Demon Magnet: A Love Story in the Key of Gah!
by beetle

Summary

A night out for Xander and Spike.

Notes

Notes/Spoilers/Warning: AU S6-ish. In this ‘verse, Xander didn’t propose to Anya just because they were about to die. She broke up with him shortly after Buffy’s death but they remained friends.
“That’s three to your two; pay up, loserboy. But I will give you a chance to win it all back, double or nothing.”

“Curse you and your preternatural pool-playing abilities!” Xander slaps sixty bucks down on the worn green felt.

“Nothin’ to do with me bein’ a vamp. You just suck at pool. And I’m a pool god. ‘S all there is to it. Well, that and my killer cheekbones and devil-may-care grin.” Spike snatches up the money while leering at a passing waitress. She gives him the eye right back, putting a little extra jiggle in her wiggle.

“What do your killer cheekbones and dev- nevermind, Evil Undead. Since you’re now a vamp of leisure, you can pay for the next round.” Xander nods toward the bar.

“And enable an impressionable young alcoholic such as yourself? Not likely. I don’t do co-dependency. Get your own booze, mate. I’ll be right back.” Spike strolls off in the direction of the waitress, duster flapping, yet somehow not snagging on chairs or knocking things over. Xander shakes his head and makes his way over to the bar. When he catches the harried-looking bartender’s eyes, he asks for two Guinesses, both of which are for Spike.

All the better to win my money back, once he’s nice and drunk...

When Xander gets back to the pool table, there’s no Spike.

After ten minutes of holding the two rapidly warming stouts and craning his neck around trying to find a tell-tale platinum blond head in the sea of humanity, he sits on the edge of the pool table.

No Spike. No saucy waitress, either.

“They’re either having sex in the alley or having sex in one of the bathrooms. Classy,” Xander mutters to himself, taking a sip of one of the Guinesses, even though he personally thinks it’s vile, varnishy-tasting stuff.

“Stupid vampire he-slut. Just means more Guiness for the Xan-man. All mine -“

“Uh, excuse me... are you waiting for someone or looking for a partner?”

Xander starts, then swivels toward the voice. A smiling blond guy, about Xander’s height and age, wearing obscenely new-looking denim, is holding a pool cue and a rack.

“Oh, I’m - “ waiting for an asshole vampire I’m not even friends with to quit fucking the waitress he just met and come back so I can lose my entire paycheck to him.

Yeah. Right.

“I guess I’m waiting for you, sailor.” Xander jokes, then when the blonde guy quirks one eyebrow up questioningly, sighs and tries to think of a less gay way to phrase that. The blonde guy chuckles and holds out his hand.
“I’m Lucas.”

“Xander.” Xander takes the guy’s hand to shake and they both yelp at the static shock they get.

“It’s my electro-magnetic personality,” Xander says lamely. Lucas laughs and as quick as that, they’re friends.

*Spike thinks he may quit smoking.

That stupid bint of a waitress had taken it upon herself to follow him outside and, while he was catching a smoke, proceeded to rub up against him like a cat in heat.

Spike wouldn’t have had a problem with that if she hadn’t looked so much like the sodding Slayer. She was tenacious like the Slayer, too. Spike’d had a hell of a time putting her off, finally telling her: “Look, you saw that bloke I was playing pool with, yeah? Brunet, brown eyes, kinda stupid-looking? I’m here with him and he gets real jealous-like.”

The waitress’s eyes had gotten so wide, Spike thought they might just fall out of their sockets. He was disappointed when they hadn’t. Right entertaining that would’ve been.

“I’m so sorry, I didn’t realize - he looks so - you look so - well, I didn’t know...” She’s blushing so hard - Julie, the nametag says - Spike actually feels a little bad for her. Her only crime had been wanting to ride The Spike. Can’t blame her for having good taste. Or for having eyesight, for that matter.

“Didn’t mean to flirt so heavy, pet, just m’ way. No hard feelings, then?” Spike flicks his cigarette away and offers his hand.

“Oh, no, of course not!” Julie smiles, composure suddenly regained, and shakes the proffered hand. “I think it’s wonderful that you and he are so open about your relationship. It’s real - inspiring. Like a Movie-of-the-Week.” Nodding, appearing very satisfied with her own open-mindedness, Julie gives his hand a supportive squeeze. “My break is almost over, I better get back... but good for you two!” Another up-with-people smile and she hurries back inside.

And Spike feels he’s earned himself a pint of the good stuff after that much niceness. Willie’s’ll be filling up, now, full of suckers as ripe for the plucking as the boy.

Remembering the waiting donut-boy - and said donut-boy’s paycheck - in the Bronze, Spike almost goes back in...

But the boy’ll be there when Spike finishes pool-hustling at Willie’s. Lord knows he always is.

Yeah, a pint, a hustle... maybe some Ramones on Willie’s juke...
“So, Jimmy says: ‘Dude, I don’t think that’s her knee...’”

Xander laughs and scratches, exactly as his challenger had planned. Once the giggles have tapered off and Lucas is setting up his next shot, Xander manages a limp glare.

“You’re a lowdown, yellow-bellied cheat, Luc.”

“Just like my daddy taught me.” With a grin, Lucas sinks what Xander would’ve called an impossible shot, even for Spike.

“Think your dad could teach me to play pool, too?” Xander begs, making the puppy-dog eyes. Lucas’s grin widens.

“How ‘bout I teach you, Xan? Since dad’s all the way in Kansas City.” Lucas walks around the table, over to Xander, and leans on the edge of the table, snagging what had become his Guinness.

“Ah, but you’ll always be able to predict my moves, then, won’t you?” Xander chalks up his cue, momentarily watching Luc drink, the way his throat moves with each swallow.

“Huh?” He realizes Luc had asked him something. He hastily averts his eyes. Oh, look, a big metal thingy.

“I said, I know we aren’t playing for stakes, but - how about if I win, you drive me back to my dorm, since my ride took off earlier.” Luc wipes his mouth with the back of his hand, something Willow has tried unsuccessfully to train Xander out of doing. Xander instantly likes Luc even more than he did before.

“Okay. And if I win?”

Luc’s eyes are green and twinkly. “Then I’ll be your perfectly willing slave for one whole day.”

“Hmm, my slave for a day, you say?” Xander twirls an imaginary mustache and chuckles evilly. “My piece-of-shit car could use a nice wash ‘n’ wax. A by-hand wash ‘n’ wax, none of that ‘car wash’ nonsense.”

Luc is laughing again. “You have a perfectly willing slave and that’s the best you can come up with? You’re bad at this game, Xan.” He stands up and eyes the table, figuring out his next shot. Xander thinks of the master/slave game he and Anya had been fond of. Thinks he’s better at this game than Luc knows.

“So, your friend. The blond guy...” Luc sinks another ball.


“Thought I saw him take off after that waitress.”

“Yeah, that sounds like Spike, alright.”

“He shouldn’t have bailed on you like that.” Two more stripes are pocketed and all that’s left is the eight-ball. Xander’s not unhappy about losing, however.
“It’s cool. Spike and I - we aren’t the best of friends. More like - default poolmates. See, my other friends are girls. They’re cool and all, but sometimes I need to hang around someone with a Y-chromosome, you know? Some he-man company to do he-man things with. Spike’s close enough for government work. And he can be pretty fun when he’s not tied up in my basement.”

Luc scratches; the white ball shoots right past the eight-ball and into the corner pocket. Luc gapes up at Xander, who’s smiling innocently.

“It’s a long story. But since I’m a gracious winner, I’ll tell you all about it on the drive back to your dorm.” Xander says, knowing he won’t tell Luc all about it, but doubting that Luc’ll mind.

“Ah.” Those sparkly green eyes blink, then crinkle up in a smile. “Okay, then. That sounds, um, nice.”

It’s going on two a.m. when Spike staggers back to the Bronze, down two hundred even.

The place has emptied out - businesses on the Hellmouth don’t encourage late nights out for even the stupidest of teeny-boppers - and Spike can’t spot the whelp among the few simps that remain, slow-dancing and pissed out of their minds, no doubt.

When he finally does see a familiar face leaning on the bar-top and chatting with the bartender, he moves toward her.


“Hi! Wondered where you went - oh, hey, that guy you were here with, your, um, special friend - “

“Booked?” Spike feels a twinge of annoyance out of nowhere. Not like he needed donut-boy to give him a ride to his crypt. Still, to just walk out on a fella like that...

*Rude* is what that is.

“Boy, did he.” The girl and the bartender exchange a look. “With this blond hottie that was mackin' on him since, like, you left.”

“That guy had only one thing on his mind,” the bartender adds. “Next time you see your man, he may have a few new tricks to teach you, hon.” The bartender gives Spike a pitying look before going into the back.

For a few seconds, Spike has no idea what the bloody hell these two morons are yammering about, then it comes back to him.

“Oh... yeah. M' boyfriend... yeah, well... we’re not exclusive or anything, just... you know...” Spike gestures vaguely, too tired and blitzed to lie convincingly, hoping Junie or Joanie will just infer something suitably alternative-lifestyle-y and let it alone.
And Harris? Turned poofier? Not so surprising, given his luck with women. Still, this mysterious guy he’d picked up sounded shady... and the boy was a demon magnet...

Of course, if anything happened to her pet donut-boy, whose is the first skull the Slayer would come pounding on?

Spike’s.

“I’m pretty sure that guy goes to UC Sunnydale, so, if you wanted to, I dunno - “

“Yeah, thanks, luv. See ya later, maybe.” Spike is moving towards the exit - towards UC Sunnydale - Jenny already forgotten.
Chapter Summary

Spike catches up with Xander and Luc.

Chapter Notes

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“So, you’re one of the Sunnydrones, huh?”

“Is that what you elitist university types call us townies, huh?”

“Only to your faces. You should hear what we say behind your backs.” Luc’s grin is infectious and Xander wonders if he should feel offended; he doesn’t.

“Now It all comes out. You’re awfully mean when you lose; mean like a junkyard dog.”

“Grr,” Luc agrees, leaning forward. “Here we are. Dorm, sweet dorm.” But Luc apparently isn’t in any rush to get out of Xander’s car.

“Say, can I ask... no para-military groups are operating out of your dorm basement, are they?” Xander tries to be smooth about it, but he must’ve failed because Luc’s green eyes are puzzled and a little wary.

“Uh, I don’t think so... though, if you wanted me to invite you in for coffee, or tea, you coulda just asked.”

“No - I mean coffee or tea would be great, just -” Xander laughs, blushes. “- there’ve been some weird groups on campus in the past. Wiccan baking circles, para-military groups, Campus Crusade for Christ - really can’t be too careful, you know.”

Luc’s giving him that quirky-eyebrow thing, something Xander could see himself getting used to. Kinda doesn’t know how he lived this long without a friend who did a quirky-eyebrow thing.

“So, um, did you say something about hot chocolate? ‘Cause I could really get behind some marshmallowy goodness.” Xander’s big grin is suspicious in both it’s bigness and it’s grinny-ness.

“I actually said coffee or tea, but for you, I could bestir myself to make hot chocolate. Hope you don’t mind instant, though.” Luc unbuckles his seatbelt and slides out of Xander’s car.

“Is there any other kind?” Xander asks, noticing how brand-spanking-new-looking Luc’s jeans are.
Certainly not noticing Luc’s ass. That would just be - weird. “None of that ‘real’ stuff for me, nossir! Powdery concentrate all the way!”

“Shut up and come on.” Luc’s laughing at him, but Xander doesn’t mind at all.

“Hey, Spike! Whatcha doin’?”

Spike hisses Clem quiet and glares; Clem merely stands there, looking clueless.

“Get down, you pillock!” Spike motions from behind the hedge. Clem looks around.

“Um... are we being followed? Or is this -? Are we on tv? Is this a reality tv show?” Now Clem is really looking around, the contents of his Big Gulp sloshing out of the cup.

“Bloody -” Spike reaches out and yanks Clem into the hedge.

“Spike, my Big Gulp!”

“I’ll buy you another if you’ll just shut it, wanker!” Spike puts his hand over Clem’s mouth.

“Haven’t seen the whelp around, have you?”

“The who? Oh, you mean Xander?”

“No, I mean Angelus.” Spike rolls his eyes, standing up. His cover’s well and truly shot, might as well just brazen it out and get this over with. He stalks resolutely across the UC Sunnydale quad. Clem hurries after him.

“Well, there’s no need to be snide... hey, are you sure this isn’t reality tv?”

“The chip only keeps me from killing humans, Clem.”

“Sorry. Oh, hey, I did see a guy that looked like Xander going toward Kentwell Hall about twenty minutes ago.”

“Kentwell? Which way is that?” Twenty minutes since anyone had seen donut-boy alive? Something was probably gnawing on his skull right this minute. The Slayer would not be happy at all.

“Right over there, actually. I wouldn’t go bothering them, though, they looked like they kinda wanted to be alone.”

Spike stops, grabbing Clem’s arm. “They.”

“Him and his date. Blond guy, kinda tall, lots of denim. Really nice smile.”

As if Spike’s lovely evening of losing all his money and possibly having to rescue donut-boy from yet another amorous demon wasn’t enough. “Are you making a lifestyle choice you feel the need to share or am I free to rescue the donut-boy?”
“I’m just very secure with my masculinity. That guy was hot.”

“I’m in a very hitting-you mood, right now, Clem. Good-night.”

“Night, Spike... hey, tell Xander and his date I said ‘hi’!”

“Oh, man! Buck Owens, Patsy Cline - Scruggs and Flatt!” Xander clutches the records - not cds, records - to his chest. “You are wonderful and I love you very, very much.”

“Aw, don’t I wish.” Luc smiles, pouring water from the tea kettle into their mugs. “You should see my dad’s collection. He’s got some bluegrass records - I don’t know where he found ‘em. He’s very mum on it, just tells me it’s not eBay. If you’re ever in Missouri, I’d love to let you loose on his collection.” Luc shrugs and steps out of the kitchen-nook and into the main room. Luc’s dorm room was actually an apartment, with a tiny kitchen and main area separate from the bedroom. And he had his own bathroom, which, to Xander’s thinking, was worth every extra dime per year.

“So, you got a roommate?” Xander’s trying to figure out a way to accept the hot chocolate and hold onto the records. Luc finally puts the mugs down on the coffee table and pries the records loose from Xander’s fingers, putting them back on the stack.

“I do. He’s off - somewhere, doing - something. I barely see him. I think I could pick him out of a line up, but don’t hold me to that.”

“Consider yourself lucky, man. Having a roommate who’s always there is no picnic. Believe me.” Xander sits on the couch and snags his hot chocolate, which, to his exact specifications is both hot and chocolatey. Finally, a friend who can cook.

“Would this have anything to do with tying your friend Spike up in your basement? The story I have yet to hear?” Luc sits next to him, smiling. It’s still a very nice smile.

“It - sorta does. Spike was my roommate for a brief time a year ago and, see... Spike is a sleepwalker. And, you know, I had to - tie him to a chair to make sure he didn’t wander off and try to kill - I mean, hurt himself. Because, you know. Basements, with the wires and the furnace and the - drier. They’re very dangerous, driers.” Xander nods soberly.

Luc’s look is dubious at best.

“Uh-huh... so... you tied your roommate to a chair every night. Kinky.” There’s a definite chuckle in his voice. Xander feels the need to defend himself.

“Hey - I’m the normal one! My former librarian used to chain Spike up in his bathtub and that didn’t come out right at all.” Xander buries his face in his hands. Had he been feeling suave earlier in the evening? Silly, silly Xan-man.

