The Prisons We Make

by whichclothes

Summary

It's over a decade since Sunnydale collapsed, and Xander is doing time. A fellow prisoner mentions a vampire he once saw displayed at a tourist trap. Freedom doesn't come easy.
Chapter 1

Entry tags:  
spike/xander, the prisons we make

The Prisons We Make, 1/18
Title: The Prisons We Make
Chapter: 1 of 18
Pairing: Spike/Xander
Rating: NC-17
Disclaimer: I'm not Joss
Warnings: angst, slash, violence, slavery, dub-con
Summary: It's over a decade since Sunnydale collapsed, and Xander is doing time. A fellow prisoner mentions a vampire he once saw displayed at a tourist trap. Freedom doesn't come easy.

AN: This fic is complete and I'll post a chapter a day. Enormous thanks to beta hello_spikey and her very helpful comments! And also enormous thanks to sentine, who has provided three amazing banners! I couldn't possibly pick just one, so I'll be rotating them. As always, your comments are what keep my muse alive!
He’d managed to go a remarkably long period without doing serious time. But then not all cops were as blind as Sunnydale’s finest, and a dead Regotz demon looks pretty much like a dead human, and he’d found himself doing five to ten. It was bad, although not as bad as he’d feared. At least he didn’t have to worry about dropping the soap. He might not have been the biggest guy in the pen, but his accumulation of scars was impressive to even the most hardcore gangsters, and his missing eye, while giving him a slight disadvantage in a fight, also made him look genuinely bad-ass. Besides, these were only humans he was surrounded by and he’d faced worse, and his demeanor said so. His demeanor also likely revealed that he wasn’t all that attached to life—didn’t especially want to die, at least not enough to make any efforts in that direction, but wouldn’t hesitate to do really serious battle if it came to it. The others mostly left him alone, and that was just dandy with him.

He spent his spare time—and really, all of it was spare nowadays—working out in the gym. Together with the uninspiring prison food and his lack of commissary funds, the result was that he’d built himself a body trim at the waist and tight with muscle at the chest and arms. When he wasn’t in the gym, and he wasn’t at his job disassembling defunct electronics, he read. He’d never been a reader in his younger days, but in recent years he’d learned that it passed the time nicely when he was sitting in bus stations or alone in a motel room with only basic cable on the fuzzy tv. It took him away, too, so that for an hour or three he could forget he was locked up like an animal in a cage, and that when he got out his prospects would be even dimmer than when he went in.

He had one sort-of friend in the prison, a half-breed Vashen demon passing for human. Xander had recognized him for what he was right away—the guy was big as a house and his features slightly skewed, as if they were reflected in a warped mirror—but he’d known the breed was mostly harmless. They’d both been relieved to have someone with whom they could talk about the real world, the world where all sorts of creatures roamed, without being dragged away to Atascadero or ending up in some government lab. The Vashen’s name was Brandt and he brewed pruno in his cell. He’d trade Xander a paper cupful for a cigarette Xander had obtained one way or another, and they’d sit on Brandt’s bunk and bullshit for hours, until Xander’s mouth was filled with the taste of rotted fruit and his head was buzzing like a swarm of bees.

The other prisoners left Brandt alone, too. He could take out the biggest of them with a single swing of his fist, and the two times he’d been shanked he’d spent the night in his own bunk, bandaged and snoring peacefully away, while his assailants saw nothing but the inside of the hospital for several weeks.

Xander and Brandt stayed out of the other inmates’ business. They didn’t care who was selling which drugs or who was claiming which gang. Brandt’s skin was sort of a grayish tan, and he could have passed for Mexican or black, while Xander had overheard rumors that he himself was Indian.

Brandt was serving three to five for armed robbery. He had mostly kept his nose clean, he said, but then he’d lost his job at a furniture warehouse when the place went out of business, and he couldn’t find another that paid well enough to feed him and put a roof over his head, and it was awfully hard trying to scrape by when you didn’t even officially exist. So he bought a gun off a friend of a friend and waved it at a frightened teenager behind the counter at Burger King. He walked out the door with five hundred bucks in his pocket, too pleased with himself to notice the sheriff’s deputy idling in the drive-through.

Brandt was a good enough sort, but he wasn’t especially bright.

“When I get outta here,” he told Xander, “I’m gonna go to Canada. Up near Edmonton there’s a town where half the people there are Vashens, or mixes like me. I got some cousins there, I think.
I’m gonna head there and I’ll bet I can find a job. Maybe even a girl. I might wanna settle down, have some kids.”

“Sounds nice,” Xander lied. He couldn’t imagine himself settling down anywhere, under any circumstances.

“How ‘bout you? Whatta you gonna do when they spring you?”

Xander had an answer prepared. “I’m going to head to Boise, where my Uncle Rory lives. He won’t speak to me now, but I think once I’m out I can talk him into a job. He owns a construction company.” It was all a complete lie. Rory had been dead for a half dozen years and had never owned anything in his life except a string of beat-up cars.

“Yeah? You know how to build stuff?”

“Sure. I’ve hammered together some boards before.”

Brandt nodded solemnly. “That’d be a good job, I bet.”

“Yeah. It would.”

At night Xander lay on his lumpy mattress, the sounds of snoring and farting and crying and rutting stealing into his brain, and tried to pretend he was somewhere else. He’d allow his hand to creep under the covers, under the waistband of his scratchy prison-issue boxers, and he’d jerk off quietly, not wanting his cellmates to hear him. While he jacked he imagined bodies, some curvy and soft, some straight and hard, but never faces or voices. Never anyone he knew.

***

Xander had just hit the three-year mark. To celebrate, Brandt gave him all the pruno he could drink and they played Go Fish and War with Xander’s pack of dingy cards. “I been thinking about Canada again,” Brandt said.

“Yeah?”

“Yeah. How nice it would be to live someplace where I could be honest about who I am, and not worry about getting killed or put in a zoo.”

“I don’t think they put demons in zoos, pal.”

“Sure they do!” Brandt put down a ten to Xander’s five and took them both. “I saw a demon zoo once.”

Xander supposed it wasn’t beyond the realm of possibility. He’d seen stranger things. “Really?” he said mildly.

“Yep. It was in California, out in the desert. Next to that big stinky lake, whattaya call it?”

“The Salton Sea?” Xander took Brandt’s three with his eight.

“Yeah, that’s it. I was working in LA at the time and had a delivery to make down there. I stopped for lunch on the way back and there was this place, right behind the liquor store. Walker’s World
of Wonders, it was called. You hadda pay ten bucks to get inside.”

“What the hell were you doing paying to get into a demon zoo, Brandt?”

Brandt shrugged, a movement like boulders shifting. “Dunno. I guess it was, whattaya call it. Mortared curiosity.”

“Morbid,” Xander muttered and put down a king.

“They had a lotta things in there. Some of ‘em were dead, stuffed, you know? I think a lotta those were fakes. And they had some things floating in jars, too. But then there were these cages, and there were real, live demons in those cages. A couple of Frgmrsh, a Polgara, some other things I don’t remember…oh, and a vampire.”

“They had a vamp in a cage?”

“Uh-huh.” They both put down aces and then had a war, which Brandt won with a seven over a six. “I remember that one, because he looked pretty much like a human at first. But you could pay five bucks to feed him, and I did, ’cause I never saw no vamp eat before. I put my money in the machine and his face went all bumpy, with yellow eyes and sharp teeth, and the machine dropped a rat into his cage. He drained it pretty quick. I think he was hungry.”

“Yes,” Xander said. “Vamps generally are.” He finished off the cup of pruno, not able to suppress a shudder as he swallowed.

“He was pretty skinny. I kinda felt sorry for him and I wanted to feed him again, but I was outta cash. So then his face changed again, and just like that he looked like a plain old naked guy with blue eyes and a scar on one eyebrow.”

Xander had always thought it was just a saying, that hearts didn’t really skip a beat when someone was surprised. Now he knew better. “A scar?” he squeaked.

Brandt gave him a puzzled look. “Yeah. Right here.” He pointed at where his left eyebrow would be, if his face wasn’t entirely hairless.

“Was he—Did he have an English accent?”

Brandt’s frown deepened. “I dunno. I didn’t hear him say nothin’. I didn’t even know vamps could talk. He’s the only one I ever seen.”

Brandt won another hand while Xander tried to clear his head. “What did he look like?”

“I told you—lumpy face, fangs—“

“No. I mean when he looked human.”

“Oh.” Brandt’s great brow wrinkled in concentration. “Well, skinny, blue eyes, scar, like I said. He wasn’t very tall. His hair was long, light brown, kinda curly. He was really well-hung. Do all vamps have big dicks?”

“Um, I don’t know. I don’t think so.”

“Well, he did. He looked about, I dunno, maybe thirty? But I guess he coulda been three hundred and thirty, right? ‘Cause vamps don’t age.” Brandt sounded unhappy about this. Vashens had a life-span of only about fifty years. Then he shrugged. “He was pretty. Nice cheekbones.”
After that, Xander drank as much pruno as he could, as fast as possible. It was a mistake, he knew. He ended up staggering back to his cell and puking into the toilet, then spending the rest of the evening with the world spinning sickeningly around him.

By the next morning, he’d chosen to forget the previous night’s conversation. He woke up at six and ate his plasty eggs and cardboard toast and drank his weak coffee, then stood all day in the workshop, blankly pulling circuit boards out of old computers. He had a tasteless cheese sandwich and chips for lunch with more of that awful coffee. And then he ran around the track for an hour before taking a quick communal shower and downing some watery soup, burned hamburger, and lumpy pudding.

Repeat ad infinitum.

Only occasionally, in the depths of sleep, did he think about Spike, perhaps trapped somewhere in his cage just as Xander was trapped in his.

***

He got out almost six months early. The prison was overcrowded and there was a lawsuit, so they had to let out some of the murderers and rapists and thieves to make room for the drug addicts.

Xander walked out the heavy metal doors and across the parking lot, gravel crunching under his feet. He was wearing jeans, a brown sweatshirt, a tan jacket and tennis shoes, and he carried a small bag containing the rest of his belongings: a change of clothes, a few toiletries, a couple paperbacks. He’d left the cards with Brandt, who still had a few months to serve. Xander had two hundred dollars gate money in his wallet and an expired California driver’s license. Up in the sky, gray clouds were fitfully spitting miserly little flakes of snow. They landed on his eyelashes and melted on his shoulder. Some slipped under the collar of his thin coat, chilling his neck.

The prison bus was idling, waiting for him and a half-dozen other newly freed men. They climbed on board and Xander could almost smell the reek of their relief and nervousness. Nobody spoke as the bus took them into town.

At the convenience store next to the tiny bus station, Xander bought a pack of Twinkies and a bottle of Coke. The clerk, an enormous woman with short blonde hair and hectic red circles on each cheek, gave him a disdainful look as he paid. She might be a cashier at a mini-mart in a nowhere town, but at least she wasn’t an ex-con.

Aside from the prison bus, only one bus stopped in this town, once heading east and once heading west. Xander looked over the fares and the list of stops before stepping forward to the clerk. “Westbound, please,” he said to the guy.

The guy didn’t bother to look up at him. “How far?”

“All the way to the end of the line.”

Chapter 2
It's over a decade since Sunnydale collapsed, and Xander is doing time. A fellow prisoner mentions a vampire he once saw displayed at a tourist trap. Freedom doesn't come easy.
Two

He was breaking parole as soon as the bus passed over the state line, but Xander couldn’t manage to get himself worked up over it. If he kept out of trouble, it wouldn’t matter. He wasn’t exactly 10 Most Wanted material. If he didn’t keep out of trouble, well, he’d worry about that when he came to it. Xander Harris had mostly given up on planning very far ahead. Not that he’d ever been much for that anyway.
So Xander just watched the gray miles stretch by. They were more interesting than anything he’d seen for the last four and a half years, anyway. The bus stopped every now and then to let one silent, bundled person off or let one on. There was a young kid in fatigues, a little old lady with a bedraggled wig and a dirty canvas bag full of oranges, a couple in their twenties who pointedly weren’t speaking to one another, a tired-looking young woman with a sleeping baby, a man in his fifties who also looked to recently sprung from prison, and so on. Each had a face closed tight against intruders and postures that said they’d been here before and expected nothing better of life.

Xander slept for a while, waking now and then as his head bonked against the window, or as the bus’s brakes screeched out a protest at being used. When dawn broke again, he felt grimy, his remaining eye sandy, and he drank a cup of gas station coffee that was no better than the swill he’d had in prison.

His bus ride finally ended in Lincoln, Nebraska. A strange place to end, he thought, but he supposed the bus had to stop somewhere. He could have caught another bus farther west from there, but he didn’t have enough cash, so instead he checked into the seedy motel down the street, bought himself a burger at a nearby fast food joint, and contemplated what to do next.

He watched television that night, fully in control of what to watch for the first time in years. He’d had several lifetimes worth of pro wrestling, thank you very much. Sadly, there was nothing much on, and he flipped though talent contests and reality shows and cop programs unhappily until he sighed and clicked the set off. Then it occurred to him that he could take a bath, a real, honest-to-god bath. The tub was chipped but surprisingly big, and the water was nice and hot. He didn’t like the harsh smell of the tiny bar of hard soap, but that was okay, it was pleasant just to soak until the water was cooled and his skin was wrinkled and bleached-looking.

He got out of the tub and dried off, then walked into the main room, still nude. That was one thing he’d missed in prison, casual nudity. ‘Cause sometimes a guy likes to let it all hang loose, but the pen was so not a good place to do that kind of hanging. The room was chilly like this, though, so he turned the control on the heater as high as it would go and put the fan on high.

It was strange to think that he could just leave the motel right this minute if he wanted to, and go anywhere. Well, except he wasn’t going to because he’d already paid for the night and that had taken most of his stash, and because there wasn’t really anyplace he could go in the middle of the night in Nebraska in November. Still. He could do it.

The room had ugly green curtains and he peeked out of them into the parking lot. More snow, grainy and dirty-looking before it even hit the ground. A couple of old beaters that looked like something Uncle Rory might have owned. A man in a blue parka, carrying three plastic grocery sacks and trudging slowly across the slushy ground. Off to the side, one bare tree that looked more dead than winter-dormant.

Not for the first time, Xander thought about how he could disappear into that darkness, just vanish, and nobody would notice or care. Nobody, that is, except a parole officer who would eventually, no doubt, be pleased to have one fewer case on his books. It was an incredibly lonely feeling. And yet it was freeing, too, in its own way. He owed nothing to anybody. Nobody had any expectations of him. He didn’t even have to be Xander Harris anymore—he could be whoever he wanted.

He sighed and turned away from the window. He didn’t have the imagination to be anybody but himself.

***
He dreamt of Sunnydale that night. Nothing new there. Some part of him knew that his body was in the Sleep-Tite Motel, but his mind was at Sunnydale High, inside the walls he’d helped build, watching as hordes of Neanderthal vamps prepared to invade. He could hear the screams of the new Slayers and remember the way he’d felt later, when he’d learned of Anya’s death. He’d grieved, but there was a secret part of him that had been almost happy, because at least he hadn’t had a chance to screw things up with her again.

He hadn’t thought much about Spike. Well, he never had, even before that, not unless absolutely necessary. Spike was a menace first, then a nuisance, and finally, Xander had to grudgingly admit, an ally, but he was never a friend. Not a real person, as far as Xander was concerned.

Of course, Buffy had told them all about what Spike had done, how he’d sacrificed himself, and Xander might have been slightly surprised, but he was too shell-shocked by other events to notice.

They’d all gone to Cleveland and spent a few weeks there, averting yet another apocalypse. Then the others began talking about going to England, to join forces with the remains of the Watchers and begin training all the new Slayers. Everyone had assumed Xander would tag along, but at the last minute he’d dug in his feet. “I just can’t do it anymore,” he said. “I don’t have it in me.”

They were all maddeningly understanding. They hugged and kissed him—well, Giles had shaken his hand—and they got on a flight to London. Xander had travelled for a few months before finding himself a job outside Washington, DC, building houses. He’d enjoyed it. He’d had a normal life and a decent apartment, and on weekends he’d go to bars with the people from work, and he’d dated a few girls and then, somewhat experimentally, a few guys. Willow and Buffy and Dawn had emailed him and sent him letters telling him about the demons they were fighting across Europe, and the places they’d been shopping, and the latest men and women in their lives. They even mentioned that they’d heard that Spike was alive—well, unalive—again, fighting at Angel’s side in LA. Some months later, it was Willow who told him that Angel and Spike had dusted in some battle. Xander hadn’t felt anything at all in response.

And then the emails and letters stopped.

It had taken several increasingly frantic transatlantic phone calls to find out what had happened, and then it was that twerp Andrew of all people who told him. They were dead, all of them, all in one fell swoop. They’d been saving the world again, and there had been an explosion, and that was it. Oh, the world had been saved anyway, and that was good, but everyone he loved was gone.

Xander had been filled with the irrational certainty that if he’d been there, fighting with them, instead of hammering shingles in Maryland, none of them would have died. He knew that didn’t make any sense—he’d been there, he would have been blown to bits too—but he couldn’t shake the conviction that it was all his fault.

So he’d quit his job and started roaming the country, a free-lance demon hunter. He supposed he could have joined the Watchers himself, but crawling to Andrew for a job? No. Besides, he couldn’t picture himself living outside the U.S. Hell, he’d never been out of the country, unless you counted a day trip to Tijuana.

The years passed and he slew demons and as every vampire exploded into ashes and every monster hit the ground, he was surprised to discover he didn’t feel any better at all, that the ghosts of his friends were still haunting him as stubbornly as ever.

They haunted him most tenaciously in his dreams, and his cellmates had complained that he woke
them with his moaning and cries. Tonight, though, he wasn’t moving just a little too slow to save Anya, or seeing Willow fail in her efforts to work the scythe’s magic, or hearing Buffy scream as the First Evil killed her for the third and final time. Tonight he was watching Spike burn.

Flames licked at Spike’s flesh, stripping away the skin until he was nothing but a skeleton with a grinning skull. There were still eyes in that skull, though, flashing back and forth between blue and gold, and they were staring at Xander. Xander was paralyzed, unable to move even a finger.

“Look what you’ve done, whelp,” Spike said. “Turned it all to ashes.”

_No!_, Xander thought, but was unable to say. _It’s not my fault._

“Why should you be the one who gets to live? What good have you done the world?”

_I’ve killed my share of nasties._

“Too little, too late, pet. I should’ve let that preacher take the other eye, too.”

And then, in the dream, Xander’s right eye was struck by terrible pain, the same pain he’d felt when that thumb had dug into his socket, accompanied by the same horror and the same revolting feeling in the pit of his stomach. He screamed.

***

Xander awoke to a gray morning. He was glad to see it, though, glad to see anything at all. He had a headache, the kind that throbbed deep in his skull as if it never intended to stop. He pissed and took a shower—because you never knew when you’d have access to hot water again—and shaved and dried his hair, then put on his clean clothes. He’d washed out his socks and boxers in the sink the night before and hung them over the tub to dry. Now he packed them in his small bag, looked around to make sure he hadn’t forgotten anything, and left.

He had $21.18 left.

He knew he should eat something, but the headache was making him slightly nauseous and he couldn’t even think about food. He did buy a couple of Snickers bars from the motel vending machine, though, and stuck them in his pocket for later.

A muscular, one-eyed man who looked like he just got out of prison wasn’t going to have an easy time hitchhiking, he suspected. So he trudged the three miles to a truck stop and then went from semi to semi, spinning a sad tale of a prodigal son trying to get home for Thanksgiving. A couple in their mid-fifties finally took pity on him—“Call me AJ, honey, and this is Chuck”—and let him climb in the back of their cab. They were heading to Laramie, they said, and that sounded good enough to him. It was the right direction, anyhow.

AJ asked him a few gentle questions, but mostly the couple ignored him, and they bickered comfortably or sang to the radio. When they stopped for lunch they insisted on buying him a burger, too.

They dropped him off at an enormous truck stop just outside of Laramie, where the wind was whistling across the vast pavement and kicking up little clouds of dry snow. He thanked them for the ride and when he shook Chuck’s hand, the man pressed a bill into Xander’s palm, motioning
with his eyes that Xander shouldn’t let AJ know.

It was a twenty, Xander saw when they’d pulled away.

He bought himself a chicken-fried steak and mashed potatoes and green beans and a chocolate shake, and chased it all with a slice of coconut cream pie his waitress claimed was the best in Wyoming. It was very good.

Dark had already fallen by the time Xander finished eating. All the truckers had left or bunked in for the night, and Xander wasn’t sure where he was going to sleep. They had rooms here, but they were out of his price range.

“Hey,” he said to his waitress when she brought the bill. According to her tag her name was Callie, and she reminded him a little of Joyce. “Is there a Y somewhere around here? Or a youth hostel? Maybe just a bus station? Someplace a guy could sleep for cheap?”

“No, there’s none of that, honey. Well, a bus station, but that’s miles from here, and besides, they close it down at night.”

“Oh. Then…maybe could I just stay here? If you keep bringing me coffee I’ll try to stay awake.”

Callie frowned at him as she considered. “You look like you could use a good night’s sleep, honey.”

He shrugged. “I’d settle for someplace warm to hang out for a while.”

She pursed her mouth. “Hang on a sec,” she said, and walked away.

Xander watched as she had a short conversation with the coffee shop manager, both of them looking at him as they talked. The guy nodded, Callie smiled at Xander, and then she left the coffee shop. He placed the twenty Chuck had given him on the table. That would pay for his tab plus a generous tip.

When Callie came back, she was grinning broadly. “Follow me,” she said.

He stood and dutifully trailed her back out of the restaurant, toward the lobby of the attached motel. The clerk was a chubby guy with gray hair, and his tag read: Tim Tilden, mgr.

“Here’s the deal,” Callie said. “You could use a bed. And you look like a guy who could haul a few heavy things around, right?”

“Uh, sure.”

Tim Tilden said, “We’ve been repainting the rooms on the west side and replacing the furniture. If you could stick around for a few days to help out, I’ll give you a room. It’s not one of the newer rooms, but it’s comfortable enough. And we can give you a voucher for three meals a day at the café. Can’t give you any cash, and no drinking or drugs. What do you say?”

Xander stuck out his hand. “I say thank you very much.”

***
It was hard, mostly mindless work: hauling furniture around and slapping paint on the walls. He put in long hours, not because anyone expected it of him, but rather because he liked the way it tired him out, wore out his body so that he collapsed straight into sleep at the end of the day. One of the rooms had a warped window frame, and he borrowed some tools to fix it. When Tim found out he was handy with a hammer, they found more things for him to fix, and that made him happy, too. He felt like he was accomplishing something, albeit something small, and that was a rare feeling for him.

During the rare times he wasn’t working, he’d sit in the café and watch the television, or chat with Callie or the other waitresses during their breaks. He learned all about their lives. Callie, for example, had grown up on a cattle ranch in western Nebraska. Eager to get the hell out of there, she married the first likely suitor that came along. She had dreams of seeing the world. Unfortunately, Bill took her only as far as Laramie before abandoning her. She was six months pregnant. Now, her son Derek was seventeen years old and the light of her life. He was a star running back on the high school football team and he worked at the Wal-Mart after school. He already had scholarship offers from a half dozen universities. He was a good kid, she said. Steady and well-behaved. Her face glowed when she talked about him, and she showed Xander his picture. He was homely, with jug ears and a goofy grin.

Callie and Tim and one of the other waitresses, Deb, all invited him to join them for Thanksgiving, but he politely declined and instead spent the day in his little room, munching on turkey and trimmings from the coffee shop and reading a novel about aliens. It beat prison Thanksgivings.

A few days later, Callie asked him if he’d come over to her place and repair a broken stair railing. “Sure,” he said. She drove him the four or five miles in her Civic. Her house was a small clapboard affair, yellow and white on the outside, neat and cozy in. Pictures of Derek hung everywhere and his trophies were lovingly arranged over the mantel. Xander fixed the railing and a leaky sink as well, and she cooked them grilled cheese sandwiches for lunch.

After they ate, she made a gentle pass at him, more a suggestion that she wouldn’t be adverse to getting closer than anything else, and he mentioned, just as gently, that he was gay. It wasn’t quite true—he liked women as well as men—but it was less complicated this way. She took it philosophically—“Figures,” she said—and tried to pay him for the work. He refused.

But word of his handyman skills seemed to have spread, and soon he was doing odd jobs not only around the truck stop, fixing this and that, but also at various employees’ houses. They’d insist on giving him a twenty or two, so that soon his wallet was considerably fatter than when he’d arrived.

He could have stayed longer. The truck stop’s general manager offered him a job, and it would have been enough to rent a little apartment and keep his fridge stocked, maybe even buy a used truck. The people around here were friendly enough, and he liked the wide-open feel of the sky, the worn boots and hats of the real cowboys who travelled through, the pragmatism that seemed to rule everyone’s lives. But at night he dreamed of Spike, maybe stuck in a cage like an animal, and he grew restless.

A week before Christmas he hugged Callie and Deb and a few of the others good-bye, and then he climbed into the cab of a truck bound heading all the way to Reno. The driver was a taciturn man named Arnie, who always kept a toothpick in his mouth and a John Deere cap on his head.

Xander spent two nights in Reno, paying $49 for a decent hotel downtown. He lost ten bucks at the slot machines and spent another twenty on pay-per-view porn.

He took the bus from Reno to Oakland, and then sprang for an Amtrak ticket that took him all the way to San Diego. There were brochures at the train station, advertising the World’s Largest
Sinkhole. Xander did not visit.

At a gas station in Escondido he found saw a couple of young guys in an SUV, hauling a trailer with dirt bikes in it. “Where you headed?” he asked them.

“Ocotillo Wells,” the taller one said.

“I could use a ride to Salton City—think I could persuade you to go a few miles out of your way?”

The men looked at each other for a moment, then back at him. “Sure, dude,” one of them said. “Just chip in for gas.” He handed over thirty bucks and then dozed in the back seat.

It was a small town, just a scattering of sand-colored buildings in the middle of the desert. The air smelled strongly of sulfur. Everything was pale and dusty; it looked unloved and forgotten, like a shoe that never fit and then languished at the back of a closet. There were cracked, paved streets that ran from nowhere to nowhere else, avenues populated only by lizards and snakes, or the raven that was tearing apart something dead. The guys dropped him off in front of the AM/PM, waved at him, and then zoomed away.

Most of the town was on the other side of the highway, the water side. Xander hitched his bag over his shoulder and jogged across the wide, empty lanes. It didn’t take him long at all to find the liquor store and there, just behind it, was a large building with chipped stucco walls and a buckled metal roof. “Walker’s World of Wonders,” read the sign in faded blue paint, and there were other signs too, each bearing a crude image of a monster, some fanciful, some, like the Dracula-like vampire with blood-dripping fangs, more or less real.

Xander tried the green-painted door, but it was locked. He peered at the hand-written sign taped to it: Open 10-7 Wed thru Sun, it said. Xander had long since lost track of the days of the week, but he suspected it was Monday. Crap.

It looked like he was going to have to find someplace to stay for a couple of days.

Chapter 3
The Prisons We Make

Chapter Summary

It's over a decade since Sunnydale collapsed, and Xander is doing time. A fellow prisoner mentions a vampire he once saw displayed at a tourist trap. Freedom doesn't come easy.

Entry tags: spike/xander, the prisons we make

The Prisons We Make, 3/18
Title: The Prisons We Make
Chapter: 3 of 18
Pairing: Spike/Xander
Rating: NC-17
Disclaimer: I'm not Joss
Warnings: angst, slash, violence, slavery, dub-con
Summary: It's over a decade since Sunnydale collapsed, and Xander is doing time. A fellow prisoner mentions a vampire he once saw displayed at a tourist trap. Freedom doesn't come easy.
AN: This fic is complete and I'll post a chapter a day. Enormous thanks to beta hello_spikey and her very helpful comments! And also enormous thanks to sentine, who has provided three amazing banners! I couldn't possibly pick just one, so I'll be rotating them. As always, your comments are what keep my muse alive!

Previous chapters here
The man sitting behind the counter at the liquor store had skin as brown and wrinkled as beef jerky, and long iron-colored hair held in a pony tail, and yellowed brown eyes. He was wearing a sleeveless t-shirt that might once have been black, but was now a tired gray, with the last remnants of some iron-on design peeling off the front. His arms were covered in prison tattoos too faded to make out. He was bent over a thick, jacketless book when Xander entered the store and didn’t look
up until Xander stood in front of him.

“Ain’t got no public can,” he said. His few remaining teeth were brown.

“Not looking for one. I was hoping you could recommend a place to stay around here. Someplace cheap.”

The man squinted at him. “There’s Slab City over that way.” He pointed vaguely with one hand. “Can stay there for free if you got a tent or a car to sleep in.”

“I’ve got nothing.”

“Bout a mile up the road there’s a subdivision. Buncha guys from LA came and started building houses, then the economy went south and they went belly-up. Houses are just there, empty. There’s a fence, but you could climb that easy.”

“Well, thanks, but I was hoping for someplace with power and water. And anyway, I’m trying to stay on the right side of the law, nowadays.”

The man gave him a long look, taking in the muscles, the cheap, generic clothes. “How long you been out?” he finally asked.

“Little over a month. I’ve put some distance between myself and trouble, and I’d like to just kinda lay low for a while, you know?”

The guy did know, because he nodded sagely. “This pisshole ain’t a bad place for that kinda thing.”

“That’s what I’d hoped. Look, I’ve got a little cash, and I’m not afraid of hard work. I’m not looking for the Taj Mahal, just a safe clean place to lay my head.”

The man paused again, clearly sizing Xander up. “Hang on,” he said at last. Then he picked up the phone beside him and dialed. “Hey, Raul, it’s Sam. Gotta kid in the store here, says he’s lookin’ for a little work ‘n a place to stay…. No, he ain’t illegal. Just pro’ly not too fond a paperwork, ya know?... Looks like a good enough kid. Strong. Only one eye, but that ain’t gonna be a problem…. Okay, man. Thanks…. Yeah, see ya then.”

He put down the phone and peered up at Xander. “Follow the highway for about three-quarters of a mile north. There’s a driveway there, leads to Conway’s Oasis. Bottom of the drive is a brown building, lotta machinery out front. Go on down there and ask for Raul.”

“Thanks,” Xander said. “Hey, what’s the deal with that place next door? Is it a freakshow or something?”

“Walker’s?” Sam made a face. “Man, he got shit in there ain’t got no business on this earth, you know. Someone shoulda burned the place down long ago, you ask me, with all those things inside it.”

“Oh.”

Sam waved his hand. “Aw, it’s pro’ly worth the ten bucks to see one time, if you’re into that kinda thing. A lot of the shit in there is crap, just fakes, but some of it’s for real.”

“Maybe I’ll take a peek later,” Xander said. “Well, thanks again.” He shook Sam’s hand.
“Keep your nose clean,” Sam said. “This place is a pisshole but it’s sure as shit better ‘n the pen.”

“Amen,” Xander said, and walked back out into the blinding sun.

Conway’s Oasis was a farm. There was a small forest worth of date palms, and more trees laden with oranges and grapefruits, and some irrigated fields carpeted in something small and green that Xander couldn’t identify from the driveway. As Sam had promised, the driveway led to a slightly ramshackle-looking brown building, with tractors and things parked out front. Many of them looked to be in the throes of death.

Inside it was dusty and warm. There was more machinery, and a half dozen trucks, and piles of metal pipes and plastic bins and wooden crates and a lot of other things Xander couldn’t make out. A short guy in a dirty white t-shirt walked briskly by. “Excuse me?” Xander said. “I’m looking for Raul.”

The guy grunted and pointed at a small, enclosed office to Xander’s right. Inside the office was a middle-aged man with brown skin and black hair. He wore a pale denim shirt and denim jeans, and he had a tan baseball cap on his head that advertised something that Xander thought might be an herbicide. “Raul?” Xander asked.

Raul stared at him. “You’re the kid Sam sent.”

“Yeah.”

Raul scratched at the back of his neck. “You ever worked on a farm or ranch?”

“No. But I’m willing to learn. And I can carry whatever needs carrying, and I’m pretty good at building stuff, or fixing it.”

Now Raul rubbed at his moustache. “I need a shed built, about ten by ten. I got the lumber and stuff, but the pendejo that was supposed to put it together took off on me.”

“I can do that. No problem,” Xander said confidently.

Raul shook his head. “All right. We’ll start with that, then. I’ll pay you two hundred a week, and I got a trailer you can stay in. I know it ain’t much, but—”

“Does the trailer have a bed and a shower?”

“Sure.”

Xander put out his hand. “Then you got a deal.”

***

The trailer was old and smelled a little musty, but it would do fine. It had a little kitchen with a tiny stove, and a table with a cracked plastic top, and a built in sofa with faded brown cushions, and a miniscule bathroom with a shower and toilet and sink. The bed was partitioned from the rest of the trailer by a wall and a door. The trailer had electricity, Xander was pleased to discover, and working heat and AC. No tv, but he could survive without, and it did have a radio, at least.

Raul had to run an errand over in Twenty-Nine Palms, so he took Xander with and dropped him off
at the Wal-Mart. By the time Raul returned for him, Xander had bought some cheap bedding and
towels and soap and shampoo, a couple of novels by Robert Ludlum and Dean Koontz, and a few
groceries. Raul had told him that Conway’s had all the tools he’d need, but Xander also bought
himself a pair of heavy gloves and some work boots.

Sundown came early that time of year, but Xander was able to at least take a look at the project and
plan for what he would do the next day. Then he headed to the trailer and showered away the dirt
from his travels before eating a PB&J, which he washed down with a couple of cans of Coors.

He tried to read, then, but he kept getting distracted with thoughts of Spike. Just because Walker’s
really existed, and exactly where Brandt said it did, didn’t mean that Spike was the vampire that
Brandt had seen there. Even if it was Spike, that had been six or seven years ago. Spike was likely
long gone, dusted or escaped. And, in the unlikely event that Spike was still there, locked up in that
ugly building just down the road a way, what the hell was Xander supposed to do about it?

