

him he heard shouts of rage from the man, who was now following him, and Amelia's voice. "No Robert, don't hurt him. He's an angel sent by the good Lord!" Despite his circumstances, Avon couldn't help but appreciate the irony here. Amelia was the second woman so far who had mistaken him for some kind of supernatural being. If Vila had been here, he'd no doubt have accused Avon of enjoying that. And even though he was currently running for his life, Avon wasn't entirely sure that he didn't enjoy her reaction to him. Robert didn't see the humor in the situation, though. "Rubbish!" he shouted. "He's more like the devil, violating you like he did." Violating? Avon wasn't sure whether he should laugh or be angry at the accusation. At least he could stop worrying about the man hurting Amelia while he was running.

His flight for the trees was cut short when Robert crashed into his back, sending both of them to the ground. Avon tried to use his opponent's disorientation to crawl away from under him, but a big and inhumanly strong hand took him by the collar and dragged him up and around until he faced the huge man. Robert smiled at him. It wasn't a pleasant sight. "I'm going to make you regret the day you were born," he informed Avon. Avon believed him. He shuddered and closed his eyes as Robert pulled back a huge callused fist that looked like it could punch through a bulkhead.



Willow was feeling relieved. She'd been chanting for a minute now and she only felt a slight, easily resistible pull this time. It felt as if something had been removed from it, making the whole process much slower and weaker. The closest analogy she could find was the way the reception on a radio inside a room could be much worse if its antenna wasn't aimed in the right direction. The "antenna" was now firmly aimed the wrong way. Willow suspected that during the previous time she'd tried the spell, the thing she caught with her magic was already traveling through the medium that allowed it to move through time, and her spell had simply changed the shape and direction of the particular corridor it was traveling through. This time it hadn't been traveling, so all that she was doing right now was making a connection between wherever this thing was and where she herself was. As long as this thing didn't use the connection, there'd be no pull. And since the chant took only about five minutes, it was only a coincidence that she'd been chanting while this thing had been traveling last time. It probably wouldn't happen again. Relieved by this conclusion, Willow resumed her chant at full strength. Whatever it was that she'd moved the last time would stay firmly put this time.



"No, please don't!" Amelia's voice shrieked in his ears, but it sounded like music to Avon. She was hanging onto Robert's arm with all her slight

weight. It didn't seem to hamper Robert much, but he was apparently unwilling to drag her along while he struck at Avon's face. Amelia continued her pleading. "Please, Robert, you know how I've prayed to the good Lord to bless us with children. And now this angel has been sent to us as an answer to our prayers. I recognized him for what he was when I saw him make lights and sounds come from his bracelet while he was staying in our house. He used it to talk to God." Robert seemed disinclined to believe this and in fact still seemed to wait only for Amelia to let go of his arm to do some major remodeling of Avon's face, but he still asked, "And God answered him?"

"Yes, he did," stated Amelia, her face radiating religious joy. "God spoke to him in the language of angels."

Avon was speechless for a moment, trying to figure out what kind of hallucination could have caused Amelia to make such an outrageous claim, then remembered the burst of static that had come from his bracelet while he was trying to fix it. It was a good thing, he mused, that Amelia had conveniently forgotten that he had not been speaking that same "language" when he was supposedly communicating with her God.

Robert looked unconvinced. "So you've been sent here to give Amelia a baby, huh?" His sarcastic tone made it clear that he was less than convinced. He did seem to have doubts, though.

"That's right," Avon told him with as much sincerity as he could muster, "God sent me to give her a daughter." Robert must have been really desperate for a child to even consider Amelia's mad story, so he hoped the personal touch would convince the big man to go along with it a little more. It didn't seem to help much. Maybe he should have tried for a son. In another attempt to convince Robert, he showed him his bracelet. "See, this is how I talk to God." He breathed just a bit easier when the big and far too muscular hand let go of his collar and instead grabbed his left arm. "Show me."