“So your former librarian and ex-roomie are the kinky ones and you’re just a helpless bystander.” Luc isn’t even trying not to laugh, anymore.
“I’d run out in shame, but that’s kinda hard to do with both feet in my mouth.”

“The foot-in-mouth look works for you, though. I’m not complaining, anyway.”

Xander risks a peek from between his fingers. “I’m not some weird, kinky Sunnydrone. I don’t tie Spike to random pieces of furniture for fun.”

“I know.” Luc puts a hand on Xander’s arm.

“And I’m not in any way, um, involved with Spike. In a, you know, naughty-fun kinda way.” Xander braces himself for fallout of some kind. Perhaps a nice bashing/name-calling combo.

“That’s good. Not for Spike, I guess, but I can’t say I’m unhappy about that.” Luc’s squeezing Xander’s arm. Xander finally uncovers his face, takes a deep breath and looks Luc in the eye.

Luc has nice eyes, Xander thinks, then clears his throat. “Just so that we’re on the same wavelength... if it weren’t for the fact that I’m still trying to pull both feet out, I’d be working up the courage to kiss you, right about now.” His blush is painfully hot. Like his entire face and some of his neck is on fire.

Luc moves a little closer on the couch, stroking Xander’s arm. “Is that so?”

“Oh, that’s so very so. As in ‘Make it so, number one’. It’s the epitome of so -”

The only thing that could effectively shut Xander up happens in sudden slow-motion. Luc’s eyes are all Xander can see until soft, warm lips touch his own and he gets another one of those shocks. His eyes slip closed. When Luc’s tongue darts out to lick Xander’s lips, he opens his mouth, but Luc’s already pulling away, leaving a slightly minty taste behind.

“Been wanting to do that since I first saw you.”

“And I’ve been wanting you to do that since you bent over to line up your first shot. I mean, wow - I’m totally not used to checking out guys, but you’re - amazingly hot -” Xander can’t seem to stem the flow of idiocy coming out of his mouth. In fact, he suspects that unless Luc kisses him again really soon, this night may not end as well as he hopes it will.

“You’re so sexy when you babble, Xander...” Luc’s arms are sliding around his neck. They feel really warm and solid and good. Not as good as the look in those deep green eyes, but close.

“Really?” Xander at least has the presence of mind to pull Luc closer; close enough that - whee! Xander’s got a lapful of man!

“And truly. But shut up, ‘kay?”

“Okey-doke -” Xander’s trying to say around Luc’s tongue, then just gives up. Talking’s overrated, anyway.
Can’t believe I’m scaling a bloody wall for the bloody donut-boy. Probably nothing but a gurgle in some demon-beast’s digestive track, by now. Shoulda just got the Slayer to come here and drag his lifeless carcass out, but no. I have to be the bloody soft touch...

It’s been at least three minutes since last he picked up the compulsive babbling that was a panicking donut-boy. Nothing but weird smacking sounds and the occasional moan since.

One more storey... and there’s the window he wants. Cracked just slightly to let in fresh air.

“Yeah...” Donut-boy. Not sounding anything like being eaten. Actually, it sounds like -

“God, Xan.”

Oh, bloody hell!

Spike leans up to look over the ledge and, sure enough, gets a snootful of pheromones and an eyeful of donut-boy being straddled and kissed by some blond tosser wearing way too much denim.

Spike’s first instinct is to rap on the glass; give donut-boy and 501 Blues the shock of their lives, when the scent hits him.

Shit, he really is a demon magnet! I didn’t even know one of these things was in town, let alone haunting the Bronze and picking up donut-boys!

“Mm, don’t stop, Luc.” Mr. Jeans has broken the kiss and pulled away slightly. The boy sounds dazed, but he’s got himself a fine double-handful of his paramour’s denim-clad arse.

“I’m just gonna close the window. It’s chilly in here.”

“I’m not keeping you warm enough?”

“Oh, you’re plenty warm enough, I just get cold really easily. Always have. I’ll be right back, don’t move.”

“Wasn’t planning on it.” The boy reluctantly lets go of the thing straddling his legs then steals a kiss. “Hurry back.”

“I will.”

Spike quickly ducks back under the ledge, fingers digging deeper into the crumbly brick facade. He hears the window open a little wider and a soft, low voice drifts out.

“Spike, is it? Your kind have to be invited in, don’t they? Well, you haven’t been. Don’t ever invade my privacy again or you’ll spend the rest of your unlife wishing you hadn’t. Have a good night.”

The window slams shut so hard it startles Spike into letting go of his precarious hold in the crumbly brick. In the split second before he hits the ground, Spike takes a moment to reflect.

Oh, fuck -
Chapter Summary

Spike gets an owwie and Xander gets some. Plus, surprises at the end!

Chapter Notes

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“So...”

“So,” Xander agrees, grinning as Luc saunters back toward the couch.

“Where were we?”

“I believe we were at the place where my pants are suddenly very tight and restricting.”

“Ah, that’s a good place to be. Not as good as the place where I help you out of ‘em, though.” Luc kneels in front of Xander and puts a hand on his belt buckle. Xander shivers.

“What’s wrong? Freak-out factor kicking in?” Luc doesn’t seem upset, just patient and curious.

“Maybe a little. But only because, well, I’m so not freaking out and I really should be.” Xander laughs nervously, reaching out to brush his fingers over Luc’s lips. “I mean, this is so new to me and you’re so - you kinda overwhelm me, you know? I feel like I’m out of my depth, but at the same time -”

When Xander pauses, frowning, Luc kisses the fingers resting on his lips. “At the same time?”

“At the same time it feels like I’ve been waiting for you all my life... wacky, huh?” Now that he’s said it aloud, Xander feels something in him that he hadn’t known was unsettled - settle.

“So not wacky.” Luc sighs, pulling Xander’s hand to his cheek, leaning into it, eyes closed. “I’m the first guy that’s ever - invited you up for hot chocolate, aren’t I? And feel free to leave out any zany asides about your ex-librarian and your ex-roommate.”

Xander’s laughing, tension suddenly gone. “Giles? Spike? Hot chocolate with them? That would be yucky if it wasn’t so gross. Andeeewww, there’s the mental picture! Make it stop, Luc, make it stop!”

Luc leans up and pecks Xander on the lips.

“Better?” Twinkle, twinkle, go the pretty green eyes. And there’s the quirky-eyebrow-thing
Xander’s starting to think is really sexy.

“Ever so much.” Xander pulls Luc up into his lap - who’d have thought that would cause tingles?
“You’re the first guy I’ve had - would like to have hot chocolate with.”

“And you’d want your first hot chocolate to be with me? Y-you want to have your first ever hot chocolate with me?” Luc’s eyes are wide and a little confused. There’s some other emotion in there Xander can’t identify. It makes Luc look very young.

“Well, yeah, I mean - if you still want to have hot chocolate with me. If you’ve changed your mind or something, that’s cool, too, I don’t wanna rush you. We barely know each other, so hot chocolate right now might be rushing things, but I sooo want to have hot chocolate with you - wait, we’re still euphemizing about primate-lovin’, right?”

“I think so...”

“Good. Not that I wouldn’t want to have actual hot chocolate with you. Or any other beverage, hot or cold. And food! We could have food, too! Do you like -”

“Xan.” Luc’s eyes are doing something Xander might call smoldering if he was a moony little girl, but since he’s not, he doesn’t. Not even in the back of his brain. No smoldering here; not no way, not no how.

“Yeah, Luc?”

“Fuck me.”

Xander is rendered both blinkless and speechless.

Spike limps down Revello Drive shaking, cursing and holding his head.

Though his vision is trebling and quadrupling, he manages to find the right house and drag his still partially-broken body up the front porch steps.

“Oi! Slayer! Open up! Trouble!”

After nearly a minute of pounding and shouting, the front door is yanked open by a very angry and very dishevelled Slayer.

“The very first word out of your mouth had better be apocalypse or I’m going to get Mr. Pointy.”

Tempted though he is to comment on the Slayer’s choice of nightwear - and the apparent chilliness of the night air - Spike cuts right to the chase.

“Donut-boy, shagging something - powerful, maybe unslayable. Rally the troops, luv, ‘cause he’s been in there for I-dunno-how-long. Dunno how long I was out. Good thing my skull knitted together before sunup.” Spike manages to get a cigarette in his mouth, but doesn’t even dig out the lighter.
For a moment the Slayer only gapes at him. It’s not an attractive look.

“Come on, Slayer, throw on something slutty and let’s go rescue the boy, yeah? You’ll wanna get the witches and Rupert in on this.” Spike’s shaking so hard his cigarette falls out of his mouth. He doesn’t immediately pick it up and put it back in his mouth; this finally shocks the Slayer into action.

As she disappears up the steps to her room, Spike slumps against the door frame, listening to his bones reknitting.


“Okay, so how much denim do you actually own?”

Luc laughs, snuggling into Xander’s side. “If denim were an animal, it would’ve been extinct years and years ago.”

“But you look really good in it, so - totally worth it. Hmm, bet you’d look really good in satin, too,” Xander muses, running his fingers up and down Luc’s side. Luc’s skin is lightly dusted with fine blond hair and as cool and pale as a vampire’s. But there’s a heartbeat - Xander had checked - and a strong, slow pulse that Xander had taken great care to speed up.

“Maybe. But I like the feel of denim. Kinda rough.” Luc rolls onto his stomach and props his head on his arms, his arms on Xander’s chest. His eyes are very grave. Happy, relaxed, but grave. That look had been there since they’d met; only left fleetingly during their conversation about hot chocolate.

“So... hot chocolate...” Luc says with a tiny, self-deprecating smile. Xander wonders briefly if Luc’s some kind of mind-reading demon. Dismisses the idea because of the uncertainty on his face. So not a mind-reader.

“Very hot chocolate,” Xander reassures him. “Came so hard I shot brain matter so... yay, chocolatey naughtiness!”

“Really?”

“Well... you were there, you tell me?” Luc’s not the only one that needs reassuring.

“I’d prefer to show you.” A cool hand on his dick should not be such a turn on, but it is. Xander’s ridiculously hard, ridiculously fast. Isn’t at all reminded of vampires or zombies or anything else that might have room temperature hands. “I want to show you at least three more times before dawn.”

Xander shivers. “That’s a plan and a half.”

Luc’s sitting up and straddling him in one fluid movement and gah! That is the sexiest move ever! And Luc’s long, swimmer’s body above his own? Sexiest visual ever!

“Wanna ride you like stallion, Xan.”
“I’m so down with that.” Xander fumbles for the Astroglide Luc’d had the good sense to put on the nighttable before things got too non-thinky. Now, Luc covers Xander’s hand and shakes his head.

“I’m still ready from last time; I just want you in me, Xander.”

“Keep saying stuff like that and it’ll be over before - gah!” Luc’s reaching behind himself to guide Xander into him, not breaking eye contact to do so.

If Xander were the type to ponder in apropos moments, he might wonder why Luc’s skin is so cool to the touch on the outside, but inside... that touch is almost unbearably hot. Like a slow slide into burning velvet.

But the feel of Luc and the look on his face - concentration, lust, fear, loss, sadness and that something else Xander really can’t define, even if he had Willow’s brain and a dictionary - is more than enough to distract him, keep him in the present. Those eyes, previously so gentle and still, were a shifting, whirling maelstrom, sucking Xander up and in, to be lost forever -

- and so help him, Xander wants to be lost... so very lost...

Then Luc’s looking away; up at the ceiling and panting, his body covered in a fine sheen of sweat. He puts his hands on Xander’s thighs and levers himself up, then slams back down so quickly, they both cry out.

“Xander.” Luc had been utterly silent their first time. Not one word or moan, just the most intense expressions ever to cross a human face. Hearing him moan Xander is better than hearing Patsy Cline. Almost better to hear than being in Luc feels.

Almost.

“God, you’re so beautiful... wanna be like this forever...” Xander’s unaware of what he’s saying at this moment, will never remember what he’s said in this moment. His body is fighting the urge to move, to thrust, to pull Luc down on top of him. But Luc had wanted to ride him, who was Xander to say no? Even if it means he can’t kiss away any emotions that aren’t happy and/or naughty?

“Luc, look at me -” Xander puts his hands on Luc’s hips, holding the cool body still for a moment. Then his hand drifts across Luc’s stomach, down the sparse trail of blond hair. Luc shakes his head no.

“I can’t... I shouldn’t... don’t do this to me, Xander, please -” Luc’s voice, already pleasantly deep, is getting deeper, louder - ring-ier. Like it has a built-in echo.

“Don’t do what?” Xander’s not really listening, stroking Luc’s erection slowly and wondering what it would feel like to have something that large and hard inside him. To clench his muscles around Luc the way Luc clutches around him. Then Xander’s running basketball stats in his head, anything not to come first. Been there, done that, bought the t-shirt. This time, he wants to see Luc’s face just as he -

And what the heck was that?

Something red and morphy-looking behind Luc, growing entirely too quickly to still be so unidentifiable - Luc’s leaning forward a little and the morphy thing is moving with Luc, is so obviously connected to Luc.
Literally connected to Luc.

Oh, fuck...

Then Luc’s storm-eyes fall on Xander, suddenly growing calm and grave and resigned and oh fuck, why does he have to be such a demon magnet even when he’s gay?

“Xander -” Luc exhales and comes, his eyes slipping shut. And - so help him - Xander finds it really hard to be afraid of any demon that comes rays of light the color of Sunday afternoon sunbeams all over his hand.

It's warm, and surprisingly tickle-y. Xander starts to giggle.

And those big red things unfurling behind Luc? Weird, morphy-looking things that now span across the entire room? Yeah, not so red and morphy, anymore. Kinda pink-ish - no, wait - kinda white-ish, now... with metallic-gold glints, even in the silvery moonlight.

A feather the size of a foot-long sub drifts down to Xander’s chest, landing softly; shining. Releasing his death grip on Luc’s hip, Xander picks up the feather with a slightly trembling hand and holds it up, mesmerized by the way the moonlight seems to showcase it. Caress it.

Shaking himself free of the feathers spell, he looks up at Luc; Luc’s head is bowed, his face buried in his hands. His shoulders are shaking slightly. Xander can’t imagine the expression written on Luc’s face, but shaking shoulders? Usually not a good sign.

"Luc -"

And all the sensations he hasn’t noticed in favor of watching Luc come catch up with him in one blinding rush.

“Holy shit - I just fucked an angel... twice!” Xander says wonderingly. Luc finally looks up. There are tears in his eyes.

Then Xander’s coming and laughing and everything is peace and groovy, golden feather-light.
Chapter Summary

Coitus Interruptus.

Chapter Notes

Notes/Spoilers/Warnings: AU, S6-ish. In this ‘verse, Xander didn’t propose to Anya just because they were about to die. She broke up with him shortly after Buffy’s death but they remained friends.

When the stars and fireworks clear - finally, sadly - Xander lays there like a limp dishrag, eyes closed and a blissed-out expression on his face.

“I am so gay,” he says aloud, his voice all hoarse and raspy. He wonders if he screamed when he came; thinks he must have. He hopes Luc’s neighbors are heavy sleepers or taking industrial strength valium.

“And this was ever in question?” Luc enquires, clenching the funnest muscles ever around Xander, who’s still hard enough to appreciate the gesture. And getting harder.