He wished he’d bought himself some aspirin, too.

***

The work was simple. Xander figured he’d be able to finish within a few days. Well, a little more
than that, because Thursday was Christmas, and Raul told him to take the day off. With pay, even.

On Tuesday, Xander measured and leveled, then he framed for the foundation. Raul said he’d bring
in a cement truck the next morning. There were plenty of other people working there, but most of
them walked by him without paying him much attention. A few gave him friendly nods. At noon a
taco truck pulled up, and Xander sank his teeth happily into a big burrito. He hadn’t had decent
taco truck food in years, and the tangy, spicy goodness of the food, eaten under a warm blue sky
and washed down by a bottle of Mexican Coke, practically brought tears to his eye.

Xander poured and leveled the foundation on Wednesday. That worked out well; it would give the
cement two days to cure before he started framing. But it took him a while, and he spent the
afternoon sawing lumber, and he didn’t stop work until dusk. He walked quickly up the road then,
his stomach fluttering more and more the closer he got to Walker’s.

But Walker’s was still locked up tight. Closed for X-Mas, said the paper taped to the door. Fuck.
Tonight was Christmas Eve. He’d almost forgotten. So he detoured by the liquor store, where Sam
was just about to lock up. Xander thanked him again for the help and bought a bottle of Jack
Daniels.

He spent Thursday eating turkey sandwiches from the AM/PM, and sweet Barhi dates, and enough
tangerines to fend off scurvy for a lifetime. He sipped slowly at his Jack all day while he sketched
imaginary, fanciful houses in a cheap notebook he’d found tucked away in a cupboard in the
trailer. He took a long nap. He sang out loud with the radio. For the first time in his life he read an
entire newspaper, the LA Times, from front page to back, puzzling over the abbreviations in the
want ads and thinking up little stories to explain the more unusual ones, like Jenni, who was trying
to sell a wedding dress, size 8, never worn, and a used Whirlpool dishwasher.

It wasn’t a great Christmas, but it was by no means the worst he’d ever spent. At least nobody was
throwing punches or tossing kitchenware.
On Friday, Xander began framing the shed. He’d wanted to finish in time to get to Walker’s. But it turned out the asshole who was originally supposed to build the thing had bought the wrong kind of nails and had badly underestimated the number of two-by fours that were needed. So Xander had to wait for Raul to drive him to Twenty-Nine Palms again—this time to the Home Depot—and by the time they returned it was nearly seven. “Sorry, man,” Raul said. “Take Monday morning off, okay?”

Xander arrived at Walker’s at 10:05 on Saturday morning. He’d been up for hours, pacing his tiny home restlessly. He’d had to stop himself from jogging over here, and he kept reminding himself to breathe.

This time, the doorknob turned.

He found himself in a small space with unfinished plywood walls. There was a rotating metal rack full of postcards, a few shelves filled with ugly knickknacks emblazoned with the establishment’s name, an ancient cooler filled with bottled water and soft drinks. A man sat on a stool behind a tall counter, with a cash register in front of him and a pile of brochures. No, not a man, Xander realized, but a demon. Djrinkoth. At least six and a half feet tall and thin as a famine victim, with grayish skin and batlike ears, and a few tufts of white hair tentatively attached to his scalp. He was dressed like someone going ice fishing in Minnesota, with a heavy parka and thick scarf, and bulky nylon gloves on his hands. Djrinkoth liked the heat, Xander remembered. He’d seen them a few times before near Phoenix and down in Texas, close to the border. Calculating and amoral, but not deadly unless it profited them somehow.


Xander pulled out his wallet and set a ten on the counter. The demon tucked it into the cash register with a small smile. It was awkward, what with the gloves on.

“Take as long as you want. Brochures here for a self-guided tour. No photography or videorecording, but you can purchase a guidebook with pictures of everything on your way out.”

“Thanks,” Xander said, and took a brochure.

“Right through there,” the demon said, and pointed at a door marked Entrance. “Enjoy your visit.”

The first room held a bunch of taxidermied nightmares. Some of them were freaks of nature, like the two-headed rattlesnake, and some were clearly manufactured fakes, like the shrunken head that was obviously a monkey, and the mermaid that looked to be a stuffed chimpanzee with a fishtail sewed onto its torso. There was a real, mummified human, which a placard explained was a cowboy found dead in the desert. You could still see what appeared to be a bullet hole in his torso, although Xander couldn’t tell whether the hole had been made after the poor guy’s death. A few of the exhibits were demons of species that he recognized, each placed in menacing positions with teeth bared and glittering glass in place of real eyes. Xander shivered and moved into the next room.

It was, as Brandt had said, stuff in jars. Preserved human fetuses with gross deformities, more animals with extra parts. Lumps and severed body parts, all neatly labeled, with awful tumors or terrible wounds. Some jars just held enormous earthworms or fish with barbed teeth. Nothing monstrous about those creatures except what nature had dealt them.

The third room had Indian artifacts, things like baskets and arrowheads and pots. There was a large chunk of stone with petroglyphs painted on it; if it was real, it had probably been stolen. There was also a beautiful dress made of white deerskin and covered with intricate beaded designs.
The door leading from that room to the next had a sign hanging on it:

**WARNING!**

**DO NOT TOUCH OR TEASE THE EXHIBITS!**

**THESE CREATURES ARE DANGEROUS!**

**ENTER AT YOUR OWN RISK!**

With his heart pounding wildly, Xander entered.

Apparently, each demon was placed in a separate small room. This room contained a heavy iron cage with a rope around it to keep visitors back. Inside the cage was a Frgmrsn demon. Xander would have recognized it even without the helpful sign, which also listed its diet and habits. This species had always reminded Xander a little of Kitty Fantastico, only with a bad case of mange and a truly nasty temperament. They were also about the size of a German Shepherd. This one looked mangier than most. It snarled at him as he entered and narrowed its orange eyes at him, then bashed its shoulder into the cage as if it might escape and attack him. When Xander didn’t even flinch it snarled again and then paced to the back of its enclosure, where it curled up in a grumbling ball and, seemingly, went to sleep.

The demon in the next room was a Polgara. It was too tall to fit inside its cage without stooping slightly, and Xander felt sorry for it, even as it roared menacingly at him. He smiled at it and moved on.

The cage in the next room was about seven feet square. The bars were set so close an arm couldn’t have fit through them. Two sides of the cage were up against the plywood walls, while a third was attached to a clunky-looking machine with a sign on it that said,

**FEED THE VAMPIRE!**

$5

**SEE IT CHANGE BEFORE YOUR VERY EYES!**

The fourth side of the cage was free, and there was no rope, so Xander could walk right up to it and rest his palms on the cool metal.

Inside the cage a naked man sat on the bare cement floor. He was hunched in the far corner with his face on his knees and his arms wrapped around his shins. Xander couldn’t see much of him except for his long, tangled hair, which was the color of dark honey, and his milk-white skin. Xander could tell, though, that he was thin, much too thin, hardly more than flesh stretched over a skeleton. He had a thick metal collar around his neck. He didn’t appear to be breathing, and he didn’t look up.

“Hello?” Xander whispered.

There was no response at all.

“Hello?” he repeated.

And faster than Xander’s eye could track, the man leapt to his feet and threw himself forward into the bars. Xander automatically took a step back to see lips stretched back in a silent, fangy growl, and bumpy brows lowered over yellow eyes. And then the vampire froze and his face melted back
to human. The eyes were blue now and filled with anguish. The vampire opened his mouth, then closed it and swallowed. He lifted a shaking arm and placed his hand just on the other side of the bars from where Xander’s had been. The vampire blinked at Xander, slowly, as if he were trying to clear his vision. And finally, although he still hadn’t made a sound, his lips moved to form an unmistakable word: “Harris.”

Chapter 4
Chapter Summary

It's over a decade since Sunnydale collapsed, and Xander is doing time. A fellow prisoner mentions a vampire he once saw displayed at a tourist trap. Freedom doesn't come easy.

Entry tags: spike/xander, the prisons we make

The Prisons We Make, 4/18
Title: The Prisons We Make
Chapter: 4 of 18
Pairing: Spike/Xander
Rating: NC-17
Disclaimer: I'm not Joss
Warnings: angst, slash, violence, slavery, dub-con
Summary: It's over a decade since Sunnydale collapsed, and Xander is doing time. A fellow prisoner mentions a vampire he once saw displayed at a tourist trap. Freedom doesn't come easy.
AN: This fic is complete and I'll post a chapter a day. Enormous thanks to beta hello_spikey and her very helpful comments! And also enormous thanks to sentine, who has provided three amazing banners! I couldn't possibly pick just one, so I'll be rotating them. As always, your comments are what keep my muse alive!

Previous chapters here
Four

It should have been Spike who was surprised. Xander, after all, had been told exactly who he would see here, and Xander had traveled here—across half the fucking country—with the hope and fear that he’d find Spike. Spike, on the other hand, had no warning at all about who was coming, about the one-eyed ghost from his past who would suddenly materialize one day.
Nevertheless, it was Xander who gaped like a dying fish, while Spike stood frozen and silent, his face expressionless.

Eventually, Xander caught his breath. “Spike. Oh gods, what happened to you?” he exclaimed.

Spike blinked slowly at him. Then he pointed at his neck and shook his head.

Xander stepped back to the cage and put his hand up so only the metal separated him from Spike. “They did something to your voice?” he asked.

Spike nodded wearily.

“Christ.” Xander filled his lungs with oxygen and then emptied them. He’d seen Spike beaten before, he’d seen him crazy, he’d even seem him cry. But he hadn’t expected to find him so despairing, so vulnerable-looking. Fragile, like he might fall to dust at any moment.

And, of course, Xander had no plan. If the cage was vamp-proof, it was very unlikely Xander would be able to get Spike out. Even if he could, they’d have to get by the Djrinkoth. Spike didn’t look in any condition to fight anything, and Djrinkothi could be pretty tough customers when cornered. Xander had no idea whether there were additional security measures in place in this hellhole. And even if the two of them managed to somehow get free, that would leave Spike under the unforgiving desert sun. He wouldn’t make it ten feet.

All right, first things first. “Are you hungry?”

Spike nodded once and then looked down at his feet.

“Okay.” Xander walked the few feet to the machine. He could hear the scritch-scritch of rodent feet inside. He had three fives in his wallet, and he fed one of them into the machine. The machine made a whirring sound, then a little clunk, and a white rat fell to the floor with a small squeal. Spike scooped it up by its tail and turned his back to Xander. The rat squealed again once more, and a moment later Spike dropped its lifeless body to the floor before turning back to face Xander. He was still in gameface, and no vampire should ever look so desolate.

“Another?” Xander said quietly, and again Spike nodded once.

So Spike ate two more rats, and when he was done he looked no better fed than when he’d begun. “Sorry,” Xander said. “I’m out of cash.”

Spike looked like he’d expected nothing less.

“Is there anyone I can contact for you? Someone who can help?” Because, Xander thought, if Spike hadn’t dusted in LA then maybe Angel hadn’t either, or perhaps some other members of their crew had survived.

But Spike’s eyes were empty of hope, and he ducked his head and looked away.

“Okay, then. I guess it’s up to me. I’m not sure how, but I’ll find a way to get you out of here.”

Spike wrapped his arms around himself, a gesture that looked so wrong without the duster, and walked back to his corner. He sank back into the position he’d been in when Xander entered, his posture a picture of perfect misery.

“I will,” Xander told him. “I promise.”
There were three more demons on display, and they all glared and showed their teeth, but Xander paid them so little attention he couldn’t afterwards say what they were. He emerged back out into the entry room through a different door than the one by which he’d entered. The Djrinkoth smiled thinly at him and Xander tried to hide his distress and anger. “Did you enjoy?” the demon asked.

“Uh, yeah.”

“Only exhibit like it in the world, you know.”

“That’s…great.

“Maybe you’d like to buy the official guidebook, to remember your visit.” The demon patted a pile of stapled books with photos of the building—in much better shape than the reality—on the front.

“I’ll pass, thanks.”

The Djrinkoth shrugged philosophically. “Well, come again, and be sure and tell your friends.”

Xander refrained from telling him that probably the closest thing he had to a friend was currently locked up in one of the rooms behind them. Xander waved slightly and then stepped out into the pitiless sun.

It had been a very long time since anyone relied on him. The thought of Spike’s plight made his chest hurt, but the realization that Spike had only him to turn to made Xander feel like he might vomit.

He stopped next door, where he picked up a case of the cheapest beer Sam carried. “Planning a party?” Sam asked as he rang it up.

“I’m not planning anything except to get very, very drunk.”

Sam nodded. “Keep it quiet, though, or Raul’ll kick your ass outta there.”

“No problem.” It wasn’t. Unlike his parents, Xander had always been a serene drinker, and his voice and legs seemed to quit working long before his right arm, so he’d only pour them back, one after another, until he was pretty much melted in place. It had been a long time since he’d done that.

The beer was heavy by the time he got to his trailer. Xander jammed as many as would fit into the tiny fridge and popped open a warm can. The stuff tasted like piss no matter its temperature, but he figured soon he wouldn’t be tasting much anyway.

***

He showed up outside of Walker’s just before noon on Sunday. He’d meant to come earlier, but he’d overslept, and when he did wake up his mouth tasted like he’d been eating the trailer’s shag carpet. He was moving slowly, and the bright rays of the sun seemed like needles shooting straight into his brain. His one eye hurt so badly he could almost wish he’d lost that one, too.

The Djrinkoth was back behind his counter, and he grinned at Xander when he entered. “Ah, back already!” the demon said brightly.
There was also a family of tourists idly browsing the crap that was for sale, tired-looking parents in their forties and a girl and a boy, both around nine or ten. They wore shorts and t-shirts and were badly sunburned. The girl was whining, trying to talk her mother into buying her a snowglobe with a plastic vampire inside, while the boy was looking through a basket of “GENUINE DEMON TEETH.” The father was leafing through the official guidebook and he had a bottle of Pepsi in his hand.

Xander plopped his ten dollars on the counter and the demon gestured him toward the entrance door with a theatrical little wave of his hands. He was wearing a knitted cap today, a pointy one in green and yellow with a yellow pompom. His scarf matched.

Xander marched straight through the rooms without bothering to look at anything. He ignored the first two demons completely and then burst into Spike’s room, half-expecting the whole thing to have been some sort of sick dream. But Spike was there, sitting in that same corner. He looked up this time when Xander came in, and Xander thought he saw a flicker of surprise before the blue eyes went flat and empty. There was a dead rat near Spike’s feet.

“Hey,” Xander said. “I brought more cash this time.” And he had—he’d brought ten fives, actually, which was nearly all the money he had left. But a red light went on on the machine after Spike had eaten only twenty dollars worth of rats. Apparently, that was all the rats the machine held. Spike still looked hungry and frail.

“Spike, look, I’m going to—“ Before Xander could finish, the door to the next room came open and the Djrinkoth came in. Spike immediately cowered back against the far side of his cage, crouching and putting his arms protectively over his face.

“I see you’re interested in our little vampire,” the demon said.

Xander nodded curtly.

The demon came closer, close enough for Xander to smell the sour odor that emanated from the creature, a little like really strong urine. “It’s always a favorite with our visitors. Probably because of the mystique that vampires have, all the books and films and so forth. Why, some people expect it to turn into a flapping bat!” He laughed, a sound like dry floorboards squeaking. “And, of course, there’s the way in which it so closely resembles a human, when it doesn’t have its fangs in. An attractive human at that. These monsters use that attraction to help lure victims, you know.”

Xander didn’t say anything, but the Djrinkoth seemed to take his silence for rapt attention, and he went on. “It’s important to remember, though, that no matter how human it may look, it most definitely is not.”

“There’s a lot of that going around,” Xander muttered, and the Djrinkoth gave him a surprised look.

There was a thunk as somewhere, an air conditioner compressor cycled on.

“Yes, well,” said the demon, recovering his poise, “what I wanted to say, since you seem so intrigued with this specimen, is that I can offer you a special deal. For only fifty dollars more, I can chain it in place, and you’ll be free to…play with it…for one entire hour. Anything you want, so long as you do no permanent damage.”

The demon leered at him and Xander’s stomach lurched so violently he was positive he was going to throw up on the demon’s beige Uggs. In the cage, Spike drew himself into a tighter ball.
“I, uh, no thanks,” Xander said, tasting bile in the back of his throat. “I don’t have fifty bucks.”

“Oh. Well, perhaps another time. You’re staying around here?”

“Yeah, for a while, anyway. Look, I was wondering…how’d you get this vampire?” It wasn’t the only question he had, but it was fairly innocuous and, he hoped, might give him some useful information.

“Oh, there are places where one might purchase such things, if one knows where to look.”

“You bought him at a vampire store?”

The demon grinned, showing crooked teeth like a old fence posts. “No, although not far off from it, actually. I got it at an auction. Vampires are quite difficult to obtain, and I was pleased to add it to my collection.”

Xander bit at his lip. “So, I was wondering. Maybe I could buy him from you? I don’t have much cash now, but—""

The demon interrupted him with another laugh. “I understand your interest, I really do. But you couldn’t possibly afford it. It’s my top moneymaker, you know. Cost me twenty thousand and worth every penny. And in any case, I don’t actually own it. I’ve leased it, you see, for a term of years. When my lease is up I have to return it to its owners, and they are not the sort to be trifled with.”

Xander reminded himself that this was Spike, just Spike. It didn’t help, and Xander felt like crying.

The Djrinkoth patted him on the shoulder. “Don’t take it too hard. You’re always welcome to come take a look at it for only ten dollars. Or save up and you can have that hour I promised you.”

Xander had to get out of there, and fast, or he really would puke. “Thanks,” he mumbled, and, with a last, quick look at Spike’s unmoving figure, he fled.

Chapter 5
The Prisons We Make

Chapter Summary

It's over a decade since Sunnydale collapsed, and Xander is doing time. A fellow prisoner mentions a vampire he once saw displayed at a tourist trap. Freedom doesn't come easy.

Entry tags: spike/xander, the prisons we make

The Prisons We Make, 5/18
Title: The Prisons We Make
Chapter: 5 of 18
Pairing: Spike/Xander
Rating: NC-17
Disclaimer: I'm not Joss
Warnings: angst, slash, violence, slavery, dub-con
Summary: It's over a decade since Sunnydale collapsed, and Xander is doing time. A fellow prisoner mentions a vampire he once saw displayed at a tourist trap. Freedom doesn't come easy.
AN: This fic is complete and I'll post a chapter a day. Enormous thanks to beta hello_spikey and her very helpful comments! And also enormous thanks to sentine, who has provided three amazing banners! I couldn't possibly pick just one, so I'll be rotating them. As always, your comments are what keep my muse alive!

Previous chapters here
Raul had given him Monday morning off, but he worked anyway. He didn’t have anything better to do and at least the labor was enough to keep his mind off Spike. He hadn’t slept well at all the night before, though, and his brain felt dull and clumsy. Still, he hammered and sawed, and by dusk he was tired enough to sink into his lonely bed without dinner or a shower and fall straight asleep.
By the end of the day Tuesday, he had the shed framed and was a good way into installing the corrugated metal siding. He had a plan, too. Not a good plan. Not a complete plan, either. But at least it was something, and even the lamest something was better than nothing at all.

He worked hard the rest of the week. He didn’t go to Walker’s, but he did put a roof on the shed and then he strung some basic wiring. Nothing fancy—he wasn’t an electrician—but he could manage a few outlets and a couple of light sockets and a switch. By lunchtime on Friday he was almost finished with the job, and he felt pretty good about it. It was a well-built shed.

There were a couple wooden picnic tables over where the taco truck parked, and Raul sat across from Xander. Raul was a couple inches shorter than Xander, with a barrel chest, a bit of a beer belly, and a perpetual squint to his eyes. He worked hard and expected everyone else to do the same, but the men respected him. He liked to talk about his grandchildren and his middle son, Oscar, who would soon graduate magna cum laude from Cal State San Bernardino. He was the first person in the family to go to college, and he was even thinking of going on to get an MBA, Raul said. Raul’s other passions were soccer and barbecuing, both of which he was willing to talk about in mind-numbing detail. Xander liked him.

“So,” Raul said, swallowing a bite of his carne asada torta, “you worked pretty fast.”

Xander shrugged. “It was a pretty easy job.”

“Some guys, they would have stretched things out, would’ve seen if they could get another week’s pay out of the deal.”

“Yeah? Well maybe I’m just too stupid to cheat properly.”

Raul laughed. “Nah, I don’t think you’re stupid at all.”

Xander smiled. “Dozens of teachers would no doubt beg to differ.” His carnitas were hot and practically melted on his tongue.

“So what’s a kid like you doing out here in the middle of nowhere? A lot of folks come here to hide, but I get the feeling you’re a pretty good guy. You’re not on the run from the law, are you?” He cocked a sharp eye at Xander.

Raul had given Xander a break, and Xander figured he owed him at least some honesty. “Not exactly,” he answered cautiously. “Technically, I violated parole when I left Indiana, but I’m not up to anything wrong. I’m just trying to get by, really.”

“What sent you to prison in the first place?” Raul asked carefully.

Xander winced. “Manslaughter.”

The expression on Raul’s face didn’t change. “And why’d you kill someone?”

“I thought I was doing the right thing. The law thought otherwise.”

“Would you do it again?”

Xander remembered the Regotz demon, and the little cache of bones he’d found at its nest. Human bones, but small ones. Children’s bones. “Yeah,” he said finally. “Under the same circumstances I probably would.”

The other man regarded him a moment longer and then nodded his head as if he’d made a decision.
“Most of the guys who work here have broken one law or another. A lot of them are illegal, they got no papers. But those papers ain’t easy to get, and I figure feeding your family’s more important than paying close attention to which side of an imaginary line you’re standing on. You do good work and, like I said, I think you’re a pretty good guy. I want to offer you a more permanent job.”

Xander put down his bottle of Coke. “Really?”

“Really. I need someone around here who can fix things that break, carry stuff that needs hauling, things like that. And also, I need someone to drive a truck three days a week. Mondays to Riverside, Tuesdays to Palm Springs, and Wednesdays to LA. Think you can do that?”

“I, uh, don’t have a commercial driver’s license.” Or any valid license at all, actually.

Raul waved his hand. “We can work around that. Same deal as before—two hundred a week plus the trailer. What do you think?”

Xander smiled. “I think it sounds fantastic.”

***

Xander was enormously relieved to be able to stick around for a while. Maybe he’d eventually come up with a better plan about what to do about Spike, or at least a more complete one. But in the meantime at least he was here, and he had a place to live and a little cash.

He decided he needed a tv, though, and asked Raul where he might find one. There wasn’t exactly a Best Buy in Salton City. But it turned out Raul had an extra. It had been in his bedroom, but he’d recently upgraded the one in his living room to a flat screen and moved the big one from the living room to the bedroom. Consequently, the small one that had formerly sat on his dresser was now gathering dust in his garage, and he was happy to find a home for it. He also informed Xander that the farm already paid for satellite—they used it for internet access in the office, and because Conway (whom Xander had only glimpsed once) liked to watch baseball games while he worked. So Raul would make a few calls, and by the middle of the week, Xander could have a zillion channels of crap in his trailer, too.

So Xander was feeling a small tinge of optimism on Saturday morning as he walked toward the center of town, such as it was. He had cash in his wallet and a bottle of cow blood from the carniceria in his pocket.

The Djrinkoth smiled broadly at him when he entered. He was wearing the green and yellow hat and scarf again. His mouth was like some sort of dental nightmare, Xander thought. Xander plopped two twenties and a ten on the counter. “I’d like the vampire for an hour,” he announced.

“Excellent! I knew you’d manage it somehow. Our little vampire has quite a following, you know. There are visitors who use it quite regularly, and—And you’re anxious to get started, aren’t you? Follow me, please.”

“Excellent! I knew you’d manage it somehow. Our little vampire has quite a following, you know. There are visitors who use it quite regularly, and—And you’re anxious to get started, aren’t you? Follow me, please.”

Xander did, through a small door he hadn’t noticed, into a tiny room with two gray folding chairs. “Please, have a seat,” the demon said. “It will take me a few moments to prepare it for you. Can’t have it biting you now, can we?” He gave his nasty little chuckle and Xander had to make a huge effort not to deck him.
The demon scurried away through a door, and Xander sat. He strained his ears but could hear nothing but his own breathing and the hum of the air system. Almost ten minutes later, he jumped slightly when the door came flying open. “Right this way, please,” the Djrinkoth said.

They walked down a narrow corridor and then the demon opened a plain door to reveal a small room with black soundproofing material nailed to the walls and ceiling. Spike was in the exact center of the room. He was naked, of course, and belly-down on a metal table-like device that looked really heavy. His wrists were locked in manacles on two of the legs, and his ankles were locked to the other two in such a way that his legs were spread wide apart. His back was to Xander, so what Xander saw first was the pale, pale globes of Spike’s arse and the vampire’s exposed, pink hole. Spike’s balls and flaccid cock—and it was impressively big—hung below. Spike’s head was hanging over the edge of the table. His eyes were closed and he had a metal muzzle over his mouth, strapped tightly around his head. Every bone in his spine stood up clearly, and he wasn’t breathing.

The Djrinkoth gave Xander a little nudge, urging him into the room. “It’s all ready for you. As I said before, do whatever you like to it, but nothing permanent. A few wounds don’t affect its ability to be displayed, but I don’t want it missing any parts, and the people I lease it from, well, they’d be very unhappy.” He made a face that was clearly meant to communicate the fact that it was unwise to piss the mysterious owners off.

“Now, it shouldn’t give you any trouble. Those chains have been tested, and they’re completely vamp-proof. But here.” The demon produced a small plastic box from one of his pockets. It looked like a garage door opener. “If you do need to give it a little reminder to behave, you can use this.” He pushed the button with one gloved finger. Xander heard a slight electrical sizzle, and Spike’s bound body arched and tensed in silent agony. The demon chuckled and handed the box to Xander, who took it with a hand that felt numb.

The Djrinkoth pointed at the large, plain clock that hung on the wall, the room’s only adornment. “I’ll be back at 11:25 exactly. Enjoy yourself!” And then he left, shutting the door behind him. He did not leave a key to the shackles.

At first, Xander couldn’t even move. He shut his eye and rubbed at his face, trying hard to get himself under control. When he was slightly calmer, he took a few steps closer and whispered, “Spike?”

Spike’s eyes opened and he twisted his head around to look at Xander. His entire body shuddered and he closed them again.

Xander came even closer, close enough to actually touch, and then he knelt by Spike’s head. He put the box on the floor, slightly off to one side. Working gingerly, he unfastened the four buckles that attached the muzzle, and slowly drew the metal and leather contraption away. He set it next to the box. Spike’s eyes were still shut but he licked at his lips. His hair hung down in a curly, matted curtain.

Xander reached into his jacket and pulled out the plastic bottle he’d brought. It wasn’t a lot—he could only smuggle in so much without it being obvious—but he figured 20 ounces of cow blood could only help. He unscrewed the top and stuck in a long straw he’d thought to bring as well. Spike’s nose twitched and his lids snapped open. He stared at the bottle the way a man lost in the desert might stare at a mirage.

“It’s just cow,” Xander said. “Couldn’t figure out a way to get some human. But I thought it was better than—Well, I thought you might want some. Do you?”
Spike nodded, so Xander held the straw to his lips and watched as Spike slurped it all down quickly, desperately. When the bottle was empty Xander tucked the straw into it, replaced the cap, and put the bottle back in his pocket. “Better?” he asked, and Spike nodded again, just once.

“Gods, Spike, I’m sorry. I’m trying—Fuck. I’m trying to find a way to get you out of here.”

Spike shook his head slowly, but Xander couldn’t tell which part of his statement the vampire was negating. But Xander had come prepared, and now he produced a pencil and a small notebook out of another pocket. The notebook had a drawing of a pirate-looking smiley face on the front. It was all they’d had at the AM/PM, and the clerk—a teenage girl with long straight hair—had looked back and forth between the eyepatched man and the eyepatched cartoon and giggled.

Xander pressed the pencil against the fingers of Spike’s right hand. But Spike didn’t move to grasp the thing, and then Xander remembered that Spike was left-handed and moved the pencil over. Spike did take it this time, but awkwardly, as if he’d forgotten how to hold such a thing. Xander stuck the notebook near the pencil point. “What happened?” he asked.

Spike paused for a moment and then scrawled, “DOESNT MATTER. LONG STORY.” It was hard for him to write with his wrists held as tightly as they were.

“How can I get you out of here?”

“CANT.”

“No. I won’t accept that. There has to be some way.”

Spike shook his head and closed his eyes again. He let the pencil drop from his fingers.

But Xander picked it up again. “Who owns you, Spike? Who did this to you?”

Spike shook his head again and refused to take the pencil.

“Spike. Have you ever known me to give up? I may not be the best and the brightest, but I am the stubbornest. Um, most stubborn.”

Spike took the pencil then, and he wrote, “SOD OFF!”

“Nope.”

Spike rolled his eyes. “DANGEROUS.”

“Surprisingly, no longer a turn-off for me.”

Spike shook his head again, this time in disbelief. “CANT BEAT THEM.”

“Probably not. But I can try. I’ve… I’ve got nothing else, actually.”

Spike looked at him then, really looked at him for the first time since Xander had arrived in Salton City. It was a difficult angle for Spike but his eyes were bright and piercing. Then he sighed and pressed the pencil to the paper again. “WOLFRAM & HART. LA.”

Okay. This was getting somewhere, at least. Xander nodded. “Good. Um, we have some time left. How can I help you now?”

Spike stared at him again, then, in savage, jagged letters, wrote, “BEAT ME.”
“No! Jesus, Spike, I can’t do that.”

“IF YOU DONT WANKER WILL SUSPECT STHING.”

“I’m not going to hurt you.”

Spike snarled silently at him, then wrote, “THEN FUCK ME.”

Shit. Xander’s throat clicked when he swallowed. “No,” he said quietly.

Spike showed his human teeth in an angry grimace. “BLOOD OR SEX. HE WONT LET YOU BACK W/OUT.”

The worst of it was that Xander believed that to be true, so he couldn’t even convincingly argue it with himself. After a long pause, he whispered, “Which would you prefer?”

Spike closed his eyes and shuddered again, then opened them. “FUCK ME.”

Although Xander supposed on some level he’d always found guys as attractive as girls, it wasn’t something he’d admitted to himself until his mid-twenties. So although he’d certainly noticed that Spike was pretty much sex incarnate, back when Xander was still a Scooby, he hadn’t allowed himself to notice that he’d noticed. Besides, back then his feelings about Spike were mainly varying mixtures of fear, annoyance, anger, and uneasy tolerance, none of which were especially conducive to lust.

Long after they’d gone their separate ways, when Spike was probably already confined in this little pocket of hell and Xander had mostly his right hand for company, Spike had occasionally made a guest appearance in Xander’s masturbatory fantasies. Xander hadn’t especially welcomed him there, but when Spike did show up, well, it was hard to refuse that body and that face. But he’d never been like this in Xander’s head—helpless, exposed, offered up like some unwilling sacrifice. In fact, while there may once in a while have been some ropes and chains involved in Xander’s little mental scenarios, it was generally Xander himself who was the dubiously consenting participant, a bit of a kink for which he blamed his parents, Faith, Anya, and Sunnydale in general.

But now here was Spike, bent and spread before him and, like someone in a really bad porno, Xander was being forced to perform. He took several deep breaths. “Are you sure about this?” he asked.

Spike glared bloody murder at him and nodded.

Slowly, Xander moved around until he was again behind Spike. He placed a tentative hand on Spike’s lower back, just above the swell of his ass. Spike flinched slightly and then was still. His skin was very cool and surprisingly soft. It reminded Xander of the white satin sheets that Anya had once bought them. Xander let his hand drift lower and to the right so that his palm was loosely cupping Spike’s right cheek. His left hand rose to mirror those actions on Spike’s left cheek. Like the rest of him, Spike’s ass was too skinny, but it still felt nice, and Xander massaged it gently and watched as a little of the tenseness around Spike’s shoulders melted away.

“I’m sorry,” Xander whispered. He felt like a rapist, like a monster, because a part of him was actually enjoying this, and he felt his cock begin to fill. Well, at least he could do what he could to make it painless for Spike, he thought. And of course he hadn’t brought any lube with him, and the Djrinkoth hadn’t provided any. Xander had the impression that the other men who used Spike weren’t very concerned with niceties like that.

So Xander sank to his knees and the cement floor was hard and cold through the denim of his
jeans. What had it been like for Spike, knowing nothing warmer or softer all these years? Even Xander’s lumpy mattress and thin, scratchy blankets had been something, some insulation between his body and the indifference of the prison.

Xander stroked the inside of Spike’s thighs, lightly, almost teasingly, and the muscles there quivered and then eased. This close, the vampire smelled of Ivory soap, and Xander realized that the Djrinkoth must have cleaned him up a little, wiping away the dust and dried blood that had accumulated in Spike’s cell.

Gently, still not quite understanding how he came to be doing such a thing, Xander reached over and stroked Spike’s pendulous balls, his long, uncircumcised cock. He was slightly surprised when he felt that cock gradually grow rigid under his fingers—and how, exactly, did that work with vampires anyway?—until Spike was fully erect and the foreskin had pulled back to reveal the pink crown.

“Is this okay?” Xander asked softly.

Spike huffed out a long breath and nodded.

Xander continued to caress Spike with his right hand, while his left moved slowly across Spike’s ass and then the fingers dipped into the cleft, hardly more than a tickle. The pad of his middle finger stroked around the edge of the puckered opening. Spike’s breath hitched a little, but he didn’t try to move away.