"All right," Avon promised him, "if you'll just allow me to talk into the bracelet." Robert grunted, and released the arm. He did, however, stay close enough to Avon so that he could easily grab the "angel" if he tried to do some such unangelical thing as fleeing. His lack of fear made it very clear that he didn't really believe that he was dealing with anything supernatural at all and was in fact just waiting for a new chance to hit Avon without hurting Amelia. Avon took a deep breath while he pressed the button that would activate the communicator. "Liberator, I need an emergency teleport, now!" He almost yelled into his bracelet, but tried to keep his voice steady. As long as he didn't sound too panicked, there was always a chance Robert wouldn't recognize the technical terms and would therefore be unaware that Avon was still trying to get away. If he did panic, that alone might give away his intentions even if the words weren't understood. He tried again, planning on producing another burst

of static to impress Amelia and maybe Robert if it didn't work soon enough. "Liberator, teleport! Teleport!" Robert was clearly unimpressed with the results. Amelia had let go of his arm to look at the bracelet and the big man smiled as he pulled back his fist again. Avon frantically tried to think of something to say that would convince Robert not to kill him, but nothing came to mind. And then, just as the huge fist started flying towards his face again, he saw his surroundings disappear. His only sensation now was one of uncontrolled rushing towards a destination he couldn't even guess at. He hoped it was the Liberator, but any place would be an improvement over the one he'd just left.



Robert stood looking open-mouthed at the place where the stranger had been only a moment earlier. "The work of the devil," he whispered, suddenly convinced that the stranger was supernatural after all and frightened for the first time since he'd been a very young boy.

"An angel," Amelia corrected him, "an angel sent from the heavens to bless us with a daughter."

Robert looked at her face, which was now glowing with religious fervor. "Are you sure?"

"Oh yes, no devil could have been like him."

"Right." Now that the shock and fear were starting to wear off, he started being practical again. "Well I hope you're right. I guess we'll know that soon enough if you actually do carry a daughter." Now that the stranger had proven himself to be more than just a man, his words might actually contain some truth. It remained to be seen how much truth. If he was a demon instead of an angel, his words would have been lies, more than anything else.

Amelia smiled happily. "We'll call her Drusilla, after my mother."

Robert nodded. That would be an excellent name, he thought, if the girl turned out to be the spawn of the devil. He looked once again at the spot where the stranger had disappeared. Nothing remained to prove that anyone had ever been there. I'll be looking again, he thought, if a child is born nine months from now. And if there are any signs of the devil at that time, I'll kill it with my own hands. He turned around and followed his wife back to their home.



"Hello father." Robert spun around when he heard the sound of his daughter's voice. His worst fears were proven true when he saw her face, horribly deformed and with a mocking smile on it showing the fangs which had sprung up where perfect teeth had been before. He staggered back. "Stay away from me, devil's spawn!" In the distance between the trees he saw two men watching them. They seemed to be enjoying the spectacle. He wondered if they'd been watching when she killed her sister and brothers, and after that, her mother. She'd protested her innocence, and for a while he'd almost

believed her, but this proved her guilt. Robert only hoped they hadn't suffered long.

"But my dear father, won't you greet your own daughter?" Drusilla was obviously enjoying herself immensely.

"You're not my daughter," he told her, "you're the offspring of the devil himself."

His daughter laughed, a tinkling sound that cruelly reminded him of the sweet child he'd once known. The child he'd been unable to kill as he should have after she was born, because she had indeed looked like the daughter of an angel. "How very melodramatic, father. You should have been an actor, instead of a miner."

"It's true," he insisted, "a demon slept with your mother and you are his daughter." He was now more certain than ever that the stranger hadn't been the angel his wife had believed him to be.

Dru seemed only vaguely interested in her father's claims. She smiled as she put her hands around his neck. Robert was appalled at her strength. She had never been weak, but the strength she possessed now as she held Robert was beyond belief. "Is that so?" she asked, mock-lovingly stroking his cheeks with her thumbs while her fingers nearly crushed his neck. He shuddered at the touch, but answered her anyway.

"Yes. A stranger came to our house nine months before you were born. He was clad in white and claimed to be an angel. He spoke to his demon minions through a magical bracelet and they obeyed him by taking him away to their realm. He is your father, not I."

Drusilla seemed slightly more interested, now. "What was his name?" she asked, shaking her father for emphasis. The world became a blur as her shaking caused his head to whip back and forth madly. He tried to fight her, but she might as well have been shaking one of her dolls. He was just as powerless to resist as they would have been. Then suddenly he both heard and felt a sickening crunch in his neck and the world turned black around him. Strangely enough, he was no longer afraid. His last feeling while he died was one of relief at getting away from the monster that was holding him without losing his soul.