“Oh, there wasn’t a question. Not even a little one, I don’t think. I was as straight as a ruled edge till I met you, then buh-bye straightness, hello hot chocolate! I should really be freaking right the hell out, y’know. Is it because you’re an angel? Is that why I’m not angsting?”

Luc’s hands are taking Xander’s, pulling them onto hips that are no longer cool, but nearly fever hot.

“I’m gonna have bruises right there in the shape of your hands,” Luc murmurs, the satisfaction in his voice going straight to Xander’s cock.

“You’re a master at the changing of a subject.” And look, Xander’s idiot body is still trying to thrust, still drawn to the intense heat at Luc’s core.

“It’s good to know college hasn’t been a total waste.”

“Wait till you try the California job market, buddy. You’ll soon be singing different tune. . . Dear. God. Don’t stop doing that.”

“You’re so awesome, Xander.”

“High praise, coming from an angel.”

“And an incredible lay.” Luc’s hands are still over his, squeezing.

“Why are you so hot inside? You’re like a furnace. . . .”
“I’m very warm-blooded - yeah, jeezus, right there - “

“Your wings are effing sexy. Can I see ‘em again?”

“Xander - “

“Don’t tell me to shut up, Luc. And quit trying to change the subject. Considering what just happened, a brief explanation would be really nice.”

“Necessary?” And those wonderful, _heavenly_ muscles are squeezing the life out of Xander’s dick. His reply turns into a moan and he rolls them over, pulling what’s left of his brains out of Luc’s warmth.

“No, not _necessary_. Just - helpful.” Luc’s legs wrap around his waist, heels drumming insistently against his lower back. “At least tell me if you’re in the market for a boyfriend, because if you are - I’m so fucking yours.” Xander opens his eyes to look into Luc’s, needing to see whatever emotions might be there. But Luc’s eyes are closed, his face turned to the side. He looks perfectly miserable.

“Luc.” Xander kisses Luc’s face and throat. Luc’s arms wind around his neck tightly, possessively.

“I’m half in-love with you as it is; if I’m not careful, I’ll fall completely.”

“So? Willow had a boyfriend who was a werewolf, Buffy had a boyfriend who was a vampire - I’m assuming that since you’re an angel, I’m not shocking you with any of this - and I’m pretty sure that Giles at one point had an evil, demon-mongering wizard as a boyfriend. Having a boyfriend who’s an angel wouldn’t be so wiggin-y for me. But . . . that’d be of the bad for you, I’m guessing from the look on your face?”

“Very.”

“‘Cause I’m just human?”

Luc turns his face so he can look up into Xander’s eyes. “No. Not because of that.”

“Angels not allowed to have boyfriends?” Xander starts stroking Luc’s erection - angelic recovery time? _Very_ of the good, in Xander’s book - wanting that miserable look off of Luc’s face. Considering that _he’s_ just gotten the vaguest brush off ever, Xander’s remarkably okay. With everything. Luc’s the one who looks like he’s about to cry or scream or - _something_.

“It’s not a matter - fuck, Xan - of what I’m _allowed_ to do. I - I can’t stay here. In this body, on this plane. I’m too - _big_, for lack of a better word. My - nature will keep manifesting; it’ll destroy this body and warp this plane out of true . . . I’m not supposed to be here.”

“This isn’t your body?” Now Xander’s scared again. Possession is something he knows about firsthand; doesn’t want anything to do with. He’s automatically pulling away from Luc, kneeling on the bed, unsure of what to do or say. Luc looks utterly confused for a moment, then anxious. He sits up, reaching out to Xander, whose look warns him off.

“This is _my_ body. It’s my - container. It’s a buffer between what I am and this plane . . . but it’s eroding.” Luc looks down, sighing. “I was born Luc Devane. I’ve _been_ Luc Devane for twenty-three years. But I’m something else, too. Something that’s manifested once tonight. And it doesn’t
belong here.”

“Too good for this crappy ol’ world?” Xander jokes, but wants to believe; more than half believes already. The light that shines out of Luc is so bright; the thought of this world tarnishing that brightness is enough to make him shudder.

Luc’s laugh is bitter. “Too something. Powerful, maybe. Different. If I don’t leave on my own steam, your plane’ll try to spit me out like a wad of used Bubble-Yum. Either way, I’m gone.” Luc looks small and faded. Xander wonders what happened to the wings, but senses this isn’t the moment to ask. He asks something more important, instead.

“How long do we have?”

Luc looks up into Xander’s face, his green eyes all saucery in surprise. “What?”

“Well, I figure if you’re only gonna be here for a little while longer - if you’ve got nothing better to do, that is - maybe you’d like to hang with me and my friends. Blow off your classes, just - live it up as much as you can in the time you’ve got left.” Xander smiles shyly. “Have lots of hot chocolate with the construction worker of your choice. . . .”

“Of my choice. . .?” Those pretty green eyes twinkle as Luc pretends to think it over; a well-timed, well-aimed tackle/thrust combo from Xander makes up his mind for him.

“God, Xander. . . we’ve got a week, maybe, before I go blooey right off of this plane.” Luc’s bucking up to meet Xander’s body, digging his heels into Xander’s lower back for good measure.

“Then let’s make it memorable.” Xander’s grinning, now, pinning Luc’s hands next to the much-abused pillow.

Just then, there’s a loud crash as the bedroom door is kicked open and nearly off its hinges.

* *

It doesn’t really look like the lair of the biggest bad since Glory.

It’s terribly unimpressive, what with the college-dorm chic and many potted ferns, but then, Glory’s condo didn’t look like HellGod H.Q., either.

Spike peers around the doorway, still spooked - wary, he reminds himself - despite the Slayer and two witches between him and the thing.

“In the bedroom. That way,” Spike says unnecessarily since Buffy is already stalking down a short hallway, broadsword at the ready. Whatever unerring sense tells him where it is has obviously whispered in the Slayer’s ear.

“He’ll be okay. We know he’s still alive,” Glinda’s whispering to Red who looks scarily on edge. Like she’s about to start hurling fireballs or lightning bolts. Or crying. Can never tell with witches.

“If he’s not, we’re gonna make the thing that has him all kinds of dead.” For a second, Red’s eyes
seem to darken, and her face. . . flickers. Spike chalks it up to the abuse his brain’s taken all evening. First the liquor, then the ten-storey fall - of course he’s not his best. And he can smell dawn in the air, already. Not to mention semen and pheromones. Really fresh semen and pheromones.

*Bloody hell, they’re not still -*

“Oh. My. *God*!”

Spike’s barging into the apartment, past the witches, wariness driven away by the Slayer’s horrified scream.

“Oh, no, Xander -“ Red and Glinda are close behind him. At the end of the hall the Slayer stands just in the doorway, sword slipping from her hand. It hits the ground with a clatter.

“Fuck, she’s been thralled!” Spike’s in gameface, can feel the heat of gathered magic behind him. Good. Red and Glinda brought their A-game. If the boy’s dead - and there’s a frownworthy thought, but only because that means no more of the boy’s paychecks to hustle away - they’ll tear that thing apart or die trying.

“Shit - *Buffy*?” Sounds like donut-boy’s voice, only two octaves higher with surprise and embarrassment.

“Eeww! My eyes, my eyes!” Buffy turns away from the doorway, covering her eyes just as Spike, Willow and Tara burst into the room.

Spike takes in the scene quickly: Xander kneeling on a very rumpled bed, looking for a sheet to clutch to himself and mostly blocking Spike’s view of *Mr. Jeans*.

“Oh!” Is Glinda’s reaction. Red seems to be speechless, gaping at her very naked best friend and his very naked, soon-to-be-slayed lover.

Donut-boy still looks absolutely horrified for a moment, all blush and stammer. Then Mr. Jeans puts a hand on his shoulder. The boy immediately straightens, like someone’s lent him a spine.

“Not to be rude, but what the fuck are you guys doing here?”

“Spike s-said you were in trouble.” Glinda's blushing, but not looking away, unlike Red, who’s already gone the way of the Slayer, turned her back to the room - to the thing.

“Spike.” Xander’s eyes shift to Spike; they’re completely unreadable.

“Well? What the *fuck* are we all staring at? Let’s rescue the boy and kill the demon-poof, yeah?” Stunned silence from all quarters meets this statement. Spike sighs, feeling very put-upon. “Some of us’ll be in danger of a really bad sunburn in about an hour, so let’s ignore the buggery and try to stay on track, shall we?” Spike starts forward, ax raised.

“It’s not enough you take my money then ditch me! But - this -! I can’t believe you’d try to cock-block me like this!” Donut-boy exclaims in angry disbelief.

“What the bloody hell -” Spike begins, just as the whelp surges forward, maidenly sheet-clutching forgotten, arm drawing back.
Spike gets a moment to appreciate that the boy’s hung like an army mule before his fist connects with Spike’s jaw and his head suffers its third trauma of the night.

* 

“Um, excuse me. . .” Luc’s calm, gentle voice cuts through the tense silence.

Xander glares at his unconscious ex-roommate for a moment, then looks at Luc, who’s smiling hopefully at Tara.

“I’m sure you guys are, um, full of questions. For Xander. But maybe he can answer them after we’re dressed?”

“Oh! Sure - we’ll just -“ Tara gently shoves Buffy and Willow out of the bedroom, pulling the door shut behind her.

“Oh, God, I saw Xander’s winky. . . I think I’ve been struck blind,” Willow’s saying.

“Blindness came a couple minutes too late to do anyone any good,” Buffy mutters ruefully as the door clicks mostly shut.

Then Luc’s out of bed, all hugs and kisses and comforting warmth. Xander runs his hands up Luc’s back; the places where the wings manifested were noticeably warmer than the rest of him.

“So. Those were the friends I mentioned,” Xander sighs, laying his head on Luc’s solid shoulder.

“They seem nice,” Luc says.
Chapter Summary

The plot thickens. Then congeals. I think its expiration date has come and gone. . .

Chapter Notes

Notes/Spoilers/Warnings: AU, S6-ish. In this ‘verse, Xander didn’t propose to Anya just because they were about to die. She broke up with him shortly after Buffy’s death but they remained friends.

“Hi, guys.”

The muted conversation stops as Xander steps into the living area.

“Well, thank God you’re at least wearing clothes,” Buffy sighs in relief, eyeing Xander’s khakis and t-shirt. She still looks faintly green. Willow looks angry and Tara just looks, well, like Tara.

“How ‘bout those Knicks?” Xander says, trying for a laugh.

“Xander Lavelle Harris, what the hell are you thinking having sex with a demon!” Willow explodes. Nope, definitely not her indoor-voice.

“What the hell are you thinking having sex with a boy demon?” Buffy adds not as loudly, sounding more confused than angry.

“He’s not a demon, you guys -”

“What, did he tell you that? Did he also tell you he didn’t have any icky, demon STDs, ‘cause I didn’t notice any protection, mister!”

“Wills -”

“Don’t you ‘Wills’ me! How long have you been making smoochies with demons?

“Well, Anya -”

“You know what I mean, Xander.”

Xander sighs. “Tonight was the first time. We met at the Bronze, we hit it off and -”

“And he brought you back to his place for a nightcap, is that it?” Willow’s resolve-face is slipping into place. This may not bode well for Luc.
“For hot chocolate, actually. . . very hot chocolate - but that’s besides the point. Look, it just happened. A string of wacky coincidences that incidentally led to the best sex I’ve ever had. . .”
Xander’s face turns smiley and dreamy. Buffy groans.

“Am I the only one who’s having trouble wrapping her mind around Xander, version two-point-gay?” She looks painfully puzzled as one lesbian witch glances at her, then the other, followed by Xander. Realizes who she’s asking and finds something interesting to notice on Luc’s bookshelf.

Willow sighs, watching the Slayer for a moment. She takes a deep breath. Then another. “Don’t get me wrong, Xander, I’m all supportive of alternative lifestyles, because -” she reaches for Tara’s hand, squeezes it. “But unprotected sex with a demon, no matter it’s gender, is way too alternative for my best friend and with no warning.

“Am I gonna have to turn this guy into a toad - or beat him to death with a shovel, Xander?” Willow asks softly, looking miserable. Xander feels a pang of guilt.

“No, Wills. There’ll be no turning Luc into an amphibian or beating him to death with a shovel. I’d like his humany bits to remain, well, human.” Another goofy, twitter-pated smile for the Xan-man, but that’s okay.

“Gah!” From the direction of Luc’s bookshelf. Xander puts away his schmoopy face and tries for a resolve-face, as well.

“And he’s not a demon. He told me he’s not and I believe him.”

“Why, because boy/boy sex is new and wonderful and you’re digging it too much to see the danger you might be in? Because he’s so good in bed you’re all - schmoopy-faced?”

“Well. . . I mean no! Of course that’s not the reason why!” Xander’s blushing so hard, it hurts a little. “You guys have to trust me: he isn’t a demon. I’ve seen proof with my own two eyes - hell, ask him yourself and he might show you, too!” Xander is practically bouncing, remembering snowy white wings that had managed to gleam gold in the moonlight.

Willow is shaking her head wearily. “Xander -”

“Will, he’s good. I feel it in my bones! He’d never hurt me.” Xander steps closer to her, wraps his arms around her. She immediately relaxes, hugging him back. “Can’t you trust me on this? He won’t turn evil on me.”

“Remember Ampada? And Faith? And Cordelia? Well, Cordelia was always kinda evil, but - do you get where I’m going with this? Your track record isn’t the best ever.”

“True.” Brutally honest, but true. “After all the crap I went through with them, though I kinda have a better survival instinct than I did in highschool.”

“Well, what if you’re just attracting a wiler class of demon, Xan?” Buffy can finally contribute something that isn’t “eww” to the conversation, but Xander isn’t so glad about that, right now.

“And you seem awfully gone on this guy, who is admittedly hot, but - you’re all mushy and making with the dreamy, distracted smiles at odd moments. Like you’re in love. Doesn’t that seem odd to you?” Buffy’s frowning in the direction of the bedroom. Xander’s seen her look like that when she’s about to slay.
“Un-Xanderish.” Willow’s voice is muffled by Xander’s chest.

“Maybe it’s nothing he’d do on purpose, but a demon - or a whatever-he-is - could hurt you accidentally. And that’s assuming this isn’t all some clever charade to get it’s possibly literal hooks into one of the Slayer’s friends.” Buffy’s hands are clenching and unclenching, as if she misses that huge sword she infrequently carries around. Xander knows that in her mind, Luc is as good as slayed.

“Come on, guys -” Xander lets go of Willow to pace to the window and back, trying to find the words to make them believe him.

“I’m n-not getting a bad vibe from him.” Tara interjects just before Xander starts pulling out his hair in frustration. Everyone looks at her expectantly and she smiles a little. “He’s - there’s something about him. A - hum. Or a th-thrum. You feel it, Willow, don’t you?”

“Oh, I feel the thrum. But the thrum doesn’t mean anything. Thrums aren’t good or evil, they’re just - power. Ethan Rayne had a thrum. Giles has a thrum. You and I have a thrum -”

“Do I have a thrum?” Buffy asks eagerly. Tara and Willow look at her intently for nearly a full minute.

“No,” they both say at the same time.

“Oh.” Buffy pouts. “Not that, you know, I’m dying to thrum, it’s just - I’m the Slayer. Seems like that’d be at least a little thrum-worthy.”

“Well, if the Slayer thrummed, demons would be able to sense her coming a mile away, and she’d be constantly looking over her shoulder. It’d be hellmouth-y no matter where in the world she went.” Willow explains reassuringly. Buffy nods, slightly mollified. Xander rolls his eyes. Wonders if he has a thrum. Then shakes his head.