A little uncertainly, Xander stuck out his tongue and ran the tip of it down Spike’s perineum. Spike tasted like soap and salt, not quite the same as a human, but not unpleasant either. He licked again, a bit more assertively, and then just barely touched the tip of his tongue to the center of Spike’s hole.

By now, Spike’s cock was very hard and the tip slightly damp; the skin had warmed with friction and it felt no different than any other guy’s, if bigger than the norm. Xander’s own erection was throbbing uncomfortably against his zipper. Xander curled his tongue and pressed it inside.

The first time Xander had sex with another man they were both drunk, and Xander hadn’t known the other guy’s name. Their coupling had happened in an alley behind a club and it had been quick and dirty, no more tender than when Xander had lost his virginity to Faith, if somewhat less violent. The next hadn’t been much different, and that was a shame, because Xander preferred to take it slow with his lovers, to take the time to appreciate their bodies, to learn what sent them to the sharp edge of control. He got as much satisfaction from pleasing his partner as he did from being pleased, maybe even more. While he and Anya had had many other problems in their relationship, sex had definitely not been one of them.

Over a year after that night in the alley, Xander had jostled into another man in a crowded coffee shop in Tampa. Coffee had been spilled, napkins were patted, and an hour later they had tumbled together into Scott’s bed. This time there was no hurry, though—they had all day, all night if they wanted—and Scott had been more than happy to help Xander learn about the possibilities of two men together. Xander had stayed in Tampa almost a month, longer than he’d stayed anywhere for a long time, or would stay anywhere until he ended up in the Allen County Jail. He’d had to move on when some members of the local demon community figured out who he was and what he was doing, but he’d remembered the lessons Scott had taught him, although his opportunities to use them had been rare.

Now, Xander took great care, trying to judge by Spike’s non-vocal responses what felt good to the vampire, and exactly what touches Spike needed where. He may have been succeeding, because
the tension in Spike’s body was of an entirely different kind than when he’d begun, and Spike was panting and doing his best to push back against Xander, to intensify the contact between them and the amount of the penetration.

Xander obliged, increasing the speed and strength of his strokes a little, fucking Spike a little more vigorously with his tongue, until the tight ring of muscle became loose and open around him, and Xander began to fear he was going to come in his pants like a teenager.

“Are you ready, Spike?” he asked, and this time Spike’s nod was almost eager.

So Xander stood and unbuttoned and unzipped, then shoved his jeans and boxers down to his thighs, and his dick wanted to write him a thank you letter for finally setting it free.

Spit did not make the best lube, Xander knew, but it was all he had, and at least Spike seemed relaxed and well-prepared, and Xander’s cock was pretty slick from precome. Xander lined himself up and then, so slowly he wanted to cry, pushed inside. Spike’s breaths went slightly uneven at first and the muscles of his shoulders tightened, but by the time Xander was fully sheathed he was arching his back and rocking slightly against Xander.

Xander had let go of Spike’s cock, but now he took it in his hand again and rubbed it in sync with the movements of his hips, which were long and slow and deep. Spike felt incredibly tight around him, the coolness of his core surprisingly not disagreeable at all, and soon enough the friction had warmed him inside as well.

The few brain cells not otherwise occupied reminded Xander to check the time, and he did. He was shocked to discover it was 11:16 already. His hour was almost up. So he began to move faster, and Spike seemed to like that idea because he wiggled enthusiastically and both their breaths came out in short, rough puffs. Xander suddenly wished he could see Spike’s face better, could see what those pretty lips felt like and what that mouth tasted like, could maybe even allow just a little fang prick, to see what had had Riley Finn so caught up all those years ago.

Xander smoothed his palm along Spike’s bumpy spine. Spike jerked and stuttered beneath him and Xander’s hand was suddenly bathed in cold, sticky fluid. At the same time, the muscles around his cock contracted so tightly it almost hurt, and that was just enough to send Xander falling over the edge into happy oblivion.

Still panting raggedly, Xander collapsed atop Spike’s back. The cold skin of Spike’s shoulders felt wonderful against his own overheated cheek. He could have stayed like that a long time, and Spike seemed content as well, but Xander knew the clock was ticking. He gently withdrew himself and, impulsively, bent and kissed the twitching little hole. He stood then and looked at his hand, trying to decide where to wipe it.

Spike gestured him over with his head, then stuck out his tongue. His meaning was clear, if shocking, and Xander gaped and held his hand in front of Spike’s face, and watched with astonishment as that sharp pink tongue licked him clean.

“Are you okay?” Xander asked when Spike was finished. Spike nodded as Xander quickly tucked himself back inside his clothes and zippered up. There was a strange expression on Spike’s face, one that Xander couldn’t read at all, and he didn’t have the time now to figure it out. He put the notepad and pencil back in his pocket and, with an apologetic frown, picked up the muzzle.

“I’m sorry,” he said again. “I’m sorry but I’ll figure something out. It might take me a while, though.”
Spike blinked at him.

“I…I’ll have fifty bucks again by next week. Do you want me to come again? Because if you don’t want…this…I understand. I’ll stay away until I can get you out.”

Spike shook his head fairly forcefully, but Xander paused before strapping the muzzle back on.

“Uh, I’m not sure whether you’re saying no to me coming or staying way.” Spike rolled his eyes.

“Do you want me back next week, Spike?”

Spike’s nod was emphatic. And Xander didn’t have to be a lip-reader to understand the word the vampire mouthed: *Please.*

***

The demon sniffed the air slightly, looked at Spike’s ass, where the sphincter was still slightly stretched and wet with semen, and leered at Xander. “So? Worth every penny, yes?”

“Yeah.”

When the Djrinkoth slapped Spike’s ass the way a man might slap a horse he owned, Xander had to grit his teeth. The situation had made him furious enough before, but now, after what he’d just done, he found himself feeling protective of Spike. Protective and not a little bit possessive.

Xander couldn’t even say goodbye to Spike as the demon scooped up the plastic box and led him back down the hallway, through the narrow waiting area, and into the entry room. A couple was waiting there, leafing through brochures, a tall man and woman in their sixties. They were wearing matching sweatshirts portraying eagles and Old Glory, and she had an enormous white purse slung over one shoulder. “Just one moment, please,” the demon said to them, and they nodded politely.

In a low voice, Xander said, “Look, Mr. Walker, I was—“

“Oh, my name’s not Walker,” the Djrinkoth chuckled. “He was several proprietors ago. My name is Reece, but then that’s not very alliterative, is it?”

“All right. Mr. Reece, I was wondering if I could set up sort of a…regular appointment. Every Saturday morning, say.”

Reece grinned so widely Xander was afraid the top of his head might fall off. “I’d be delighted, Mr., uh….”

“Harris.” Xander had a tendency to forget pseudonyms, and anyway, half the town already knew who he was.

“Mr. Harris. Next Saturday at eleven, shall we say?”

“Fine.”

The wind had kicked up while Xander was inside, and fine sand blew into his face, making him squint his eye. He felt empty—drained—and tired, and his limbs were as heavy as lead. Plus, he had the entire weekend ahead of him with nothing to fill it.
He wandered slowly into the liquor store. Sam was reading one of his ubiquitous books, this one with a battered red cover. He held a Harley Davidson mug in one hand, but the smell that came from it wasn’t alcohol or coffee, but a scent familiar to Xander from thousands of hours spent in the school library or the Magic Box or Giles’s apartment. Bergamot, someone had told him once, the flavoring in Earl Gray tea. Giles’s favorite.

“I hear you’re gonna stick around for a while,” Sam said.

Xander plopped a fifth of Johnnie Walker on the counter. “I guess so.”

“That’s good. This place ain’t much, but sometimes it helps just to sit awhile.”

“I suppose so,” Xander said. How would he know? The only places he’d sat were Sunnydale and prison.

Sam took Xander’s twenty-five dollars, punched at the cash register for a moment, and then gave him back a dollar bill and change. “You know,” he said, “that stinking lake out there was a mistake. Flood came, dikes broke, and the fuckers spent almost two years tryin’ to stop it. They couldn’t, though. Man versus water, water always wins. So then there’s this big salty lake nobody wanted, and suddenly folks start seein’ a use for it. There was fishing, and the birds made it a regular stop as they’re flyin’ by. It ain’t never been no Disneyland or nothin’, but tourists came, and folks that didn’t have no other place to go.”

He took a long swallow of his tea and then put the mug down on the splintery counter. “So now the sea is dyin’. Too much salt, too much pollution, shit that gets washed into it from the farms...the fish and the birds die, and so do the little towns around it.

“And now here’s the thing—folks are workin’ to try and save the damned thing. Environmentalists get their panties all in a bunch, some of the politicians talkin’ about spendin’ billions of dollars. That’s billion with a b, kid!”

Xander nodded, wondering exactly what had inspired the lecture.

Sam put the bottle of bourbon in a tall paper bag, the kind where everyone knows perfectly well that it’s booze you’re carrying, the kind winos drink out of.

“So there’s a colossal fuck-up that didn’t nobody want at first, and it ain’t never been all that pretty. But it still has value, right? Folks’re still willin’ to work to preserve it.” He laughed, the deep, hoarse sound of a lifetime smoker. “You never know, kid, you just never know.”

“I guess not,” Xander said, not knowing how else to respond.

Sam gave him a funny little smile and then bent back over his book.

Chapter 6
Chapter Summary

It's over a decade since Sunnydale collapsed, and Xander is doing time. A fellow prisoner mentions a vampire he once saw displayed at a tourist trap. Freedom doesn't come easy.

Entry tags:  spike/xander, the prisons we make

The Prisons We Make, 6/18
Title: The Prisons We Make
Chapter: 6 of 18
Pairing: Spike/Xander
Rating: NC-17
Disclaimer: I'm not Joss
Warnings: angst, slash, violence, slavery, dub-con
Summary: It's over a decade since Sunnydale collapsed, and Xander is doing time. A fellow prisoner mentions a vampire he once saw displayed at a tourist trap. Freedom doesn't come easy.
AN: This fic is complete and I'll post a chapter a day. Enormous thanks to beta hello_spikey and her very helpful comments! And also enormous thanks to sentine, who has provided three amazing banners! I couldn't possibly pick just one, so I'll be rotating them. As always, your comments are what keep my muse alive!

Previous chapters here
Six

Araceli had wavy black hair she wore long, back over her shoulders. She wasn’t quite plump, but she was definitely very curvy, with wide hips and generous breasts. She was the one who gave Xander the paperwork before he made a delivery, and then took it from him when he returned, and she always had a shy little smile for him. She had a tiny little voice, like she was almost afraid of being heard, and kind eyes that, Xander was pretty sure, didn’t miss a whole lot. She wasn’t going to be an easy mark, but she was Xander’s best bet. The other ladies in the office—fiftyish Maria, who pursed her lips disapprovingly every time he entered the building, and Veronica, who had
really long nails in bright colors and was always on her cell phone with her boyfriend—would never let him near the computers.

“Hi,” he said, smiling as winningly as he could at Araceli and handing her the receipts from the Riverside delivery. She took the papers from him and gave him a half-smile back, ducking her head as if she had a secret.

Xander looked around the fake wood-paneled room. Maria was gone already—she only worked half days—and Veronica was, of course, chatting away to Leonel, who sounded like an asshole from Xander’s side of the conversation, but then nobody asked him. “I was wondering if maybe you could do me a favor.”

“Sure, sweetie. What’s up?”

“I need to do a little research on the internet. But the library’s only open while I’m at work, and I don’t know where the nearest internet café is.”

She laughed. “Probably San Diego.”

“Yeah. A little out of walking distance. So I was wondering—“

“You want to borrow a computer?”

He nodded. “Please?”

“This research—it’s something important?”

“Yeah. It really is. I promise, I’m not running any phishing scams or anything.” One of his cellmates had been convicted of just that. He’d conned hundreds of people into giving him their credit card numbers.

She smiled softly at him. “I’ll tell you what. I’m going to end up working late tonight anyway. The quarterlies are almost due. Come on by around 5:30 and I can hook you up.”

He grabbed her hand and kissed the back of it. “You’re a peach.”

She made a little shooing gesture at him. “Go. Fix things.”

At 5:35 Xander crept toward the office. He skulked around for a moment to make sure nobody else was around, but Araceli’s Toyota was the only car in the lot. He knocked softly on the door and a moment later she was opening it and waving him inside. She ushered him to a chair in front of a monitor. The wallpaper was all swirly flowers, very romantic and girly. It made him grin.

“You’re all logged in,” she said. “I’ve got about another hour worth of work. Is that going to be enough?”

“I hope so.”

“Then research away, sweetie.”

Xander wasted no time at all in opening up Internet Explorer.

By the time Araceli was locking the door behind them, Xander had several sheets of paper filled with scrawled notes. He thanked her again, and then he headed off to his trailer to think.
The next Saturday, Xander arrived better prepared. As soon as he had the muzzle removed, he pulled out another Sprite bottle full of cow blood. Spike slurped it down thankfully. But Xander wasn’t finished. “Spike,” he said carefully. “If, um, I let you bite me…you’d stop before you drank too much, right?”

Spike’s eyes grew very wide.

“Cause if you exsanguinate me—fancy word, isn’t that?—I’m not gonna be able to do you any good at all.” He was fidgeting nervously with the empty bottle, he realized. He tucked it away. “So—and I never thought these words would pass my lips—do you want to bite me, Spike?”

Spike closed his eyes very tightly. Then he opened them and nodded once.

“Okay, then.” Xander started to scoot closer, to find a way to get his neck near Spike’s mouth, but Spike stopped him with a shake of his head and a rattle of the manacles on his left hand.

“Oh. Yeah, okay, that’ll work.” Xander held his wrist near Spike’s face. Spike lifted one eyebrow at him, clearly giving him a chance to back out, but Xander only said, “Bon appétit.”

He watched Spike shift to gameface. He’d seen it countless times, with Spike and other vampires, and sometimes he’d been at the wrong end of those fangs and had been pretty sure they’d be sinking soon into his soft flesh. But this time, when he knew what was about to happen, he didn’t find Spike’s face frightening at all. It was beautiful in its own way, he realized, sort of like a lion.

He lifted his arm a little closer.

Spike moved his head a little until his cool breaths were raising goosepimples on Xander’s skin. And then he pressed his lips to Xander’s vulnerable wrist in a gesture of gratitude that made Xander’s eye suddenly swim with tears. He was still blinking them away when sharp pains stabbed into him.

It hurt. The thing was, though, it didn’t hurt very much, or for very long. And then those lips were against him again, this time not kissing but forming suction, and he could feel the small trickle of life being drawn out of him, into Spike’s mouth, down Spike’s pale, collared throat. Spike’s eyelids were closed but the lashes fluttered.

It didn’t feel like anything else Xander had ever experienced. It was slightly like the giddiness he got when he felt the first buzz of alcohol, a few drinks before he got truly drunk. It was also slightly like sex, really good sex, especially in the way it narrowed his focus to just a small spot of his body, and in the way his nerve endings seemed to tingle and thrum. It was a little like a fantastic fight, the kind where he just threw himself into it and lost all conscious sense of self, becoming just a weapon, an animal acting on instinct. But it wasn’t really very much like any of those things. It was sui generis, and it was really fucking nice.

Xander would have happily allowed Spike to sip every last platelet from him. It was the vampire who stopped feeding, and kissed the tiny wounds again, and rattled his chains to wake Xander from his trance.

“You dirty little….”

“Christ,” Xander said.

Spike looked slightly smug. He was also, Xander couldn’t help but notice, fully erect, his cock rubbing slightly against the bottom of the table thing, leaving a small damp spot there. Xander was
hard, too, hard the way he used to get when he was maybe eighteen and he felt like his nuts were going to goddamn just burst if he didn’t get a chance to jack off now. He scrambled to his feet and unfastened his jeans quickly, pausing just slightly to look to Spike for acquiescence. Spike rolled his eyes and nodded, mouthing what were no doubt Anglicized insults.

This time was not going to be slow and gradual like the last. Still, Xander had no desire to hurt Spike. Luckily, he’d arrived better prepared this time. With a small, triumphant flourish of his hand he produced a tube of lubricant from his jeans pocket. He’d had to buy it from that girl at AM/PM—Ava, her nametag read—and she’d wiggled her thin eyebrows at him and giggled as she rang it up. Oh, he was a neverending source of entertainment to the quick mart staff.

Spike didn’t look amused, though, just slightly relieved and a whole bunch impatient. So Xander wasted no time in applying a generous dollop to the crack of Spike’s ass, and then working it inside with a single finger, then two. He did take the time, though, to make sure he gave a nice little massage to Spike’s prostate—the joys of which Anya had taught him long ago—and Spike breathed shallowly and tried to impale himself more deeply.

A little more lube rubbed on his own cock, and then Xander was inside, fully seated in that snug and welcoming channel. As he began to swing his hips, he smoothed the palms of both hands over Spike’s buttocks and lower back, around his jutting hips, up his knobbly spine to his shoulders, and then to the sides, over the prominent ribs. Spike seemed to lean into these touches, and Xander realized that gentle caresses had probably been rare for Spike not only during his recent captivity, but throughout his many years as a vampire. Xander knew Spike’s relationship with Buffy hadn’t exactly been about cuddles and cutey-pie, and somehow Drusilla didn’t strike him as the mellow type.

Spike lifted his head and twisted it around to look at Xander—it must have been a pretty uncomfortable position—and his expression was surprisingly soft and amazed, like the way someone might look if they saw a unicorn. Then he let his head hang again, and Xander moved faster, harder, until his balls were high and tight and he lost all sense of rhythm. He cried out when he came and his own voice startled him.

He wasn’t exactly sure when Spike climaxed, but by the time Xander caught his breath and pulled out, Spike’s cock was softening and the bottom of the table was sticky. “Everything okay?” Xander asked. It was disconcerting to have a partner who couldn’t speak, could barely move. But Spike nodded.

They still had twenty minutes. Xander took out the notepad and pencil, and placed the pencil in Spike’s hand. Spike immediately wrote a single word: WHY?

“Why what?”

“Y R U HERE? Y R U BEING NICE 2 ME? Y DO U CARE??”

As Spike looked at him questioningly, Xander shook his head. “Being nice to you? Spike, look what I’m doing to you!” He waved his arms vaguely around to encompass the whole chained down and forced to be fucked scenario.

But Spike wrote, “ITS OK. ONLY GOOD I HAVE.” He turned his head away, then, unable to meet Xander’s gaze.

“Shit. Look, once we were…I don’t know…comrades at arms, I guess. And even though you were a murdering monster for a long time, and an irritating bastard after that, you don’t deserve this. Nobody does. Besides, in all the world, you’re the only one who knows me. Isn’t that pathetic?”
Spike looked at him and nodded. Yeah, that was pathetic, his face clearly said. But there was also something there that might have been compassion, or at least empathy. Spike sighed.

Xander cocked his head a moment. “Spike? Can I do something? It was…. When I was little my Mom used to do this when I was sick or Dad had been on the warpath—this was before Mom started to drink, too. It always made me feel better.”

Spike shrugged like he didn’t care one way or the other, and Xander decided that was good enough. He stood to Spike’s side and draped himself over the vampire’s back, then let his arm hang over that damned collar. It looked tight, he noticed. Even thin as Spike was, the collar dug into him and the skin around it was red and irritated-looking. There was no visible lock on the thing and Xander had no clue how to remove it. So instead he just carded his fingers through Spike’s long hair, gently easing some of the mats and tangles free, mostly just rubbing along the scalp. Spike shut his eyes and then so did Xander, and he could feel Spike’s breaths beneath him as they came slower, easier, more relaxed.

It was only a brief respite for them both, but prison had taught Xander that even the smallest moments of peace should be cherished like treasure.

Chapter 7
The Prisons We Make

Chapter Summary

It's over a decade since Sunnydale collapsed, and Xander is doing time. A fellow prisoner mentions a vampire he once saw displayed at a tourist trap. Freedom doesn't come easy.

Entry tags: spike/xander, the prisons we make

The Prisons We Make, 7/18
Title: The Prisons We Make
Chapter: 7 of 18
Pairing: Spike/Xander
Rating: NC-17
Disclaimer: I'm not Joss
Warnings: angst, slash, violence, slavery, dub-con
Summary: It's over a decade since Sunnydale collapsed, and Xander is doing time. A fellow prisoner mentions a vampire he once saw displayed at a tourist trap. Freedom doesn't come easy.
AN: This fic is complete and I'll post a chapter a day. Enormous thanks to beta hello_spikey and her very helpful comments! And also enormous thanks to sentine, who has provided three amazing banners! I couldn't possibly pick just one, so I'll be rotating them. As always, your comments are what keep my muse alive!

Previous chapters here

For various reasons I'll be posting two chapters today. Chapter 8 will go up this afternoon, California time.
“Raul? Can I ask a big favor?”

Xander’s boss looked up from the catalog of tractor parts he’d been reading. “What? Not enough channels on your satellite tv?” he smiled.

Xander smiled back. “No, there’s plenty. Besides, it seems like the more channels you have, the less there is worth watching.”

“True! So what can I do for you?”

“I have to talk to these people in LA. Lawyer types.” He made a face.
“You got legal trouble?”

“No, other than that little parole matter. This is about sort of an old friend. He’s in deep shit.”

Raul stroked at his mustache. “I figure it’s always bad news when lawyers get involved.”

“Yeah. But I do need to talk to them. I was wondering if it would be okay for me to go by there Wednesday, after I make the LA delivery. I can work all day Sunday to make up for it.”

Raul waved his hand. “Nah. You already worked New Years, and I still owe you that half day you never took. Go ahead.”

“You don’t mind me using the company truck?”

“Only way you’re gonna get to LA, ain’t it?”

“Pretty much.”

“Then go ahead. Just bring ‘er back in one piece, yeah?”

“Thanks, man.”

Raul smoothed his mustache again. “Your friend—I figure he’s pretty lucky to have a friend like you.”

***

The first circle of hell, Xander decided, was exactly like driving a panel truck on the 10 at one in the afternoon on a rainy day. He’d rather have fought demons any day.

His delivery had gone fine, a load of citrus and dates dropped off at a sprawling produce market in Monterey Park. There was a little café next door to it, a vegetarian place. It wouldn’t have been his first choice, but he’d been surviving mostly off taco trucks and AM/PM, so he guessed a few green things wouldn’t be amiss. As it happened, though, the food was amazingly good, and he happily scarfed squash soup and a veggie burger and sweet potato fries. He passed on the grass drink—really, that was a step much too far—but he had some frothy fruit thing that was really tasty, and then a big chunk of carrot cake for desert. So he was full at least when he headed downtown.

But of course traffic was crawling and people were driving especially like assholes around him because nobody wants to be behind a truck, and the whole thing was made worse by the fact that he was dreading the meeting to come.

But finally he exited the freeway and then, not too much later, he pulled in front of a tall, gleaming building. “Wolfram & Hart” it said in enormous letters at the top, and he wondered if they really occupied the entire fucking building. If so, that was a whole lot of lawyers.

He didn’t have an appointment with anyone and didn’t even know the name of the right guy to see. But his research online had at least told him what the appropriate division would be, so he thought he’d just sort of show up there and see what happened.

There was a loading dock in the back of the building. The truck at least gave him an advantage there, as the security guard opened the gate and waved him forward. Xander parked the truck near
the dock and hopped out. He slid open the back door and pulled out the delivery he’d prepared, what appeared to be a crate full of packaged dates. In actuality, only the top couple of layers contained dates; the rest was just empty boxes. It looked impressive enough, though, he hoped.

There was a pair of security guys at the loading door. “Delivery for Sales & Acquisitions,” he announced.

One of the guards peered at him. “ID, please.”

So Xander put down the crate and pulled out his wallet. Just a few days earlier, Raul had presented him with what appeared to be a genuine California commercial Class B license for Alex Hernandez. It had Xander’s picture on it. Xander had no idea where his boss got the thing and he didn’t ask. Now, the guard squinted at Xander and at the license before handing it back to him. “Sales & Acquisitions is on seven. Check in at main reception first.”

Xander nodded and picked up the crate again.

The door led into a corridor, and signs informed him that the basement was to the left and reception was to the right. He went to the right. He emerged in an inconspicuous little hallway that led into a grand, multistory lobby. There was a noisy fountain and modern, uncomfortable furniture and ugly things that he thought were meant to be art. People were zooming every which way, most carrying briefcases or expanding file folders and talking into cell phones as they went. Some were not quite people at all, but demons, a detail that didn’t especially surprise him after the bit of research he’d done.

In the center of the lobby, almost close enough to the fountain to get splashed, a thin, balding man was chained to a large wooden cross. He was naked except for the silk tie around his neck and the glasses on his face, and he was sobbing silently. He had staplers hanging from each skinny flank, clearly affixed to him by the staples, and one of those enormous paper easels hanging from a thick string tied around his balls. “Employee of the Month” was scrawled on the easel in heavy black ink. Xander shuddered and approached the desk, where a stunning young woman looked haughtily at him. “Where to?” she demanded.

“Sales & Acquisitions,” he answered.

She clicked away at her computer. “Whom, specifically?”

He decided it might help to play up the dumb. “It don’t say,” he said, and showed her the false delivery papers he’d convinced Araceli to make for him.

She sighed as if he were the most inconvenient person on the planet. “Seven,” she said, and pointed at the elevators.

He rode up with a pair of women in suits who ignored him. They were so busy talking about some case involving a land deal that he wasn’t sure they were even aware he was there. They got off on six, and then he was on seven.

He’d been hoping that he’d find a directory when he got there, or maybe just one office that looked more impressive than the others. Instead there was another reception desk, this one much smaller. The woman behind it was perhaps fifty. She wore an expensive-looking suit and not a strand of her dark hair was out of place. She took in his delivery outfit—jeans and a green polo embroidered with the Conway’s Oasis logo—and his overgrown hair and eye patch. “Yes?” she said with the air of a monarch who deigned to speak to a commoner.
“Got a delivery,” he said, hoisting the crate a little higher.

“You may leave it there.” She pointed at a spot on the floor next to her desk.

“Sorry. Boss told me to deliver it personally.”

She narrowed her eyes. Clearly she was not used to people questioning her authority. “I shall make certain it gets to the recipient,” she informed him.

He tried to make himself look as stupid and stubborn as possible; not a difficult feat, actually. “Boss says.”

“I don’t care what your boss said, young man. Leave the delivery here and I shall take care of it.”

“Look, lady. I need this job. My boss is a real stickler and I—“

“I’ll take it,” said a voice from behind him.

Xander turned around. The carpeting was thick and he hadn’t heard the man approaching. The man was maybe a couple years older than him and a couple inches shorter. He was wearing a suit that Xander guessed cost more than any car Xander had ever owned, and it fit his muscular frame perfectly. He had startling blue eyes. “Why don’t you come with me?” the man smiled at him. “If you leave it on my desk, will that suit your boss?”

Xander pretended to think about it for a moment. “Um, yeah. I guess so.”

“C’mon, then.”

Xander followed him down the hall to a door with a sign that said “Lindsey McDonald.” The man—McDonald, apparently—opened it and ushered him on in. Xander took a moment to gape at the fancy surroundings. He’d never seen his public defender’s office back in Indiana—all their meetings had been at the jail—but he was pretty sure it was just a cubicle under fluorescent lights somewhere. His lawyer’s suits looked like he’d got them on clearance at Sears.

“Nice digs,” Xander said.

McDonald shrugged. “It’ll do. You can put the thing down on that table.”

Xander placed the crate on a low table. It was made of a red-colored wood he couldn’t identify, probably something exotic and pricey.

“So you need me to sign something?” McDonald had moved behind his desk.

Xander took a deep breath. “Actually, I’m not here to deliver.”

The other man’s eyebrows shot up. “Oh?” His hand hovered near what was probably a security button, but his posture remained relaxed.

“I came to talk to you about a vampire. I understand your firm owns him.”

“Our firm owns a lot of vamps. There’s quite a market for them, among certain types.” His smile was almost a leer.

“This one’s named Spike.”

The grin disappeared from the lawyer’s face. “What about him?” he said, his voice low and
dangerous.

But Xander had faced down way scarier things than this guy. He stalked over to the desk and let
the man have a good, long look at his face, at his missing eye, at the—hollowness, he guessed—that
he knew was in the remaining eye. Back in prison, Brandt had told him that when Xander got
serious like this, he looked like a killer, like a guy who would waste whoever was in his way and
not think twice about it. Sometimes Xander had felt like he was a heartbeat or two from becoming
that guy.

“You have no right to do this to him. Let him go,” Xander said.

“What the fuck do you care what happens to a goddamn vampire?”

“We’re old friends.”

Something odd flickered for a second in the man’s pretty eyes. “Vampires don’t have friends,” he
said.

“Not usually, no. But he does. Let him go.”

McDonald snorted out a laugh. “Or what? Do you have any idea who you’re dealing with, boy?”

Xander leaned slightly over the desk. “Do you?” Okay, so maybe he wasn’t the world’s best
bluffer, but there was a hint of uncertainty on McDonald’s face now, and something else Xander
couldn’t identify.

McDonald abruptly turned away. He marched to the window and stood there, looking out at the
ugly building across the street. “Do you know how the firm got him?” he asked.

“Doesn’t matter.”

McDonald ignored him. “He was working with another vamp, a bastard named Angel.”

“Yeah. I knew Deadboy.”

McDonald turned and looked at him in surprise. “Who the hell are you?”

“You were telling me a story.”

“So Angel was made CEO of the LA branch of the firm. But he betrayed the firm, betrayed—“ He
paused and swallowed. “He betrayed a lot of people. And there was a big-ass battle and Angel got
dusted, all his friends were killed. All except Spike. Spike got torn to pieces but he wasn’t dust.
The firm scraped him off the pavement and patched him up. And then they offered him the same
deal they’d once given Angel. Just like that—poof!—all the power and money he could ever want.
The chance to become human someday, maybe.”

“Why would they do that? Why not just dust him, too?”

“Because the firm had reasons to want to keep the last remaining vamp with a soul around. There
was a prophecy.” By the look on his face, McDonald wasn’t too fond of prophecies.

“And?”

“The little shit refused.”

Xander felt a sudden inexplicable pride in Spike. Even before the soul, and despite his faults, Spike
had been a vamp of principle. He’d stuck with his crazy girlfriend for over a century, he’d kept his side of the bargain when he and Buffy had defeated Angelus, he’d watched over Dawn that summer when Buffy was dead. Even after he’d tried to rape Buffy that time, he’d gone and fought for his soul, apparently so he wouldn’t hurt her again. And later, it seemed, he’d turned down a deal few humans would have been able to say no to.

“Okay, so he told you to take a hike. And yet you still didn’t dust him.”

McDonald spread his hands. “The firm was still interested in him. They tried…persuading him, but no go. They couldn’t very well just let him go, so they were gonna let him rot down in the basement.” He smiled, not very pleasantly. “Holding cells down there.”

McDonald left the window and paced over to the table. He picked up a package of dates and put it down again. “They kept him down there a few months, I guess. I wasn’t…wasn’t exactly around, just then. And then someone decided they could make a few bucks off him, maybe pay him back a little for trying to bring down the firm. So they rented him out.”

Xander’s jaw felt tight. “Cabrónes.” He’d been hanging out with the farm crew lately.

“Pretty much. You know, once a year they send someone out to that shithole and ask him if he’s changed his mind. Guess he hasn’t.”

Xander was furious, but also on the trembling edge of despair. This wasn’t some sort of simple abuse-the-helpless-demon thing. The firm’s treatment of Spike had a purpose, and they weren’t at all likely to just let him go.

But McDonald was looking at him quizzically. “You really do care about him, don’t you?”

“Yeah,” Xander growled. And it was true.

Again, something unidentifiable flickered across the lawyer’s handsome face. “Who are you?” he asked.

“Xander Harris.” He didn’t expect the name to mean anything to the man, and by all appearances it didn’t. “Look, I don’t care about fucking prophecies or twisted little revenge schemes or any of that. I just want Spike free, and I promise you trouble until he is.”

McDonald cocked an eyebrow. “I could just call security and you’d be out of here in a flash. Hell, you’d be just gone, man.”

“I wouldn’t recommend it.” Okay, more with the bluffing. But somewhere deep inside Xander there was a part of him that refused to believe he was beaten, refused to accept that nothing could be done for Spike.

McDonald turned away again and walked to the window. Even though all Xander could see was the man’s back, he had the sense that the lawyer’s head was a very busy place at the moment. At least the guy wasn’t bringing the guards. Yet. Xander waited.

When McDonald spun around to face Xander again, he was rubbing at his chin a little, biting nervously at the pad of his thumb. It was a strange response, not at all what Xander had expected. What did this lawyer have to be nervous about?

“I’ll tell you what,” McDonald said. “I need to…think a few things out. I might be able to help you, but I need some time. Give me a month. If I can work it out, I’ll come talk to you.”
Xander mulled this over a while. It could be nothing. Just a ploy to get rid of him, maybe, or, even more likely, a trick of some kind. He sure as hell didn’t trust the man standing before him. On the other hand, if McDonald wanted to fuck with him, he was going to do it anyway, and it least this gave him a few crumbs of hope.

“One month,” he finally answered.

“Don’t try and take him away. That collar won’t come off without the right spell, and as long as he wears it, we can find him anywhere in the world. We can activate, it too. Have you seen what it does?”

Xander nodded once. He didn’t trust himself to speak.

“Gimme your number,” McDonald said.

“I don’t have a phone.”

“Then where can I find you?”

Xander pointed at the emblem on his shirt. “Conway’s Oasis. Conveniently located in Salton City.”
Chapter Summary

It's over a decade since Sunnydale collapsed, and Xander is doing time. A fellow prisoner mentions a vampire he once saw displayed at a tourist trap. Freedom doesn't come easy.

