
"Because you are beautiful, my William." The answer came from an unlikely source, his new cousin-in-law, Drusilla. She stood and walked to him as if in a dream and she seemed so sane in that moment, as if the stars really did indeed speak to her and give her the answers to life's age old questions. She touched a hand to a curl that had fallen onto Will's brow.  
  
"Because you are a man blessed with beauty both inside and out," she continued, looking into his eyes and through to his soul. "Because that is a quality attractive to both male and female and everyone who meets you is drawn to it like moth to flame." She leaned down and placed her lips on his and he was dumbstruck and didn't pull away.  
  
His body reacted and started kissing her back and when he felt Tara's lips on his neck, he moaned and opened his mouth to Drusilla's questing tongue.  
  
When at last she pulled away, William knew the answers to his questions.  
  
"The minions had her at death's door when I got to her, Spike," Angel confessed.  
  
He looked to Angel with something akin to thankfulness. "And so to save her life, you killed her."  
  
Angel nodded, "I turned her, yes."  
  
"Thank you," he told his cousin, sincerely. "From the bottom of my heart, I will be grateful to you for eternity."  
  
Tara giggled into his ear. "That's kind of the idea."  
  
She was not unhinged, everything she had said was true. In order to be with her, he would have to die.  
  
Will willingly and bravely bared his throat to her.  
  
"No," she said softly and he was hurt and confused.  
  
"Tara and I have shared much in the last few months, Spike," Angel told him, not unkindly. "We have, well, we have shared our secrets with each other. I told her how much I hated you for always having my mother's affection even though it was not your doing. And she told me what a good man you are and how much she loved you and how much you loved each other. She wants things to remain as they are. She wants to remain your sister. She wants you to share the same sire."  
  
Will looked at Tara and she nodded. He would do anything for her.  
  
Angel reached out a hand and Will took it, allowing Angel to help him stand and lead him to Tara's bed.  
  
"Lie down, William," Angel instructed him, but tenderly, in a tone he had never heard Liam use before.  
  
Will sat and rested his head upon Tara's pillows. Angel removed his robe and his nightshirt and lie down next to his cousin. He pulled Will into his arms and held him tenderly, telling him, "You will be my childe, one of my own. I will always take care of you and your sisters. Should you ever need anything, anything at all, from this day forth, you will come to me, is that understood?"  
  
Will was confused and unsure but he nodded. Something was different here; something was terribly out of kilter. Angel pulled Will's leg up so that it draped over Liam's hip and Will had the strange sensation of feeling another man's cock rubbing enticingly against his own. They were both erect and the feelings inside of him were new and terrifying but he couldn't make himself pull away. He heard a sound and looked to the end of the bed. Tara and a newly nude Drusilla stood holding each other, looking down on them as if enraptured.   
  
It made his cock surge and he felt Angel smile against his cheek.  
  
"It's new for me, too, Spike, but it feels right, doesn't it?" Angel whispered against his skin.  
  
"Yes." William didn't want to admit the truth, but he couldn't seem to stop himself.  
  
"Would you feel better if they were in bed with us?"  
  
Will looked toward the women. "I- I don't know."  
  
"Then we'll begin without them and see how it goes, all right?"  
  
He didn't get to answer as he felt Angel's tongue sweep up his neck, pausing slightly at his pulse point.  
  
"Smell so good, my sweet boy," Angel purred and Will couldn't help it as his body shivered.  
  
"Can I touch you?" Angel asked and Spike blushed, but nodded.  
  
Angel's hand spared him no mercy and wrapped tightly around his swollen cock head. Running his hand up and down the shaft, using the ever increasing lubricant of Spike's semen to facilitate his movements, he kissed and bit softly at Spike's neck, murmuring how beautiful he was and how wonderful his sex felt in Angel's hand.  
  
He begged Spike to come for him and assaulted his mouth in a kiss that sent Spike falling over a precipice. As he shot himself into his cousin's soft hand, Angel left his mouth and bit into his neck, bringing him into the darkness.  
  
"Drink, my love," he heard Tara's voice say, but he couldn't; he had nothing left, this was the end.  
  
"Drink, childe," Angel told him. "Drink from me now." Something was pressed against his mouth and he felt a drop of something liquid hit his tongue. Something inside his body told him that if he wanted to be with Tara, he had to drink. He opened his mouth and pushed his tongue into the gash in Angel's neck, taking in as much of the nectar as he could before he succumbed to the shadows.  
  