“Look, can we finish this later, Scooby-up this evening? I’ll bring Luc along and you guys can ask him some questions. He may not answer all of them, or any of them, but I don’t think he’ll mind you guys asking. He’s really awesome like that.”

“We don’t even know who this guy is, let alone what he is and you wanna bring him to a Scooby meeting? It was months before I brought Tara along and she was so obviously not evil!” Willow exclaims.

Xander pinches the bridge of his nose, trying to halt the beginnings of a tension headache. “And Luc so obviously is because he wants me, right?”

Nothing but silence for his answer, but it’s enough.

“Ladies and gentlemen, my best friends.” Xander laughs ruefully. “Isn’t it possible that maybe Luc doesn’t want to eat my brains or something? Maybe he’s just helplessly caught up in the Xan- man’s mojo?” Xander asks, unconsciously mimicking Spike’s leer.

The witches and Slayer exchange worried glances, not sure how to express their mountains of misgivings. But Buffy wearily sums it up for the three of them:
“Oh, damn, he’s gonna try to eat Xander’s brains.”

“Wake up”

Spike snorts and tries to roll over and go back to sleep; is stopped by a hand on his arm and something cold and metallic against his throat.

His eyes fly open and he nearly jerks upright reflexively, only barely stopping before he beheads himself on the Slayer’s best broadsword.

“Sodding hell -” Spike’s vision clears and he can see the smiling thing squatting next to him, holding the sword. He knows he’s in the shit, now.

“Sodding hell is right, vampire. I told you - I warned you - to mind your business, didn’t I?” It’s smile is still as sweet as cotton candy, but it’s eyes are empty and unfathomable. Like looking into a stagnant green pool. Spike shudders, unable to look away.

It’s smile warms and it blinks as if nothing had happened, eyes twinkling cheerfully.

“I know what you are, mate. Know you’re not as human as you look. Or as nice.” Spike’s panting, can’t get enough air though he doesn’t actually need it.

“You have no idea what I am, Spike. None whatsoever.” The sword presses down a little harder. There’s a sharp pain and Spike feels blood running down his neck. “As great as the Slayer and her bunch seem to be - and they really do seem like a swell gang, if a bit over-protective - I really didn’t enjoy them bursting in on Xan and me. Kind of a mellow-harsher, I’d say.”

“What the fuck do you care? You’ve already had the boy; could smell it from the bleeding hallway, I could.” Spike tries for a leer, manages a grimace. “You’ve sampled donut-boy’s negligible charms, why don’t you just get in the wind before the Slayer decides to turn you into paste. Believe me, that swell gang’ll seem much less swell if you hurt their mascot.”

In the other room, Red’s voice reaches a near screech as she berates the boy for being such a pillock. Spike couldn’t agree with her more. Like the utter simp he is, Harris defends the thing Spike’s currently trapped with.

“She’s a feisty little lady. I like that.” It smiles so sweetly, Spike’s teeth begin to ache. “And of course she’s doing her misguided best to protect Xander. Gotta love her for that.”

“If you hurt him, feisty don’t begin to cover the world of pain you got waitin’ for you. Red’ll eat you alive.”

“See, there you go confusing me with one of your ilk. I have no interest in hurting Xander. I have no interest in him as the Slayer’s confidante. I’m not even interested in the hyena that crouches silently inside his heart.”

Spike looks blankly confused. Luc sighs. “Anyway. My interest in him is purely personal and purely
none of your fucking business.”

“But it’s damn sure the Slayer’s, you schizoid-demon-poof!” Spike scoots back as quickly as he can, the sword sliding down his body, taking buttons, shirt and skin with it. The thing doesn’t even try to stop him, merely watches him with a mixture of fondness and exasperation, still smiling that impossibly nice and brilliant smile. Full of perfect teeth. Blindingly white.

It really was a very nice smile. . . .

“Oi!” Spike glares, scrambling back a little more, till his back hits the dresser. “Save that Mr. Nice Guy shit for the boy, tosser.”

The wattage on that lethal smile cranks down to a more bearable degree as the thing stands up. It’s wearing dark blue jeans and donut-boy’s flannel shirt, unbuttoned.

“You know, we’re getting off to such a bad start and I really don’t want that. I mean, Xander considers you a friend, though he’d never admit it. I, of course, mean you no harm. I don’t want to hurt any of you.”

“Doesn’t mean you won’t,” Spike grunts, trying to stand, sick of having to crane his neck to look up at it. The dresser’s thankfully sturdy.

“Are you okay, Spike?” Solicitousness that Spike doesn’t believe for one moment.

“Oh, I’m fine as paint, mate. You can stow the fake concern bit, hey? Save it for some ponce with a soul.” Now that he’s standing, the room spins and lurches. He has to lean on the dresser to stay upright.

“I only want to make Xander happy,” it asserts, still holding the sword. Looks comfortable holding it, too.

“Sure. I buy that. If by happy you mean dead and possibly eaten.” Spike sneers, some of his bravado returning at the horrified look on it’s face.

“Xander is very special to me, Spike. I would never - will never hurt him.” It moves toward Spike, who fights every instinct in him that’s saying run, hide. “I don’t have much time here. Which I’m sure is killing you inside.” It’s sweet smile turns wry, perhaps the first honest look that’s crossed it’s face in Spike’s presence.

“It’ll be a shame to see you go,” Spike agrees; unwisely, perhaps. But it doesn’t look angry, just ponderous and sad.

“You simply need to stay out of my way while I’m here, Spike. I’m not gonna waste my time dicking around with some impotent, limey vamp with no fashion sense.”

“I’m not bloody impotent! And you’re a fine one to mock my fashion sense, wanker -” The rest of Spike’s tirade is cut off as he’s lifted by his jaw and slammed into the wall. Through the stars and fireworks he can see those stagnant-lake eyes glaring up at him.

How’d it move so fast -?

“I feel as if you’ve missed the point of my thinly veiled threats, so I’ll repeat myself slowy and use
small words. And you just nod to let me know you understand, m’kay?” It waits for Spike’s sullen, angry nod.

“Good! I like a fast learner.” It squeezes Spike’s jaw until there’s an audible creak. “I’m here to make Xander happy. That’s really all you and the Scooby gang need to know. Why is none of your concern. And you won’t go around bad-mouthing me to the Slayer and her friends or to Xander. In fact, if you know Xander and I are gonna be someplace you already are, you’re gonna do your damnedest to be somewhere else when we get there. And if you ever -” Another slam into the wall - “ever -” it’s eyes are changing color, lightening from green to a pale, lusterless yellow-gold. “- lay so much as a hand on what’s mine, or try to come between us, I’ll personally take you on a tour of hell dimensions you can’t even imagine. Nod if you follow me, Spike.” All in that infuriatingly normal voice.

Spike nods despite himself, shuddering. Then he’s dropping to the floor, gulping in more air that he doesn’t need. It watches him for long moments, those scary eyes darkening back to that murky, still green. In another impossible to follow move, it’s hauling him upright and dusting him off efficiently.

“So put away that funky face, buddy. In six, seven days max, I’ll be dust in the wind and everything can go back to the way it was,” it croons softly, pulling Spike into it’s arms for a hug. Spike’s too weak and tired to fight it off, doesn’t want to.

“Everything’ll be just fine if you stay out of our way. I really don’t mean any of you harm. I just want some time with Xander. . .” Spike can feel it’s breath in his hair, hot and dry. “Just one week.”

“Then you’re gone,” Spike murmurs, smiling. Bloody tired, he is; could fall asleep right here, all warm and cozy-like. Luc’s no trouble at all, just wants some time with the boy, whose love-luck has been shit since Spike’s known him. Maybe Luc is just what the boy needs -

Spike stumbles almost drunkenly out of it’s arms, snarling into gameface as his back hits the wall. It doesn’t try to stop him, only gives him one cute-n-sexy wink.

“Fucker! You absolute fucker!” Spike growls, shaking with exhaustion, adrenaline and a sense of having pulled himself out of deep quicksand, indeed. “Don’t you ever touch me again or I’ll take you apart!”

“As if.” It’s amused grin is too charmingly disarming. Spike is rapidly growing to hate dimples. “Shouldn’t make promises you can’t possibly keep, cowboy. Just remember what I told you. Sleep on it.”

Spike slides gracelessly down the wall, unconscious.

Luc ambles to the bedroom door whistling and grinning. The Slayer’s sword drops from his fingers like forgotten trash.
Chapter Summary

Please pass the confusion.

Chapter Notes

Notes/Spoilers/Warnings: AU, S6-ish. In this ‘verse, Xander didn’t propose to Anya just because they were about to die. She broke up with him shortly after Buffy’s death but they remained friends.

“Is everything okay?”

Everybody turns to look at Luc, who’s standing barefoot and open-shirted in the doorway. Xander doesn’t even try to hide his goofy smile and pulls Luc into his arms.

“Better, now that you’re here.” Xander’s never had anyone light up at his touch the way Luc does. Not even Anya.

Tara clears her throat when the simple hello kiss turns into marathon face-sucking and groping under shirts. Buffy makes a retching sound that isn’t entirely fake.

“Um, we’re not alone, Xan,” Luc murmurs, a blush in his voice.

“Yeah. How ‘bout I fix that?” Xander glances at his friends over Luc’s shoulder. “Guys - get out.”

“Xander! Ignore him, you guys are welcome to hang or crash, if need be. Mi dorm es su dorm,” Luc says, trying half-heartedly to get out of Xander’s arms and face their audience of three.

“Ignore him, he’s clearly insane. See you guys this evening. Safe trip home, try not to get eaten.” Xander tries to back them towards the bedroom. Luc kicks Xander in the leg just hard enough to make him yelp and stop.

“Hi, I’m Lucas Devane. Luc to my friends.” Luc’s gotten himself turned around so he can offer his hand to Tara. “Pleased to meet you all. . . current circumstances notwithstanding.”

Tara smiles warmly, stepping forward to take his hand. “Likewise. You have a very nice place. Sorry about the door, but we thought, well - this is Sunnydale.”

Luc chuckles. “Yeah, I’m learning that the ‘Dale’s rep isn’t all hype. You wouldn’t believe some of the weird things I’ve seen in this town,” Luc confides. Buffy snorts.

“Try us. Start with what you see when you look in the mirror.”
“Buff!” Xander sounds angry and mortified even to himself. Can’t help his arms tightening around Luc’s waist to hold him closer, protect him from the Scoobies, if need be.

“Xan, you’re as sweet as pie, but she’s right to be cautious. You’re her friend, and she worries.” Luc’s talking about Buffy, but looking at Willow, who seems unimpressed.

“I’m not totally human. I’m not even technically from this plane of existence, not that anyone is. I’m - not going to be here for too much longer and I want to spend what’s left of my time with Xan. I don’t want to hurt him, just - to be with him, while I still can.”

“Well, that sounds pretty harmless.” Willow’s smile is sharp and not what anyone would call friendly. “But why Xander? Sure, he’s one of the best people I know, possibly the nicest, most wonderful guy ever, but how, out of all the people on the planet, did you choose him? How did you know who he was? Have you been spying on him? He wasn’t even into guys before you, which is pretty suspicious, don’tcha think?”

“And I have a question: what exactly are you?” Buffy is in full Slayer-mode. “Spike wouldn’t even say, which tells me you’re badass enough to put a scare into a vamp. Not sure I want you giving my friend any happies.”

Luc looks back and forth between the two women. “I’d show you if I could, but - I have to be, um, excited or very angry for it to manifest. I can’t really control it, other than keeping it under wraps so I don’t go - blooey.”

“Blooey?” Buffy asks, looking as confused as Xander’s ever seen. Luc shudders in Xander’s arms, but doesn’t elaborate. “Okay, mystery man, if you can’t show us, tell us.”


“Probably not,” Willow agrees. “But why don’t you tell us anyway?”

“Tell ‘em,” Xan whispers in Luc’s ear. Luc’s hair and skin smell like some kind of incense. Xander’s closing his eyes and nuzzling the soft skin of Luc’s nape before he makes a conscious decision to do so. And lookee here, Luc’s not wearing button-fly jeans this time. Sweet.

“Okay, see, he has to be some kinda mind-control demon or evil wizard. Xander’s practically fucking the guy right in front of us!” Willow sounds unhappy and incredulous.

“Xander. . . I love when you touch me, but I wasn’t raised to be an exhibitionist. Get your hand out of my pants and stop it. Your friends are freaking out.” Luc gently but firmly removes Xander’s Roman hands and Russian fingers.

“We’re not freaking because of the exhibitionism - though, ewww - but because Xander never wanted smoochies with another guy before he met you. On the Hellmouth, that’s pretty significant.” Willow says in resolve-voice.

“Well, I mean, I did - sometimes, I just never told you about it.”

And the Xan-man is once more the focus of attention.

“You wanted same-sex smoochies and - you never told me? Even after Tara, you never told me?” Resolve-face is totally obliterated by sad-puppy face. Xander feels like a heel. A cad. A jerkwad.
“That’s just not something guys talk about, even to their female best friends, Will. And it wasn’t major crushage, like with Cordelia, or even Ampada. It was just - you know. Curiosity. And only about how it might feel to kiss a guy I knew.”

“Larry?” Buffy asks, eyebrows so flying so high they’re a part of her hairline.

“Gah, no!”

“Who’s Larry?” Tara and Luc ask at the same time, then grin at each other.

“No one,” Xander says firmly, with a glare at the Slayer, who looks apologetic.

“Jesse.” Willow is looking at Xander like she just figured something out.

“Yeah.” Xander smiles a little. “Whenever he did something he knew he was gonna get called out on, he’d get this look on his face, like - whatever it was was so worth the trouble. And I’d want to kiss him, he just looked so.” Xander cuts himself off, blushing. “Part of it was hero worship, I mean, Jesse was the man.”

“He was,” Willow sighs, looking down at her hands.

No one knows what to say for a moment, then Xander breaks the awkward silence the only way he knows how. “And Jonathan.”

“Yuck! God! Why Jonathan?” Buffy demands, looking like she’s ready to stake Xander.

“He was all cute and little. Like a muppet. How can you not wanna have smoochies with him? Tell me I’m not the only one who kinda wondered.”

The unanimous silence from his best friends is deafening.

“We would tell you we’d wondered, but we’d be lying,” Tara offers apologetically. Willow and Buffy nod in agreement.

“I’m guessing there’s a story behind each one of those names.” Luc is relaxing back into Xander’s arms with a contented sigh.

“Yeah. Maybe I’ll tell you over breakfast.” Xander lets the hand on Luc’s stomach inch downward again.

“Xander, stop that!” Buffy, Willow and Luc say at the same time.

“You see why we think you’re bespelled or under some kinda mind control? You weren’t this - handsy with any of your girlfriends, not even Anya!” Willow’s angry again, energy crackling around her that even Buffy and Xander can feel.

“Wills - I’m not under a spell or mind control!” Xander’s never felt better or more like himself! Still likes the ladies, but an armful of Luc’s so not a bad thing. Especially when Luc’s grinding oh-so-slowly and oh-so-subtly against his cock.

“To be fair, part of why you like me is because of what I am. Some part of you senses it and is
responding on a, um, sexual level. But that’s not something I can control. I like you a lot, Xan, and - what I am is working overtime to be someone that you could lo - like, too.” Luc’s voice is a little huskier. Xander knows what that tone means.