Entry tags: spike/xander, the prisons we make

*The Prisons We Make, 8/18*

**Title:** The Prisons We Make  
**Chapter:** 8 of 18  
**Pairing:** Spike/Xander  
**Rating:** NC-17  
**Disclaimer:** I'm not Joss  
**Warnings:** angst, slash, violence, slavery, dub-con  
**Summary:** It's over a decade since Sunnydale collapsed, and Xander is doing time. A fellow prisoner mentions a vampire he once saw displayed at a tourist trap. Freedom doesn't come easy.  
**AN:** This fic is complete and I'll post a chapter a day. Enormous thanks to beta hello_spikey and her very helpful comments! And also enormous thanks to sentine, who has provided three amazing banners! I couldn't possibly pick just one, so I'll be rotating them. As always, your comments are what keep my muse alive!

Previous chapters here
Eight

“What are you doing with all the blood?”

“Making sausages.”

“In that teeny trailer? You’ve barely got room to make toast.”

Xander silently cursed the lack of privacy that was small-town living. “I’m...worshiping Satan?” he tried.
Mrs. Villanueva flapped her hand at him. It was a nicely manicured hand, and the gold of her bracelets nicely matched the gold of her blonde highlights and the gold of the Lexus she had parked outside. The Carniceria Villanueva was actually an outpost of a small chain. The other outlets were in considerably more prosperous locations like Palm Springs and Palm Desert, but, as Mrs. Villanueva had informed him the first time they’d met, she’d seen a profit potential in Salton City. There was no competition for miles and, while most of the locals didn’t have much money, they still had to eat. Besides, there were always off-roadsers driving by on their way to Ocotillo Wells, and they liked to have some nice steaks to barbecue after a day spent zooming around the desert, and there were the people passing by in their enormous, expensive RVs, who were always happy to find a source for quality meats. So the Villanuevas had opened this little shop. It was staffed mostly by a guy named Orlando, a butcher whom the Villaneuvas had carefully selected, but on Saturdays Mrs. Villanueva came in to do the books. And, apparently, to make sure she was up on the town’s latest gossip.

“You’re giving the blood to that vampire, aren’t you?” she said.

Xander opened his mouth to deny it, then closed it. His shoulders slumped. “How’d you know?”

“Well, first off, what else would you be doing with 20 ounces of cow’s blood? And second, right after you leave here you go over to Walker’s.” She pointed out the store’s front window. “I see you.”

“Oh.” If she knew, others might. How much trouble had he stupidly caused for Spike?

“That vampire would be very handsome if he could feed properly,” she said.

“Um…yeah.”

“And that man—Reece—he has some nasty side business going on with those demons he owns. He’d never keep that place afloat otherwise.” She shook her head. “I’m all in favor of turning a tidy profit, but that place, it’s not right.”

Xander relaxed a little. Maybe she hadn’t tattled after all. “I agree,” he said quietly. “Not even demons should be treated like that. Some of them are even…pretty nice people.”

She gave him a warm smile and pushed the bottle of blood toward him. “Go feed your vampire. But if it’s all right with you, I’m going to have my daughter, Emma, come by your trailer tomorrow. You’ll like her. She’s a beautiful girl.”

Xander tried to wrap his head around the turn the conversation had just taken. “I’m sure she is, Mrs. Villanueva, if she takes after her mother. But you know I’m… I’m gay.” It was easier to say that than to explain he was bisexual but currently having a compulsory sexual relationship with a vampire.

She laughed. “Oh, I know, dear. Emma works at Eisenhower Memorial in Palm Desert. I bet she could find a few bags of human blood that nobody would miss. That would be better for your vampire than this, wouldn’t it?”

He blinked at her. “Uh, yeah. It would.” Such a strange, matter-of-fact woman.

“Good,” she said, as if something had been settled. “Now, I’ve got some really nice tri-tip today. Why don’t you stop by after Walker’s and buy yourself some? You could do with a decent meal.”

Xander picked up the plastic bottle. “Sounds good,” he said, still bemused. “I’ll see you later.
“Oh, Spike.”

Spike was trussed up the same as always. But this time the pale skin of his back and buttocks and thighs was marred by purple and black bruises and criss-crossed with angry red welts. His face was a mess, too, with one eye swollen nearly shut and his nose mashed so that he was struggling to breathe with the muzzle on. Xander quickly removed the muzzle and handed Spike a pencil. The vampire looked so tired, he thought. Defeated.

And then it occurred to Xander that Spike’s wounds might be his fault, some kind of retribution for his visit to Wolfram & Hart a few days earlier. “What happened?”

“REGULAR. USUALLY VISITS TUE. LATE THIS WEEK.”

“Jesus, Spike.”

“ILL MEND.”

Xander reached up and stroked Spike’s face. Spike moved his head a little so his cheek was cupped in Xander’s palm. He closed his eyes and breathed deeply.

“I brought you some blood,” Xander said after a few moments. “That’ll help you heal, won’t it?”

Spike nodded wearily and drank the stuff down.

“Can I give you some of mine again?”

Spike shook his head sharply. “TOO SOON.”

Xander would have to trust Spike on that, although he figured a vamp would know more than him about blood loss.

“Spike, I heard about what you did.” Spike frowned, puzzled. “How you tried to help bring down those lawyers, and then how you refused to work for them.”

Spike’s eyes glittered and his jaw worked.

“That’s stupid, Spike. Look where it’s got you. It’s also the bravest goddamn thing I ever heard of.”

A fat tear fell from one of Spike’s eyes and then, horrifically, he was sobbing, not a sound escaping from his throat except gasps of air, his entire thin body wrenching with the power of it. Xander did what he could, given Spike’s position and the damage to his back: He scooted as close as he could and leaned his cheek against Spike’s upside down one and stroked Spike’s head with his fingertips. Maybe it helped, because after a few minutes the terrible crying slowed and then stopped. Smiling slightly, Xander pulled a Kleenex from a pocket—“I was never a Boy Scout but I do come prepared.”—and wiped the tears and snot from Spike’s face.

“It’ll be okay, I promise. It’ll all be okay.” He hoped it wasn’t an empty promise.

When Spike was completely calm, Xander stood, and then, working from the shoulders down, he
systematically kissed each and every one of Spike’s wounds. When he got to the curves of Spike’s ass, where the marks were particularly heavy, some so deep they’d obviously drawn blood, Xander was especially gentle, and he also began to lick Spike’s cleft and caress his hardening cock.

Instead of fucking Spike right away, though, Xander crawled under the table, bent his neck at an extremely awkward angle, and took Spike’s cock into his mouth. Spike went very still for a moment, then thrust his hips forward the inch or two that he could.

Xander liked Spike’s flavor, and the way he could feel the firm flesh warming inside him. He wasn’t talented enough to take the entire length, but he could take several inches of it, anyway, and work the remainder with his fist. Sometimes he pulled off a little and used his tongue to play around a little with the foreskin or to poke into the slit. He wished again that Spike could speak and move more freely, so that Xander would have a better idea of what the vampire liked best, but in any case Spike seemed to be enjoying. Soon enough his breathing hitched and his cock pulsed and the slightly bitter taste of semen coated Xander’s tongue and the inside of his mouth.

Xander would have been content to stop then, even though his own cock was complaining urgently. But of course they had to put on a show for Reece, so Xander stood again and lubed them both and pushed himself inside. It didn’t take him long to come, and when he did, he saw that Spike was hard again. “Do you want me to do something about that?” he asked.

Spike shook his head.

They still had ten minutes together, and Xander spent it rubbing Spike’s neck above the collar and untangling his hair.

***

Mrs. Villanueva was right—Emma was a beautiful girl. She had thick auburn hair and a heart-shaped face. She was tiny, with a crooked little smile and sharp intelligence in her eyes. She was twenty and, she informed Xander with her mother’s straightforwardness, was pre-med at UC Riverside. She was wearing scrub pants and a Hello Kitty t-shirt, and she arrived bearing several plastic bags of blood. “They’re expired and I was supposed to throw them away. That’s okay, isn’t it?”

Xander shoved them into his tiny fridge. “Yeah, they’re great. Thanks.”

Meanwhile, she’d plopped herself down on one of his two chairs. “So how does a guy get to be pals with a vampire anyway?”

“It’s a really long story. I grew up in Sunnydale.”

“The sinkhole town?” She bounced a little with excitement.

“Well, it wasn’t a sinkhole then, but yeah. There was a lot of strange stuff there.”

She cocked her head a little. “Like vampires.”

“Plenty o’ vamps.” He sat down, too. He’d already offered her a Coke, but she’d informed him that she didn’t consume refined sugar or, even worse, high fructose corn syrup, because corn syrup was really all part of some sort of conspiracy, the details of which flew right over his head. He didn’t
have anything else to offer but Cheetos, but they were probably part of the conspiracy, too, so he didn’t mention them.

“It must have been so interesting! I grew up in Palm Desert. The scariest thing there is all the old people and the way they drive.”

“Interesting isn’t always such a great thing.” He was only fourteen years her senior, but he felt suddenly ancient, like he might burst out any minute into stories about walking to school through three feet of snow, barefoot and uphill both ways.

She just smiled. “Mom says you’re gay.”

Mrs. Villanueva was a veritable fount of information. “Yeah,” he said.

“She thinks I’m going through an experimental phase, because I used to have this boyfriend but we broke up, and lately I’ve been dating this girl from school and her name is Kat and she’s really cool. We’re gonna start a band as soon as we can find a drummer, ’cause neither of us knows how to play and my Dad would flip if I tried to set up a drumset in the garage.”

Xander wondered if he was ever that young and enthusiastic. “Well, good luck with that,” he said mildly.

“Would you tell me about how you met this vampire and were you a couple—not that I’m implying you’re a couple now or anything but you’re bringing him blood and I bet you’re sticking around this dump because of him. Ohmigod! You’re going to try and save him, aren’t you?”

“Uh….”

She patted his hand. “That’s okay, Xan, I understand.” When was the last time someone had called him that? “A guy’s gotta keep his secrets. But will you tell me how you met? Please?”

He didn’t want to. He never spoke to anyone about Sunnydale, not ever. But she was making a face that somehow managed to mix puppy-dog pleading and firm resolution, and it was a familiar expression, and he knew he didn’t stand a chance.

So he told her, everything from the day Buffy showed up. An hour or so into his story she ran them over to the AM/PM in her Rabbit and they bought fruit juices—she checked the labels first—and whole wheat crackers and cheese, which was the closest thing to healthy the store had. But of course he had dates and oranges, too, so they ate those as well.

When he was done it was late and he was exhausted. His throat was sore—he’d never talked so much at once in his life. But he felt better, somehow, like a burden had been lifted.

Emma had been pretty silent throughout, apart from an occasional comment here and there—“Ooh! Wish I could learn to do magic!”—and when he ended she took his rough hands in her small, smooth ones. “It’s gonna work out,” she assured him. “I can feel it.”

“Thanks, Emma.”

She stood and stretched, then scribbled something on the receipt that lay on his counter. “That’s my number. If there’s any way I can help, you let me know, okay? Or if you run out of blood.” Then she gave him a hug and left.

The trailer was very quiet and still with her gone. But Xander was smiling, because tonight he felt like he’d made an old friend.
The next weeks crawled by. Xander worked and worried and found himself jumping at the slightest provocation. He wasn’t drinking, though, and that was good, he supposed. Sometimes Emma came by and sometimes Xander stopped by the liquor store, where Sam would tell him long stories about the history of the area. He rarely talked about himself, though, and Xander wondered what his own story was, what he’d done time for and how long he’d been out.

One Sunday afternoon, Sam started pontificating about power. “Everything has a source of power, right, man? The thing that makes it go. You destroy that power and you destroy the thing. Long time ago, I had this bike. Oh, she was a sweet ride! An Indian, a ’47 Chief, and she was a dream. She’d purr like a kitten and take corners like a sonofabitch, and she could outrun nearly anything on two wheels or four. Had her for years, and shit’d wear out or break, but I’d fix it up and she’d be better’n new. So one time I got myself in a little trouble and I was runnin’ from the fuzz in Virginia. Got away that time, too, but I overheated the engine and ended up with a cracked cylinder. Tried to repair it, but no matter what I did, she wouldn’t run. Finally replaced the whole damn engine—found another just like the original—and the bike’d run all right, but it was never the same. It was just transportation, nothin’ special. That engine was the source of her power, you see.”

Xander nodded and wondered how much Sam had used psychedelics.

Sam took a gulp of tea. “Now, this town—hell, the whole fuckin’ state—the source of power is water. You ain’t got enough good water, the place just shrivels up and dies. If you was somewhere else, Nebraska, say, the power’d be in somethin’ different, like the land, maybe, or the wind. I figure the Middle East, the power there’s in oil, right? All those sheikhs and tall buildings’d be just driftin’ sand without.

“Livin’ things have power sources, too. With humans, it’s—“

“Blood,” Xander interrupted. He remembered something Spike had said to him years ago, shortly before Buffy died to save Dawn. “’Blood is life. It’s what keeps you going, makes you other than dead.’”

Sam grinned. “Got it in one, man. Blood in our bodies, blood ties, spillin’ the blood of our enemies. People are all about blood.” He shrugged. “It’s somethin’ different for every creature, I guess, for every thing and every place. But the rule’s always the same: You destroy the source of power and you destroy the thing.”

“I’ll keep that in mind,” Xander said, lifting his bag of beer.

“You do that, man,” replied Sam, and bent back over his book.

Xander was especially nervous on days he had to make deliveries. Irrational as it was, he felt that Spike was safer when Xander was just down the road.

If Reece knew about Xander’s visit to Wolfram & Hart, he didn’t let on. He’d just lead Xander into that small room, grinning, and then leave. At least Spike hadn’t been marked up again. Xander knew that was willful blindness on his part, that the vampire was still being beaten each week, but was able to heal before Xander saw him. But he had to be in denial about something, and anyway,
Spike refused to discuss it.

Spike was very pleased with the human blood. Xander could smuggle in several packets at once, and so Spike, while still too thin, at least was no longer skeletal. Reece didn’t comment on that, either. Maybe he didn’t care, as long as he wasn’t the one paying for it.

Xander did the best he could in the short time they had together to help Spike feel good. Not just in a sexual way, although on one visit he made Spike come three times, so that by the time he left the vampire was half-asleep and as melty as warm taffy. But Xander also massaged sore muscles, or covered Spike’s body with his so Spike could drink in some of his heat. He told stupid little stories about things that had happened to him after Sunnydale—the time he was briefly re-possessed by that old hyena spirit, the time he picked up a cute guy in a bar and only discovered in flagrante that the guy was a Galepis demon, the time he got buried in zombies. Spike would grin and laugh silently, and Xander hoped that at least for a few minutes the horror of his situation would recede a little.

On a Sunday afternoon exactly three days short of the one month mark, there was a knock on the trailer door. Xander put down the Neil Gaiman novel he’d been reading and felt his heart speed up like he’d been running a marathon. He heaved himself to his feet, walked the few feet to the door, and opened it.

It was Lindsey McDonald. He wasn’t wearing a suit this time, but jeans and a slightly ratty UC Hastings tee. He had on cowboy boots.

“Nice digs,” he said, smirking slightly, when Xander let him in.

Xander didn’t care. He’d survived his parents’ basement, homelessness, and prison. This trailer was a mansion in comparison, constant cricket and lizard visitors and all. “Yes, but I have an exciting career in produce delivery,” he responded, and sat.

McDonald sat in the other chair, staring at him.

“I did some research on you,” McDonald announced. “You have an interesting past, Xander Harris.”

“You looked up the wrong Xander Harris. Me, I’ve spent my life behind a white picket fence, coaching Little League and paying taxes.”

“You’ve got a warrant out in Indiana. Forgot to check in with your parole officer.”

It was clear that McDonald had seen through Xander’s empty threats. On the other hand, nobody had come yet to drag him away in a squad car, and that was a good sign. He shrugged. “I doubt I’m the criminal justice system’s top priority.”

“Hmm,” was the noncommittal response. “Xander, do you know anything about my history with Angel and Spike?”

So they were on a first-name basis. “No, Lindsey, I don’t.”

“Angel and I, we weren’t on the best terms.”

Xander snorted. “Yeah, we’ll you’re an evil lawyer and he was a bastard. You should have been good pals.”

Lindsey sucked on his lip for a moment and looked like he really wished he had a drink in his
hand. Xander didn’t offer him one. Then the lawyer sighed loudly. “Look. I grew up dirt poor. Poorer than this,” he waved his hand around to indicate the trailer. “Going to school with no shoes poor. Ketchup soup for dinner poor. And I worked my ass off to get to college—first one in my family; my Daddy called me a stuck-up pansy and stopped talking to me—and then to law school. Wolfram & Hart came along and offered me a really sweet deal. All I had to do was promise them my soul.” He laughed bitterly. “I was a law student. What did I need with a soul? Of course I said yes.”

Xander narrowed his eye. “Of course.”

“I was doing pretty well. Didn’t think too deeply about what I was doing most of the time, just did it. And I had sort of a…crisis of conscience.”

Xander could have made a crack about being surprised that a lawyer even had a conscience, but it seemed redundant.

Lindsey continued. “I went away for while. When I came back, there was that son of a bitch Angel, sitting behind that big desk. As if he’d earned it! I tried to play him and Spike off against each other. Didn’t give a shit about Spike, it just seemed like a good way to get to Angel. Almost worked, too.”

Xander really didn’t like this prick. “So Spike was just….”

“A convenient tool.” Lindsey ran his hand through his hair. “Wolfram & Hart still owned me, of course. They were pissed I’d left, and they put me somewhere really unpleasant.”

“Louisville?” Xander didn’t like that city at all.

Lindsey rolled his eyes. “Hell. They put me in hell. Angel came and got me when he decided he needed me, and I thought maybe he really could beat the firm. I helped him. And then, when I thought we were on the same side, the fucker had me taken out and shot like…like a crippled horse.”

“Yeah? He killed my teacher and stalked my friend before luring her to bed and then trying to end the world. I told you already, I’m not the president of the Angel Fan Club. What does that have to do with Spike?”

“He got caught in the crossfire, that’s all.” Lindsey messed up his hair some more. “So here’s the thing. Angel had me killed, but it didn’t stick because the firm still owns me, right? They dragged me back and put me to work. I guess I’m lucky they didn’t shove me in hell again, but for now they’ve decided they can use me.”

“This is great, Lindsey. I’m really enjoying hearing your life story. So what?”

“So I want out. I want out of the firm, out of California, just plain out. But I’m as trapped as Spike.”

Xander didn’t feel sorry for him. “Nobody’s raping and beating you, Lindsey. And your cage looks a hell of a lot comfier than his.”

“Still a cage.”

“I’ll say it again. So what?”

“I know how to get that collar off Spike. And I’m willing to do it if you do something for me.”
There went Xander’s heart, racing again. “What?”

Lindsey’s eyes were intense. “Help me get free, Xander.”

Chapter 9
The Prisons We Make

Chapter Summary

It's over a decade since Sunnydale collapsed, and Xander is doing time. A fellow prisoner mentions a vampire he once saw displayed at a tourist trap. Freedom doesn't come easy.

Entry tags:  spike/xander, the prisons we make

The Prisons We Make, 9/18
Title: The Prisons We Make
Chapter: 9 of 18
Pairing: Spike/Xander
Rating: NC-17
Disclaimer: I'm not Joss
Warnings: angst, slash, violence, slavery, dub-con
Summary:  It's over a decade since Sunnydale collapsed, and Xander is doing time. A fellow prisoner mentions a vampire he once saw displayed at a tourist trap. Freedom doesn't come easy.
AN:  This fic is complete and I'll post a chapter a day. Enormous thanks to beta hello_spikey and her very helpful comments! And also enormous thanks to sentine, who has provided three amazing banners! I couldn't possibly pick just one, so I'll be rotating them. As always, your comments are what keep my muse alive!

Previous chapters here

I'll post Chapter 10 later today. :-)
Nine

Xander decided that this was the point where some alcohol would be good. He had a bottle of tequila in the cupboard and he poured generous shots for them both. He spilled some salt into a couple of dishes. Then he said, “Hang on,” and ducked outside the trailer. He yanked a couple of limes off the tree that grew a few feet away—the primary reason he’d bought tequila in the first place, because it would be a shame for those limes to go to waste—and came back inside. He sat back down, then, and reached over for a knife to slice the fruit.

Without a word, they wetted their fingers, dipped them in the salt, licked the salt off, gulped the booze, and then bit into the green slices. The sour fire was a balm to his throat. Xander refilled
their glasses right away.

“Okay,” Xander said, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. “Tell me why I’d want to help you.”

“Because if you do, I’ll free Spike. Besides, like I said, I did my research. You’re one of the good guys. You do good guy stuff.”

“I did good guy stuff. I’ve hung up my white hat.”

“So why are you trying to liberate Spike?”

“Because…shit.” Xander quickly downed another shot and Lindsey followed. “Because nobody else is going to.”

“That hat’s still on, Xander.”

Xander shook his head but didn’t pursue that argument any farther. “If you free him, won’t your bosses be pissed?”

“Yeah. But I can make sure they won’t know for a while. And when they do figure it out, I’ll be long gone. Once I’m free of them, I know how to stay out of their radar.”

“That didn’t work so well for you last time.”

Lindsey made a wry face. “Because I was stupid enough to come back. Won’t make that mistake twice. Now, Spike, he’s going to have to stay out of their clutches, but that’s pretty much a given anyway. So will you. Right now they don’t know you from Adam, but this business is gonna put you on their screen for sure.”

Xander found himself not caring. He’d faced too many apocalypses, too many near-death experiences. After a while, the fear just went away. Especially when he didn’t have all that much to live for in the first place. And then, as his third glass of tequila filled his stomach, he had an epiphany. That’s why he’d come looking to save Spike. It was going to be his last hurrah, his last attempt at heroism. Afterward, he wasn’t just going to hang up the hat, but the boots as well. Goodnight, Irene. Maybe he’d have drunk himself to death in the family tradition, maybe he would have stepped in front of a bus. Maybe he’d just have let one of the demons win.

He must have been sitting there, gaping for a while, because Lindsey said, “Xander? You really surprised the firm would be ticked off at you?”

Xander blinked to clear his head. “No. That’s not it. Wolfram & Hart can try their best. Seriously, I’ve faced worse.” He pointed at his eyepatch. “Not quite intact, but I survived.” And he found that although he really wasn’t scared of the law firm, he wasn’t planning to die anymore either. Huh. “So how in the world can I get you out of Wolfram & Hart’s claws?”

Lindsey smiled. It was maybe the first true smile he’d shown Xander, and Xander was fairly sure the guy was genuinely relieved. “Think of it as a heroic quest,” he said.

Xander rolled his eye. It wasn’t as effective with only one, he thought.

“When I hooked up with the firm, I signed two copies of a contract. I’ve got one, they have the other at headquarters. If they’re both destroyed, the contract is void.”

“Why don’t you destroy it, then?”
“Can’t. Can’t get near it. It has a spell on it to keep the party of the second part—that’s me—away. The Senior Partners ain’t stupid.”

“How do I know if it’s the right one? They could have made copies, right? Decoys.”

“’Cause the genuine article is signed in my blood.” He dug in his pants pocket for a moment—not an easy task, because his jeans were pretty tight—and pulled out a small metal charm in the shape of a sword. “This thing’ll glow if it gets near my blood. See?” He picked up the knife Xander had used to slice the limes, and pressed the blade into the heel of his left hand. Xander winced—that had to hurt. A small line of blood welled up, and Lindsey placed the charm near it. The charm instantly lit up with a soft red shine.

Lindsey set the bit of metal back on the table and the light faded. He licked at his wound. A waste of blood, Xander thought automatically, and oh gods, he’d been spending too much time obsessed with a vampire.

Xander had another shot of tequila. “So I’m just supposed to waltz into your fancy offices in LA and tear up some paper and Spike’s home free?”

Lindsey’s face was grave. “LA’s not HQ, man. That’s just a branch office. They got ‘em all over. Rome, London, Beijing—“

“Yeah, I get it, Carmen Sandiego. Where’s HQ?”

“It’s sort of…in a hell dimension.” Lindsey wasn’t meeting his eye now.

Xander wasn’t surprised. After all, if had been easy, Lindsey wouldn’t have been willing to give up Spike so quickly.

“And how, exactly, am I supposed to get to this hell dimension?”

Lindsey squinted at him, surprised he hadn’t baulked already. “There’s this witch. She could send you there. She doesn’t like me much, but I bet she’d help you.”

“So that’s the whole thing, then? I go to Hell HQ and destroy the contract and Spike goes free?”

Lindsey spread his hands and, Xander thought, tried to look honest. “That’s the whole thing.”

Xander played with his lime rind for a moment while he thought. “I have some conditions before I agree.”

“Hit me.”

“Okay, first off, I don’t trust you. So I’m not gonna destroy the contract until I’m back in my own crappy but non-hellish dimension, safe and sound. I’ll steal the thing and bring it with me. And second, you free Spike first, before I leave.” Because, he didn’t add, if he never made it back he wasn’t going to leave Spike trapped.

“And why should I trust you? How do I know that once he’s out you won’t disappear?”

“You said it yourself: I’m a good guy. Good guys keep their promises.”

Lindsey squinted at him, poured himself another healthy dose of tequila and downed it in one go, without the salt and lime, then slammed the glass down and stuck out his hand. “Deal,” he said.

Xander shook it, wondering just how incredibly stupid he was being.
“Can we do this now?” Xander asked. Every minute longer was a minute of suffering for Spike.

“Go see the witch this week, make sure she can get you there. Then give me call, and if we’re set, I’ll come back next weekend.” He slipped a card out of his wallet and scrawled a phone number on the back of it. “Use this number.”

Xander nodded unhappily. When he was in prison, a week had felt like an eternity. What did it feel like to Spike?

They sat there for a while until somehow the tequila bottle was magically empty. Lindsey had turned his chair around so he straddled it backwards, and now he was toying with his depleted dish of salt, dipping a finger in it and then lazily licking it clean. His glance flickered toward Xander and Xander’s sodden brain realized that the man was coming onto him.

“Uh, I gotta work early in the morning,” Xander said, standing and stretching.

Lindsey stood, too, but he stepped closer until they were almost touching, and he tipped his head up to grin crookedly at Xander. “Want some company?” His voice was a gravelly sort of purr.

There were plenty of times Xander would have been more than tempted. Lindsey might be morally ambiguous, but then Xander had nearly married a former vengeance demon and was currently having weekly sex with a vampire. And Lindsey was really goddamn sexy, with a weekend beard and hair that was flopping in his face a little and the muscles visible beneath his t-shirt.

“No,” Xander said. “I really don’t.”

***

Xander knew better than to assume the witch would be some dried-up old crone with a pointy hat. But he more or less expected her to wear sort of long, floaty skirts, probably made of organic cotton by a women’s collective in Nepal, and dangly earrings of shell or stone, and to smell like incense and herbal tea.

Elizabeth Wallace looked like the CEO of a Fortune 500 company. Her age was hard to pin down—forties maybe—and her blonde hair was short and non-fussy. She wore a dove gray suit and a pearl choker with matching pearls in her ears. She smelled of Chanel No. 5, the same fragrance his mother had received every single year from his father as a Christmas gift.

“Call me Liz,” she said, and gestured at him to sit. Her office suited her, with expensive-looking furniture and a nicer view of the city than Lindsey’s. It was raining outside, the drops blurring the glass so that everything looked dreamlike. He felt out of place in his Conway’s Oasis uniform, but she was being gracious about it, and had even had her secretary fetch Xander a cup of coffee.

“So,” Liz said, steepling her hands. “Alexander Lavelle Harris. Xander, yes?”

He nodded. “Look, I’m here because—“

“I know why you’re here.” Her tone wasn’t angry, just very self-assured. This was a woman who was used to being in charge. “You would like to travel to that law firm’s home dimension so that you may void Lindsey McDonald’s contract and, in turn, release your vampire.”
Xander wondered whether Lindsey had told her all this, or whether she knew it some other way.
“He’s not my vampire,” he muttered.

She smiled indulgently. “Are you certain?”

Okay, this wasn’t anything like how he’d intended this conversation to go. “He’s just….” He sighed. “Can you help me? Please?”

“You’re not frightened of entering a hell dimension?”

“I don’t know. I mean, yeah, I do know. Of course I’m scared. But I don’t have much choice, do I?”

“Of course you do. You could simply walk away.”

“No, I can’t! How could I live with myself, knowing Spike was…and I’d just…. No. I have no choice.”

He’d said it a little angrily, but she didn’t seem upset at his outburst. Instead, she cocked her head a little. “And you realize you will be taking on enormous evil all by yourself?”

“I’ve been by myself for years. I’m used to it.”

She smiled again and shook her head. “You really haven’t, you know.”

He had no idea what she was talking about, but he didn’t argue. Arguing with witches was generally a bad idea, in his experience.

Liz slid open one of her desk drawers and took out two identical boxes. They were of gold metallic cardboard, each about three inches square. She set them in front of him and then lifted the lid of the first one. There was a necklace inside, with heavy links of some silvery metal and a small padlock holding it closed. A tiny key was set in the padlock. “This will take you to their home dimension,” she said, pointing. “You must wear it. You simply turn the key and you will be there, turn it again to return. It can be used only once, so take care. Your clothing and anything in your pockets will travel with you, as will anything—or anyone—you are touching. Only you can use this.”

“So I can bring weapons?”

“You may. Firearms will not work there, so don’t bother with them. In any case, you might find that additional weapons are unnecessary.” She gave a small, secretive smile.

He didn’t know what she meant, so he just nodded. “Okay.” It was slightly comforting to know he didn’t have to go naked and unarmed, at least. “Will this drop me off straight at Evil Inc.?”

“I’m afraid not. You will have to find the contract yourself.”

Great. “Okay,” he said again, because what else could he do?

She replaced the lid on the box and pushed it slightly closer to him. He tucked it into his jacket carefully. Then she tapped the other box. “Before you go, I want you to use this.” When she lifted the lid, a small object was revealed. A single date fruit, actually.

“I thought this was an appropriate way to do this.” He liked her smile, he decided, although he couldn’t say why. “When you are someplace safe and alone—your trailer would be perfect—and
you don’t expect to be disturbed for a few hours, eat this. It will enable you to have a conversation with the oracles. There was not general agreement about this, but I insisted. There is information you should have before you turn that lock.”

Xander had learned many years ago that questions asked in situations like this only got him answers he wouldn’t understand. He simply took the box with the date in it and stuck that one in his pocket, too.

Liz stood, making it clear that the meeting was over, so Xander stood as well. “Uh, about your fees, uh, I don’t—” He was blushing.

But she patted him on the arm. “Not your concern. Mr. McDonald will be quite capable of taking care of it. It is, after all, his errand.”

“You’re very welcome. And Xander? Best of luck.”

The funny thing was that as he rode the elevator back down, he was certain that her good wishes were sincere, and equally certain that he was somehow strengthened by them.

Chapter 10
Chapter Summary

It's over a decade since Sunnydale collapsed, and Xander is doing time. A fellow prisoner mentions a vampire he once saw displayed at a tourist trap. Freedom doesn't come easy.

Entry tags: spike/xander, the prisons we make

The Prisons We Make, 10/18
Title: The Prisons We Make
Chapter: 10 of 18
Pairing: Spike/Xander
Rating: NC-17
Disclaimer: I'm not Joss
Warnings: angst, slash, violence, slavery, dub-con
Summary: It's over a decade since Sunnydale collapsed, and Xander is doing time. A fellow prisoner mentions a vampire he once saw displayed at a tourist trap. Freedom doesn't come easy.
AN: This fic is complete and I'll post a chapter a day. Enormous thanks to beta hello_spikey and her very helpful comments! And also enormous thanks to sentine, who has provided three amazing banners! I couldn't possibly pick just one, so I'll be rotating them. As always, your comments are what keep my muse alive!

Previous chapters here

EDIT: The perfection that is the art at the end of this chapter is by the lovely blondebitz!
It was just a date. A little piece of brown fruit about the size of his thumb, nearly identical to thousands and thousands of fruits that were growing or drying within yards of his trailer. Thanks to his recent employment, he could even identify the variety: Medjool. He liked Medjools.

He should eat it, he told himself. It was Friday night and he had nowhere to be until his usual date—Ha! Date!—with Spike the next morning at eleven. Liz had seemed nice enough. Besides, what harm could eating an enchanted piece of fruit possibly do?

“Right,” he grumbled to himself.
Staring at the thing was getting him nowhere. “Just call me Snow White,” he said, and put the date in his mouth.

Nothing happened right away. It tasted perfectly normal, and there was the pit, same as always. He spat the pit into his palm and then set it on the table. He chewed a bit more, then swallowed. Just a date.

And that glowy thing floating in front of his face, that was perfectly normal, right?

He put up a finger to touch the light and it grabbed him, sucked him into itself as if it was a Dustbuster and he was spilled cracker crumbs. It didn’t hurt, but it did feel very strange. A little like riding the Viper at Magic Mountain, only without the barf potential.

When things stabilized, he was standing in a glaringly white room. White marble floor, ceiling, and walls, with mysterious swirly designs painted here and there in gold. They made him dizzy when he tried to focus his eye on them. There was a fountain in the center of the room, also of white marble, and water tinkled pleasantly into a basin with sides wide enough to sit on. There were no visible doors or windows, and that made him a little nervous. “Hello?” he called. “Oracles?”

Pop! Pop! He moaned and covered his ears as two loud explosions echoed through the room, sounding like someone had set off firecrackers in his ear canal.

And there were the oracles, standing before him. A man and a woman, both dressed in black togas with silver belts. Their skin was gold and shiny, as if they were made of metal. The woman was very petite, short and with a tiny waist, but her bare arms were well-toned. The man was much taller and big, all muscle and wide shoulders. Their faces were oddly fuzzy—sort of pixilated—so that he couldn’t quite make them out.

“Where is our tribute?” a ghostly voice demanded.

“Uh, tribute? The witch didn’t say—“

“We demand tribute for our services! That is the way of the oracles. That is the—Oh, forget it. This is really stupid.” The voice changed at the end, became human-sounding, female. Became familiar, as a matter of fact, and Xander found himself suddenly backing up until he collided with the wall.