  
  
**Part 19**  
  
He awoke to the feel of Tara playing with his earlobe. It reminded him of a time when he and Tara had slipped away from the family Christmas dinner and���  
  
"Tara, Love, what are you doing?"  
  
"Playing with you."  
  
He smiled, and then frowned in concentration, feeling with his senses, both new and old.  
  
"Love, what are we now? Monsters?"  
  
She smiled and ran a hand through his pale blond hair. "No, silly, we're immortal. We can love forever you and I."   
  
She kissed him. Not passionately, but gently, as if he might break and he truly felt as if he could. This would take some getting used to and he didn't know if he could stand it. But he would, he would stand the change as well as Tara had. He'd lived through her death; he could live through anything now. And he had eternity with her to practice.  
  
"Along with Liam and Drusilla?"  
  
"If you like. Angel and I talked about traveling one day; maybe soon, it depends on you. We can do anything now. No one can say anything, for if they do, we will simply eat them all up." She giggled, the same delightful sound to which he was so accustomed.  
  
He turned his head and looked at her. "Do you like that? Drinking blood, I mean. Is it, is it disgusting?"  
  
"Why don't you find out?"  
  
She motioned with a tilt of her head to the wall across the room, where her maid sat bound and gagged and looking horrified at them. He imagined it must be shocking to find out that your beloved mistress had been loving her brother. In the biblical sense.  
  
Even if they weren't currently in the throes of passion, they were both, his sister and himself, lying naked on top of the blankets of Tara's bed and he was obviously aroused.  
  
But for some quite odd reason, it didn't bother him that there was someone else in the room witnessing this.  
  
  
  
It took them a while to get the hang of it. Vampires they are, but fledglings all, with no one to teach them about the hazards and glories of this new physiology. So they stayed at the mansion, fumbling on, practicing on the staff.  
  
When at last the last servant was dead, they traveled to London and their homes there. They knew they'd have to behave, for these cosmopolitan people would surely spot them and possibly stake them. They'd known vaguely about this practice, for they had seen it done in the master's lair and could recall the scene vividly - not getting staked was paramount to them all. They were a happy foursome and intended to keep themselves to themselves.  
  
But this shop was far too tempting to resist.  
  
The small shop that, once upon a time, had the misfortune to be chosen as a suitable place to buy Tara a gift.  
  
The shop keeper remembered them - after all, how could you forget a stunningly handsome man who not only made a large purchase but also couldn't seem to keep straight as to whether he was buying this for his wife or for his sister.  
  
Putting on her best sales smile, Anya greeted them warmly and asked, "Good evening, good Sir, have you come to purchase more items for your���" she hesitated and decided it was best to be thorough, "your wife or" she looked at the young woman, trying to see a family resemblance and there certainly was one, "your sister."  
  
"Yes," was his monosyllabic answer, not answering the question to Anya's way of thinking at all. The girl just smiled, took hold of the man's hand and let him lead her around the store.  
  
Anya watched them without seeming to watch them. She saw the secret smiles, the slightly more than chaste kisses and other public displays of affection. They'd taken one of her shopping baskets, provided for the courtesy and convenience of her customers, as Mr. Harris, the butcher, had said was a good idea.   
  
She kept looking away. No one, not even the Prince Regent himself had ever been so brazen; but the two here - didn't seem to care if they got arrested for public indecency. Since they were making a rather large purchase, from the looks of the two baskets they carried, she decided to wait until they had paid for their purchases and left the shop to summon the policeman.  
  
When they returned to the counter, they were still publicly affectionate and she didn't want to but couldn't help from seeing his hands - and her hands - and their hands - and she dearly hoped that this was the wife and not the sister, resemblances be damned.  
  
They paid for their things and moved to leave and Anya, being the sensible business woman that she was, stopped them. "I hope your wife and yourself have a lovely evening."  
  
William stopped and turned and the wicked smile he gave her made a tingle run down her spine.  
  
It was Tara, however, who answered her. "I am his lady sister, my good woman, not his wife."  
  
"But you could be my wife now," he said to the girl standing next to him, "Who's to stop us?"  
  
"We could eat a cardinal and maybe a bishop or two. I'm sure after that any number of clergymen would be happy to marry us, even if only out of fear."  
  
William smiled. "Luv, you're brilliant."  
  
Tara made a slight frown. "I'm also hungry."  
  
Spike closed the shop door and locked it behind him; didn't want any other patrons to walk in during the shopkeeper's death. He held out his arm so that she could take it and she did. He led her back toward the counter of the store, face realigning itself into a macabre mask.  
  
"After you."  
  
  
  
The End