“Xander!” Tara puts a hand on Willow’s arm to stop her from saying anything else.

“What?” Xander can’t help laughing. ”Since I’m under a spell, I may as well act like it. Come on, Buffy, use those finely tuned Slayer instincts; do you think Luc’s really out to hurt me? Seriously?”

Buffy sits on Luc's couch tiredly. “Actually, no. I don’t know how much off this man-lovin’ side of you is real, but - you do seem to be enjoying it. To all of our dismay - and could you guys just hold off on the grinding? At least until we’ve run out of here screaming?”

“I second that motion.” Willow’s making a face Xander hasn’t seen since that time Jesse ate a grasshopper on a dare. “And - I can’t be comfortable with some - whatever-you-are doing the horizontal lambada with my best friend when you could just be making him think he likes it. Whether you can control this appeal you have or not - you’re exerting some kind of influence on him, making him do - things he normally wouldn’t do and you won’t even tell us who or what you are!”

“I’m just Luc. That’s the most important part of who I am. It’s the only part of me that would ever have a shot with someone like Xander. The part of me that isn’t human, isn’t mortal, couldn’t feel this or even want to. It couldn’t - appreciate how much it’s been missing. Till now. It wants more than it can possibly have, but it would never hurt Xander or any of you.”

“The pronoun game. And here I thought you were out of the closet,” Willow says softly, eyes as unyielding as green granite. “Okay, we know why you claim you’re here. Now tell us what you are.”

“He’s an angel, Willow. That's why he thrums so loudly. Can’t you feel it?” Tara breathes wearing a smile so big her face has to be hurting. Probably isn’t, though. Xander has worn such a smile practically all night and knows it feels wonderful.

The look on Willow and Buffy’s faces is almost as delicious as a Xander's mouthful of Luc's earlobe.

* *

“For a guy who lives off of pig’s blood, you weigh a ton!”

“Quit complaining, Slayer. You’ve got super strength. And it’s not like you had to carry me all the way to the cemetery!”

“All I’m saying is you’d be a lot lighter if you were in an ashtray.” Buffy dumps Spike in a heap at the door of his crypt. The witches are waiting to drive her home, though how much sleep she’s going to get in the maybe forty-five minutes before she has to get up was debatable.

“A little care, Slayer!” Spike tries to glare up at the Slayer, but can’t decide which of the three of her needs that glare most. He settles for closing his eyes and hoping the spinning stops soon. He’d
unfortunately regained consciousness while Buffy was half-carrying, half-dragging him through the cemetery.

“You’re lucky I don’t just stake you and have done with it! I can’t believe you dragged us all out of bed to rescue Xander from an angel!”

“And I can’t believe you swallowed that goody-two-wings act whole! These things are bad news! Make trouble wherever they go, like the plague.” Slipping into gameface helps with the dodgy vision, but not much.

“Coming from you, that has a ring of total non-truth.” The waning moonlight glinting off her hair makes his eyes hurt, it’s so bright.

“Mark my words. He’s got an agenda. Why would something as allegedly good as this alleged angel want the whelp, eh?”

Buffy’s mouth opens and closes as she tries to think of a reason.

“Yeah. My point exactly. And the boy’s acting like a bitch in heat over somethin’ that ain’t female. Completely out of nowhere. Don’t you number that as odd, Miss Marple?”

“Well, maybe - it could be that - just - shut up, Spike!” Buffy paces back and forth, looking very annoyed. “I mean, Luc’s an angel and we’ve got nothing to worry about. Angels are good and sweet and they smell like chocolate chip cookies.”

Spike sighs. “Where d’you modern gits come up with this idea that angels are bloody sweetness and light? Do you know what real angels are? Messengers. Killers. Bearers of wrath. Fun stuff like that. Supernatural hitmen lacking in flaws and in mercy. Did you ever read a story about angels where they’re not knocking up virgins, murdering children or killing the so-called unrighteous, hmm? And now, for some utterly unknown reason, it wants into donut-boy’s panties? Doesn’t that put you in mind of an apocalypse, or something?”

Buffy just stares at him as if he’s gone quite mad.

“Bloody hell, it’s like talking to foam rubber.” Spike gets shakily to his feet, pushes open his crypt door. He takes one last look at Buffy. She looks tired and confused and belligerent and terribly young in the light of the setting moon. A sight that would’ve given him a pang in his undead heart just a few hours earlier merely makes him feel old and full of regrets, now. “Go home, get some sleep, Slayer. I’ll be layin’ low till donut-boy’s angel is gone. Don’t look for me to do any of your leg work for the next week.”

She obviously wants to say something punny and no doubt scathing, but just shakes her head, as if she’s trying to wake herself up.

“What kind of apocalypse?” She finally thinks of something to say as Spike shuts the door in her face.
Chapter Summary

Moonset. In bed and elsewhere.

Chapter Notes

Notes/Spoilers/Warnings: AU, S6-ish. In this 'verse, Xander didn’t propose to Anya just because they were about to die. She broke up with him shortly after Buffy’s death but they remained friends.

“Sorry,” Luc sighs as the door closes behind the Scoobies and a still unconscious Spike. The sight of the Big Bad being carried out by five-foot-nothing Buffy was classic.

“What for?” Xander loves the way his flannel shirt looks on Luc, but that doesn’t stop him from taking it off. ”I mean, this night has been - amazing. It wasn’t just me, right? That was, like, the best sex ever?”

“Oh, yeah,” Luc agrees with a tiny smile.

“Too bad we were interrupted.”

“We could finish up now...” That’s such a great idea, Xander feels the need to reward Luc with sloppy kisses.

“You are officially the brains of this operation, college-boy.” Xander says between kisses, walking them in what he hopes is the direction of Luc’s bedroom. But they hit a wall hard enough to make a painting fall of the wall with a loud bang.

Xander decides walking while necking can be hazardous to their health. He pulls back slightly, reluctantly.

“Bedroom,” he pants against Luc’s cheek.

“Mmm, no, right here.” Luc suddenly grabs Xander’s cock and yanks him closer.

“But - holy rocket-powered Santa! - at this rate, we’re gonna break everything in your livingroom. Including ourselves.”

“Less talk. More naked.” And how sexy is it that Xander’s reduced a college boy to words of two syllables or less?

Pretty darn.
Getting Luc’s jeans off is considerably easier than it was last time, thanks to the zipper. Who even wears button-flies anymore? Whatever. The zipper’s down far enough for Xander’s hand to get right where it wants to be. Luc groans so loudly, Xander starts to giggle. This entire night has been hilarious. Hot, surprising, scary, frustrating atimes, but over all, so. Fucking. Hilarious.

“From now on, I’ll only wear sweatpants. I want you to have easy access,” Luc says only half-jokingly. He bucks up into Xander’s hand, already throwing off enough heat to make Xander’s hand sweat a little.

“If there’s a flaw in your logic, I can’t find it.” Then they’re kissing again, trying to get the last of each other’s clothing off. “So. . . do angels do the dirty-talk, or would that be too weird for you to -”

“I want you to turn me around and fuck me against this wall so hard there isn’t a painting left hanging when we come. And I want you in me so deep I can taste you in the back of my throat.” Luc whispers against Xander’s jugular vein. “I want to scream God at the top of my lungs and till my throat is raw - and mean you.” Luc leans back, his face flushed and eyes seriously not-smoldering again.

“How’s that? Not too bad for a first timer?”

Xander’s response is both immediate and in the affirmative.

“I can’t believe we just left him there,” Willow says miserably, staring up at the ceiling. Tara hugs her close.

“Well, they kinda wanted to be alone, Willow.”

“I know, and eww to that.” Xander having smoochies with something that claimed to be an angel? Sonot making for a good night's sleep.

“I think it’s pretty hot, actually.”

“I’d respond to that but I’m too busy having an aneurysm.”

“Baby. . . .”

“Luc could be doing anything to him! Anything.”

“Actually, I think Xander’s the one who’s doing the doing -”

“If you love me don’t finish that sentence!” Willow’s that close to singing the la-la song and jamming her fingers in her ears.

“Sorry. It’s just that Luc is so obviously the bottom in their rela -”

“TARA!” Willow closes her eyes tight. That doesn’t help with the gay porn movie - featuring
Xander and Luc - going on behind her eyes, though.

“Poor Willow.” Tara’s breathy chuckle ghosts across Willow’s cheek, then her lips, then her throat. “How about we forget Xander and Luc’s horizontal fun and make our own horizontal fun?”

“I’m so far from turned on, right now, Tara. My best friend is doing naughty things with something we’re not even sure is an angel! I mean, his thrum is almost as powerful as Glory’s, but that doesn’t mean he’s not just some thrummy demon. Or another HellGod! And did you not hear the part where seeing Xander’s winky almost made me blind?” Willow tries for resolve-voice and face but can’t seem to do either convincingly if the finger tracing the curve of her breast is any indicator. In fact, Willow suspects she’s wearing her schmoopy face.

No one respects the schmoopy face, least of all horny girlfriends.

“I love you.”

Willow cracks one eye open just a little bit.

Tara’s big, sad, pretty eyes are looking hopefully down at Willow.

That does it. Willow has no natural defense against the big-sad.pretty eyes; the gay porn behind her eyes has totally switched genders.

Willow arches up into Tara’s touch as soft, light kisses brush across her face and throat. Then there’s the unbuttoning and the stroking and the caressing and -

Buffy does what she always does when she can't sleep: weapons check.

Makes sure the sharps are still sharp, the holies are still holy and the patrol-halter still shows the right amount of cleavage.

Check, check and double-check. Dead tired and still unable to sleep.

Worry about Xander, worry about Willow. Even worry about Spike. Although the vampire would never admit it, Luc had put up his hackles, scared him. Something that put fear into Spike isn’t something Buffy wants in her town or in her best friend.

The eww-factor really has a way of sneaking up on her.

And gay-Xander... what’s with that? Is it really just - a thrall of some kind? Spike certainly seems to think so, though if Xander was going to fall for any guy, it’d be that one. A hottie with a sweet smile and a fetish for treating Xander like he’s something precious...

Buffy hopes she doesn’t have to slay him, but from what Spike had said, she fears a slaying might be in order. Only - how does a mortal, even the Slayer, kill an angel? Perhaps Giles would know if he ever decides to pick up his phone again. Buffy had called five times before they left for the UC
Sunnydale campus, once after she’d gotten back home, getting Giles’s lame, stuttery outgoing message each time.

She doubts there’ll be anything in Giles’s books on killing an angel. Probably not too many Watchers wanting to do that.

But Luc just seems too good to be true. Though she hates to even entertain the notion, Buffy’s sure Spike’s right.

Spike. Looking like he’d gone six rounds with something none-too-happy; broken and battered and scared.

Wiggin-y. But twice as wiggin-y? The relief she feels that Spike’s banged up, but basically okay. A world without Spike would be. . . .

Less complicated.

Buffy sighs softly. Xander had just about the worst luck at love. The only person with worse luck was Buffy.

Giles opens his eyes then immediately shuts them again. Even the faint light of the setting moon makes his head pound insistently. He must invest some money in curtains. Venetian blinds are a poor substitute for well-made curtains.

Yes, there is a lesson to be learned from everything, if one is willing to search thoroughly for it. Lesson-the-first of this past night had of course been: know your limitations. He isn’t Ripper, anymore. Ripper had been able to handle his liquor better because he hadn't seen the dark side of twenty-five, yet.

Giles feels he would do well to remember that, the next time Anya decides they should do the monthly inventory at a bar and grill. His aching, sore head thuds in complete agreement.

Lesson-the-second is -

“I must say, Rupert, for a man of your age, you have amazing stamina. Do you use viagra?”

Lesson-the-second -

“I know being a Watcher doesn’t pay very much and I’m certain being a librarian is an even more thankless task as far as money’s concerned, but The Magic Box does excellent business. And though it could do better, you should still be able to afford curtains, Rupert.”

Dear. God.

“It is okay that I call you Rupert, isn’t it? We’ve interlocked parts, so first names seem in order. Though. . . . you are British and very stuffy, so if you feel more comfortable being Giles or Mr.
Giles I’ll just have to call you that. Though you were calling me ‘Anya, oh, Anya’ not ‘Ms. Jenkins, oh, Ms. Jenkins’.

Lesson -

“It’s really amazing that I can drink and drink and never get a hangover. You don’t look so good, though. You need coffee. And maybe a moisturizer. Well, it’s rather early, but I suppose I’m up for the day. I’ll go make some coffee. But I won’t bring you any. We may have had very nice, toe-curling sex, but I’m not your maid. If you’d like a cup, you can come get it yourself.”

The sound of small feet hitting the carpeted floor and striding purposefully out of his bedroom and downstairs, hitting every creaky spot at least twice. Each creak makes the thudding in his head worse.

Lesson-the-second: never, ever try to drink a former vengeance demon under the table, as you’ll almost certainly regret it in the morning.

Clawing your way out of your own coffin is a sonuvabitch.

Roy Baker can attest to that, fuckin-a. It took him damn near three whole nights to get out and now, well, he can smell dawn on the air, instinctively knows that’s a bad thing. Though he no longer feels fear, he is wary. Roy understands the needs for haste. It’s like his daddy’d always said: You’re fast, you pass, you’re slow, you blow.

It’s sound advice like that makes a man wanna pay a visit to New Mexico and his dear, old dad. Roy’s car is probably still parked down at the site, probably covered in construction dust and bird shit, but still roadworthy for a breakneck drive to New Mexico.

First stop: construction site and car.

Next stop: New Mexico and dad.

Stop after that: food.

On second thought, he can probably combine those last two.

Sweet.

More dirt’s collapsing inward on top of him and silver light hurts his keen new eyes. Moonlight; and fresh air, which he doesn’t need, but the coffin smelt like dead people and that was just fuckin’ gross no matter whose team you played for. Fresh air, however unneeded, means free at last. And thank-fuckin-god, right? Whatever conscientious go-getter buried him took their jobway too seriously. Who actually bothered to bury people the full six-fucking-feet under? Even in Sunnydale?

Whatever, though. The night is old and getting older. He feels the need to get to his car and get on the road even though dawn is near. He can sleep in his trunk if he can’t find a motel. That same new
instinct is telling him Sunnydale is *not* the safest place for him; not without a leader or teacher of some kind to show him the ropes.

Roy pokes his head out of his grave. Looks around, sees nothing. *Hears* nothing.

*Silent as the grave*, dad would’ve said.

The bitch that’d turned him is no-fucking-where to be seen. Just like a woman to cause trouble and take-off before the shit hits. Boy, he’ll be glad to shake the soil of this shitty little burg off his shoes. And out of his mullet.

He’s only halfway out of his grave, still snorting out dirt, wood-slivers and earthworms, when a small, dark fist punches through his thorax, exploding what’s left of Roy’s heart - and Roy - into a shower of dust.

It’s kinda like his daddy had always said: *Easy come, easy go.*
Chapter Summary

A not-so-secret meeting.

Chapter Notes

Notes/Spoilers/Warnings: AU, S6-ish. In this ‘verse, Xander didn’t propose to Anya just because they were about to die. She broke up with him shortly after Buffy’s death but they remained friends.

The sun rises over the picturesque SoCal town of Sunnydale. All the Bads, Big or otherwise, have gone to bed.

Few business are open, yet, even along Main Street. It’s dawn in Sunnydale and for the most part, the business owners like to hedge their bets. Only when the sun is already climbing the vault of heaven, do the CLOSED signs in doorways and windows get flipped to the OPEN side.