The blurry faces sharpened, becoming more distinct. Also familiar.

“B-Buffy!” he stammered.

She grinned at him. “Hi, Xan.”

“Can we get this over with?” the other oracle complained, tugging ineffectively at the short skirt of his toga.

“Deadboy.”

“Angel. My name is Angel. You can even call me Liam, if you must.”

Buffy elbowed Angel. “You gotta admit it’s pretty appropriate, though, you being all dead and everything. Twice over.”

Xander felt faint. What kind of mickey had the witch slipped him? “Wha-wha-wha….”
Buffy walked a little closer and smiled. “Sorry, Xan. I’d hug you, but that’s on the no-fly list. Something about cross-dimensional frequencies.”

“But…are you really….”

“It’s really me, Xan. And I have a lot to tell you and we’re short on time. So let me give you the 411 and you can freak later, okay?”

“O-Okay.” It seemed the safest answer.

She took a deep breath. “Okay. Here’s the deal. There’s, like, this power struggle going on between good and evil. More or less. Wolfram & Hart is on one side and The Powers That Be kind of run the other.”

“The Powers That Be.”

“Yeah. They’re the ones who sent Cordelia visions so that Angel could be all with the just in the nick of time. They did a bunch of other stuff, too. They were involved when Angel and his crew had that big battle in L.A., but that didn’t work out so well.” Angel made a sound, kind of a pained noise, and she shot him a sympathetic smile. “But that doesn’t mean that the Powers are giving up. They still think maybe they can beat W & H, and they think Spike might be the key to that.”

“The prophecy,” Xander said.

Angel mumbled something that sounded an awful lot like “fucking shampoo.” Xander had no idea what that meant, but Buffy nodded. She walked over to the fountain and sat down on the edge. She looked so young, Xander thought. She had been young when she died. Just a kid. Angel walked over and sat down awkwardly on the opposite side of the fountain, but he couldn’t seem to find a comfortable way to arrange himself without the toga hem riding up perilously high, and he huffed out an annoyed sigh and stood again. He ended up against the wall with his arms crossed on his chest, glowering slightly.

“The Powers are limited in what they can do, Xan. Spike is in those jerks’ claws and the Powers couldn’t just yank him out directly. But they could do things indirectly, right? Like make sure that the guy who saw Spike at Walker’s eventually ended up in the same prison as you.”

“Brandt.”

She smiled again. “Right. And they got you out of that prison as soon as they could.”

“Not soon enough,” he said bitterly. “Not for me, not for Spike.”

It was Angel who said, “Xander, if you’d found out about Spike before you went to prison, would you still have come all the way out there and tried to rescue him?”

Xander thought about that. He might have. Maybe. But he wouldn’t have been at a place where he was willing to risk his neck for the vampire, or go on quests to hell dimensions. “These Powers have a hell of a manner of getting their way,” he said.

“Tell me about it,” Angel replied grimly.

“But they did help you out, you know,” Buffy said. “All the way from Indiana to Salton City, they steered you toward people who might give you a hand. Come here.”

Cautiously, he approached her, and when she pointed at the fountain he looked inside. There were
faces floating there in the water, faces he knew. AJ and Chuck, who gave him a ride and twenty
bucks. Callie. Tim Tilden. The guys who drove him to Salton City. Sam and Raul and Araceli and
Mrs. Villanueva and Emma and even Ava from the AM/PM, the giggly girl who had taken to
finding him extra discounts when he paid for his food, and who had traded him a hand-knitted hat
for a little statue of a cat he’d whittled on his time off. It got cold at night in the desert.

“They’re—“

“They’re just people, Xan. The Powers only helped you meet them. Most of them would have
helped you anyway, but in some cases, well, they were kind of kindred spirits, and a few of us…
pushed them along a little.” Other faces flickered in the water for a minute, momentarily blending
with and then replacing the some of the people he’d met in the last few months. These were the
faces of people who’d been important to him, his family in all ways that mattered. Willow, Dawn,
Giles, Anya, Joyce, Tara.

He felt tears running down his cheek and realized he was crying. “I haven’t been alone,” he
whispered, remembering what the witch had said to him a few days ago.

“Never, Xan. We’ve been watching you, too. See?” The waters shifted, and now they showed the
inside of his trailer, where Xander could see his own body slumped at the table as if he were
asleep.

“How?” he asked.

She shrugged. “It’s a perq of being an oracle. Actually, we’re only temping, until things are settled
with you.”

“Oh,” he said and then something occurred to him. “Um…you haven’t been watching all the time,
have you?”

She giggled and Angel looked away and Xander felt his face turn bright red. “Don’t worry, Xan,”
she laughed. “We kept to the PG-13 parts.”

Okay. Another something he could have a breakdown over later.

“It wasn’t a coincidence that the tiny Texan ran into you that day at the office, either,” Angel said.
“If you’d arrived a few minutes earlier or later, you’d have been trying to make a deal with
someone else, and they’d have just called security on you.”

Xander’s head was starting to hurt. “Okay. I get it. The Powers have been jerking me around like a
puppet on a string and now I’m supposed to spring Spike so he can get jerked around.”

“It’s not quite that bad, Xan. The Powers can influence things, but they can’t make you do stuff.
It’s a free will thingy. You have choices. And that’s also why Liz wouldn’t help out unless they let
you talk to us. I like her! So you could choose freely.” She shifted her eyes around the room for a
moment, as if checking for someone who might overhear. “Liz might have given you a little extra
help, too,” she almost-whispered.

The lyrics of an old song by the Clash popped into Xander’s head. Spike used to belt it out to annoy
him when he was tied to the chair in Xander’s basement. “Should I stay or should I go,” he
muttered.

Angel stomped over and loomed over Xander without actually touching him. “You have to do this!
It’s the only way to finally get at those bastards, and—“
“Angel!” Buffy punched him in the shoulder, hard. He rubbed at it and glared at them both. “He’s stressed enough as it is. Xan, make your own decision.”

The entire room shook, like a minor earthquake. “Oops,” Buffy said. “That’s the two-minute warning. If you have any more questions, now’s the time.”

He tried very hard to gather his thoughts. “Are you…you and all the rest…are you okay? Happy?”

She gave him a soft smile. “We are. It’s…I’m not supposed to tell you. But it’s good. And you’ll be with us again someday. But not too soon, okay? Grow old, Xander! Get fat and bald and complain about these kids today and eat dinner at four and…and listen to NPR.”

He wished he could touch her, just once. “Okay,” he said. Then he turned to Angel. “Deadboy, while I’m paying the lawyers a visit anyway, is there something I can do to damage them? Besides just Lindsey’s contract, I mean.”

Angel swallowed and his eyes glittered with intensity. “Yeah. There is. It’ll be riskier, though.”

“Danger is my middle name. Actually, LaVelle’s my middle name, but please don’t spread that around.” It was an old joke, but Buffy grinned anyway.

Angel rolled his eyes. “If you destroy them there, Xander, they’re dead everywhere.”

“Great. How do I do that?”

“I can’t tell you. Just, keep your eyes—eye—open, all right? And your ears. It might be something unexpected.”

The ground shook again. “And since when does anything unexpected happen to me?” Xander joked.

Buffy smiled up at him. “Do you remember that time with Adam? That spell Willow did?”

“Kinda hard to forget.”

“You were the heart, Xan. Remember how important the heart is.” Now it was Angel’s turn to poke her and she scowled at him before looking back to Xander. “Bye, Xan. I love you, you know.”

Xander woke up at his table with a blinding headache and a mouth that tasted like a dead F’jetrik demon.

***

On Saturday morning, Xander stumbled over to the AM/PM. The place was busy with vacationers stopping for gas and snacks on their way from one place to another, but Ava still gave him a wave when she saw him enter. He picked up some coffee to drink as he made his way to Walker’s and waited until there was a slight lull to pay for it.

“How ya doing, Pirate Guy?” she grinned at him.

“Aarrh, matey. Lost my parrot. Seen him? Can’t miss him, he’s got a peg leg and a hook wing.”
She giggled and rang up his purchase. “Sorry, no disabled birds today.” For just a split second, he imagined he saw her brown eyes turn blue.

“Hey, I was wondering. Can I borrow your cell phone? I need to make a quick call to LA. I’ll pay you for the minutes.”

She pulled a phone out of her pocket. It was pink and had a sparkly Minnie Mouse charm hanging from it. “Don’t worry about it. I have unlimited minutes.”

He took the phone a few feet away from the counter so she could help the next customer, a harried-looking mother with a toddler in tow. He pulled the card from his wallet and dialed.

“McDonald.”

“It’s Xander Harris.”

There was a short pause and he heard a loud exhale. “We on, Xander?”

“Yep.”

Lindsey whooped loudly, forcing Xander to pull the phone away from his ear. When he put it back, the lawyer was saying, “—be there tomorrow night. Wait at your trailer.”

“I’ll see you then.” He hung up and returned to phone to Ava, who was busy ringing up three bags of Doritos and a can of Red Bull. She waved at him again and then he left.

He didn’t tell Spike about any of it. He didn’t want to create false hope, and anyway, if Lindsey was telling the truth, Spike would find out soon enough anyway. Instead, he convinced Spike to drink from his wrist and then talked for a little while about old times, back when Spike was the Big Bad and trying to eat the Scoobies. The blood and memories seemed to cheer Spike up a little.

“KNEW YOUD TASTE GOOD,” he wrote.

The sharing of body fluid had its usual effects on them both—Spike never got hard from drinking the human stuff that Emma brought, only from Xanderjuice straight from the vein—and Xander pounded away inside of Spike so vigorously that Xander saw stars when he came, and Spike writhed within the confines of his bonds and silently howled. Afterwards, Xander felt sated but there was still time remaining, so he kissed any of Spike’s flesh he could reach. He was being especially tender with the skin around the collar when he realized that Spike’s cock was hard again and Spike’s eyes were shut tightly in concentration. So he kissed a little more and then he licked, and when Spike tilted his head a little and Xander actually bit, blunt human teeth marking vampire skin, Xander learned that Spike could climax from that alone. Now there was an interesting bit of demon lore Giles had never mentioned.
Chapter 11
The Prisons We Make

Chapter Summary

It's over a decade since Sunnydale collapsed, and Xander is doing time. A fellow prisoner mentions a vampire he once saw displayed at a tourist trap. Freedom doesn't come easy.

Entry tags: spike/xander, the prisons we make

The Prisons We Make, 11/18
Title: The Prisons We Make
Chapter: 11 of 18
Pairing: Spike/Xander
Rating: NC-17
Disclaimer: I'm not Joss
Warnings: angst, slash, violence, slavery, dub-con
Summary: It's over a decade since Sunnydale collapsed, and Xander is doing time. A fellow prisoner mentions a vampire he once saw displayed at a tourist trap. Freedom doesn't come easy.
AN: This fic is complete and I'll post a chapter a day. Enormous thanks to beta hello_spikey and her very helpful comments! And also enormous thanks to sentine, who has provided three amazing banners! I couldn't possibly pick just one, so I'll be rotating them. As always, your comments are what keep my muse alive!

Previous chapters here

Once more, I'll post two chapters today. And my offer from yesterday still stands: I'm willing to bribe someone to do a manip of Angel in a toga from chapter 10! :-)
EDIT: Go see the end of Chapter 10 for blondebitz's perfect art!
When did it officially become night? Xander wasn’t sure, and he didn’t want to miss Lindsey. Besides, he had nowhere else to go anyway. So he spent almost the entire day in his trailer, picking up a book, staring at the pages without reading them, putting it back down. The sounds of the television only irritated him and he just felt like a crazy guy when he paced around in the sand and gravel parking lot adjacent to the trailer. Finally, at a little past noon, he jogged over to the AM/PM and once again borrowed Ava’s phone to call Emma.

“Hey, Emma,” he said when she picked up. “Xander.”

“Xan! How are you?”

His heart was warmed with the way she sounded genuinely happy to hear his voice. “I was
wondering if there’s any way you’d be able to get me some more…uh, red stuff.” There were several people shopping nearby and asking someone for blood was a little weird.

“Sure, Xan. I’m just about to get off work right now, actually. How much?”

“As much as you think I can squeeze into my fridge.”

“Ohmigod! Spike’s there! You got Spike out!”

He sighed unhappily. “Not yet. But if all goes well he’ll be here soon, and he’s gonna be hungry.”

“How’d you manage it—No. Don’t tell me. Tell me later. I’m gonna finish up here and then drive over.”

“Thanks, Em.”

“Is there anything else you need? I know your shopping possibilities are pretty limited there.”

He thought about that. What would Spike need? Several years worth of demon therapy? A car so he could get the hell out of Dodge? A great big mental scrub brush to wipe away his memories of what Xander had been doing to him? He sighed again. “Do you think you could pick up some clothing for him? Just the basics, jeans, a couple t-shirts. He likes black.”

“Sure! I’ve never shopped for a vampire before. What size?”

“Um…I dunno. He’s a little shorter than me and he’s…he’s really skinny now, but he’ll fill out when he’s feeding better.”

“I’ll find something. See you in a couple hours, okay?”

“Thanks, Em.”

Ava winked at him when he handed back her phone. As he walked out of the store, he glanced across the highway toward the center of town. He could just make out the edge of Walker’s World of Wonders. What was Spike doing right now, he wondered. What was he thinking? Xander wished he could run over there right now and tell Spike not to give up hope, help would be there soon. Instead he trudged back home and, with no other way to occupy himself, ended up dusting the inside of the trailer, and scrubbing the sink and the shower stall, and wiping out the inside of the fridge.

Emma knocked on his door at just after three. She had a paper grocery sack in her arms and a green plastic bag in the other. She grinned at him and started taking blood packets out of the paper bag and stacking them in the fridge. He was left holding the green bag.

“How do you manage to smuggle so much blood out of there?” he asked her. “You won’t get in trouble, will you?”

She waved a hand at him. “No prob. I’m supposed to throw it away anyway in this medical waste bin. I just wheel the bin by my locker when nobody’s looking and transfer the bags there and later I stuff them in my backpack and taa-daa! Home free.”

He nodded and dumped the plastic bag over the table. There were two pairs of black jeans and four silky black tees and a black belt with a silvery skull-shaped buckle and a half dozen pairs of cotton boxers in navy blue. Xander looked at the pile dubiously.
“Is the belt too much? ‘Cause I figured he’d need one and I thought this one was really cute and—“

“The belt’s fine, Em.”

“Is the underwear okay? I know you said black but they didn’t have it, and I was really torn between the blue and these red ones, and then I thought maybe I should get some of each, but—“

“It’s fine, Em.” He remembered the two times he’d briefly shared living quarters with the vampire. “I’m not even sure the guy wears underwear anyway.”

“Then what’s the prob? You don’t look pleased.”

He felt color seeping into his face. “It’s just that this stuff looks really nice, really expensive, and, uh….” He trailed off, his face hot with embarrassment.

Emma made a dismissive snort. “Don’t worry about it, okay? Please. My Grandma gave me a gift card to this store for my birthday, and that was, like, almost a year ago, right? And it’s a nice store, over on El Paseo, but their women’s stuff is so not my style, more like Mom’s, really, and the card was just going to waste. It’s just…a little present from a friend, okay? And I’ll be horribly offended if you don’t accept it or if you try to pay me back, so don’t even try, mister.” She shook her finger at him with mock solemnity.

Xander smiled. “All right. I certainly wouldn’t want to tick you off. Thank you, Emma.”

She had dimples, he noticed. “My pleasure.” Then she bounced up and down a little on her feet. “So, how are you springing him and when will he be here?”

“It’s…kind of a long story. And I can’t really tell you now, I’m really sorry. But if all goes well he’ll be free very soon, and I promise I’ll explain later.” The last thing he wanted was to draw her into Wolfram & Hart’s web.

She pouted for a moment and then relaxed into a grin. She went up on her toes to give him a hug and a peck on the cheek. “Okay. Good luck, then. I gotta head home. I have an Organic Chem exam tomorrow and I swear the professor might as well be speaking Sumerian for all the sense she makes.”

Xander hugged her back, thanked her one more time, and then stood in the doorway to watch her walk back to her car.

***

It was an hour past sunset when another knock pounded at his door, almost shaking the whole tiny trailer. Xander leapt to his feet—he’d been sitting on the little built-in couch, trying to keep his mind clear—and hurried to open up.

Lindsey was standing on the top of the three steps, again dressed in jeans and a faded t-shirt, this one emblazoned with the word “Sooners.” His eyes were feverishly bright and he had spots of color on his cheeks.

“When can we get Spike?” Xander demanded.
Lindsey grinned and leaned to one side.

Spike was standing behind him, down at the bottom of the steps. He was still naked and collared, with the muzzle buckled on his face and a black leather mask covering his eyes. From the way he was standing, it appeared that his hands were bound behind his back. A black leash trailed from the front of the collar, down Spike’s body, ending just short of the ground. Spike was as pale as moonlight in the bright overhead lights, and he was trembling, or maybe shivering in the cold, Xander couldn’t be sure.

“Son of a bitch!” Xander spat. He nearly pushed Lindsey off the steps as he raced down to Spike. He grabbed Spike’s shoulders with his hands. “Spike? Are you okay?”

Spike nodded slowly, warily.

Xander put his arm around Spike’s waist and helped him up the steps—“Careful, you need to step up once more.”—but when Spike got to the doorway he bounced back a little and Xander swore at himself. “Sorry, sorry. Spike, you’re invited in.”

For a second, the three of them stood awkwardly in the small space that passed for kitchen and living room. Then Xander ducked into the bedroom and grabbed a blanket, which he placed around Spike’s shoulders and wrapped around the vampire as best as he could. “Could’ve at least fucking given him some clothes,” he hissed at the lawyer, and moved behind Spike to take the things off his face.

Lindsey smirked slightly. “Hey, I got him out, and that’s what I promised.”

As Xander pulled the mask away, Spike blinked in the light and looked around himself in bewilderment. When the muzzle was gone, too, he panted open-mouthed, his gaze darting from place to place. “The manacles,” Xander said, and Lindsey tossed him a key. Xander had to push the blanket aside to get at Spike’s hands, and he saw that the cuffs had dug deeply enough into Spike’s skin to bleed a little. Spike winced as he moved his arms forward, then stood silently, clutching the blanket around him.

“The fucking collar,” Xander said to Lindsey.

“And then you’ll go?”

“Yeah, I’ll—wait. No.”

Lindsey came a half-step closer and bared his teeth. “I can still stick him back in that cage, Xander. Maybe minus a part or two.”

Xander placed himself between the two of them. “Over my dead body, asshole.” Spike’s hand clutched at Xander’s shoulder, tight and claw-like, whether for support or something else, Xander couldn’t tell.

“That can be arranged,” growled Lindsey. “We had a deal, hero.”

“And we still do. I’m not backing out. But Spike needs a little time to get back on his feet.” He meant that almost literally, as he could feel Spike shaking behind him. “Give me a week.”

Lindsey’s jaw worked, but he was as stuck as Xander, really. It wasn’t likely that he’d find someone else willing to take on his crusade. “One week,” he ground out.

“And you take the collar off now.”
“I swear to God, if you do a runner—“

“I’m not going anywhere, Lindsey.”

Lindsey took two or three breaths, glaring at the cupboard over Spike’s shoulder. Then he shook his head and came slightly closer. “I need to be touching the damn thing.”

Xander twisted around to face Spike. Spike was still holding his shoulder, and his eyes were wide and shocked looking. He appeared like he might collapse any second. “Spike?” Xander said softly. “Do you want him to take the collar off?”

Spike swallowed and blinked, then nodded once.

Xander slung an arm around Spike’s frail shoulders and pulled the blanket down a little so the metal around Spike’s neck was revealed. “Do it,” he ordered.

Spike flinched against Xander when Lindsey reached out his hand, and that alone was enough to break Xander’s heart. Then Lindsey’s fingers were pressed against the metal, and Lindsey said something that sounded like “Dezhrezvoo beteelyiat,” and the collar fell open with an ear-splitting squeal and clattered to the floor.

Spike made a horrible gasp, clutched his throat, and crumpled to his knees. Xander knelt beside him, offering what little comfort he could.

“See you next Sunday,” Lindsey said, and left. The door clattered loudly behind him.

Spike was hunched so much that his head was nearly on the floor. Feeling useless, Xander patted his back and shoulders until Spike shuddered and rose up a little to stare at Xander. His neck was a mess, bloody and raw, and when he tried to speak, nothing came out but a ragged croak.

“Hey, it’s okay,” Xander said. “I’ve got blood, all the A Pos you can drink. That’ll fix you up, right?”

Spike nodded shakily and allowed Xander to lift him to his feet and settle him on the couch. His eyes were full of questions, but those could wait, Xander thought. Dinner first.

The trailer didn’t have a microwave, so Xander set a pot of water to heat and, as it did, poured part of one of the bags into his coffee mug. Spike didn’t seem to mind that it was cold, but his hands were shaking too much to drink by himself, and Xander had to help hold the cup steady.

Spike drank a gallon of blood—some of it even managed to get warm in the pot first—before he pushed the mug away and shook his head. He still looked stunned and fragile, but Xander was fairly certain the wounds on his neck were already looking a little better.

Xander set the mug down on the table and knelt in front of Spike. He remembered what a shock it had been when he’d been released from prison, how the wide open spaces and many uncertainties had almost made him want to step right back inside. And he’d at least known he was going to be out—he’d been marking the days, for Christ’s sake—and he’d been in for less than five years, and under conditions that were five-star luxury compared to what Spike had been through. He tried to think what words might have comforted him, had there been someone there to say them.

“Spike, listen,” he said. “You need to know this. You’re safe and everything’s going to be all right. Nobody’s going to hurt you anymore and you’re never going back to that place. You don’t have to worry about anything now. Just…heal, get strong, okay? Until then, it’s all taken care of.”
Spike stared at him. Spike was still confused and a dozen or more emotions flickered across his face, but Xander thought that maybe hope was one of them.

Xander reached over and opened one of the drawers. He pulled out his pirate notebook and pencil, and handed them to Spike. “I don’t want to overwhelm you now, Spike. Let me give you just a few options. Is that okay?”

Spike nodded.

“Good. You can sleep—got a fairly comfy bed over there.” He pointed. “Or you can watch some tv, maybe. I’ve got satellite. Or…” He tilted his head and squinted a little. “Maybe you want a shower? I don’t have a tub, but the water’s good and hot, anyway.”

Spike looked blankly at him, and Spike could almost see rusty gears turning as, for one of the very rare times in ten years, Spike got to make a choice about something. Finally, he touched the pencil to the paper and wrote, “Shower.” His handwriting was faint and shaky, but it was no longer the hurried scrawl with which he’d been communicating lately. Maybe that was a good sign.

“Okay,” Xander said. “Do you…do you want a little help getting started?”

Spike nodded and ducked his head.

Xander strode to the miniscule bathroom and turned on the tap. He twisted around to look at Spike. “Hot?” he asked. Back in the basement, Spike had always turned the controls as hot as they went, and Xander was nearly scalded twice before he learned to check before stepping in. Spike nodded again.

When the water was running, Xander helped Spike to his feet. Spike allowed the blanket to fall away to the floor, and stepped carefully into the bathroom. Xander pointed out the soap and shampoo and towel. “There’s some clothing by the bed when you’re done, if you want it.” He watched Spike step under the spray and then shut the door.

He was far too restless to do much of anything. Every muscle in his body felt tight, his nerves just about thrumming with tension. He drew himself a glass of water and gulped it down, then stood in front of the sink, looking through his own reflection in the window glass.

THUNK!

Xander almost dropped the glass as a loud noise came from the bathroom. “Spike?” he yelled, lunging for the door, but of course there was no answer, and he turned the flimsy little knob and yanked the door open.

Spike was curled up in a fetal ball on the floor of the shower, the water raining on him and down the drain, and his entire body was heaving in enormous, nearly silent sobs. “Spike?” Xander said again, more softly.

When Spike didn’t respond, Xander reached in and turned the tap off. Then he crawled in beside Spike and stroked his shoulder. Still crying, Spike sat up and twisted around, and he wrapped his arms around Xander so tightly Xander could barely breathe. Xander didn’t care. He simply embraced Spike as well, and rocked their bodies gently, and he told himself the wetness on his own face was just stray drips from the shower.
The Prisons We Make

Chapter Summary

It's over a decade since Sunnydale collapsed, and Xander is doing time. A fellow prisoner mentions a vampire he once saw displayed at a tourist trap. Freedom doesn't come easy.

Entry tags: spike/xander, the prisons we make

The Prisons We Make, 12/18
Title: The Prisons We Make
Chapter: 12 of 18
Pairing: Spike/Xander
Rating: NC-17
Disclaimer: I'm not Joss
Warnings: angst, slash, violence, slavery, dub-con
Summary: It's over a decade since Sunnydale collapsed, and Xander is doing time. A fellow prisoner mentions a vampire he once saw displayed at a tourist trap. Freedom doesn't come easy.
AN: This fic is complete and I'll post a chapter a day. Enormous thanks to beta hello_spikey and her very helpful comments! And also enormous thanks to sentine, who has provided three amazing banners! I couldn't possibly pick just one, so I'll be rotating them. As always, your comments are what keep my muse alive!

Previous chapters here
Twelve

They were soaking wet and shivering against each other. Spike was slumped against him, practically sitting in Xander’s lap, still clutching Xander tightly. “Let’s get dried off, okay?” Xander said.

Spike nodded against his shoulder, so they untangled themselves awkwardly in the small space and Xander pulled Spike to his feet. Spike swayed and his eyes were unfocused and half-closed. Xander wrapped a towel around the vampire, suddenly wishing he’d been able to afford an
oversized, plush one instead of the thin, cheap thing that constantly shed fuzz. But it was better than nothing, and it did absorb most of the dampness. Still in his own dripping clothing, Xander led Spike the few steps to the bed and tucked him in. “If you need anything, just make some noise,” Xander said, but he thought Spike was asleep before the words were out of his mouth.

Xander walked back into the bathroom and stripped off his clothes, then patted himself dry. Without bothering to dress he went out into the main room. The detritus of Spike’s captivity still lay on the floor: The handcuffs, muzzle, and mask; the blanket Xander had wrapped around him; and, of course, the collar. Xander stuffed everything except the blanket in the trash and glanced at the clock that hung on one wall. It was still pretty early, actually, but he was exhausted from the evening’s events.

He closed the curtains on all of the windows so Spike wouldn’t accidentally incinerate in the morning. Then he picked up the blanket and squeezed himself onto the small sofa. It was much too short for him, and the cushions were too thin, but it was marginally better than sleeping on the floor. With an enormous yawn, he reached over and turned out the light. He fell asleep very quickly.

When something poked him in the side he startled so badly that he fell off the couch in an undignified tangle of legs and blanket. Spike was standing over him, still naked, with one eyebrow raised and a tiny smirk on his lips. “Git,” he said, and his voice was thin and hoarse but it was a voice nonetheless.

Xander scrambled to his feet and gaped groggily.

Spike raked his glance up and down Xander’s body. While Xander had had plenty of opportunities to see Spike in the altogether over the past several weeks, Spike hadn’t seen Xander completely undressed since their time in the basement, when Spike used to like to barge in on Xander in the bathroom, probably because he enjoyed hearing Xander squawk. Now, he seemed to like what he saw because he leered a little. He grabbed Xander’s elbow and dragged him into the bedroom, and then pushed him toward the bed. “Git,” Spike repeated before sliding between the sheets and looking expectantly at Xander.

Obediently, Xander climbed in beside him. As soon as Xander was lying down. Spike pulled the covers up over them both and plastered his body against Xander’s. “Warm,” he croaked into Xander’s neck and then promptly fell back asleep.

***

In a lifetime of waking up in strange places and under strange conditions, this ranked up near the top, Xander thought. Sure, he was in his own borrowed bed, but there was a naked vampire mostly on top of him and a pair of sharp blue eyes inches from his own, staring at him the way a cat stares at a bird in a cage. He could feel Spike’s hard cock digging into his hip, while his own equally erect organ was trapped very pleasantly against Spike’s silky skin.

“Um, good morning?” he said.

Spike looked at him a moment longer and then disappeared under the blankets, his body slithering nicely along Xander’s. Before Xander had a chance to make a peep, long, strong fingers were wrapped around the base of his cock and a cool mouth—a mouth which, he tried not to remind
himself, was sometimes filled with a lot of very sharp teeth—was sucking on the head.

“Gah,” was all he managed to say before his brain short-circuited completely, and then he was clutching Spike’s long hair and learning what it felt like to be deep-throated by a creature who didn’t need to breathe. In a really embarrassingly short time he was coming hard enough for his vision to momentarily gray, and then Spike was crawling back up his body and gently kissing the lid of his missing eye before settling his mouth against Xander’s. Spike was a good kisser, Xander thought, with soft lips and a clever tongue that thrust inside of Xander adeptly. When Spike pulled away to stare at Xander some more, he looked slightly smug.

“Uh,” Xander managed. “You didn’t….”

But Spike’s grin grew and he grabbed Xander’s hand and moved it to his own crotch. His cock was soft and sticky-wet. “You’ll need to wash the linens,” said Spike. His voice wasn’t quite the familiar baritone, but it was considerably stronger than the night before.

Slowly gathering his wits, Xander glanced through the open door toward the clock. “Shit! I have to go to work!” He nearly fell again as he clambered out of bed. He grabbed a clean pair of boxers out of the dresser and tried not to topple over as he hopped into them, then yanked on some jeans and a t-shirt and socks. Spike just sprawled on the bed, watching with a trace of amusement on his face.

“I have to go to Riverside this morning, but I can check in with you at lunch if you want. There’s plenty more blood in the fridge and there’s probably some human food around if you want it, some chips I think and some bread and peanut butter and definitely some oranges, and, uh—“

“Xander.”

He took a deep breath. “Yeah?”

“What did you do to get me here?”

Xander chewed at his lip. “That’s…. I’ll tell you after work. Just rest or watch tv or whatever, and I’ll fill you in tonight, okay?”

Spike didn’t look very happy about it, but he nodded.

Glancing nervously at the clock again, Xander perched next to Spike for just a moment. “Look, what I said last night…I meant it. You’re safe here, I promise. Just stay inside for now because it’s pretty sunny out. There’s some booze in the cupboard if you want.”

Spike sighed. “I expect I’ll just sleep.”

“Okay. See you in a few hours.”

Spike nodded, rolled onto his side, and closed his eyes.

***

Raul took one look at what Xander belatedly realized was probably a pretty debauched-looking employee and lifted his eyebrows. “Sorry!” Xander said. “I’ll get the truck loaded right away.”

“Late night?”
“Um, not exactly. Hey, remember that friend of mine, the one with the…legal troubles?”

“Yes.”

“He showed up kind of unexpectedly last night. He’s…well, things are going better for him, a lot better, in fact. But he needs a place to stay for a few days. Is it okay if he crashes with me? He won’t be any trouble. You probably won’t even see him.”

Raul stroked his mustache. “Is he going to bring any of his problems with the law here?”

“No. Those are straightened out now. He just needs a little time to rest and get his act together.”

“No drugs. Hate that mierda.”

“Spike doesn’t do drugs. Well, he drinks, but nothing illegal.”

There went the eyebrows again. “Spike?”

Xander shrugged. “Yeah.”

More mustache-smoothing, and then a nod. “Okay. If you vouch for him.”

“Thanks, Raul. I appreciate it.”

“Go make that Riverside run, Xander.”

It was just past noon when Xander returned to the Oasis. Everything looked fine—just the usual crew doing their work, and Raul tinkering with one of the decrepit tractors that he was always trying to revive. Xander waved at him and then ducked into the trailer.

Spike was in bed, fast asleep, and although Xander valued his neck too much to ever say so out loud, the vampire looked cute. He was curled on his side with the blankets pulled up to his chin. His lips were slightly parted and one hand lay lightly curled on the pillow. His hair, which was still pretty tangled but now clean, at least, frothed around his head in wild abandon. He was breathing, slow and deep, and that surprised Xander a little. He guessed it was some kind of reflex thing.

Spike’s eyelids fluttered open and he startled slightly before he seemed to remember where he was. “What’s wrong?” he asked, sitting up quickly.

“Nothing. Sorry I woke you. I was just checking in.”

Spike glanced at the covered window. “Time is it?”

“Lunch. And I have to get back to work soon. Is there anything you need?”

Spike blinked for a moment. “Clothes.”

“Right there.” Xander pointed at the pile on top of the dresser. “Um, no shoes, ‘cause I didn’t know what size.”

Spike shook his head. “Not going anywhere, am I? But it’s nine and a half.”

“Okay. Not really a Docs outlet around here, but I’ll see what I can do. Anything else?”

“There’s scissors in one of the kitchen drawers. The rest, again, not exactly a shopping mecca here, but I’ll do my best.”

“Ta.”

Xander stood there awkwardly.

“Go. Do your work and come back and tell me what the bloody hell is going on.”

A small grin escaped Xander because it had been so long since he’d heard English swearing. To his surprise, Spike grinned back, a warm sort of smile like friends sharing a good joke.

“Later,” Xander said, and went off to see if Raul wanted some help with that tractor.

A couple hours later, when Xander had a few minutes free, he ducked into the office. Veronica frowned at him like always but Araceli smiled. “Hey, Xander.”

“Hey yourself. Can I borrow the phone for a sec?”

“Sure.” She passed it over to him and he dialed Emma’s number.

“Xander!” Emma squealed. He was the only one who’d be calling her from the Oasis. “Ohmigod! Is he there? Is he all right? Did the clothes fit him okay? Was he upset about the boxers? ‘Cause I can go somewhere else today and—“

“I don’t think he’s worn anything yet, Em,” Xander said. “But yes, he’s here and he’s okay. Can I ask another favor?”

“Sure!”

“He needs shoes. Size nine and a half, he says. And, uh, hair bleach and, I don’t know, some kind of gel.”

Emma giggled. “Sounds like a high maintenance vampire. Okay, no prob. I get off work in a couple hours, so it’ll be a while, okay?”

“Thanks, Emma.”

“What kind of shoes does he wear?”

Xander thought about the state of his finances. Well, considering he was probably going to die in a hell dimension soon there was no point in being stingy. “Um, black boots. Doc Martens, but if you can’t—“

“Docs! I love Docs! I can get those, easy. More blood, too?”

“That’d be great, if it’s not too much trouble.”

“See ya later.”

“You’re a goddess, Emma.”

She giggled again and hung up.

Araceli didn’t say anything as she took the phone back; she just raised her eyebrows at him. He sighed. “His name is Spike and he’s an old friend and he’s staying with me for a few days. Raul
said it was okay.”

She smiled. “And he wears size nine and a half boots and he’s fussy about his hair.”

“He does and he is.”

“If he feels like coming by, I’d love to meet him, Xander.”

“He’s…. We’re not really….” He gave up. “I’ll let him know. He’s kind of recovering from a bad experience now, though, so if he just hides out, don’t take it personally.”

She nodded as if she knew exactly what he meant. With a glance at Veronica, who was staring at him wide-eyed, he left.

***

“Christ, this is better than I’d remembered.”

Xander nodded and took a bite. One of the town’s two restaurants sold pizza and, although they didn’t ordinarily deliver, he’d begged and offered a twenty dollar tip. He hadn’t had the stuff himself in far too long, and it tasted like ambrosia to him, like the food of the gods. He’d even missed the way the hot cheese and sauce stuck to the roof of his mouth, burning it, and the way he could lick the grease off his lips after each bite.

Spike apparently hadn’t had any human food at all in a decade and he’d been happy to dig on in. Xander pretended not to notice how sexy he looked when he tongued a little sauce off his fingers. Of course, he enjoyed the beer even more, even though it was just the cheap stuff that Xander happened to have at hand, and Xander promised him a liquor store run as soon as possible.

“My friend Emma’s gonna come by in a little while with some of the stuff you asked for. She’s your blood supplier, too. I don’t have a car.”

Spike drank half a can of beer at once. “Tell me now, Xander. What did you do? What kind of deal did you make with that pillock?”

“Just a little errand.”

Spike took a swig from the mug of blood that had sat next to the beer. He’d been drinking the stuff all afternoon and was looking much more like his old self. “‘A little errand.’ I told you to stay away. Do you have any idea what you’re dealing with, whelp?”

“I’m not a whelp, Spike! I’m a grown man and, contrary to popular opinion, I’m not an idiot either. I have a pretty good idea what I’m dealing with.”

Spike crossed his arms. “Then why? You really that desperate for a piece of my arse? Could’ve continued to shag me whenever you could scrape up a fifty.”

Xander had almost forgotten how angry the vampire could make him. He viciously murdered another piece of pepperoni before he answered. “Your ass is very nice, Spike, but it’s not the only ass in the sea. I can get laid whenever I want and without having to pay for it, thanks very much.”

“Ah, but this way you have me all to yourself. Bending over with gratitude, yeah? Is that why?”
“I’m not asking you to bend anywhere! Em’s bringing your boots, my wallet’s up there on the counter. I thought you’d want to stick around a couple days and recover, but if you want to take off now, I sure as hell can’t stop you.”

“I have nowhere to go!”

“Neither do I!”

They were face-to-face across the table, screaming at each other, and it was so stupid that Xander froze and then fell back in his chair, laughing.

“What’s so bloody funny?” Spike demanded.

“You are. I am. Both of us. Everything. The whole goddamn universe is an enormous cosmic joke, and I’m the fucking punchline.”

Spike scowled a moment later and then he relaxed as well and shook his head. “Barmy as always,” he muttered.

Xander lifted his can of beer in a little toast and took a big swig.

“Xander, why?” Spike’s voice was quiet now, almost plaintive.

“Because you don’t deserve to be treated like that and…and I couldn’t live with myself if I’d left you there.” He ducked his head, unable to meet Spike’s eyes. When he peeked back a moment later, Spike had his head cocked and brows lowered, regarding Xander intensely.

“Is it because I’m the last link to your past, pet? A souvenir of old times?”

“I try not to think of old times, Spike.” Xander looked away again. “It’s because of you, okay?”

A long pause. “You care about me, Xander?”

He whispered his answer. “Yes.”

He wasn’t sure what response to expect. Something sarcastic, maybe, an insult or two. Maybe anger. Maybe just abrupt rejection. What he definitely didn’t expect was for Spike to stand and walk over to him, then kneel at his side and reach up to stroke Xander’s face. “Oh, pet,” he murmured. “Don’t you know? I won’t get you anything but trouble.”

“I can manage that perfectly fine on my own, thanks,” Xander said, slightly sullenly.

Spike laughed. It was the first time Xander had heard him do so since Sunnydale. “That you can, pet, that you can.” He bowed his head, then, and rested it on Xander’s knee. Xander found himself running his fingers through Spike’s hair and massaging his scalp, just as he had at Walker’s.

“T’s lovely,” Spike purred.

They could have stayed like that all night, perhaps, but a knock sounded on the door, startling them both. “Emma,” Xander said. He called, “Just a second!” and then turned to Spike. “Do you feel up to meeting someone? She’s a friend.”

“She knows about me?”

“I told you, she’s our blood source.”
“All right, then.”

Xander walked over and opened the door. Emma burst inside, her arms again full, already chattering about a fantastic sale she’d found. Out of the corner of his eye, Xander saw that Spike had backed as far away as the tiny space permitted and his arms were wrapped tightly around himself.

Xander took the bags away and set them on the table. “Emma? This is Spike. Spike, Emma.” He nodded once, and she dimpled at him.

“Hi,” she said. “It’s great to meet you. I’ve never met a vampire before—not that I wouldn’t want to meet you anyway even if you weren’t a vampire, it’s just that I think it’s really interesting and I hope the boxers are okay and you don’t hate the buckle but I found you some great boots and, uh, shutting up now.”

Spike relaxed a little and cocked an eyebrow at her. “Boots?” he said.

So she smiled again and rummaged through a bag until she had a cardboard box, which she handed to Spike. “Black, to complete the ensemble.”

He pulled one boot out of the box and stroked it lightly. “Cheers, love,” he said, before replacing it and setting the box on the sofa.

“You’re English! Ohmigod! Xander, you didn’t tell me he’s English!” She turned and glared at Xander as if he’d been withholding state secrets.

“Um—“ Xander began.

She ignored him and turned back to Spike. “I want to go to England so bad and I told my parents that I should go when I graduate, like, take a year off before med school, right? And they were all, ‘No, you have to finish your education first,’ and I was like, that’s easy for them to say, they get to travel whenever they want to. What’s England like?”

Spike looked slightly overwhelmed. “Erm, haven’t been there for decades, love.”

Her eyes went wide and she bounced up and down. “That’s right! You’re like, really old! Ohmigod, I forgot about that part! Were you around for the Crusades?”

Xander snorted laughter and now it was Spike’s turn to glare at him. “Not quite,” Spike answered. “Well, I expect you to tell me all about it sometime, okay?”

“It’ll be a pleasure, love.”

She squealed slightly and then whacked Xander on the arm. “Okay, well, I’m gonna go, because you guys probably want some time together—I don’t necessarily mean together together, not that that wouldn’t be totally cool or anything, just talking together, or whatever. So, um, I’ll go.”

“How much do I owe you?” Xander asked, reaching for his wallet.

“Oh, don’t be stupid, Xan. It’s a gift, for Spike, a…late Christmas present. Oh, vampires probably don’t celebrate Christmas. Then it’s an early Spring Equinox present. Um, that’s okay, isn’t it, Spike?” She looked genuinely worried.

Spike smiled slightly. “That’d be brilliant. Haven’t had a proper equinox pressie for ages.”
Her face turned to sunshine again and she clapped. “Great! Okay, going now. Bye, guys!” And before Xander could say another word, she was gone.

Spike and Xander looked at each other in the sudden silence. “Does she remind you of someone, mate?” Spike finally said.

“Um, yeah. We need to talk, Spike.”

***

It took a little time to put away the blood packets Emma had brought, and then Xander had a quick shower because he felt really grimy, and in the meantime Spike laced on his boots and tromped around the trailer in them in apparent satisfaction. Before stepping into the bathroom, Xander pointed out that Spike could go outside if he wanted—it was well past dark and few people would be around—but Spike seemed slightly panicky at the prospect so Xander distracted him with the remote control instead.

When Xander came out of the shower he pulled on his one pair of sweatpants and sat down on the sofa. From his perch on the bed, Spike clicked off the television, and then he came padding in, barefoot again.

“She brought me hair bleach,” he announced, sitting next to Xander. “It’s all right if I use it tomorrow while you’re at work?”

“Sure, Spike, whatever you want.” He really wished Spike wouldn’t use the gel, though; he liked the soft feel of Spike’s hair as he ran through his fingers. Maybe he could persuade Spike not to use it until they’d parted ways.

“What do you need to say, pet?” Spike looked like he was preparing for a blow.

Xander took a deep breath and let it out. “Okay,” he said. “It’s like this.”

And he told Spike everything—his initial meeting with Lindsey, the deal he’d brokered, the meeting with Liz and then Buffy and Angel as oracles. Spike looked like he wanted to interrupt several times, but he restrained himself. Although he snickered slightly at the description of Angel in his oracle outfit, his overall mood was grim, and by the end of the tale his face was even paler than usual and his jaw so tightly set Xander could hear his teeth grind.

“No,” Spike growled. “You’re not letting the Powers That Wank pull your strings, and you’re not letting that tosser send you to hell so he has a chance of a bloody holiday.”

“Not my first choice, either, Spike, but—“

“But nothing. They can put the collar back on me and stick me back in their sodding cage. You’re not going.”

A part of Xander rejoiced at this. Spike didn’t want him to sacrifice himself. Spike cared. But he shook his head and put on his most stubborn face. “I’m going. And it’s not just to save you, although I’d do it for that. It’s just…I used to have a purpose, Spike. I might not have been all that great at it most of the time and I mostly wasn’t all that important in the grand scheme of things. I wasn’t the Chosen One. But that was okay. I was doing something. And then for a while I stopped,
tried to have a normal life. But that didn’t work out so great. Let’s face it, Spike. It’s a miracle I lived this long. I’m gonna end up getting chomped by a demon, which is better than the alternative, spending my life locked up in the pen. If I’ve got even a small chance to hurt Wolfram & Hart—and keep you free in the bargain—I’m gonna take it.”

He didn’t usually make speeches and this one tired him, but he meant every word of it.

Spike stuck out his bottom lip. “Tilting at windmills, just like the pouf.”

“Maybe. Seems to me you’ve done some windmill tilting yourself, Spike.”

Spike had no answer to that. He just scowled at the worn floor until Xander stood.

“I’ve gotta work in the morning,” Xander announced. “I’m going to bed.”

Spike stood as well. “Right, then. I’m going with you.”

Xander was fairly certain he didn’t mean to the bedroom.

Chapter 13
The Prisons We Make

Chapter Summary

It's over a decade since Sunnydale collapsed, and Xander is doing time. A fellow prisoner mentions a vampire he once saw displayed at a tourist trap. Freedom doesn't come easy.

Entry tags: spike/xander, the prisons we make

The Prisons We Make, 13/18
Title: The Prisons We Make
Chapter: 13 of 18
Pairing: Spike/Xander
Rating: NC-17
Disclaimer: I'm not Joss
Warnings: angst, slash, violence, slavery, dub-con
Summary: It's over a decade since Sunnydale collapsed, and Xander is doing time. A fellow prisoner mentions a vampire he once saw displayed at a tourist trap. Freedom doesn't come easy.
AN: This fic is complete and I'll post a chapter a day. Enormous thanks to beta hello_spikey and her very helpful comments! And also enormous thanks to sentine, who has provided three amazing banners! I couldn't possibly pick just one, so I'll be rotating them. As always, your comments are what keep my muse alive!

Previous chapters here

Thank you for voting! The impatient have won, so I'll continue posting 2 chapters a day. :-) At the end of this chapter we have special bonus art, courtesy of the very talented magixa!
It was really hard to argue when Spike was under the covers with him, one hand playing idly with Xander’s nipples while his mouth suckled lightly on Xander’s neck. Xander lay on his back, feeling the tension slowly ebb away, wondering whether Spike was going to bite. He realized he’d come to a point in his life when he was eager for, rather than dreading, fangs sinking into him.

Sinking into him. That gave him a thought. “Spike?” he said.

Spike paused in his mouthing of the tender skin. “Yeah, pet?”

“There’s lube in my jacket pocket.”
“Bit eager to get in there, are we?” Spike didn’t sound upset about it, just amused. He went back to gently pinching Xander’s nipples.

“Actually, I thought we’d try something different, now that you’re more mobile.”

Spike froze again, and then rose up on one elbow. “Really?”

“If you want. I mean, I’m good either way, but I thought maybe—”

“Christ, yes!” Spike bounded out of the bed, and Xander had to laugh as the vampire streaked his way into the other room, where Xander’s coat hung on a hook on the door, and rifled through the many pockets, swearing impatiently the whole time. Finally, he made a small noise of triumph and came running back in, small plastic tube held high in one hand. He looked so funny—really, the entire situation was so funny—that Xander started to giggle, then to laugh, until he was cackling so hard that tears were running out of his eye. Spike mock-growled and tackled him, then began a series of touches and kisses and gentle little nibbles that soon turned Xander’s shortles to moans.

Spike fumbled a little with the lube as he squirted it on his finger. “Been some time since I did this,” he said.

“Me, too.”

“Do you reckon we’ll remember how?”

“Can’t tell until we try,” Xander said, and then gasped when cool fingers went between his legs.

Spike spent a few minutes caressing Xander’s balls and rubbing the skin behind them, and then he patted Xander’s hip. “Turn over, pet.”

Xander did. In fact, he went up on all fours. But when nothing happened, he turned his head to look over his shoulder. Spike was kneeling behind him, assessing his ass like it was a painting in a museum.

“Well?” Xander said. “What’s the verdict?”

Spike slapped him just hard enough to feel good. “You’ve been exercising.”

“Not much else to do in prison, and I’ve been doing a lot of physical work since.”

“And fewer doughnuts.” He slapped the other side, so the cheeks would match, maybe.

“Nearest Krispy Kreme’s 80 miles from here.”

“It’s a good look for you. I like you all grown up.”

Xander was pondering what that meant when Spike started stroking his crack, and Xander gave up on thinking. Soon Spike was inserting one slick finger in him, then two, and Xander was whimpering into his pillow. “You’re ready?” Spike asked.

“Gods, yes.”

Spike’s cock pushed against his entrance, just a little. Xander tried to relax. He really, really wanted this, but he hadn’t been fucked since before he went to prison, and he couldn’t help tensing just a bit. Spike stayed still, though, the damp head of his cock exerting just a little pressure, his hips rocking just the tiniest amount. He reached around Xander’s side and began fisting Xander’s dick, which was very happy to join the festivities.
When Xander began whimpering and pushing back against Spike, Spike correctly interpreted that to mean he was ready for more, and he slowly pushed inside. It hurt a little, but as with the bite, the pain and discomfort were very much outweighed by the pleasure that coursed through Xander’s body. And Spike’s, too: “Bloody hell, pet, that’s good,” he groaned. “Not going to last long.”

Xander moaned his agreement.

Spike’s strokes were long and unhurried, and Xander felt so wonderfully filled, and Spike was managing to rub against his prostate with every thrust, so that Xander was shuddering with the effort to hold back his climax a little longer. Then he mustered an idea and struggled upright on his knees. Spike could only move a little like this, but that was enough. He was gripping Xander’s hips tightly enough that it might have hurt if Xander was capable of registering something like that right then, but all Xander said was, “Bite me.”

Spike instantly stopped moving, except for a noisy intake of oxygen. Then Xander heard the distinctive sound of bones and flesh reshaping, and Spike’s sharp tongue was tickling his neck. “You’re certain, Xan?” He lisped just a tiny bit around his fangs.

“Absolutely.” He leaned back just a little until his back was firmly against Spike’s chest. Spike again began to caress Xander’s cock and, just when it was almost too much, he bit into Xander’s carotid.

Buffy and Willow and all his old friends might be in heaven, but Xander shot somewhere up above the stratosphere, his body arching like a bow between the points of penetration while his mind zoomed through the solar system like a comet.

When he came back to Earth, he was on his side in bed, and Spike was facing him, leaning his forehead against Xander’s. Spike’s arm was folded comfortably around Xander’s waist. “We remembered,” he whispered with a small smile.

“Mmm.” Xander could barely get his mouth to work.

“Might still fancy some practice, though.”

“Mmm,” Xander repeated, wiggling slightly to indicate his approval. “Not tonight. Human.”

Spike chuckled and palmed Xander’s ass. “Sleep, pet.”

***

Despite the fact that Spike woke him with another spectacular blowjob—and this time let Xander reciprocate—and then Xander had to shower to get all the dried mess off of himself, he reported to Raul on time. “How’s Spike?” Raul asked, handing Xander his delivery manifests.

Xander blushed slightly. “Um, good, thanks.”

“If he wants a little work, I could probably find him something.”

“Thanks, Raul, that’s really nice of you. But Spike’s not, um, really a daytime person.”

Raul stroked his mustache but didn’t say anything.
“Okay, well, I’m off to Palm Springs,” Xander said, and went to go load the truck.

The Tuesday run actually required several stops so, although it involved the least mileage, it took the most time. It was late in the afternoon by the time Xander returned to the Oasis, and then he had to unload empty boxes and crates and get the manifests cleared through Araceli. He’d been thinking about Spike all day, though, sometimes daydreaming about the feel of Spike on him, in him, around him; sometimes marveling that he and his one-time enemy had become friends, lovers. Important to one another. And sometimes he thought about the disagreement they’d had the previous night before bed. Did Spike really mean to accompany him to hell? Xander had very mixed feelings on the matter—on the one hand, his chances of success went up astronomically with Spike at his side, but on the other, the last thing he wanted was for Spike to throw himself back into danger. Potentially, right back into Wolfram & Hart’s hands.

“Hi, honey, I’m home!” Xander announced, stomping into the trailer. Spike gave him a slightly annoyed look from the bed, where he was propped up on the pillows watching tv. He’d cut his hair quite short and it was back to its familiar radioactive shade, but it didn’t look like he’d used the gel. He was wearing a pair of jeans, unbuttoned, and nothing else. Xander had no idea what his emotional state was, but he looked fully healed, his chest and abdomen once more displaying compact, well-defined muscles, and his eyes no longer looking deeply sunk in their sockets.

“Been gone bloody long enough,” Spike groused.

“Somebody’s gotta bring home the bacon. Or, in this case, the really nice t-bones he picked up when he swung by the carniceria.”

“Steaks?”

“Of the yummy and non-dust-producing kind. I’m guessing you’ll want yours extra rare.”

“And I’m guessing your cooking skills haven’t improved over the years.” Spike stood and stretched, which was a pretty thing to watch.

“Hey. Even I can cook a steak. And my cooking skills have improved over the years. If it involves ramen noodles or using a hotplate, I’m your guy.”

Spike rolled his eyes. “Give us the food before you ruin it, pet.”

Xander grinned, because he actually had no objections whatsoever to having Spike cook for him. “Done.” He handed the bag over and then used the opportunity to run his newly emptied hands over the smooth skin of Spike’s back. Spike seemed to like that, because he stepped in a little closer, squashing the bag between them so he could mouth at the tiny scabs on Xander’s neck. He made a happy little sound as Xander’s hands slipped below his loose waistband to cup at his ass. Xander had been right—Spike didn’t need underwear.

“Okay,” Xander groaned. “How about we save this ‘til dessert, ‘cause if I don’t eat first I’m not gonna have any energy at all.”

“Need to get some meat in you, Harris?”

Xander squeezed Spike’s left cheek fairly hard, which only made the vampire wiggle appreciatively. Then, with some regret, Xander pulled his hands away, dropped a kiss somewhere in the vicinity of Spike’s ear, and stepped back. “I’m thinking we need something to wash the steaks down with,” he said.

“Some juice with your meat?”
“Can you make everything sound dirty?”

Spike curled his tongue behind his teeth. “Don’t like it when I pound a point home?”

“You’re evil, you know.”

“I try hard.”

Xander threw his arms up in defeat. “Okay. I’m going to go over to Sam’s and get something strong enough to make me forget this conversation. Any requests?”

Spike thought for a moment as he set the packages down on the table. “Some Jack’d be lovely.”

“Jack it is.” Xander swooped in for another peck on the cheek, just barely avoided grabbing hands, and, feeling absurdly domestic, went off to the liquor store.

Sam was bent over one of his usual books, his mug of tea within reach. “Hey, Xander,” he said, when Xander plopped a bottle of JD and a six-pack of Sam Adams in front of him. “Thirsty day?”

“Pretty much.”

Sam punched at the cash register keys. “You know, that vampire ain’t at Walker’s no more. Got repossessed, I guess.”

Xander tried to keep his face neutral. “Oh?”

“That sick bastard that runs the place, Reece, he was in here Sunday evening, boo-hooing about it. ‘It was my biggest draw,’ blah, blah, blah, as if anyone gives a shit. Place shoulda been shut down years ago.”

“What’s he going to do about it?”

“I dunno. Not much he can do, from what he says. Hope he can dig up another one.” He chuckled. “Dig up, heh-heh! Fucking demons.”

“Some demons aren’t so bad,” Xander said, because he found he couldn’t betray Spike or Anya by saying nothing.

Sam lifted a gray eyebrow. “I never could trust one.”

“Most demons are pretty straightforward. They plan to eat you or take over the world, they’ll generally let you know. In my experience, it’s the humans you gotta watch out for.”

“You got a point there, kid.” He handed Xander his change. “You spent a lot of time with demons?”

Xander laughed and picked up his bags. “You have no idea, man.”

“You know, I had a pretty wild life, back in the day.”

“You don’t say,” Xander said without surprise.

“I gave it up a while back. All my friends were dyin’, you know? Was only a matter of time before I kicked it, too. So I straightened up and now I live a safe little life. Hell, I even wear a seatbelt! Thing is, I’m still gonna bite the dust, one of these days. Sometimes I wonder if it’d been better if I’d just gone out with a bang instead.” He grinned crookedly. “Might’ve been more fun.”
The delicious odor of grilling t-bone filled Xander’s nose as soon as he entered the trailer. Spike was still dressed—or, more accurately, undressed—as he had been before, and he was just pulling the steaks out of the oven. Xander had no idea how Spike had managed to fit both of them in the tiny appliance. Magic, maybe.

“Just in time, pet,” Spike said, transferring the meat from the pan to plates with a barbecue fork. “Was about to eat them both myself.”

“Then I’d have drunk all the whiskey myself.”

“Then I’d have taken advantage of you when you were pissed.”

“You don’t need to get me smashed to take advantage of me, Spike.”

Spike leered happily at him. Then they sat across from each other and began to eat. The steak was, as Xander had predicted, extremely rare, but it was delicious. Besides, ever since the second time the hyena had visited him, he’d had a real taste for barely cooked meat.

When the food was gone and the beers were opened, Xander leaned back against his chair and belched. “You make a good housewife, Spike.”

Spike threw a spoon at him, but not very energetically.

“Have you always liked guys, Spike? Is it some kind of vampire thing?”


“That’s pretty much what Anya told me.”

“Demon bint taught you a thing or two, did she?”

“Over a thousand years of experience, Spike, and no qualms about over-sharing.”

“She was quite a girl.”

“She was.” Xander remembered how it had felt to see Spike and Anya having sex on camera—like getting his heart ripped out—and only belatedly realized that part of the anger came from the fact that he was jealous of both of them. The possibilities he could have explored had he been a bit more open-minded back then!

“Where’s your mind wandered to now, pet?”

Xander set his beer down. “Don’t go.”

Spike blinked at him. “Pretty comfy sitting here, Xander. Hadn’t fancied a walk just now.”


Spike stared at him impassively. “You know I won’t listen to a word of that shite, whelp.”

Xander sighed. “No. I didn’t figure you would. It’s only, somebody should have a happy ending, Spike. I’d like it if that somebody was you.”

“And you really think I’d be happy if I let those wankers have you? Look, this,” he waved his hand
back and forth between them, “it’s not just convenience, Xander. I think you know me better than that. It might not have been what I chose—hell, neither of us would have chosen it—but now I have it and I want it and it’s real.” He shrugged again. “It’s all I do have. A century and half, and the only thing of value I’ve ever truly possessed is sodding love. In the end, maybe that’s enough.”

Xander stared at Spike in astonishment. “Love?” he squeaked.

“Love,” Spike replied firmly. “Git.”

Chapter 14
Chapter Summary

It's over a decade since Sunnydale collapsed, and Xander is doing time. A fellow prisoner mentions a vampire he once saw displayed at a tourist trap. Freedom doesn't come easy.

Entry tags: spike/xander, the prisons we make

The Prisons We Make, 14/18
Title: The Prisons We Make
Chapter: 14 of 18
Pairing: Spike/Xander
Rating: NC-17
Disclaimer: I'm not Joss
Warnings: angst, slash, violence, slavery, dub-con
Summary: It's over a decade since Sunnydale collapsed, and Xander is doing time. A fellow prisoner mentions a vampire he once saw displayed at a tourist trap. Freedom doesn't come easy.
AN: This fic is complete and I'll post a chapter a day. Enormous thanks to beta hello_spikey and her very helpful comments! And also enormous thanks to sentine, who has provided three amazing banners! I couldn't possibly pick just one, so I'll be rotating them. As always, your comments are what keep my muse alive!

Previous chapters here
Fourteen

The rest of the week went by quickly. Spike never once left the trailer. Xander thought the vampire must have been going stir crazy in the tiny space, but when he suggested even so much as a walk around the Oasis, Spike shook his head and hunched his shoulders and looked miserable. Spike did read the small stash of books Xander had accumulated, and he watched tv and cooked and cleaned. And there was sex, lots and lots of mind-blowing sex, so that by the end of the week Xander was half-certain he was never going to make it to Lindsey’s hell because he’d be fucked to death first.
Cuddled together in sticky and post-coital bliss on Friday night, the two of them were talking about nothing important and everything of consequence. Spike spoke of his childhood in London, his recollections a mixture of soft nostalgia and hard realism. He described the way it felt to still be angry at people who had been bones in a forgotten grave for a hundred years, the way the small hurts William had suffered as a human never really went away. Xander talked about his parents, things he’d never said to anyone, not even Willow, like the way he had looked at his mother the day he’d realized she’d never save him from his father’s drunken rages, and how that was the day she’d begun to drink as well. It felt good to share these things, to carry the burden of the memories between them. To feel strong, strong arms around him and know that for once if he fell, someone was there to catch him.

In the wee hours, somewhere near the point where late night becomes early morning, Xander again asked Spike if he’d like to go for a walk. “Not much light pollution out here. You can see about a bazillion stars.”

Spike burrowed against him, hiding his face in Xander’s skin, and in the tiniest of whispers, said, “I’m afraid.”

Xander swallowed around the lump in his throat and stroked Spike’s lower back. “Afraid of what?” he whispered back.

“That this is all a dream. If I go outside I’ll wake up, and I’ll be back in that cage again, or up on the auction block, or watching everyone die in that alley.” He was trembling and Xander’s shoulder grew damp from his tears. “I couldn’t bear that, Xander, I couldn’t.”

How close to broken did Spike have to be to admit this weakness?

“We’ll stay in here,” Xander said firmly. “We’ll stay in bed and never get out again.”

Spike sighed and clutched Xander tightly, and all the world was a dream except the two of them.

***

Knock knock!

“If that’s the sodding lawyer tell him to bugger off,” Spike ordered from the sunlight-safe confines of the bedroom. “We have another day.”

But it wasn’t Lindsey. It was, in fact, Sam, who was wearing a fringed leather jacket and carrying a worn black satchel. “Do you have a minute?” he asked.

“Um, sure,” Xander replied, bemused. “Come on in.”

Xander shut the door behind Sam, and the man and Spike eyed each other warily. “Spike, this is Sam. He’s the one who’s been keeping us so amply supplied with alcohol. Sam, this is Spike, my, uh, my Spike,” he finished lamely.

Neither looked exactly pleased to make the other’s acquaintance, but they nodded cordially at one another, and then Sam set his bag down on the table. “I had a dream last night,” he announced. “Real vivid one, kinda like I was havin’ a flashback to my old peyote days. This dude was in the dream, guy in his fifties, uptight looking bastard in tweed with a snooty accent.”
Xander and Spike exchanged quick, startled glances.

“So this guy, he tells me that I’m supposed to give you these.” He patted the bag he’d brought. “Said the fate of the world depended on it, or some kinda shit like that. Now, I ain’t one to pay much attention to mystical crap. But I ain’t using this stuff no more anyway, and I know you run with a bad crowd, now and then, so I thought, what the hell. Might as well.”

“What’d you bring my boy?” Spike asked, stepping closer. A small thrill raced down Xander’s spine at the words “my boy.”

Sam gave Spike a long look, then opened the bag and upended it over the table. An assortment of implements clattered out. Mostly knives of a variety of descriptions, but also several brass knuckles, some with blades built into them, a scarred crowbar, and even a set of four-pointed throwing stars. Spike immediately began sorting through, setting the items into piles according to some criteria Xander couldn’t discern.

“That’s quite a collection,” Xander said.

Sam grinned. “Like I said, I had a pretty wild life. Dunno why I kept all this shit, really. Ain’t touched it in a long time.”

“You’re sure you don’t want it?”

“Nope. Use it in good health, as my grandma would say.”

Xander clapped him on the shoulder. “Thanks, man. This is…thanks.”

“Sure thing. And if you ever see that English dude, tell him to stop haunting my dreams.”

“Will do.”

Sam shook his hand—even shook Spike’s hand, in fact—and then left.

“Well,” Spike said, eyeing their loot. “This ought to come in handy.”

***

Xander remembered those strange days in Sunnydale, those last few hours before the world almost ended again. They’d clung to one another then in various ways and various combinations, pulling the last dregs of comfort that they could. He and Anya had rutted like bunnies—well, poor choice of analogy in her case—for hours, stopping only to eat a little and take a quick nap before starting in again. He was glad for it at the time, and even gladder later, when she was dead. They didn’t love each other in the way they both hoped for, but they did mean something to one another, and Xander was consoled a little with the knowledge that she’d spent the last of her many, many days feeling appreciated and wanted, at least.

This was different. Oh, he and Spike had sex, but it was slow, leisurely, with the orgasms being mostly incidental to the proceedings, like sprinkles on a donut. Sprinkles were nice, they were a lot of fun, but you could enjoy your fried pastry just fine without them. Mostly, they just enjoyed the contact with each other, the soft caresses of fingers and lips and even toes, the scent of each others’ bodies, the sounds they made as they moved together. When they got close to a climax, Spike
would nip at Xander here and there, just a tiny nick with the point of his fang, and they’d fall over the edge together, panting and calling out, and then crawl right back up and begin again.

And when their poor cocks finally gave up, they just held each other, cuddled up and dozing over HBO, and if Xander could have stretched Sunday to a thousand years he would have.

Just after six o’clock, Lindsey arrived.

Xander and Spike scrambled into jeans, and Xander let the lawyer into the trailer. He looked at their obviously debauched state with amusement until Spike growled at him, a low sound like something a lion would make right before it pounced, and then Lindsey paled a little and made sure Xander was standing between them.

“You don’t care who you tangle up into your twisted schemes, do you? Fucking over vampires, that’s one thing, but Xan’s human, and good, and you know it.” Spike looked about a half second away from sprouting bumps.

“Hey, man, he came to me. He’s gets what he wants, I get what I want. That’s fair.”

“Fair!” Spike snarled and took a step towards the lawyer.

“Hey!” Xander put his hand out to hold Spike back. “’He’ is standing right here and capable of speaking for himself. Spike, we’ve been through this, and you know you can’t even fully blame Lindsey for this situation. And I’m gonna go through with it, so there’s no point getting fangy about it. Lindsey, you’re a grade-A asshole and there’s nothing fair about this. But I knew that when I agreed.”

For several moments they all just stood there, glaring at one another, until finally Xander sighed. “Let’s get this over with.”

They all relaxed a little, and Lindsey nodded.

“Sit down,” Xander ordered, pointing at a chair. “It’s gonna take us a few minutes to get ready.”

“’Us?’”

“I’m not letting my boy go there alone,” Spike said.

Lindsey looked slightly surprised, then shrugged and sat. “Whatever. Just get it done.”

Xander grabbed Spike’s arm and dragged him into the bedroom, then shut the door. Silently, grimly, they put on clean clothes and laced on their boots. Xander shrugged on his own coat and handed Spike the one he’d picked up for him Wednesday on his way back from L.A. It was a black leather motorcycle jacket, nothing like the long-lost duster, but it suited Spike. And it had a lot of pockets, into which Spike began to tuck some of the weapons Sam had brought. Xander did the same. Blades went in their boots as well, and they buckled scabbards around their waists, until they were both walking armories.

Xander had hidden the chain Liz gave him in the back of the closet, and now he drew it out and, with a slight shiver, hung it around his neck. He’d also stored Lindsey’s blood-sensing charm there. He strung a leather cord through the little loop on the charm, and Spike tied the cord securely around Xander’s wrist.

They were ready.
But before Xander could make it out the door, Spike seized him and threw him against the wall hard enough to shake the trailer slightly. He gasped as Spike crashed into him, melding their mouths together with a clack of teeth, pressing their bodies together from chest to knees.

Xander twisted his head away. “Spike!” he said breathlessly. “Lindsey’s right—”

“Sod him. Need this, pet.”