Main Street and Sunnydale are ready for another day of commerce.

* *

Just after 8a.m., there’s a brisk, mostly one-sided argument going on at the Espresso Pump.

The Pump’s only occupants on this early Saturday morning are sipping their espresso-based beverages peaceably, if one ignores the Asian woman’s gesture-y statements.

“I’m just saying that if they’re here, they’re hiding from us, ‘cause I can’t tell sense them at all.” She leans toward her companion, petite, precious and punk in a too-short plaid skirt, torn black Billy Idol vintage tour-shirt and enough black make-up to make her look like a human raccoon. “I’m getting all kindsa bad vibes from this Stepford-wannabe town--and that’s aside from the Hellmouth!”

“The Hellmouth’s--emanations would be more powerful than our four power signatures combined.” The tall, syntax thin black man in the Saville Row suit’s English accent is as impeccable as his taste in clothing. “The only reason you and I met up is because we happened to be drawn to the Hellmouth at the same time. Purely coincidental.”

“I don’t believe in coincidences, but--you could be right . . . still, that means they shoulda been there, last night, too. How the hell are we supposed to find each other if the fuckin’ Hellmouth is messin’ around with our mojo!” The woman’s voice is rising steadily.
“After a day or two, I imagine we’ll have grown used to the emanations and instinctively filter them out, like white noise. Then we’ll be able to pick up their power signature. Also—we may simply have gotten here first. They could still be in transit.”

“Hezzuel, the Mighty and Punctual? Running late?” She snorts and digs around in a purse covered with buttons and shiny bits of metal. Out comes a battered pack of Marlboro’s and a lighter. “Sariel, you’re finally developing a sense of humor in your old age and I say good on ya!”

“You’ll get us thrown out if you smoke those in here. And please refrain from using my name so freely. Louis will do, just fine.Rosa.”

“Dude–there’s no one here but that inbred-lookin' kid working the register! He gives a shit if I smoke or say your freakin’ name?” Rosa says rather loudly, but puts the cigarettes away. The young man behind the counter is reading Spin and doesn’t even bother to look up.

“Yes, well.” Louis sniffs and crosses his legs, minutely adjusting his trousers at ankle and knee. Rosa makes a face then rakes a hand through her shoulder-length, two-tone, pink and bleach-blond hair.

“Why are you doing that?”

“Scragged a vampire a few hours ago, on my way into town. Punched right through his fuckin’ thorax, bam! I still haven’t got all the damn dust out.” She scratches, sighs, then abruptly gives up. “I really thought if we poked around that busted up highschool, we’d at least find the boss waiting for us, if not Cassiel, but no dice.”

“He--or she--” Louis amends at Rosa’s frown. “Is almost certainly in town, by now, making ready. It’s been fairly quiet since I got here, for a town built over a Hellmouth, anyway. That must be you-know-who’s influence.”

“Has to be. . . .” Rosa nods. Hey, I wonder what Cassiel looks like, this time.” Rosa fixes Louis with a look as he opens his mouth. “And don’t get on me about the names-thing, Sariel. I don’t know what his or her human name is, so you can just fuck off.”

Louis grimaces and overlooks her umpteenth use of his real name--after his umpteenth time of asking her not to use it--in favor of sipping his macchiato.

“I don’t suppose it matters what our friends look like, or what sex they are. We’re here to deliver a message, not cater to human vanity.”


“Do shut up, please?” Louis looks pained and put out.

“Now there was a man who liked to take extended tours of the Southern Hemisphere, if you know what I mean.” Rosa’s face grows wistful.

“A slow five year old would know what you mean, Rosa.”

“I’ll bet if you lost the prissy ’tude and square-bear clothes, maybe got some tats and a ring here--” Rosa darts across the table and taps Louis’s right eyebrow, much to his stuttering dismay. “You’d be hot shit.”
“Well, thank you for that . . . compliment, I’m sure, but I won’t be changing my appearance anytime soon. I imagine I’ll be rather busy, what with the apocalypse we’re to usher in.”

“You really know how to suck the fun right out of a girl’s day, don’t you?”

“You are not a girl, Kossuth!” Louis snaps through tightly clenched teeth; his eyes narrow at the triumphant look on the raccoon-ish little face.

“I’m pretty sure I am. At least this go-around. I could even show you, Louis--”

“I’d really rather you didn’t!” Louis moans helplessly as Rosa stands up and does a slow, teasing lift of the school-girl skirt.

Just before the edge of the panties Rosa’s not wearing would have come into view, she lets the skirt drop and sits down, a concerned, exasperated look on her face.

“Guy, you gotta learn to chill. Life’s too short. Especially considering--” she makes a kablooey motion with her hands. Louis shudders, closing his eyes again.

“You’re right, but I do so get tired of this.” The look of wearied age on his thin, dark features is mirrored on Rosa’s own face.

“It’s our job, Lou. And hey, maybe the next world’ll be better . . . till we, you know, destroy that one, too.”

Rosa is obviously not suited to giving comfort, but Louis smiles a little, anyway.

“Our jobs still suck, pardon my language.”

“Yeah, they do . . . but it helps if you pretend your life is one long episode of Sliders.”

Rosa and Louis look up at the sudden appearance of a newcomer. This time it’s Rosa’s eyes that narrow. Louis’s mouth purses and he starts studying his macchiato intently.

“Hezzuel? Boss, is that you?” The tremor in Rosa’s voice belies the earlier bravado, as does the look of abject terror on her small, cherubic face.

“I do believe that’s Cassiel,” Louis mumbles, still not looking up. The newcomer smiles, but it’s a frown-y sort of smile.

“Well, I go by Luc, now, but yeah.”

“Cassiel!” Rosa’s already hurling herself into Luc’s arms and planting a wet, sloppy kiss on his lips. For his part, Luc pinwheels backwards into a chair and nearly falls, trying not to drop Rosa. “How’d you find us?”

“Oh, I’ve been living in Sunnydale for about six months, so the Hellmouth doesn’t screw with my Spidey-senses, anymore. I felt you guys’ arrive, but I was a little—indisposed. As soon as the sun came up, I just followed my nose.”

“See, I told Sariel it’d probably be somethin’ just like that.”
Louis rolls his eyes and mutters into his beverage.

Rosa leans back to study Luc’s face, then wriggles against him with a happy smile. “You are smokin’ hot! We should definitely fuck before the big show gets started.”

“Dear Lord.” Louis sounds appalled and aggrieved and very, very British. Luc and Rosa ignore him.

“Not that I wouldn’t want to, sweetie, but I’m so gay, right now, it’s not even funny.” Luc’s tone is both apologetic and not as he puts Rosa down. She pouts and crosses her arms.

“Now that’s a goddamn shame, tell you what,” she sighs, then brightens. “But my loss is Sariel’s gain.”

“I beg your pardon!” Crisp and extra British, now.

“Um--” both of Luc’s eyebrows quirk up.

“Come on, you’re both gay and Sar needs to get laid in the worst way--”

“I do not! And I am not gay! Not that there’s anything wrong with being gay,” Louis adds with a polite smile for Luc, who puts up his hands in no-offense-taken gesture.

“We’re cool, buddy. I kinda have this--thing with this guy that I really like, so I’m off the market, anyway. Not to mention the whole apocalypse-thing we gotta do.”

“How can you not be gay, dude? You’re so thin and--neat. And British!” Rosa looks puzzled and disbeliefing. “And I thought you were gonna faint when I hiked my skirt up.”

“That was more an expression of displeasure at breached decorum than because I find you unattractive!” Louis exclaims, then shuts his mouth as if he wished he’d never opened it at all. Luc and Rosa share a look.

“Might we tend to the business at hand, please? We’re here to destroy the world, not discuss our sexual proclivities!”

Another eyebrow quirk from Luc and a shrug from Rosa and they’re sitting down. “We can’t really get down to brass tacks till Hezzuel puts in an appearance, and you know it, Sariel. Anyway, I’m a brekkie-before-business kinda guy. I’m starving!” Luc’s stomach growls right on cue.

“Which wouldn’t have anything to do with that monster hickey on your neck, would it?” Rosa grins.

“Maybe it does and maybe it does.” Luc gives her a coy look before laughing--no, giggling.

“Do tell.” Rosa leans forward, nearly knocking over her vanilla soy latte. “What’s his name? How was he? As if I don’t know, you’re glowing, Cassiel!”

“Well--” Luc is blushing but obviously eager to dish.

“Kossuth! Cassiel!”

The dishing duo turn surprised looks on Louis; he looks grim and pissed off.
“I don’t know how long either of you has known what you are--what you truly are--but I just found three weeks ago. The same day I proposed to my girlfriend.” Louis’s mouth purses. “I broke it off with Julia, once I knew what my purpose was. My only purpose. I gave up a wife, a family, a career, a home, a life; because my duty comes first.

“So, I don’t care to hear about past exploits or amorous boyfriends, alright? Forgive me, but it tastes like ashes in my mouth.” Louis stands up and throws a business card on the table. “Call me on my mobile, when Hezzuel makes contact.”

Louis drops his empty cup in the trash before stepping out into the bright, California morning. After glowering up at the blameless blue sky, he gets into his rental--a Jaguar, what else?--and drives off.

“Such a drama queen,” Rosa mutters.

“He’s lost a lot in such a short time.”

“Haven’t we all?”

Luc covers her hand with his own. “How long have you known?”

“Five years.” Rosa shrugs. “I was a pregnant, homeless runaway one day and bam! a freakin’ angel the next.” A bitter laugh. “I was some kinda fucked-up, Cass . . . ’specially when the memories first started returning. Had me a breakdown, got put in a county-run home. The baby was put up for adoption . . . .”

“Jesus, Koss--” Luc squeezes her hand. She lets him for a few moments before pulling away and digging around in her shiny purse. She comes up with her cigarettes and lighter.

“Yes. Fuckin’ sad, ain’t it?” She mumbles around the cigarette, looking everywhere but at Luc. “But you don’t see me pulling Chernobyls in random coffee shops, do you? I repress, just like God intended. Fuck self-analysis.”

“Hey--miss--you can’t smoke that in here, it’s against the law.” Late breaking news from the brain surgeon behind the counter. “You’re gonna have to put it out.”

Rosa sighs and Luc waves away a faceful of smoke. “I swear I’ll put it out in your left eye, hon. Let it be.”

The kid stands up, tossing his copy of Spin on the counter. “I’m afraid I’m gonna have to ask you--”

“You ass better not come around that counter, kid, is all I’m sayin’.” Rosa locks gazes with the kid who pales and backs up till his butt hits the espresso machine. She doesn’t turn her gaze--as palpable as a falling anvil--even after the kid picks up his magazine with shaking hands and disappears into the stockroom.

Rosa stares holes into the door for a few moments before she looks at Luc and smiles, feral red lights dancing in her dark eyes. “This world. This filthy, fuckin’ world. You know, I can’t wait to rain some apocalypse down on it--good riddance! Then off to the next world.” She takes a deep drag, flickering eyes sliding to the window. “Divine jihad, Cass. I’m all about that.”

Luc watches her smoke and stare out the window. When the cigarette’s nearly all smoked down, she
uses it to light another before stubbing the first out on the table.

“Someday, those things’ll kill ya.”

Rosa snorts laughter and smoke like an amused dragon; Luc grins.

“You dick . . . speaking of dick, tell me about this guy you’re boffing--?”

“Xander.” Luc’s the one who’s purring, now.

“Ooh, look who’s all thrummy with the power and lust.” Rosa waves her second cigarette around. The red lights have faded from her eyes and she looks like any other young, Asian woman with a penchant for punk and chain-smoking. “So, what does this Xander look like?”

“Tall, dark, devastating—muscle-y, but not in a gross, Mr. Universe way. Babble-y and blush-y with big puppy-dog eyes.” Luc’s practically bouncing in his seat.

“Sounds like somebody’s in love,” Rosa singsongs, laughing at the startled look on Luc’s face.

“No, no—not after one night,” he backpedals unconvincingly; his eyes drop to his fidgeting fingers. “I mean, that’d be silly. And dangerous, I mean—Hezzuel’d have a cow. Six cows, even. Falling in love with mortals is not part of the Mission. I’m just having some fun, is all.”

Rosa swings one booted leg up into Luc’s lap.

“Pull this one. It plays Jingle Bells.” She snickers when Luc pushes her leg off his lap. “Shit, you’re all moony over him and it ain’t love? He must be really good in the sack.”


“Fuck, Cass, if it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck . . . .”

“This is so not a duck. I mean, I’ve known what I am since I was nine. I’ve gone nearly my whole life without getting attached to people. I’m certainly not gonna start now.”

“Whatever you say. But you should know you’re not kidding anyone sitting at this table.”

“It’s just that—he’s so wonderful—and sweet. I’ve never met anyone like him. Ever.”

“Wow, sounds like he’s a keeper.” Rosa stubs out her second cigarette and is already puffing on her third.

“He is.”

She gives him a wary look, ever-so-slightly tinged with pity. “You do know that you can’t keep him, though, right?”

Luc’s smile is starting to look a bit strained. “I know. Of course I can’t keep him. Heck, I already told him I can’t stay here or I’ll blow up--”

“What?” Rosa sounds like she’s trying not to laugh
“Well, I couldn’t tell him the truth, could I? ‘Yeah, Xander, I’m here to blast open the Hellmouth and destroy you, your friends and your world. Let’s get horizontal!’” Luc slumps miserably. “Anyway, I could just hole up with you or Sariel until go-time, never see him again, save myself some painful memories.”

Rosa gives him a skeptical look. “Yeah. Uh-huh. Be sure to take Xander some breakfast, he’ll probably be pretty hungry, too.”

Luc blushes. “How can I even look him in the eye, knowing what we’re gonna do? I don’t wanna, Koss. I like him and I don’t wanna destroy any world that he’s a part of.”

“Don’t you fuckin’ say that! You know what Hezzuel’d do to you if—do I even have to remind you about what happened to Phanael?”

“No, you don’t.” Luc closes his eyes for a moment. Rosa nods. “Good. Greatness. Anyway, if loverboy is so sweet and pious, he’s got a one-way, express ticket to a Heaven dimension, so—you’re actually doing him a favor, killing him while he’s still so pure.

“You’ve already told him a few whoppers, just tell him some more. That everything is gonna be alright, that you love him, that there ain’t gonna be no apocalypse, no way, no how, no sir.”

“I hate lying to him,” Luc whines and drops his head to the table with a loud thunk. Rosa pats his hair, absently running her fingers through it. “But he’s friends with a Slayer, Koss, and you know how they get, with all the world-saving and stuff.”

“So, like I said: lie to him, make him happy, hump like bunnies. I’m serious, Cass, enjoy him, while you can, ’cause when Hezzuel makes contact—when we’re whole again—we’re gonna give this shit-hole world somethin’ to cry about.”
Interlude: His Name

Chapter Summary

Dancinbutterfly asked for a Luc drabble.

Chapter Notes

Notes/Spoilers/Warnings: AU. A prequel-drabble to “Demon Magnet.”

The guttural, unlovely sounds they coo at him are a name.

Luc or Lucasericdevane!

But not his name.

His name is three perfect syllables, invoked during his Separation;

is the word that drew him, naked and unknowing, from the Undifferentiated;

is a purifying Pestilence that stretches across worlds, immortal and unstoppable;

is what his heart whispers when he wakes from incomprehensible dreams of destruction with a smile on his tiny, serene face;

is his duty, his history, his comfort;

is a toddler in Kansas City, Missouri, whose first word is unrecognizable as such;

His name


is death.
Chapter Summary

Three of the Four meet and struggle with their destinies, while the Fourth slumbers on.