Xander couldn’t say no to that. Hell, he was pretty sure he needed it, too. So he turned his head back and met Spike’s soft lips with his own. One of them—both of them, maybe—moaned. Their hands skated restlessly over too many layers of fabric until they came to rest on one another’s asses, palms against denim, and Spike drew their hips more tightly together. Xander had had more sex in the past week than in the past many years, more really great sex than he’d had since, well, ever. But still his cock hardened against Spike’s bulge and they ground into each other desperately.

Xander nibbled at Spike’s delectable lip and then trailed his mouth down to that delicate neck, where he worried the thin skin lightly with his teeth.

“Oh, fuck, yeah. Like that,” Spike groaned. Xander found Spike’s voice incredibly sexy, especially when it went all deep and raspy like that, and so he bit a little harder. So hard, in fact, he tasted salt and copper, and Spike stretched his neck more, offering himself, and then shuddered helplessly against him and cried out raggedly. Xander could feel Spike’s cock pulse as he came.

Knowing he could do that to the vampire, that he had the power to make Spike fall apart like that, that was a heady thing. Maybe it was the hyena’s fault. But Xander was suddenly certain that he possessed Spike, just as thoroughly and absolutely as Spike possessed him. He released Spike’s neck and he howled in triumph and exhilaration, and he flew apart.

It was only a minute or so later that he regained himself. Their knees must have given out, because he and Spike were tangled in a panting heap on the floor. Spike reached out a slightly shaky hand and smoothed the hair back from Xander’s face. “You’d make a lovely vampire, Xan.”

Xander decided to take that as a compliment, and he smiled. “I already have a lovely vampire.” They leaned their foreheads together, just for a moment, and then sighed. Slowly they extricated themselves from one another and stood on slightly weak legs. Xander looked at the small wet patch on Spike’s jeans and knew he had one to match. “We’re going to go to hell all sticky.”

Spike leered. “Best way to go, pet.”

Lindsey was still waiting for them, of course. His face was bright red, and it went even more crimson when Spike sniffed the air and then sneered. “Got your knickers all wet as well, lawyer?”

“I, uh…you guys were loud.”

Lindsey shrank back in his chair as Spike stomped closer. Spike stopped only when he was looming over the man, practically shoving his crotch in Lindsey’s face. “Whether you get ownership of your soul back or not, you’ll always have a great hollow space inside you. No matter how much you have, you’ll always be wanting, little man. You’ll never have what my boy and I do. Tosser.”

Lindsey turned his head away and worked his jaw. He looked like he might cry.

Spike snorted dismissively and moved away. He walked up to Xander and they kissed once more, this time soft and slow and sweet. When they parted, Spike whispered, “I love you, you barmy git.”
“I love you, too, my crazy demon.” Spike smiled like an angel and looked like he might cry, too.

Xander scowled at Lindsey, who was standing now, with his arms crossed defensively over his chest. “I don’t know how long I’ll be gone.” He refused to acknowledge the probability that he’d be gone forever.

“Time works funny in hell dimensions,” Lindsey said.

Xander thought about Angel. “Yeah. I know. If I’m not back by tomorrow morning, make sure my boss, Raul, gets that envelope on the counter.” He pointed. There was one there for Emma, too. He figured he owed them an explanation of sorts and, while what he’d written didn’t give them many details, at least he let them know he appreciated them, and he hadn’t just run out.

Lindsey nodded. “Yeah. I will.”

Spike tucked his right arm tightly around Xander’s waist. “Let’s do it, love.”

Xander reached up to the chain around his neck and turned the key.

Chapter 15
The Prisons We Make

Chapter Summary

It's over a decade since Sunnydale collapsed, and Xander is doing time. A fellow prisoner mentions a vampire he once saw displayed at a tourist trap. Freedom doesn't come easy.

Entry tags: spike/xander, the prisons we make

The Prisons We Make, 15/18
Title: The Prisons We Make
Chapter: 15 of 18
Pairing: Spike/Xander
Rating: NC-17
Disclaimer: I'm not Joss
Warnings: angst, slash, violence, slavery, dub-con
Summary: It's over a decade since Sunnydale collapsed, and Xander is doing time. A fellow prisoner mentions a vampire he once saw displayed at a tourist trap. Freedom doesn't come easy.
AN: This fic is complete and I'll post a chapter a day. Enormous thanks to beta hello_spikey and her very helpful comments! And also enormous thanks to sentine, who has provided three amazing banners! I couldn't possibly pick just one, so I'll be rotating them. As always, your comments are what keep my muse alive!

Previous chapters here
Fifteen

Shortly after they’d closed the Cleveland Hellmouth, and before everybody but Xander had left for England, Dawn had thrown a tantrum. “I’m seventeen years old. I don’t have any friends except a bunch of old people. I had to move and now I’m going to have to move again—to a whole other country where I don’t know anybody and they don’t have the right stores and they don’t even talk right—sorry, Giles—and it’s not fair!” Nobody had had an answer to that because of course she was right. It wasn’t fair.
Buffy had frowned at her. “It’s not like we haven’t all made sacrifices, Dawn. We’ve all been fighting and some have lost”—she glanced at Xander—“people we care about. We’re doing the best we can. With the help of the Watchers we can—“

“I don’t care!” Dawn stomped her foot. “They’re just a bunch more old people. I’m not even going to get to go to prom!”

Willow had patted her on the back. “I’m sorry, sweetie. What can we do to make it better?”

“Make everything like it was before,” Dawn responded sullenly. “With Spike and school and Anya and, and…..”

“Honey, even the strongest magics can’t undo what’s done. You know that.”

Dawn had stared down at her feet, her hair hiding her expression. Then she’d looked up again, with a slight sparkle in her eyes. “Can we at least go to Disney World before we leave?”

So they’d rented a car and the five of them had driven to Florida. Giles had leaned on the Council to contribute generously to their vacation, and Willow had booked them a two-bedroom suite at the Animal Kingdom Lodge. It was a nice hotel, like a tiny bit of Africa. Giles was not interested in the parks and he spent his time at the Lodge, reading in the lobby or by the pool with a drink near at hand, and, Xander was fairly certain, getting a massage or two at the spa. Meanwhile, Xander and the girls had visited all the parks, watched all the parades and shows, ridden all the rides. Dawn made him wear Pirates of the Caribbean-themed Mickey Mouse ears. It had been a lot of fun, just ordinary people on an ordinary vacation.

Each of them had had a favorite ride. Xander liked the Jungle Cruise, with all the familiar corny jokes, maybe because it reminded him of one of the few happy times with his parents, a trip to Disneyland when he was five. Willow loved Spaceship Earth with the robots from history and the focus on computers. Buffy’s favorite was Test Track because, she said, usually she and cars were unmixy, but on this ride even she couldn’t manage to crash. And Dawn fell in love with Tower of Terror, in which you’re strapped into a giant elevator. It rises up to the top of the faux hotel and then, suddenly, drops. Everybody screams. As soon as the ride ended, she’d drag them all back in line again. They must have ridden it a dozen times.

When Xander turned the key in the lock around his neck, he felt a lot like he was back on that ride again. The ground just seemed to open up beneath him—beneath them, because Spike was holding him tightly—and they fell. There were no seatbelts here, though, no reassurances that in a few minutes you’d be back among sticky, screaming children and grownups in rodent costumes. There was only utter darkness, and gut-twisting nausea, and such brutal cold that Xander couldn’t even breathe.

They landed on their asses with a bruising thump.

It took Xander a few moments to refill his lungs with oxygen and settle his swirling stomach enough to risk opening his eyes. When he finally chanced it, he saw that he and Spike were sitting on hard cobblestone in what appeared to be an alley between two tall buildings. He craned his neck so he could see the sky. It was a sick, bilious color of green, and it roiled in a way that made him lean over and retch.

“Better, pet?” Spike asked when he was done, patting Xander’s shoulder.

“Yeah. Sorry.” Xander spat out as much of the foul taste as he could, wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, and then, with Spike’s help, stood. Then, rather belatedly, he had a horrible

“’M fine, Xan.” He held his hands out. “See? Not even smoking.”

Xander sagged a little with relief. “I guess the sun here is more vamp-friendly. Makes sense, I guess. Think we’re in the right place?”

Spike shrugged. “We’re not in Kansas anymore, Toto.”

Xander still felt a little unsteady, but they made their way to the mouth of the alley and peeked out. A gray demon in a gray suit was hurrying by. It caught sight of them, frowned, and scurried even faster.

They seemed to be in a big city. There were no cars or trucks, nothing motorized, but creatures of every imaginable description walked or crawled or slithered by, or rode down the street in strange-looking two wheeled rickshaw–type things pulled by muscular demons with orange scales, who were goaded to faster speeds by short, vicious-looking whips. Everyone seemed to be in a hurry.

Spike and Xander stood there for some time, trying to get a sense of the place before emerging. They spied a few humans, but they were all naked with heavy collars on their necks, and demons were dragging them around on leashes. The humans all looked miserable and defeated, and most had signs of recent beatings on their bodies. One poor man was paraded by with a huge plug visible in his ass and a gag in his mouth. He’d been castrated, Xander saw, and the sight of his limp, lonely penis almost made Xander vomit again.

“Um, Spike? We’re gonna be pretty visible here, I think. Maybe you should switch your face.”

Spike nodded and his face shifted. “Good thought. Not much we can do about your pretty face, though.” He stroked Xander’s cheek, and Xander allowed himself a split second to preen in the compliment.

“How about if we make it look like I’m your slave, then?”

“I am not displaying you naked in front of this lot.”

“Yeah, not my first choice, either. Besides, then I’d have nowhere to hide weapons.”

“Right, then. We’ll have to do what we can and hope that’s enough. Give me your shirt, pet.”

Xander slipped out of his coat and then pulled his t-shirt over his head and handed it to Spike. He put the coat back on, grateful that at least it wasn’t especially cold here. Spike tore the shirt into long strips. He used one to bind Xander’s hands behind his back, loosely enough that Xander could twist free with little effort if he tried. He fashioned the longer strip into a makeshift leash, tying it around Xander’s neck and leaving one long end free to clutch in his hand. He gave Xander a quick peck just above the knot of fabric at Xander’s throat. “Let’s go, Xan. Try to look like a captive, yeah?”

Perhaps their ruse worked, because the scurrying demons paid them scant notice as Spike and Xander emerged from the alley and made their way down the street. Xander tried to keep his gaze cast down submissively, but he couldn’t keep from stealing glances now and then at their surroundings.

It was an unsettling place. Entire blocks would remind him of LA, or of other cities he’d visited over the years—Chicago, New York, Miami—or even of cities he’d only seen in pictures or in movies. Paris, London, Tokyo. Here, though, all the angles seemed subtly wrong and the
perspectives somehow skewed, as if the entire place were a reflection in a warped mirror. Some spots seemed to violate the laws of physics and they made his head hurt when he tried to figure out the geometry, like looking at an Escher print. There was also a bizarre sameness to the city, because everything—buildings, sidewalks, streets, the occasional ugly statue in a paved square—was made of the same substance. It was a slightly bumpy, porous stone, the color somewhere between gray and beige. When he surreptitiously reached behind himself to touch one protuberant wall, the stone left an oily residue on his skin that made him wish he could wipe his hands. He didn’t see a single tree or flower or blade of grass. Nothing but stone and demons and an occasional human in chains.

Spike led him this way and that for a while without any real destination. There were no signs on street corners or buildings, and they certainly didn’t pass any Tourist Information kiosks. Xander had absolutely no sense of direction in this place and he’d become certain that they were just going in circles, but then Spike halted. “I reckon that’s it,” he said very quietly.

Xander risked a look ahead. At the end of the street was an enormous edifice. It was slightly taller than any of the other buildings, and slightly wider, but much more ornate, with columns and carved scrollwork and small gilded domes. It looked like the bastard child of the Taj Mahal and the Empire State Building, with maybe a little of the Roman Colosseum thrown in for good measure. It squatted at the center of a wide square, and Xander had the feeling that the entire city radiated from this point. Still no signs visible, but, like Spike, he was fairly confident that building was their destination.

Before they could set off in that direction, though, their way was blocked by a broad, squat creature. It had oozy-looking pinkish skin and a wide, lipless mouth, but no nose. Oddly, it was wearing a three-piece pinstriped suit, complete with striped tie and a hanky in the pocket. It had shiny black shoes on all four of its feet. “Why is that slave wearing clothing, half-breed?” it demanded.

Spike bristled visibly. “Because I don’t fancy sharing what’s mine with common trash, arsehole. Now bugger off.”

The thing didn’t move, though. Xander peered at it from under his eyelashes as it gave him a long, appraising look. “It’s pretty enough. Shame about the eye. I’ll give you twenty for it.”

Twenty what? Xander thought. Inanely, he found himself wondering if that was a good price, and feeling slightly indignant at the suspicion that it was not.

Spike growled. “Get out of my way before I tear your head off.”

The short demon sneered and drew itself up to its full five feet. “You’ll do no such thing. I’m an assistant to a Liason of the Senior Partners.” It gestured at a small metal pin that was affixed to one lapel. “Twenty-five, that’s my last offer.” It raised its arm again and poked at Xander’s chest with a finger, the way a person might poke at a chunk of meat he was considering buying.

Spike roared. He dropped Xander’s leash and, faster than Xander’s eye could track, he threw himself upon the demon. The demon squawked and grabbed Spike around the neck and tossed him aside. Great, Xander thought. The little monster was strong. Spike launched himself at it again, while Xander got his hands free and pulled a very long, thin knife from its scabbard inside his jacket. He attacked as well. The knife sank into the demon easily, like cutting through jello, and didn’t seem to do much harm. So, as Spike and the demon struggled, Xander yanked the blade back out and, as soon as Spike was momentarily out of the way, he thrust it into one of the creature’s piggy little eyes.
That got its attention. It screamed and backhanded him, sending him flying. But he maintained his grip on the knife and was soon back on his feet, aiming himself at one of the remaining two eyes. Spike was using all his strength to hold the thing’s head still, and, though it was still thrashing its arms around, they were too short to reach Xander. Very quickly, Xander impaled the second eye, wrenched the blade out and then stabbed the third. Spike let go of the demon as it fell to the ground, thrashing and screeching.

“There goes our inconspicuous entrance,” Xander said, observing the small crowd that now stood around them, gaping.

“It touched you, pet.”

“I know. Thanks.” Xander bent to wipe the knife on the writhing demon’s suit, and then he set it back in its sheath. “But maybe we ought to make a run for it.”

Spike eyed the bystanders. “Good call.”

So they ran.

It wasn’t far, maybe a quarter mile. Nobody tried to stop them, either, although everybody stared, open-mouthed, as they raced by. Spike, of course, could have got there very quickly, but he paced himself alongside Xander, so that they arrived in tandem at the bottom of the building’s wide front steps, Xander panting only a little and Spike not at all.

They didn’t have a plan. They’d talked about it a little over the past week, but it was nearly impossible to formulate one without knowing any specifics about their destination. Besides, strategy had never been the strong suit of either of them. They looked at each other now and shrugged. Xander handed the end of his leash to Spike. “Might as well see if the charade works here for a few minutes.”

“All right.” Spike took the fabric and they trudged together up the steps. The front doors were enormous—probably twenty feet tall and twice as wide—and they slid open when Spike and Xander approached them, like the doors to a supermarket. The lobby was, predictably, huge. Most of the surfaces were of that ubiquitous greasy stone, but here it was heavily polished so that it was almost like marble. Chandeliers made of bones and set with flickering candles hung from the ceiling and the furniture was all made of uncushioned, ornately carved wood. None of it looked comfortable. One wall was inlaid with a dozen or more sets of shackles, in about half of which hung naked, miserable prisoners of several species. More employees of the month, perhaps.

Although there was a lot of activity in the hall, demons and even some clothed humans scuttling here and there with stacks of paper and wooden boxes and loads of what looked like either torture implements of modern art, the space was oddly hushed. It was as if the building itself managed to swallow noises. Spike’s and Xander’s bootsteps on the hard floor were nothing but whispers.

A reception desk sat in the exact center of the room and a beautiful young woman sat there, examining the polish on her nails. She appeared to be identical to the receptionist in LA. Maybe it was the same girl, or her twin, or maybe they were clones or something. Xander suddenly remembered the Buffybot. She ignored Xander completely and focused her gorgeous brown eyes on Spike. “May I help you?” she asked, clearly implying by her tone that she’d rather do anything but.

Spike glanced back at Xander and then shrugged. “Looking for the contracts department,” he said to the girl.
“Thirteen, of course. Follow those stairs and turn left when you get there.”

“Cheers.”

Xander trailed slightly behind as they walked across the empty floor. A wide stairway meandered crookedly upwards to a set of double wooden doors. When they opened the doors, they saw more stairs, narrow and steep, twisting around from landing to landing. “I guess it’s too much to ask for elevators in hell,” Xander complained as they climbed.

“I expect technology doesn’t work well here. Have you noticed? We had more than this back when I was a lad.”

“Well then, they shouldn’t make their buildings so tall.”

“Must be overcompensating.”

Xander snickered.

By the time they finally reached the thirteenth floor, though, he was huffing and puffing. He needed to do more cardio exercise. He put it on his mental list of things to do if he survived this place.

Spike yanked open the door marked “13” and they found themselves in a much smaller lobby. This one was covered in thick, soft rugs the color of old blood, and abstract paintings that made Xander dizzy hung on the walls. There was another reception desk here, but nobody sat behind it. As they’d been instructed, Spike and Xander turned left.

Most likely, behind one of the unmarked doors in the long corridor was their objective, Lindsey’s contract. But Xander knew it couldn’t possibly be this easy, so he wasn’t at all surprised when nearly two dozen people—well, a mixture of demons and humans—suddenly erupted from the doors in front and in back of them, trapping Spike and Xander in a few feet of narrow hallway.

They were all heavily armed with large, nasty-looking weapons. Spears and crossbows and even a couple of morningstars. Nothing in Xander’s or Spike’s arsenal could compete.

“Is this how you greet all your guests?” Spike asked. “Not very friendly.”

“Who are you? What do you want?” demanded a purplish thing that reminded Xander a little of an elephant. It had a very deep, nasal voice.

“Came to talk to the boss, not a minion.”

The demon took a step closer. “Yeah? How ‘bout if you talk to a nice, wooden arrow, instead?”

Spike smirked. “Sure. You tell the Senior Partners you dusted the last souled vampire. I’ll wager you’ll make a pretty decoration for the lobby. That color of yours will brighten the place up nicely.”

There was a low, agitated murmur among their challengers.

“What are you doing here?” the demon asked.

“Told you. Came to talk with the Partners. Reckoned I could get a better deal that way than with the underlings in LA. Been waiting a long time to have a nice natter with your superiors.”

The demon narrowed its eyes. “And what about that?” It pointed a claw at Xander.
Spike turned and gave Xander a dismissive shrug. “That was my ticket here. Now run along and fetch your betters.” He glanced nonchalantly at his fingers, as if checking for chipping black polish.

The demons exchanged glances. The purple one turned to a skinny rat-like thing and barked, “Go tell them!” The rat demon scampered away.

Elephant Man glanced back and forth between Spike and Xander. “So if you’re done with your ticket, you won’t mind if I give it to the crew to play with.” A shiver ran down Xander’s spine.

Spike looked at Xander for a moment as if he’d never seen him before. “Nah,” he finally said. “It makes a nice pet. Tasty. I plan to keep it for a while.”

“We have better slaves than this,” said something with horns and tufts of orange fur. “Younger. Less damaged. More obedient.”

“Ah, but that takes all the fun out of it, doesn’t it? Don’t like my toys too tame.” Spike walked over and grabbed Xander’s crotch, hard. When Xander tried to knock his hand away—he couldn’t step back because of the demons standing so close behind him—Spike said “Uh-uh, pet!” and grabbed Xander’s wrists hard enough to hurt. He held them one-handed while his other squeezed Xander’s balls again. “This belongs to me now, doesn’t it?”

Yellow demon eyes stared into Xander’s, and he tried to read the emotion there, but it was too alien.

A door flew open again, and this time the crowd parted reverently to reveal what appeared to be a middle-aged human man in a suit. The man smiled broadly at Spike. “William the Bloody! I’m so delighted to see you!”

“Yeah? This isn’t much of a welcome committee, mate.”

The man frowned at Elephant Man. “Patterson! This is a disgrace! Go prepare rooms for our guest at once!” Patterson quailed visibly and ran off, his entourage following behind. That left Spike and Xander, and two enormous, identical men in black suits who probably weren’t men and certainly were trouble. The man smiled again, his grin as oily as the stone from which this city was built. “Now, Spike—You don’t mind if I call you that, do you?”

“Call me whatever you want, mate, but you’re not a Senior Partner.”

“No. The Partners rarely... well, you’ll see. I’m the Chief Liaison. My name’s Hatfield, by the way, Robert Hatfield. Call me Bob. Now, once those idiots have your room ready, I’ll give you some time to freshen up. I’ll make sure some... refreshments... are sent up as well. And then we can talk a little and I’ll take you to see the Partners.”

“Fine,” Spike said, rubbing his stomach. “Could do with a nosh.”

“Excellent!”

He turned to walk away and his men flanked him. Only when his back was turned did Xander realize that Hatfield had eyes on the back of his bald head. Xander shuddered. Spike began to follow Hatfield, towing Xander by the leash, but then Hatfield halted and turned around. With a false look of consternation, he said, “I’m afraid we don’t allow human slaves in the guest quarters, Spike. It’s a quarantine issue, you see. Nasty things bring in so many diseases! But don’t you worry! We’ll keep it safe and sound for you, down in the basement.”
Spike frowned. “Don’t trust your lot with my property.”

Hatfield feigned offense. “Spike! You have my word that we will take the very best care of it.”

Xander was very unhappy with the entire direction of this conversation, but what could he do about it? He cast a desperate look at Spike.

Spike scowled some more and then said, “Right, then. But if I find out any of those wankers have so much as touched my boy—“

“Not a finger, Spike, I assure you.”

Spike nodded unhappily, and Xander wanted to cry out and clutch at him, but he didn’t. Hatfield touched the shoulders of his goons, and, in the blink of an eye, instead of two goons there were four of them, all the exactly the same. Two of them moved toward him and a pair of handcuffs materialized in the hands of one of them. That one cuffed Xander’s wrists behind his back, being very careful to not touch Xander at all. The other one held out his hand for the leash. Spike handed it over and, without another look at Xander, followed Hatfield down the hall.

Chapter 16
The Prisons We Make

Chapter Summary

It's over a decade since Sunnydale collapsed, and Xander is doing time. A fellow prisoner mentions a vampire he once saw displayed at a tourist trap. Freedom doesn't come easy.

Entry tags: spike/xander, the prisons we make

The Prisons We Make, 16/18
Title: The Prisons We Make
Chapter: 16 of 18
Pairing: Spike/Xander
Rating: NC-17
Disclaimer: I'm not Joss
Warnings: angst, slash, violence, slavery, dub-con
Summary: It's over a decade since Sunnydale collapsed, and Xander is doing time. A fellow prisoner mentions a vampire he once saw displayed at a tourist trap. Freedom doesn't come easy.
AN: This fic is complete and I'll post a chapter a day. Enormous thanks to beta hello_spikey and her very helpful comments! And also enormous thanks to sentine, who has provided three amazing banners! I couldn't possibly pick just one, so I'll be rotating them. As always, your comments are what keep my muse alive!

Previous chapters here
Prison had, quite literally, stripped Xander of whatever shame he had once had about nudity. You endure enough body cavity searches from a guard the inmates nicknamed “Bubba,” and merely being naked is no big deal. So it wasn’t the loss of his clothes that grieved Xander as much as the loss of all the weapons he’d stashed inside them. But there wasn’t much he could do about it with his hands chained behind his back and those two huge thugs tearing at his shirt and jeans, and he had to content himself with a long, loud monologue on what he thought of the goons, their mothers, and their likely sexual habits. The two men in black said not a word as they ripped off every shred
of fabric, leaving him indignant and shivering slightly.

But when they reached for the chain around his neck, that’s when he really started to squirm and shout and kick. It didn’t do any good, of course. One of the men stood behind him, twisting Xander’s cuffed hands upward until his shoulders sang with pain and he had to bow far forward. The other one raised his hand, but when his fingers touched the metal of the chain, his mouth opened in a silent scream and his entire body flew back against the wall. He hit the stone with a sickening thud and then slid slowly down, unconscious or, if Xander was lucky, dead.

The second guy didn’t try to touch the chain after that. He also avoided the charm that was strung on the leather cord around Xander’s wrist. Leaving his colleague slumped on the floor, he took the end of Xander’s leash and led him down the hall, through a door, and into a different stairway than the one Xander and Spike had climbed.

They went down and down. At least, Xander noted, the temperature grew warmer, so that by the time they left the stairwell and entered a long, dim corridor, he was quite comfortable in his bare skin. The corridor was lined with nearly identical metal doors. Each had a metal plate on a hinge; one door had a missing plate and he saw that a small hole lay beneath, he supposed so a person could peek inside. Each door also had two glass bottles affixed to the outside, each with a metal tube at the bottom that ran through a tiny aperture in the door. They reminded him of the water bottles Willow had used for Amy when she was a rat in a cage, and he imagined they served very much the same purpose.

Xander’s captor removed a big key from his pants pocket and unlocked one of the doors. When the door swung open, a horrible reek blew out, and Xander’s stomach reminded him that it had been unsettled only very recently. The man untied the fabric from around Xander’s neck—carefully avoiding the chain—and unlocked the cuffs. He even pulled off Xander’s eyepatch. Then he shoved Xander so hard that Xander fell forward and to his knees, and the man clanged the door shut behind Xander. Xander heard the lock turn.

He was in a small cell, maybe seven feet square. When he stood, the ceiling was only a few inches over his head. There was absolutely nothing at all in the cell except for himself and a hole in one corner that must have been intended as the toilet. Walls, floor, and ceiling were of that same, now-familiar stone, but a soft glow emanated from the entire ceiling as if it were fluorescent. He was glad it wasn’t very bright, because the cell was filthy, and he didn’t particularly care to identify the various substances splattered and smeared everywhere.

There was metal mesh over the peephole on his door, so he couldn’t even stick a finger through. The ends of the metal tubes protruded through the door just a little and, even though he had to spend several minutes first trying to quell his disgust, he got down on his knees and drank from the one that contained water. The water was warm and tasted off, slightly sulfury, but at least it was wet and it washed away the taste of vomit.

He pounded on the door, then banged into it with his shoulder, but that just got him a sore shoulder. The hinges were outside and he couldn’t get at them. He poked around the four corners of the cell but found no seams, no possible avenues of escape. Even had he been willing to try dropping into the unutterably vile hole, it was criss-crossed with metal bars. It looked like his only way out was going to be through the door when someone unlocked it. If someone unlocked it, his mind unhelpfully corrected.

Xander sat in the corner, the feel of the dirt and the stone making his skin crawl, and he waited.
Xander had been fortunate enough never to end up in the hole when he was in prison. The CO’s
liked him because he was quiet and kept out of trouble, and the other prisoners mostly left him
alone. But of course he’d heard plenty of stories about it. And he’d had a cellmate once, an old guy
called Two-Time, who’d spent plenty of time in d-seg over the years. Two-Time liked to give
advice, whether anyone wanted to listen or not.

“You wanna know about the hole, kid?” he’d said to Xander one evening.

Xander hadn’t, but he just sort of nodded noncommittally, because it was easiest to go with the
flow.

“Well, rule one, don’t get tagged.” Two-Time hacked out a cough at his own joke. He was a tiny
man, short and wiry, with mostly missing teeth and a perpetual squint. “But if you end up slammed
down, rule two, see if you can get on meds first. Makes the time slip by easier. If you can’t do that,
rule three, turn off. Don’t think about the outside, don’t think about anything, don’t think.”

Xander tried that. It worked, at least sometimes. Sometimes it didn’t and he’d pace restlessly, and a
few times he had screaming fits, pounding his fists—and, once, his forehead—bloody against the
walls and door. He slept a lot, too, sliding in and out of hazy dreams that left him feeling restless
and angry when he woke.

Occasionally the rusty squeal of metal would startle him and he’d see a small beam of light as
someone lifted the hinge over the peephole. Then the hinge would squeak shut, and there would be
a slight rattle as his food and water bottles were refilled. The food was always a thin, syrupy gruel.
It tasted awful, but it didn’t kill him and it filled his belly. He’d slurp as slowly as possible, trying
to draw out one of the few distractions he had.

He itched from the grime and, he suspected, the oil from the stone floor. His skin was a mess of
bloody welts from his constant scratching. He tried to wash himself off a little with water from the
bottle, but it was awkward. He had to draw out a mouthful, spit it out onto himself, and sort of
spread it around with his hand. The worst was his eye socket, because dirt had a way of working
itself in there, and there was no way at all he could effectively clean it. His hair was greasy and
matted and his mouth full of unbrushed teeth felt—and tasted—like a dead rodent. His skin was
rubbed raw, too, over his hips and shoulders and back and ass and legs. Anywhere that touched the
floor when he tried to sleep.

Aside from when he was fed and the sounds he himself made, the cell was silent. Either there were
no other prisoners nearby, or else the cells were soundproofed. When Xander was lying on the
floor, though, dozing or trying not to think, he thought he could just barely hear a sound, a slow but
continuous thud like a heavy engine chugging faraway.

He had no idea how long he’d been there. Weeks? Months? And he could have been missing from
Salton City for any length of time at all. He wondered if his friends there thought about him now
and then. He wondered whether the Powers That Be still had hope for him and Spike, whether
Angel and Buffy could still see him.

The funny thing was that he didn’t despair. Deep in his heart, he trusted Spike. The concept that
Spike might really love him—that had been too new to digest properly. But he knew Spike
wouldn’t betray him as he’d seemed to. Besides, Spike knew perfectly well that Xander could
return anytime he wanted, just by turning the key. He was also fairly confident that Spike was not
dust, nor was Wolfram & Hart doing anything truly nasty to him. After all, if they weren’t trying to keep Spike happy, they’d have let Xander starve by now, or maybe made use of him as a slave. He didn’t know why things were taking so long, but Spike had waited for him and now he would wait patiently for Spike.

***

When the door finally did burst open, Xander cried out at the blinding influx of light and cowered in the corner with his arm over his eye. “Get out!” commanded a gravelly, inhuman voice.

Xander rose to his feet and stumbled blindly toward the door. Huge, rough hands grabbed him and quickly cuffed his wrists behind his back. “Don’t touch that thing on hissss neck,” someone warned, and someone else gave an answering growl.

Xander kept his eye closed as he was pushed and prodded down the hall, and cracked the lid just in time to get a blurry look at the large room he was shoved into. Something big and snakelike propelled him into the center of the room, then repositioned his hands so that they were chained so far above him he had to stand on his toes. There was a metallic squeal behind him and the sound of water rushing, and then a blast of icy water hit him from behind so hard he lost his footing. He scrambled to regain his toehold as the water played over him from head to foot. Then, just as he was about to try opening his eye all the way, the spray hit his front instead. It was forceful enough to hurt and it stung his raw skin, and when the water hit his face he was left squirming and gasping for breath.

Then, abruptly, the assault stopped. “That’sss good enough,” said the sibilant voice.

Xander finally managed to get a good look around him. Snake Demon was standing in front of him, hands on its—well, it didn’t exactly seem to have hips. Just a wide head that attached to a long, sinuous body. About two-thirds of the body trailed across the floor, but the top third was wearing a suit jacket and white shirt and tie. It looked absurd. The demon’s skin was a mottled greenish diamond pattern, which, Xander thought, would make a lovely pair of boots.

The second demon came up behind Xander, who twisted his head around to see. This one looked a lot like Thing from the Fantastic Four, only also wearing a suit, of course, and it had a black fauxhawk and a black soul patch on its chin. Xander nearly fell again as Thing unhooked his hands and then cuffed them behind him again.

“Let’sss go,” said Snake, and Thing pushed Xander toward the door. Xander was only marginally cleaner, and now he was shivering with cold.

The corridor was long and Xander quickly grew tired of being pushed. “You know,” he said, and his voice sounded harsh and unused. “I bet you two would be a great draw at Walker’s. You ever near Salton City and looking for a job, you let me know.” Thing growled and shoved him especially hard, making him stumble, but then Snake hissed out a warning. Apparently, there was still a hands off the merchandise policy, and Xander took that for a good sign.

By the time they reached the third floor, Xander realized that there was no way he was going to make it to thirteen. His confinement and poor diet had left him weak. His legs gave out and he collapsed half-way between four and five. Luckily, Thing caught him before he could fall back down the stairs. There was an urgent conversation between the demons—lots of hisses and growls.
—and then Thing scooped Xander into its arms like a baby and carried him the rest of the way. It wasn’t very dignified, but Xander figured he’d left his dignity behind long ago anyway.

Thing dumped Xander on his ass as soon as they reached the thirteenth floor. Xander had a hard time standing back up with his hands behind him, so Thing hauled him up by his elbows, glaring as if it were Xander’s fault. They walked for a while down the stone hallway—gods, how Xander had come to hate that stone!—until it opened into a cavernous space with a domed ceiling. The walls of the space were lined with shelves, all of which were crammed with scrolls, and in the center of the room stood several figures, who turned to watch Xander and his demons approach. Xander felt nearly faint with relief when he saw that one of the figures was Spike.

Spike was wearing a dark pinstriped suit that had clearly been tailored for him. His shirt was deep red and his tie was navy. His hair was bleached and gelled in place. He looked gorgeous, Xander thought. Like a model or one of those playboy CEOs with the private islands and their own fleet of jets. Spike’s face was human, but it remained cold and expressionless as he regarded Xander, and Xander didn’t try to say anything to him.

A half dozen or so creatures of various descriptions were standing around Spike, all in suits but none nearly as handsome. Xander recognized one of them—Hatfield, the Liaison they’d met when they first arrived. There was a huge table in front of them all, with two long pieces of paper on it.

Two beasts stood on the other side of the table. The Senior Partners, Xander assumed. One of them resembled a wolf the way King Kong resembled a monkey. It was the size of a Clydesdale, with thick, grizzled fur and a pointy snout. Its eyes were red and malevolently clever. It was wearing a suit, too, a light gray one with a Nehru jacket buttoned up to its neck. Its tail poked through a matching pair of trousers. Somehow it managed not to look ridiculous.

The thing next to it more closely resembled a human. However, it had two enormous, curved horns growing from the top of its head. Also, it was wearing Bermuda shorts rather than trousers, so Xander could see that its legs were furry, and they ended in sharp little hooves instead of feet. Its top half was clothed in a traditional navy jacket and red tie, and its hands looked like a man’s.

An almost palpable feeling of power emanated from the Partners. They glanced only briefly at Xander and then back towards Spike. Xander wondered where Hart was, but then he was being pushed to his knees at Spike’s side.

“Wel,” said Hatfield. “I think we’re all set now.”

“Unchain my pet,” Spike ordered.

With a glance at the Partners for approval, one of the minions scurried to obey. Xander clasped his hands in front of him and tried to look suitably subservient. He was tempted to lean against Spike’s leg, just because he’d missed his touch so badly, but didn’t dare.

“Are you ready to sign, Spike?” Hatfield asked brightly.

Spike shook his head, then leaned over the table to read one of the scrolls. It took quite a long time, and Xander tried not to shift restlessly, but the floor was hurting his knees. The Partners were patient, but of course they’d waited a long time for this; what was a few minutes more?

Finally Spike straightened up and nodded. “Right, then,” he said. “Looks like it’s in order. You’ve got the bits about the cars and the stable of blood suppliers, and my pet here—“

“Yes, yes, eternal youth, just as we agreed. You know, we can repair its eye as well, if you like.”
Spike looked thoughtful. “Later, perhaps. Got other things to sort first, haven’t I?”

“Of course. Now, if you’ll just sign right here?” Hatfield pointed at a spot at the bottom of the scroll.

Spike shifted to gameface. He bit into his own wrist and then, ignoring the way the blood dripped onto the floor, picked up a feather from the table and dipped the end of it in his wound. He used the quill to write his name, then got more blood before signing the second contract as well.

As soon as the contracts were signed, all the demons visibly relaxed. Ram’s face split into a broad grin and Wolf’s mouth opened and his tongue lolled out. “Some drinks to celebrate,” Ram said. He had a very deep voice and an odd, unidentifiable accent.

A few of the suits rushed away. They came back just a moment later. One of them was carrying a glass bottle full of amber liquid and a stack of small glasses; he put it all down on the table and immediately began to fill the glasses. Another demon carried a large, cut-glass bowl full of crimson liquid that looked a lot like blood to Xander. It placed the bowl on the floor in front of Wolf. And the third was dragging a man by a chain around his neck. A human man, naked and quite handsome, but with horrible long scars on his back and buttocks. The slave folded to his knees next to Xander, and Xander strained to see him. The man’s eyes were blank, as if he’d given up all hope a very long time ago.

The demon handed the chain to Spike, who tugged on it. The slave rose to his feet but didn’t look in Spike’s face.

“To a long and satisfying partnership,” Ram said, lifting a glass. Everyone else lifted theirs as well, except Wolf, who looked down at the glass bowl, and Spike, who grabbed the man by his shoulders. Xander was fairly certain he saw a flash of relief in the man’s face, and then, just as everyone else drank, Spike bit. It was a much more savage bite than the tender little nips Spike had given Xander, but the man didn’t make a sound. He hardly twitched, in fact, and as Spike began to drink the slave quickly went limp, allowing himself to be drained without protest. Within minutes the glasses were empty and Spike dropped the lifeless man to the floor. Now the slave’s face seemed at peace, and Xander silently sent up a wish that he was bound for somewhere good.

Spike’s lips and teeth were bloody. He took a cloth out of the inside of his jacket to wipe his mouth, then replaced it. When he pulled his hand out again, he let it rest on Xander’s shoulder, and Xander suddenly grew very alert. He felt hard, sharp metal between Spike’s skin and his. The throwing stars Sam had given them, he’d bet. Not his best weapon—the missing eye played havoc with his depth perception—but he’d practiced with them a little over the years, and he could manage okay.

He also noticed that Spike had not returned to his human face.

“If we’re all finished here, I’ll be taking my pet and going,” Spike announced. “Haven’t had a chance to use it in ages, have I?”

The Partners nodded, and Hatfield said, “Of course. We can begin our work tomorrow.” A few of the minions walked away, no doubt to go file reports. Besides Xander and Spike, that left the Partners, Hatfield, and two extra demons of the big and stupid-looking type. Five to two odds. Xander had faced worse.

“Stand,” Spike ordered, and Xander did. In the process, Spike managed to smoothly transfer the stars to Xander’s left hand. Spike slapped Xander on the ass and said, “C’mon, pet. Maybe later I’ll let Bob here see what you’re good for.”
Xander decided that was a code. So a moment later, when Spike stepped away from Xander and leapt onto the nearest brute, Xander transferred one of the stars to his right hand and threw it straight at Hatfield’s throat. He missed, but not by much. Hatfield shrieked as the weapon tore through his expensive suit, hitting him in the chest. But before he could move away, Xander had thrown another star, and then another. One of them hit the demon in his face, just under his left eye, and the other cut deeply into his neck. Hatfield collapsed to the floor, gurgling.

Xander turned to help Spike, who was busy kicking and biting at the two big demons who, luckily for Spike, were following the time-honored bad-guy technique of only attacking one at a time. Maybe they’d watched too much television. There wasn’t really much Xander could do—he was out of weapons now—besides keep his eye out for an occasional chance to get in a kick or a jab of his own.

It didn’t take long before both demons lay on the floor, necks twisted at unnatural angles. Spike was looking a little battered and bloody, and his expensive suit was ruined, but he flashed Xander a smile full of fierce glee and, Xander thought, love as well.

The Partners hadn’t moved, still didn’t move as Spike and Xander stalked toward them. “That was quite a display,” Ram said. “Not unexpected from a vampire, of course. But it doesn’t get you anywhere. You’ve already signed the contract. Perhaps a few decades in that cell with your pet will remind you of that.”

“Don’t think so, Mr. Tumnus. My boy and I are going to kill you and Fido here first.”

Ram chuckled and Wolf made a low huffing sound that might have been laughter as well. “Oh, I very much doubt that, Spike. We were running this firm when your human ancestors were still swinging in the trees, and we’ll be here long after the species is extinct and you yourself are dust. We are not easy to kill.”

Spike grinned. “Good. If you were easy, that would take all the fun out of it.” And then he jumped forward.

Spike had gone for the wolf, and he had a knife in his hand, a long, thick blade he must have had in his jacket. As Xander watched, and the Ram looked on with a slight smirk, Spike jammed the knife into one of Wolf’s eyes. Wolf simply shook his head, sending the vampire and knife flying, and his eye was instantly whole. Too bad I couldn’t do that trick, Xander thought.

Then Spike was on Wolf again, biting and clawing, but it had about as much impact as a toddler attacking a mountain. Wolf stood there, somehow managing to look slightly amused, and then, abruptly, sank his teeth into Spike’s belly. Spike howled and fell away, but Xander could see that Spike’s stomach was a torn mess.

Xander almost retched as Wolf spat out a chunk of Spike’s flesh.

“Ugh,” said Ram drily. “Vampire tastes terrible. Not fresh at all.”

And that’s when Xander lost all vestiges of self-preservation, as well as whatever common sense he’d retained, and launched himself at Ram.

Xander should have been dead meat—quite literally—almost instantly, something he was quite aware of as he attacked. But when Ram reached over casually to rip Xander’s throat out with his hand, that hand touched the chain around Xander’s neck. Ram didn’t die. He did, however, scream and recoil, leaving Xander to fall on his ass for the second time in an hour.
Xander looked over at Spike, who was still trying to fight Wolf. It was patently obvious that Wolf was only toying with Spike, and also that Spike wasn’t going to last much longer. Spike’s power was simply no match for these demons.

Power.

As Xander struggled to his feet he was hit with a flash of brilliance that, for just a moment, let him know what it must have been like to be Willow or Giles. If you wanted to destroy something, you had to destroy the center of its power. And he knew with a certainty what that meant for these creatures.

“Spike!” he yelled at the top of his lungs. “His teeth! You have to damage his teeth!”

He didn’t know whether Spike heard him, couldn’t stop to check, because Ram was charging at Xander, his head held low, those wicked-looking horns aimed for Xander’s mid-section. Xander felt exactly like a bullfighter as he stood his ground. Except bullfighters got the fancy costumes and the red cape, and all Xander got was his birthday suit. His birthday suit and the chain around his neck. And when Ram was almost upon him, Xander bent and touched the chain to one of Ram’s horns.

The sound was horrible, almost enough to deafen Xander, certainly enough to make his ears ring. Ram’s momentum still carried him forward, so Xander was knocked down, and Ram was yowling on top of him, his horns shriveling away like burned paper. One hoof caught Xander in his unprotected balls, and then he was shouting, too, and his vision almost blacked out for a moment.

He gathered his consciousness and pushed Ram’s body off himself. He was just in time to see Wolf toss Spike across the room like a doll. Spike’s body made a wet thunk sound when it hit the stone, and Spike lay very still. Wolf stalked towards the vampire, and Xander ran faster than he would have imagined he could and threw himself down over Spike.

Wolf’s muzzle was thick with gore, and Xander was pleased to see that it was not all Spike’s. Several of Wolf’s huge, sharp teeth were broken or missing. Unfortunately, that still left plenty of them intact.

Xander had been possessed by a hyena not once, but twice. They weren’t his favorite memories. However, the experiences had taught him quite a bit about carnivore psychology. Consequently, he had a fairly good notion of what Wolf would do next. Xander used one hand to pull the chain tight around his own neck, and then bent his head to one side almost invitingly.

As he’d hoped, Wolf went for his throat. Xander felt the teeth as they dug into him, and, unlike Spike’s gentle nibbles, this hurt like hell. But then one or more of those teeth touched the chain. Wolf screamed even more terribly than his Partner had and fell to the side, convulsing wildly as his fangs burned away, and then his entire face followed suit.

Within seconds, all was silent except for Xander’s labored breathing.

Xander climbed off Spike, who hadn’t moved all this time, and looked him over. He had to suppress a cry, because Spike’s face had been raked deeply with claws, and his flesh from neck to groin had been worried and torn by teeth. Xander saw parts of Spike he’d never wanted to see. But Spike wasn’t dust, and that was something.
Chapter Summary

It's over a decade since Sunnydale collapsed, and Xander is doing time. A fellow prisoner mentions a vampire he once saw displayed at a tourist trap. Freedom doesn't come easy.

Entry tags:  spike/xander, the prisons we make

The Prisons We Make, 17/18
Title: The Prisons We Make
Chapter: 17 of 18
Pairing: Spike/Xander
Rating: NC-17
Disclaimer: I'm not Joss
Warnings: angst, slash, violence, slavery, dub-con
Summary: It's over a decade since Sunnydale collapsed, and Xander is doing time. A fellow prisoner mentions a vampire he once saw displayed at a tourist trap. Freedom doesn't come easy.
AN: This fic is complete and I'll post a chapter a day. Enormous thanks to beta hello_spikey and her very helpful comments! And also enormous thanks to sentine, who has provided three amazing banners! I couldn't possibly pick just one, so I'll be rotating them. As always, your comments are what keep my muse alive!

Previous chapters here
Xander had no idea how long it would be before reinforcements arrived. There was still one Partner somewhere, after all. He was in remarkably good shape, although his balls were sore from that monster’s goddamn hoof and his neck hurt. Thinking quickly, he stripped the bloody jacket off Hatfield’s dead body and slid it on himself. Then he frisked Spike quickly, transferring some of the weapons he found to his pockets.

He rolled up Spike’s contracts and shoved them in his inside pocket. He would have just ripped
them up, but he wasn’t sure if that was good enough and he didn’t want to risk it. He knelt over Spike and used one of the smaller knives to make a shallow incision in his own wrist. He could worry about infection later, if he survived. He pressed the bleeding wrist to Spike’s mouth.

For a moment nothing happened, and then he felt the deep tug within himself as Spike began to draw at his blood. Of course, he had no way to tell how much was enough to get Spike on his feet, and whether that would be too much to keep Xander alive. He just had to try, and to hope for the best.

Spike’s eyelids fluttered and then opened. His hands lifted and he grabbed at Xander’s arm. For a moment he held tightly, sucking eagerly, and then he pushed Xander away, breaking the suction from his lips. “Bloody hell,” he croaked.

“Spike! We need to move!”

“What did you do?”

“Two down, but that leaves one to go and—shit, I need to find Lindsey’s contract still. Can you stand, do you think? I’m not sure I can carry you.”

Spike looked dazed. “Two down?”

“Yeah, Wolf and Ram are history.”

“How?”

“I promise I’ll tell you later, Spike. We have to go!”

Spike sat up a little and shook his head, maybe in disbelief, maybe just to clear it. Xander helped pull him upright until the vampire was standing. He was leaning most of his weight on Xander, but he was standing. He looked around at the bodies that littered the floor. “Bloody hell,” he repeated.

“Literally,” Xander giggled slightly hysterically. When Spike turned his head and gave him a look, he shrugged. “I’ve had quite a day, you know. I’m not responsible for anything I say. Let’s get this done with, okay?”

There must have been tens of thousands of contracts. If they had to check them each individually, they could be there for years. So they limped to the nearest shelf and Xander waved the wrist with the charm on it vaguely. To his immense relief, it began to glow a little when he moved his arm to the right. After that, it was like a game of hot and cold. He dragged Spike around, following the shine of the little piece of metal, until the charm was blood red and Xander had a piece of parchment in his hands. He unrolled it to check, and…yeah. That brown scrawl at the bottom looked an awful lot like “Lindsey McDonald.” That scroll joined the other two in his pocket.

“Okay,” he said, propping his slightly woozy vampire against a shelf. “You’ve been here a while now. Any idea where the last Partner might be?”

“We could just go now, pet.”

“And blow our chance to destroy these assholes? Is that really what you want?”

Spike sighed. “I expect not.”

“So where is he?”
“Dunno, pet. Never saw any of that lot until today. He’s a hart, isn’t he? Likely off prancing about in the woods.”

“Now that would hart-ly be fair, would it?” Xander still felt lightheaded with it all. “Leaving his pals to do all the dirty work. Very hard-harted of him.”

Spike glared.

Xander opened his mouth to say that Spike’s lack of assistance wasn’t very hartening, but then he froze, his jaw still agape.

“Pet?” Spike asked, looking worried.

“He said to keep my ears open!” Xander said excitedly.

Spike blinked. “Did you go barmy down in that cell? Not gonna be like Dru, now, are you? Wasn’t the stars talking to you, was it?”

“Not the stars, Spike, an oracle! Oracle Angel!”

Spike frowned. “What did the pouf tell you?”

“If I wanted to bring down Wolfram & Hart, to keep my ears open. Spike, the third Partner is not a deer. Shit! Buffy practically spelled it out for me.”

“What are you going on about?”

“Come on!”

Without another look at the carnage around them, Xander put an arm around Spike’s waist and drew him out of the huge room, down what Xander was fairly certain was the hallway through which he’d arrived. The hallway was lined with endless identical doors. “Fuck! Spike, can you track me?”

“Huh?”

“Can you figure out which one of these doors I came through earlier?”

Spike frowned slightly, then sniffed the air delicately. “That one,” he proclaimed, pointing at one of them. Xander flung the door open and, sure enough, there were stairs.

Getting up to the thirteenth floor had been bad, and he’d had to catch a ride. Now he had no demon to carry him, and instead a weakened vampire who was leaning on him. And his balls were throbbing and probably swelling grotesquely. But he didn’t have many options. He started hauling Spike down the stairs.

“Where are you taking us?” Spike asked after several flights. He was groaning with pain and trying to hold his insides in with the arm that wasn’t clutching Xander.

“To the third Partner.”

Neither of them spoke after that—they were both gasping and panting too much—and eventually they found themselves at the bottom of the stairway. They were in the basement, in the same row of cells where Xander had been held, and he couldn’t hold back a shudder as they passed. But he wasn’t looking for the cell. The hall seemed endless, and they turned the corner and there were more cells, and Xander felt like he might burst into tears. Then they turned another corner, and,
sweet, merciful Zeus, there was a door, a different door. Not metal, not with a covered peephole. This one was wooden and sort of cracked and it looked old.

Xander pushed it open.

More stairs, dark, going down.

Spike had apparently given up on asking questions. Instead, he just struggled to descend with Xander. After a moment or two, he paused and tilted his head. “What’s—“

“Come on.”

A while longer, and Xander could hear it, too. *Thud. Thud. Thud.* The steady sound of a great, slow engine, which Xander had heard when he was locked in his cell. Only there were no engines here, were there? Not even the primitive kind they’d had in Spike’s youth. The technology didn’t work, he’d been told. What they were hearing was something else entirely.

After what seemed like a thousand years, and as the noise steadily got louder, they reached the bottom of the steps. Spike was completely unable to stand by then, so Xander finally did lift the vampire into his arms and, moving awkwardly, opened the heavy door that was there.

They were again in a large chamber, only this one was cavelike, a cavern of that stone. The stone here was not in flat panes; it undulated and rippled like granite mounds in the desert, and it was tinged slightly pink. In the exact center of the room was...a blob. That was the only way Xander would have been able to describe it. It was as big as the trailer he lived in and more or less round. It was mostly red, with thick veins of blue and black running through it, and it glistened and oozed like melting Jello.

And it moved. Every second or so it contracted and then relaxed. *Thud.*

“The third Partner?” Spike whispered in awe.

“Yes. All this time and they’ve been spelling it wrong. I think it’s the center of power, Spike, the source for the whole firm, maybe this whole dimension.”

“But how do we kill it? I’ll wager my blades and fangs won’t harm it.”

“No. But I bet I know what will.”

Gingerly, Xander placed Spike down on the ground, keeping him as far from the blob as possible. “Don’t—“ Spike began.

“You know I will, so don’t even try.”

Spike rolled onto his side and moaned.

Xander walked slowly up to the thing, and he smiled, because even if he was wrong, he’d done his best, he’d followed the clues. He hadn’t given up. He stopped within reach of the thing and he said, “I really hope this works.” And then he leaned forward and touched his chain to the seeping flesh in front of him.

The Heart—for that’s what it was, of course—skipped a beat. Xander pressed harder, and the Heart beat faster, the thuds picking up tempo until they were more rapid than Xander’s own rattling heart, until they were a constant buzz of almost palpable noise and Xander couldn’t imagine hearing anything else and he pressed still harder, and it felt like the Heart was going to engulf him,
envelope his entire body and then…it stopped.

Xander staggered away as the Heart thrashed spasmodically a few times, all rhythm lost, and began to blacken and crumble until it looked like nothing but a slagheap.

And, just as Xander had breathed a sigh of relief and turned towards Spike, everything began to shake. The stone underneath him softened, turning instantly to sticky slime, and, like some horrible nightmare, his legs sank into the stuff as he tried to make his way to his vampire.

“Spike!” he screamed. He saw Spike trying desperately to crawl toward him.

The stone—which wasn’t stone anymore at all—began to smell, the sick-sweet odor of rotting flesh. Horrible groans and crashes came from overhead, and Xander understood that the building was collapsing. Hell, probably the whole city was collapsing, and he and Spike were trapped in the middle of it. In the heart of it all.

Spike and Xander yelled and wriggled and the surface on which they struggled sucked at them, drawing them in. Like insects in amber, Xander thought. Oh, gods, no, he wouldn’t let it end like this!

Spike roared and, with a slurping noise, pulled himself out just enough to scramble the last few feet to Xander. Just as a great chunk of the roof fell, trapping Xander’s feet, Spike caught hold of Xander’s hand.

“Now!” Spike screamed.

And Xander reached up and turned the key.

Chapter 18
The Prisons We Make

Chapter Summary

It's over a decade since Sunnydale collapsed, and Xander is doing time. A fellow prisoner mentions a vampire he once saw displayed at a tourist trap. Freedom doesn't come easy.

Entry tags: spike/xander, the prisons we make

The Prisons We Make, 18/18
Title: The Prisons We Make
Chapter: 18 of 18
Pairing: Spike/Xander
Rating: NC-17
Disclaimer: I'm not Joss
Warnings: angst, slash, violence, slavery, dub-con
Summary: It's over a decade since Sunnydale collapsed, and Xander is doing time. A fellow prisoner mentions a vampire he once saw displayed at a tourist trap. Freedom doesn't come easy.
AN: This fic is complete and I’ll post a chapter a day. Enormous thanks to beta hello_spikey and her very helpful comments! And also enormous thanks to sentine, who has provided three amazing banners! I couldn't possibly pick just one, so I'll be rotating them. As always, your comments are what keep my muse alive!

Previous chapters here

And here we are at the final chapter. Thank you for reading and for your lovely comments. And once again, extra special thanks to hello_spikey for her wonderful beta help, and to sentine, magixa, and blondebitz for the amazing art!!
Eighteen

Lindsey screamed in an entirely unmanly and undignified way. Not that Xander could blame him. One minute the guy’s just sitting there, dozing at the table, and the next minute there materializes on the floor a mostly naked, blood-covered, one-eyed guy and a partially eviscerated vampire. That would be enough to startle even an evil lawyer.

“What the fuck?!” Lindsey cried, scuttling as far from the mess as the trailer’s small confines would allow.

Xander jumped up, grabbed Lindsey, and, with strength that surprised both of them, dragged him over, forcing him down to his knees. “Give him your wrist, now!” Xander demanded.

Lindsey tried to pull away, but Xander forced his arm near Spike’s mouth. Xander realized that
he’d happily kill this man if it meant helping Spike. His vampire needed blood now, and Xander had already donated what he could spare. Lindsey may have realized that he had already lost this fight, because he stopped struggling and allowed his wrist to be touched to Spike’s mouth. For a moment Xander thought he’d have to open Lindsey’s vein himself, but then Spike shuddered slightly, opened his eyes, and vamped out. He immediately latched onto the flesh in front of him.

“Ow, damnit!” Lindsey said.

“Don’t be a goddamn baby,” Xander growled at him. “It doesn’t hurt that bad.”

“Didn’t ask to be supper,” Lindsey grumbled, and Xander wanted to hit him.

“None of us asked for any of this, shithead, so shut up.”

Lindsey did. Spike drank a while, until Lindsey was looking a little pale, Xander thought, and then the vampire pushed the man’s arm away. Lindsey collapsed back on the floor on his ass, but Xander ignored him. He picked Spike up as tenderly as possible and carried him to the unmade bed. He set him down there and fluffed the pillows under his head as comfortably as he could.

“What can I do, Spike?” he asked, trying not to see the devastation that was his lover’s body.

“Just…get these clothes off me and let me rest,” Spike replied weakly. “I’ll mend.”

Trying not to disturb the wounds too much—which wasn’t easy—Xander managed to pull off the rags that had recently been a fine suit. “Do you want me to bandage you? I have a first aid kit and —”

“Nah, pet. No need. Just let me sleep, yeah?” Spike’s eyes were already closed.

“Okay.” Xander bent over and kissed a small, uninjured section of Spike’s cheek. Spike would need cleaning up—and so would Xander—but that could wait. For now, Xander simply made sure none of the bedding was sticking to the open wounds. Then he shrugged off the jacket he’d stolen and pulled on his very own pair of sweatpants.

“How long were we gone?”

Lindsey glanced at his watch. “About four and a half hours.”

“Shit.” Xander sat heavily on the couch.

The fridge had been nearly empty when they’d left, Xander remembered. “Give me your phone,” he demanded. “He’s gonna need more blood right away.”

“There’s a couple of gallons in your fridge,” Lindsey said. “You couldn’t fit any more in now anyway.”

“What do you mean? Where—“

“Cute little girl stopped by a while ago. She said she had a feeling you’d be needing it. She filled the fridge, called me a bunch of nasty names, and then left. Said you should call her when you get back. Who the hell was that? You know what? Never mind. Did you get the contract? Because our agreement still holds, and—“

“Fuck you,” Xander said wearily. He got up, fetched the contract from the jacket, and handed it to
Lindsey.

Lindsey unrolled it and grinned. “Let me see the charm.” So Xander held his arm up against the scroll, and the charm went red as a traffic light. Lindsey beamed even brighter and then, gleefully, tore the contract to shreds.

“If I were you, dude, I’d get you and your vamp the hell out of here. Wolfram & Hart are gonna come gunning for you real soon.”

“I doubt that very much."

“Why?”

“We killed the Senior Partners.”

Lindsey’s mouth dropped open and it was his turn to collapse onto a chair. “You didn’t,” he whispered.

“Did. And by the way, did you know that Hart was so not a deer?”

Lindsey just blinked at him. “Holy fuck.”

“So now you can go riding off into the sunset, cowboy. I want you to get the hell out of my trailer and out of my life. You ever come anywhere near Spike again and I’ll kill you.” Xander said it flatly, quietly. He didn’t have the energy to yell. But he meant it, and Lindsey could tell.

Lindsey stood. He took his jacket from the hook behind the door and put it on, then opened the door. Xander could just get a glimpse of the black velvet sky outside. “Thanks, Xander.”

“Fuck you, Lindsey.”

The lawyer—former lawyer, now—left. Xander got up and shut the door behind him. He should find a phone, he thought, and call Emma and tell her he was all right. But he didn’t have the strength for a conversation with her right now. It could wait until morning.

Xander shuffled into the bedroom. Spike looked serene, at least, and maybe a tiny bit healed. Xander slipped off his sweats—wincing when his poor balls were jostled—and, carefully so as not to wake Spike, slid into bed. He didn’t think the chain would be very lethal anymore, but, just in case, he pulled it over his head and dropped it on the end table. He owed Liz a thank you note. He was filthy and exhausted and sore from head to toe. And, he thought, as he snuggled up to his vampire’s cool body, he couldn’t remember ever feeling this much at peace.

***

When Xander woke up, Spike was still out for the count. So Xander used the toilet—real, genuine plumbing!—and then ran the water heater empty taking a hot shower. He scrubbed and scrubbed at his skin, and did his best to get shampoo into his matted hair. He felt worlds better when he got out. His neck was a little chewed up, but not too badly. Even the throbbing in his groin had receded to a dull ache. He ate an orange and some crackers. Real food had never tasted so wonderful.

Spike blinked at Xander when Xander went to check on him. “Hi,” Xander said. “You up for some
nummy O Neg?”

“That’d be lovely.”

Xander went to the kitchen and came back with several bags and a mug. He helped prop Spike up, then poured him a cupful. Spike was able to hold the mug and drink by himself. “That hit the spot?” Xander asked.

“Washes away the taste of that lawyer.

“Don’t worry. Lindsey’s long gone.”

Spike nodded, but he was frowning. “Pet? Are you all right? What I did to you—“

“Don’t. We’re just not gonna go there, okay?”

“It took so bloody long to convince them I really wanted to deal with them, and I was afraid they’d suss out that something was up. Christ! I tried to get them to let me have you with me, but—“

“Spike. I understand. It wasn’t exactly the Ritz, but you didn’t have any choice, and I survived. I don’t blame you, okay? It’s all right.”

Spike didn’t look very convinced. “If they touched you—“

“Nobody touched me. And they’re all dead, remember? We killed them all.”

That did bring a small smile to Spike’s lips. “Yeah. You were brilliant, love.”

“Xander Harris, action hero. That’s, let’s see…four world saveages for me? What’s it bring your score to?”

“More than Peaches,” Spike grinned. But then his face went serious. “Why didn’t you leave? You could have turned that lock any time.”

“And abandon you? I don’t think so.”

“For all you knew I was off living it up with the demon set.”

Xander put his hand on Spike’s knee. “I trusted you, Spike.”

Spike’s face went soft with wonder. “You did?”

“Of course. Git.”

“That just sounds wrong when you say it.”

“Yeah?” Xander swung his legs up so he was lying next to Spike. “Let’s see. Berk. Bloody hell. Let me take the lift down from your flat and I’ll drive my lorry on the motorway.”

Spike had apparently recovered well enough to inflict a vicious tickling.

***
“You keep eating like that and you won’t fit in the trailer.”

“Ha ha. Blame Emma. I think she’d stick a feeding tube down my throat if she could get away with it.” Xander took another bite of lasagna. Homemade; Mrs. Villanueva’s own recipe.

“That bint’s a bit scary, isn’t she? She gets that look in her eyes…. Reminds me of—“

“Yeah. Me too. I’m not gonna cross her, that’s for sure. Besides, this stuff is really good. Have some.”

Spike ran his hand down his bare torso, which was pale and perfect as always. “Watching my figure.” Xander threw a roll at him. It bounced off the wall and rolled back toward Xander’s feet. “Good thing you’re handier with throwing stars than with bread, pet.”

“Hmm.” He scooped a bite of saucy, cheesy, noodly perfection into his mouth.

“Could put the pasta aside and have some of this instead.” Spike stood hipshot, his thumbs tucked into his waistband, his hands framing his crotch. His tongue was curled behind his teeth.

“You are a tempting demon. But you do remember that I’m human, right? And I’m not eighteen anymore and my body has limits. Gimme at least a short break.”

Spike leaned up against the wall and pretended to pout.

Xander finished his food. As he was washing the dishes, Spike sidled up behind him and wrapped his arms around Xander’s waist. “Pet?” Spike said.

“Hmm?”

“Would you fancy a walk?”

Xander out down his plate, turned off the faucet, and squirmed around. “Really?”

Spike drew him into a closer embrace, and Xander felt him nod. “Yeah. ‘M not afraid anymore. Not if you’re at my side.”

Xander wondered if Spike could feel his heart skip a beat. “I’ll go get my shoes on.”

Although the weather was quite warm during the day already, it was still chilly at night, so they wore the new jackets Emma had brought them the previous day. They were both leather. Xander’s was brown and fell below his hips, while Spike’s was black and looked remarkably like his old duster. Both of them had gaped when Emma had handed it over—how had she known? She just smiled and said when she saw it in the store, it looked right for Spike. As always, she refused any offers of payment. “Nobody else lets me shop for them,” she’d explained. “You two are so much fun!”

Spike had muttered something about being a sodding dress-up doll, but Xander had seen the grin hiding at the corners of his lips.

Fully dressed, they left the trailer. As soon as they were outside, Spike paused and looked up, his mouth open. “Bloody hell. Haven’t seen so many stars in ages.”

“Pretty, isn’t it?” Xander caught Spike’s hand in his own, and they walked close together, slowly, their shoulders bumping now and then. Xander led him through the Oasis, down the rows of date palms and citrus trees, past the fields of strawberries and carrots. Then they strolled up to the
highway and towards town. It was very late and nobody else was around. Xander showed Spike the AM/PM, where the headlines in the LA Times still wondered whether terrorists had destroyed an eminent law firm’s buildings all over the world a few days earlier, and where Ava gave them a happy wave. They walked by the half-built subdivision, the streets that went nowhere. Xander pointed out Sam’s liquor store, and then they both stopped near Walker’s World of Wonders.

“Almost ten years in there,” Spike said softly.

“I’m sorry.”

Spike twisted around and grasped Xander’s face in his palms. “I’d do it again in a heartbeat—well, if I had a heartbeat—if it got me here with you.”

Xander swallowed. What could he say in response to that? It turned out he didn’t have to say anything, because Spike leaned in and kissed him. It was a possessive kiss, one that laid claim to Xander’s mouth as well as his soul, and if Spike hadn’t been holding him, Xander might have melted.

When Spike had to stop so Xander could breathe again, they simply stood, arms around each other, head against head.

“What should we do, Spike?”

“Got a few notions,” Spike purred, sliding his hand to Xander’s ass.

“Well, yeah, of course we’ll do that. I meant in a more global sense.”

“Where do we go from here?”

“Exactly.”

“I’d like to sort that bastard,” Spike said, pointing at Walker’s.

“We can do that.”

“Perhaps we could stay here a while, you could save some dosh. Buy a car.”

“Araceli’s getting rid of her Toyota. She wants to buy a new one. She offered to let me have it if I reroof her house.”

“Sounds fair.”

They turned and began to walk back toward the Oasis. Looking up at the stars again, Spike said, “Do you expect they’re still watching? The pouf, I mean, and the Slayer. The rest of them.”

“I don’t know. But I do know they’re happy.”

Spike snickered quietly. “Wonder if Peaches is still wearing a toga?”

Xander loved the sound of their laughs ringing out together.

They were almost home when Xander stopped again. “But what do we do, Spike? I mean, we give Reece what’s coming to him, we get a car, then what? Where do we go? Do we stick around here? ‘Cause Raul’s offered to give me a raise if I stay, but maybe you’re bored here. It’s not very exciting, is it? So we could—“
“Xander. I don’t care. I’d go back to that bloody hell dimension if it meant being with you. You saved me, you saved the sodding world again…. You’re free, pet. You can do whatever you want.”

That stopped Xander cold. “What if I don’t know what I want?” he said in a small voice.

Spike laughed and gave him a quick peck on the cheek. “Then I’ll help you find out. Git.”

Xander looked up at the limitless, sparkling sky and out at the stinky accidental sea, before resting his gaze on his very own beloved vampire. His vampire was beautiful, his skin glowing ethereally, his smile as bright as the moon. Xander felt invisible chains dropping away, melting away to nothingness like clouds evaporating in the sun. Spike was right: Xander was free, really free for the first time ever, and it felt so good he was surprised he wasn’t floating away.

Instead he swept Spike into his arms and, ignoring the slightly indignant squawk, dipped him back and gave him a long, slow, end of the movie sort of kiss.

When they were both upright again, their lips a little swollen, other parts of their bodies swollen as well, Xander grinned at Spike. “Well,” Xander said. “That was definitely one thing I wanted.”

---fin---

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!