Chapter Notes

Notes/Spoilers/Warnings: AU, S6-ish. In this ‘verse, Xander didn’t propose to Anya just because they were about to die. She broke up with him shortly after Buffy’s death but they remained friends.

“Do you ever get tired of it?”

Two quiet minutes have gone by, during which, two less-than-quiet customers have entered The Espresso Pump. They make their way to the counter, giggling and talking and way too peppy for 9a.m: a blonde dressed for a night club in summer, rather than a cafe in the fall, and a brunette dressed in forgettable shades of tan and grey.

“We’re all tired, Cass,” Rosa says softly, her flat, speculative gaze following the pair. The whirling crimson lights, like angry embers, have mostly faded from her eyes, and her smoking is downright pensive. “Tired don’t mean shit.”

Luc links his hands on the table and waits till her attention is once again on him before speaking. “I’m thinking it does. I’m thinking we’re the ones doing their damn dirty work on faith. But what if we just—stopped?”

A blank look, like Luc’s speaking Swahili. “What?”

Luc’s lips curve upward, as different from his repertoire of gameshow-smiles as night is from day. “You heard me. What if we stopped destroying worlds?”

Rosa’s mouth is a small, shocked, blood-red ‘O’, and the cigarette has halted about halfway there.

“Are you on crack?” She finally demands, at last taking an irritated drag off the neglected cigarette. Her hand is shaking, just a bit. “Or maybe you’re just fucking crazy.”

“A crazy angel?” Luc’s eyebrow says what he thinks of that; Rosa snorts, but lets it slide.

“So whaddaya mean by stop, Captain Sanity?”

Luc glances toward the counter. The two women, be-coffeeed and be-biscottied, are bickering good-naturedly about which table they should sit at, the blonde casting coy glances Luc’s way. He flashes them a brief, dazzling smile, then leans in toward Rosa.
“What if . . . what if there was a way to save this world . . . would you want to?”

“Would you wanna save this cesspool?”

“I believe I asked you first.” His mischievous green eyes twinkle with good humor, curiosity and kindness. He’s clean-shaven, well-scrubbed--so deceptively young. But his other face--

The true face, that watches and waits under its human guise--is ancient . . . is as strange and unknowable as the hidden face of the woman sitting across from him. These are not faces that know words like tired, or compassion, or even what if; they’re faces that knows only duty and cold satisfaction.

Most days, hidden as they are, those faces are easy to ignore. But not today. Not in this company, and not for either of them.

“Not our choice, is it?” Rosa drops her cigarette in her unfinished coffee. The women, unsurprisingly, park it a couple of tables away from theirs, the blonde still stealing little interested glances at Luc. “Humans are so predictable. They don’t change and they for-damn-sure don’t ever improve. The whole species is like a botched, seventh grade science project--one any sane kiddie would scrap.”

“Not according to Phanael,” Luc mumbles, his lips pursing in a way that, on someone who wasn’t an angel, would be considered pouting. “And you still haven’t answered my question.”

Obviously not one for self-doubt or introspection, she shoots a nasty, unnoticed glare at the women seated nearby. “Well, if there was a way, then I’d remind you that Phanael--our great and fearless former leader--already tried. Tried and failed, in the most spectacular and painful sense of the word. But she at least had the good sense not to get us mixed up in her mess. You remember where she is now, don’tcha?”

“She knew the risks and did what she felt was right--”

“’Cause last I heard, she was stripped of her rank and powers, and Fed Ex-ed to the very worst of hell-dimensions for all time.” Rosa fishes a small mirror out of her purse and checks her lipstick, letting her words sink in. “That’s eternity, in the Quor’thoth, Luc.”

“None of the Separated can truly conceive of eternity, not even the big-wings--”

“So what? Even if they’re bluffing--the Quor’thoth is not a bluff you call!”

“Isn’t it?”

Rosa laughs ruefully. “First Phanael, now you. Un-fucking-believable. You’d really risk Hell, just to keep this stupid life?”

Taking a deep breath, Luc nods. “Yeah . . . yeah, I would. I can’t do it anymore. The killing and ending. All I want is some peace and--normalcy.”

“Normalcy?” She demands, somewhere between a laugh and a scoff. “What the fuck is normal and why the fuck would you wannabe it?”

Suddenly Kossuth bleeds through the thin mask that hides it--shields the world from it--with a
subsonic *thrum* like the beating of a huge, inhuman heart. The crimson lights in her eyes have spilled down onto her face like tears, dancing across her flushed skin with a hectic, feverish intensity. The skin it touches begins to darken, taking on a coppery gleam.

“Tell me you wouldn’t miss this, Cassiel?” Rosa asks, laying a too-cool hand on Luc’s. “The moments just before the end gets into full swing . . . shrugging off the disguise--and all the bullshit baggage that comes with it--to deliver the one message you were made to carry.”

It’s like, calling to like--temptation, and one that Cassiel feels keenly, even in its half-waking state.

For a few moments, the skin on Luc’s back glows red-hot, singeing the back of his chambray shirt. The bright, emerald green of his eyes shifts to a murky, stagnant green, and minute cracks appear on the flawless skin of his face, under which glows a pale, virulent-yellow light.

*It* is struggling to awaken fully.

Now isn’t the time, but Cassiel’s growing awareness is melting Luc, like a blow torch melts ice cream that’s already been left out too long. It’s been thirteen years, nearly to the day, since Luc’s first manifestations; since Cassiel began to wake, bringing knowledge, scraps of memory and misery. Thirteen years, at least, that this world has been living on borrowed time, and Cassiel is more than ready to come out and play.

Reality in their immediate vicinity begins to shimmer, ripple and warp, like the disturbed surface of a pond, and Luc is one hundred percent sure that the end is nigh, Hezzuel or no Hezzuel--

“Not here, not yet,” he grits out through a frozen smile, desperately holding onto himself. He doesn’t know if he’s speaking to Cassiel, or Kossuth--or both. Across from him, the first sharp edges of Kossuth’s armor are trying their best to manifest on Rosa’s face and hands. She looks horrified and exalted. “It’s not time . . . Hezzuel isn’t here, yet. Not time . . . *control yourself*.”

Here eyes are bright and hot, like fire--could burn Luc to a cinder where he sits, leaving only Cassiel in all its sickly glory--but the hand/gauntlet on his own hand is ice-cold.

“Soon,” Rosa says. It’s not a question, and it’s not--totally--her voice.

Luc jerks his hand away, opens his mouth to tell her--tell *them*--no. But what comes out is:

“I count the moments.”

And Cassiel’s the one who says it, grave and unsmiling. Kossuth nods once, an understated concurrence.

Then, like some sort of strange fish, the dark, heavy, alien *extra-ness* that is Cassiel slips down below the surface of self-awareness . . . but not so far that it couldn’t be easily recalled. Reality reasserts itself, snapping back into its proper place like a rubber-band, leaving Luc and Rosa to shiver, and gasp for air.

In seconds, their breathing and heart rates have normalized. There’s no crimson light crawling over Rosa’s skin, no hints of Kossuth’s armor.

Luc’s complexion is flawless once again . . . if pale under his tan.
Not ten feet away, the two women are talking and paying them no mind—well, the blonde’s talking, and the brunette’s sipping coffee with an overdone look of interest on her face.

No doubt the kid behind the counter is still engrossed in *Spin*.

“Jesus . . . how ya gonna argue with that kinda logic, Luc?” Two tears—real ones, this time—run down Rosa’s face, but she doesn’t look at all unhappy. She snatches one of her napkins and blots carefully at her eyes before her make-up begins to run. “Whatever lover-boy does for you can’t compare to what it feels like to be *them*.”

Luc’s eyes skitter away from Rosa’s and he starts folding the last napkin absently, trying not to will away the ache in the muscles of his back. He’s had chronic “back pain”, to one extent or another, since he was nine years old.

The day the pain finally ceases is the day the world ends.

“You went native,” Rosa is saying, still starry-eyed and breathless. “It happens. I understand—you’ve had a nice, human life and now you’ve got this nice, human guy that you want a nice, human future with. But here’s the problem: you’re not nice, you’re definitely not human, and the future of this world and everything on it can be measured on a stopwatch.”

“Phanael thought—”

“Fuck, Phanael!” Rosa exclaims; her hand flashes back and forth between them. “*We’re* not Phanael! We’re just destroyers, Luc. Foot soldiers. We aren’t nearly as smart and powerful as Phanael was—shit, we aren’t even as smart and powerful as Hezzuel, come to it! You wanna be a Pollyanna? Fine. You wanna wage an unwinnable war? Fine. But don’t be surprised when you get caught, and the big-wings toss your ass straight into Hell!”

“It doesn’t have to happen that way. Not if I had you and Louis on my side—”

“Oh, so now you think *Sariel*’d be stupid enough to go along with whatever crazy plan you’ve got stuck in that pretty head?” Rosa laughs, not unkindly. “Please! Little Lord Fauntleroy’d narc on you as soon as Hezzuel showed up!”

“Maybe not. He’s a man with a lot to lose, hear him tell it.”

“Hear him tell it, Sar’s not a man at all, and neither are we.”

“Semantics.” Now Luc’s eyes are steady on Rosa’s, solemn and scared; two emotions that don’t suit the face he currently wears. “He’s got people he loves, commitments to honor. Ties that bind. If we could get him to—”

“Whoa, whoa, whoa!” Rosa darts frightened glances from Luc, up to the ceiling, as if expecting lightning to strike. “Whatchoo mean *we*, white man?!”

The charming smile is more instinct than premeditation, and out it comes. “C’mon, Ro. . . .”

“No, *you* c’mon, *Loo*! I got nothin’ personal against humanity—most of it, anyway—but I’m not spending the rest of my existence in hell just to save one measly world!”

“What if I wasn’t asking you save the world, but—*one man’s* fiancee, *one man’s* barely-begun
romance--” Luc extends his hand to her. Sitting in his palm is a perfect paper rose. “One woman’s five year old daughter.”

“She’s four, and fuck you, you fuck.” Rosa swats the rose out of his hand and they watch it drift to the floor. Luc’s smile slips just enough to make Rosa sigh, and pick it up.

“For someone without a soul, you can sure work the guilt like a pro. Catholic-style,” she grumbles, handing it to him. The anger seems to have gone out of her.

“For someone without a soul, you’re amazingly susceptible to small fits of conscience.” Luc shrugs, elegant and unapologetic. A few passes with his fingers, a few tugs on the petals, and the rose is just a napkin, again. “If only for the people we care about, this world deserves to keep turning.”

“All the innocents get to go to the heaven-dimensions, lucky fuckers. They got nothin’ to worry about.”

“Except the horrible deaths they’ll suffer beforehand?” Luc snorts. “Those lucky fuckers.”

“Lucky compared to us. Twelve, fifteen years from now, we’ll be doin’ all this again, being eaten alive by human guilt till we finally put another corrupt, stupid world out of its misery,” Rosa says bitterly, watching Luc’s fingers. He’s folding, again, but it won’t be a flower, not this time.

“Maybe not.”

“Maybe not?” Behind the sparkle of mockery is a flicker of curiosity. “Listen to you, all cool and confident . . . you really think this plan of yours has a shot, don’t you?”

Luc’s smile is enigmatic and lovely. He offers Rosa a paper crane, which she ignores. “Are you in?”

“That depends on if you’ve got a plan.”

“Which depends on if you’re in, or not.”

“You want me to take a leap of faith?” Rosa throws her head back and laughs loudly, drawing the attention of the two women. Turning a smile as sweet and irresistible as any of Luc’s on the startled pair, she rolls her eyes. “A leap of faith, he asks. Ladies--am I the only one choking on all the irony?”

After a moment, the women start laughing, too, a tad uncertainly. But Rosa’s already turned a composed face back to Luc, who’s still holding out the crane. “So, let’s hear this crack-brained scheme of yours.”

“Sorry, Koss. There’s too much at stake and, courage of my convictions aside, I really don’t wanna wind up in the Quor’thonth if it can be avoided.” Luc’s fingers twitch slightly and the crane flutters, as if it’s about to take off.

“You know I won’t fink on you, no matter what you tell me.” She looks so hurt, Luc sighs and puts the crane down to take her hands in his own. Once again, they’re noticeably warmer than the human norm, just like his own.

“I need more than that from you. I need active participation. Unless you helped me--and helped me convince Sariel--my . . . alleged plan wouldn’t have a snowball’s chance.”
Rosa shakes her head and removes her hands from his. “Plans and schemes, man? Shit, back in the
day--”

“Back in the day, we were obedient, efficient, but not sadistic. Blasting open a Hellmouth--this
Hellmouth--is . . . Jesus, I’m trying so hard not to say evil--”

“No! We stop evil, Cassiel. We bring purity, order and silence to the corruption, chaos and din of
creation. We--”

“Are too damn old to still believe the propaganda we got spoonfed, like, a bajillion years ago!” Luc
snaps, pounding on the table for emphasis; the crane jumps, and minute cracks appear in the marbled
formica. He turns even paler and folds his hands together in his lap. “All we’ve brought, for ages
now, is pain and death to the hapless.”

“Occupational hazard.” Despite the glib reply, Rosa is starting to look very uncomfortable. Luc
presses his advantage.

“Hellmouths doesn’t gulp, Ro, they savor. Years will pass in slow agony before this world finally
dies and when it dies . . . and it’ll die screaming. Can you really go through that again? Knowing
what you know and feeling what you’ve felt?”

“At least the people we love won’t know we’re the ones carrying out their death sentence. They
won’t see us once we go to work; that’s something we should be thankful for.”

“Yeah . . . thankful is the word for how all the world-destroying makes me feel.” His smile turns wry
before it disappears altogether. “We’re at war against people who don’t even know they’re in one.
That’s wrong.”

“I know you think it’s wrong because being alive has made you kind and soft-hearted, this
go-round. Merciful.” Rosa leans closer, her eyes dark and fierce. “But every angel walking the
lower planes was Separated for the same reason. We may carry different messages, Pestilence, but
they all mean the same thing . . . and it ain’t mercy.”

Luc sits back quickly, as if stung, but Rosa’s--Kossuth’s gaze never leaves his.

“Each of us has to do what we were Separated for, Cassiel.”

“To what end?”

She gestures dismissively, cigarette smoke trailing, as if to say we’ve killed trillions. Does the ‘why’
even matter, at this point?

“Do they deserve armageddon?” Luc nodding at the women chatting nearby, his voice little more
than a whisper. “You should remember more clearly than I do what it was like being part of the
Undifferentiated. There was no grand agenda, no judgment; and we definitely didn’t know what
death was, let alone pestilence, or war, or famine.”

Rosa follows his gaze, then stares so hard and for so long that one of the women--the mousy
brunette--shivers, and glances their way.

“Hi, there,” Rosa mouths, blowing their observer a kiss. The woman blinks slowly, almost as if she’s
half-asleep. Her companion glances over at their table, her eyes lingering on Luc before ticking to and dismissing Rosa in less than a second.

“Hey--still talking, here,” the blonde says, waving a hand in front of the brunette’s face, earning herself a narrow-eyed scowl.

“Yeah, I know. You’re always talking. I can’t even remember the last time I got a word in, edgewise!”

The blonde looks more confused than hurt. “Tess--” she starts, but Tess cuts her off.

“In fact, I can’t tell you how many times I’ve considered driving a finger into my right eye, just to see if you’d interrupt your own fucking monologues to ask me if I’m okay! God--you’re so self-involved you probably wouldn’t even notice!”

Luc looks away from the mini-soap opera. Rosa--Kossuth?--is smirking at him and the crimson lights are back in her eyes.

“We didn’t know,” Rosa/Kossuth says smugly, turning to watch the pair avidly, like they’re professional wrestling. “But we sure learned quick, didn’t we?”

“--if you could actually hold up your end of a conversation, I wouldn’t have to talk so much!”

“Maybe if you knew anything about the world, current events, history or--hell, anything that wasn’t your hair, I’d have something to say to you!”

Both women are standing up, now, opposing each other, hands braced on the table. Except for the lack of foam around their mouths, they resemble nothing more than rabid dogs about to have it out.

What makes Luc uneasy, is the not-so-small part of him that finds nothing unpalatable about the fight or its instigator. “Stop this, Ro.” His mouth is dry, the minty flavor of his toothpaste less than a memory. Rosa puts her hands up in smirking self-defense.

“Hey--I just nudged! They’re the ones can’t let go of a grudge.” The look she gives him is delighted and sly, like a toddler torturing the family pets. “You know what? We should tag-team ‘em! I got the brunette, you should take the blonde . . . give her the ebola virus, or scurvy, or something.”

“No!”

“C’mon, Cassiel, let your hair down and show off a little . . .”

But before Cassiel can stir again from its strange half-sleep and really take interest, Luc closes his eyes . . . tries to tune her out. Which has the unfortunate side-effect of tuning him in to the ridiculous, but escalating argument.

“--said you were shallow and stupid--”

“Oh, is that why he asked me out?”

“No, he asked you out because you’ll spread your legs for anyone with a pulse!”

“You bitch! I--”
Cassiel’s faint stirring is being quickly replaced by a headache. Luc clears his throat. “Um, excuse me, ladies?”

The two women put their argument on hold to turn dagger-filled eyes on Luc. Even his best smile doesn’t put one on their flushed, angry faces. “It’s a really nice morning, too nice to spoil it with fighting—”

“What my friend’s trying to say is—take it outside. Now,” Rosa adds, when the blonde starts to protest. Luc can’t see what Rosa’s eyes are doing, but Tess can. It makes all the blood drain out of her face.

Animus momentarily forgotten, she grabs the blonde’s arm and drags her out of the cafe. Once out in the fresh air and sunshine . . . they immediately resume their argument in front of the picture window. Neither Luc nor Rosa can hear what they’re saying, but the expansive gesturing and unmistakable facial expressions are rather telling.

“Fuck—that was so good, I need a smoke.” Rosa chuckles and up-ends her purse over the table. Half a Walgreens cosmetics aisle, the tiny mirror, tissues, an empty and crumpled plastic baggie, rolling papers, a lighter, and the battered pack of cigarettes falls out.

“See?” Rosa leans back in her chair and nods at the window; the blonde is storming off, red-faced and muttering. “I’m what ya might call a motivated go-getter, showing some initiative. Granted, lighting a fire under petty resentments is a parlor trick--a mere bag of shells. But damned if it ain’t like falling off a bike.”

“You mean riding a bike, you psycho.” Luc runs his hands through his hair and tugs on it, watching Rosa light up. After her first few contented puffs, she defies the laws of physics and crams everything but the cigarettes and lighter back into the purse. Out on the sidewalk, Tess is still standing alone, and staring angrily, forlornly after her friend. “I can’t believe we’re related.”

“Not just related, but shaped for the same purpose, babe. So I know you get off on the smiting—or will, once you unwind a little,” she exhales, the picture of self-satisfaction.

“Once upon a time that woulda been true.”

“You liar!” She accuses, but there’s laughter in her voice. “How can you lie, like that? You know good and goddamn well that when we’re all together and the fireworks begin . . . you won’t give a shit about this world, or the people infesting it.”

“Only because my own humanity will have been burned away by this--thing inside me!”

“Exactly, and there’s nothing you can do about it, so why waste energy fighting? This world’s already on the ropes. We’re just the TKO.” At Luc’s crestfallen expression, Rosa’s ‘tude falters. “Okay, look, if your little plan works, what then? Assuming that sooner or later, some archangel doesn’t drop in and send us all to Hell--we just live our short little human lives, then face whatever tea party waits for us afterwards?”

Squaring his shoulders, Luc’s resigned reply is: “Something like that.” His weary sigh sends the crane scudding an inch closer to Rosa’s side of the table.

“I figured.” She shrugs and picks up the crane carefully, examining it. It’s impossible to tell it was
ever anything but a crane. “Fuck it. Worse comes to worse and whatever plan you’ve got fails--anything running around the Quor’thoth’d at least be fun to kill.”

“Wait--what?” Luc blinks warily and actually leans forward as if he’s misheard.

“There’s worse ways to spend eternity than killing monsters with my best friend at my side.” Rosa shrugs again, crimson flashing in her eyes like anticipation.

“Really?” At her nod, Luc grins, fit to crack his face in two. “Ro, sweetie--how in love with you am I right now?”

“God, you’re, like, extra-strength gay.” Rosa rolls her eyes. “Anyway, I dunno what you’re so enthused about, I mean--does your plan cover the boss’s arrival?”

“Oh . . . I think I know how we can take care of Hezzuel--”

“Think’? ‘Take care of’?”

Luc fidgets a little. “Alright, I know, and . . . maybe take care of is too . . . nebulous a term for what I’m thinking . . . .”

“Nebulous. Uh-huh . . . and what term would be less nebulous?”

Luc takes a cigarette from the pack, Rosa automatically lights it. He takes several deep, fortifying drags before he answers. “Kill.”

The look of slightly condescending--very sardonic--courtesy turns to one of cold, predatory interest. “No shit--we’re gonna kill Hezzuel?”

“For starters, yeah.”

“Can we even do that?”

“Did the Slayer bring down Glorificus?”

At Rosa’s blank look, Luc shrugs. “That means yes.”

Rosa crushes the paper crane, her eyes flashing crimson and brown so fast, they seem Halloween-orange. “Now you’re speakin’ my lingo! Lay out this plan of yours, Polly--I’m so in.”

Hezzuel still slumbers.

* 

Its dreams are sweet: billions of voices, rising in one perfect scream. The screams of the dying, the repentant, the despairing--the cries of an ending world--are music.

But still not as beautiful as the sterile silence that will come . . . after.
After their cities burn, after their hubris has been rewarded, their unrighteousness addressed . . . their atonement witnessed.

Hezzuel has been perfect in its dedication, its obedience, its faith in its purpose. Perfect in its devotion. It has carried the Message to thousands of worlds, as it was created to do, and it has never doubted, never questioned.

But other messengers have been found wanting, in this wise. They have let desire and envy corrupt their faith--have acted counter to the mission.

Have tried to prevent the Message from being delivered.

Oh, yes . . . when Hezzuel wakes, it will address such concerns as faithlessness and corruption with the ruthless zeal, and single-minded determination that have led it down millennia, after blood-soaked millennia. When it wakes, it will stretch purity and silence across this world. It's almost time; time to make the Message felt. So close. . . .

Hezzuel's hour has nearly come around, at last, and it's--

"--the end of the world
As we know it
It's the end of the world
As we know it
It's the end of the world
As we know it
And I feel fiiiiiiiiiiine. . . ."

It's a toss-up as to which is more unexpected and jarring--Michael Stipe's voice, or the continuing whine of the alarm--but both sounds so have to go.

After a minute of half-awake flapping and flailing, he gives up on the snooze button and just yanks the clock-radio plug out of the wall-socket.

Blessed silence. . . .

Smiling, Xander slouches back to dreamland, where Hezzuel waits to be born.
Chapter Summary

Written for Dancinbutterfly's prompt, "Xander/Luke the messenger - After the fic that happened." More like the fic that never happened. Also inspired by Interpol's "Pioneer To The Falls."

Chapter Notes

Notes/Warnings: AU. Post . . . everything that ever was. Spoilers for Demon Magnet, and existence.

After Kossuth it became easy, once more, to witness Hezzuel's Message.

The body of the woman who was once Kossuth, the Messenger of War, was laying at Hezzuel's feet, a dried husk, caught forever in a scream that was not and would never be voiced.

Luc'd knelt and wept, struggled and loosed the screams that Rosa—mother, assassin, messenger, friend—would never voice. How he screamed, till he was immobilized by a will greater than any he'd ever come up against. Possibly greater than any, save the un-Named.

There'd been something like confusion in Xander's eyes as he reached down to ghost ice cold fingers near to, but not quite touching Luc's fevered cheek. And wheresoever his fingers passed, changes occurred: sores erupted on Luc's fair, flawless skin, and tumors surfaced. Shortly, his face—his mask —was cracked and riven with disease, and still Xander smiled at him, as if he were the most beautiful thing in all of creation.

“I've sent her home, Cassiel. You should smile,” he'd said gently, smiling himself, serene and utterly inhuman. There was nothing of Xander in those dark, dead . . . no, death-eyes.

But then, there'd never been a Xander, just as there'd never been a Luc, or a Rosa, or a Louis. . . .

. . . or the Vrilcrun, Marshal of the Quor'toth, known in higher circles as Phanael the Apostate. Descended but not fallen, prodigal but not rebel, one of the first to come forth from the Undifferentiated One.

There's no reasoning with something like Hezzuel. It was drawn forth, Named for one reason, given
the greatest power of all: perfect faith in its Message. Only complete destruction would stop it, and only Phanael had had a power and a will to (or it had been hoped) to match Hezzuel. The Vrilcrun had the whole of a demonic dimension at her beck and call.

Yet one of the eldest had fallen at Hezzuel's hands... Phanael, whose name meant hope... neither apostate nor prodigal, but the purest and truest of them lay, at such long last, dying.

Was dead. The scaled carapace of its demonic form had been caught eternally in a fierce battle cry.

White light oozed like ichor down the rusty, bloodied symbol of Hezzuel's office, and its cowled head turned like a mechanical thing to watch it flow. Around them, the Quor'toth withered and was no more. Another piece of the multiverse returned to the Undifferentiated. Back to the the un-Named and whatever passed for peace.

The Quor'toth had held the last hope, been the last bastion. The last to fall, and now the Message was almost fully delivered. The multiverse was almost cleansed, almost scoured, almost done.

Almost erased, but for the bleak, dark, harsh bit of reality upon which the Messengers of Death and Pestilence stood.

The Messengers, one might say, were any left to say it, of Silence and Witness.

Once a tiny bit of the un-Named was Named Cassiel--was Differentiated, and thus drawn forth. He'd been given a Message, a task beyond bearing witness to the End. But at the end of all things, he now finds he cannot remember what it is. So he kneels and prays, and weeps an ichor that bears no resemblance to tears, and yet stands their stead perfectly.

A cold hand hovers near his shoulder—hovers, but does not settle. Hezzuel needs no fiery words to set brother against brother, nor the breath of blight to scorch crops and starve the living. No, nor does he need a pestilential touch to pass on dis-ease and all manner of foulness.

He does not need to touch to silence, but cause silence his touch would, and immediately. In all these long eons Luc, only, had been spared that touch with no explanation. Nor was he asked to help deliver the Message that was to have been borne by four, but instead, had been carried by one alone. One whose shoulders never bowed, and whose mission never wavered.

So it is here, now, at the other end of eternity, in the silence left behind after the multiverse has stopped screaming—after the voices and clangor have stilled, and the ash left from the fires have, themselves, become ghosts—it is here and now that Luc can finally ask:

“Why?”
Hezzeul turns to him slowly—a millennia for that empty cowl to turn to him, and he sees that it is not, as he’s though for all time, empty at all. Inside is a smile as bright and sharp as the scythe Hezzuel still carries, and which no longer crawls with the light of slain messengers or the life-blood of slain corporeals.

It crawls with nothing. Is nothing, in this time, when all that will ever be said or done, has been.

“Why have you spared me to witness this?” Luc demands, his voice cracking and pitiful in a silence that beggars even the silence of death. “Why didn't you send me to the Undifferentiated like Rosa, and Louis? Like the Vrilcrun?”

“Isn't this what you wanted?” Hezzuel asked, and that, too, took millennia. There'd been no need to speak since the night they found Sariel, many years after they'd found Kossuth, and Hezzuel had smiled. Nothing made him smile so brightly as delivering the Message, and Hezzuel was always smiling.

No, there'd been need to speak in all those years.

“You wanted us to be together, and now, we can be. All of us.” Hezzuel pushes back the cowl, revealing Xander's face . . . a face Luc hasn't seen in an eternity. But underneath it, like dark writing on the second sheet of a cheap pad of paper, showing through the first sheet, is a grinning skull. And in the faint distance, many dead universes away and getting closer, Luc can hear the underpinnings of the multiverse itself beginning to shudder and groan.

Soon they will begin to tumble and crash, as Everything collapses into itself, falling ever inward—a great, entropic spiral, until reality is one single, Undifferentiated point of infinite mass and madness. The wails of the damned and hosannas of the saved will be as one, and--

“--we'll all be together. There'll be a glorious din louder than we can bear, but it'll be silence because we'll all be one, we'll all be together, and there'll be peace, and it won't all be empty chaos, it'll be pure, and we won't be alone, anymore. All togeth--”

“It's okay, Xander. I still love you. Hush, now,” Luc murmurs gently, reaching up to pull Hezzuel's cold hand down on his shoulder, and the last mortal, Lucas Eric Devane, is dead before that hand touches his shoulder.

Under Hezzuel's heavy hand and shocked, glittering eyes, the Messenger of Pestilence, of Witness smiles gruesomely . . . and is gone.

In this near-timeless space, the scythe falls to barren rock. Shortly thereafter, so does a dusty, frayed
black robe—yards of fabric that billow and stink in the harsh, scouring, noiseless wind.

And so, the Messenger of Death, and of Silence, who used to be Xander Harris, sits tailor style and waits: seemingly a skeletal, dark-haired, hollow-eyed young man in jeans and a plaid shirt which motion crumbles, bit by bit, till he's nearly naked. A skin and bones boy, trembling and alone in the vast darkness he has created.

“This next time,” Hezzuel whispers tiredly into the formlessness, as Completion nears, and the cacophony of a universe of universes caving in on itself begins. “There won't be Messengers.”

The time of great collapse into One-ness, into Undifferentiation is at last, at hand. The Message has will be delivered.

“And you and me'll be intergalactic bounty-hunters, instead.”

All that's left is to wait for the End to take the last Messenger into itself. To let it finally, at last, come home. To rest.

Rest'd be kinda nice.

“I've given this some thought, and . . . yep. Intergalactic bounty-hunters.”

And if, in the single breath between the death of the multiverse and its rebirth, the ten trillionth of a nano-second in the crucible embrace before another in an infinite number of Differentiations begins, the last Messenger should see a face it had not been created to love. . . .

“All a few trillion years, granted, but--”

Completion.

Perfect. Silent. Sweet.

And gone by far too quickly for faces or love, or anything but the loudest silence there ever would be.

Then existence becomes again, not with a whimper, but a Bang, as the very first are Differentiated. A universe of universes is reborn, in which absolutely nothing resembles a universe that'd never been.
In none of these strange new universes will there be there such things as intergalactic bounty hunters.

By the same token, in these strange new universes there will also be no such things as Messengers.

And for once, Xander Harris will come out ahead.

The Beginning

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