Drusilla looked at the corpse of her father and giggled. She'd really have to learn to control her new-found strength. But oh, it had been such fun, choking the life out of him. A pity his neck had snapped so easily. She let go of him, allowing him to fall to the ground like a puppet whose strings had been cut. She walked back to where Spike and Angelus were waiting for her, sometimes skipping whenever the joy of what she'd done became too much to hold in. When she reached them, Spike embraced and kissed her. "Did you enjoy that, my love?"

Drusilla nodded happily, "Yes, I'm really glad Angelus left him for me. He was right, it was a lot of fun."

"Well, I'm glad you're happy." Angelus bowed

over her hand and kissed it. "I only wish I could stay here to celebrate with you, but I have a date with a gypsy princess."

Drusilla frowned for a moment, remembering a vision that had shown danger for her handsome Angel. But he was so looking forward to what he was planning to do tonight. She didn't want to spoil his fun with gloomy predictions. Telling him could wait until morning, she decided. Surely, nothing bad could be done to him by a mere band of gypsies? She smiled at him. "Have fun."

"I will." Angelus flourished his cape and walked backwards a few steps, as if retreating from a queen. "Until we meet again." Drusilla giggled at the mock formality and blew him a kiss. While Angelus was walking away, Spike embraced her again from behind, locking his hands over her belly and resting his head against her neck. "There's a party in lady Mulgrew's mansion. Let's go crash it to celebrate your father's death."

"Oh, but he wasn't my father," Drusilla nestled herself comfortably in Spike's arms as she explained. "Apparently mother's been sleeping with a demon." She giggled again. "Dear Mommy, who'd have thought. I didn't think she had it in her."

"All right, then we'll have to go find your real father sometime. For now, there's a party to crash and a house full of unsuspecting mortals to kill."

Drusilla clapped her hands with glee at this suggestion. "Oh yes, let's go celebrate."



"Anything?" Cally looked expectantly at Tarrant from where she sat behind the teleport console. Tarrant shook his head. "They claim he never got there." He took off his bracelet and put it in an empty slot in the recharging unit. "I still can't understand how he could have wound up anywhere else. The teleport settings were for the center of the city. Even Vila couldn't have mishandled the teleport that skillfully."

"Thanks." Their resident thief nodded at him from where he sat next to Cally. "I think," he added, doubtfully. Cally smiled fondly at him, which proved that he had indeed been at the receiving end of one of Tarrant's jokes. Vila shrugged. Nothing new there. He glanced at the teleport console while Cally and Tarrant were discussing what else they could do to locate Avon. He sat up suddenly when he noticed the button that lit up as contact was made with a teleport bracelet. "Cally," he called, pointing at it. The telepath glanced at the board and immediately went to work trying to enhance the woefully weak contact. After a few seconds they heard static and a barely recognizable voice coming through it, shouting "Liberator, teleport! Teleport!" Cally worked furiously for several seconds to get a better signal before she dared to flip the switches that would bring the caller to their ship. The familiar shimmering appeared in the teleport area and Avon became visible. They all breathed a sigh of relief. But instead of solidifying, he kept on shimmering for more than a

minute. Just looking at it did strange and unpleasant things to Vila's stomach. Slowly, Avon faded out again, despite Cally's frantic efforts to boost or even maintain the signal. The shimmering stopped and he was gone. For a moment they all stared at where he'd been. Then Cally and Tarrant both started the most urgent systems check Vila had ever seen. He stayed out of their way. If they started looking for someone to blame this on, he didn't want to be around. After all, it was he who'd manned the teleport when Avon had gone missing in mid-teleport the first time.



Willow was now halfway through the spell and it was going very smoothly. She held back a smile. After all, it wouldn't do to let Drusilla think that things weren't going the way she wanted. She still felt something pulling at her, and even though it was still weak, she could tell that the wrongness she'd felt before was now gone. She didn't understand how she could possibly tell which direction could be wrong or right for something she'd never felt before. It might have been nothing more than a figment of her imagination, brought on by the fear she felt when something was coming towards her. She didn't think so, though. The feeling was still clearly etched in her memory and it wasn't there now.

Relaxed as Willow now was, she was totally unprepared when the feeling of something pulling at her increased suddenly to the level it had been at during the last time she performed the spell. For more than a minute Willow struggled frantically just to stay where she was. During that time there was no way she could hold anything back and she panicked as she realized that any moment now, the thing that was coming towards her was going to appear, right in front of her. Since she was nearly done with the chanting, she speeded it up, hoping to finish before it reached her. It was coming closer, faster and faster. While Willow started the final phrase of the spell, everything went dark in front of her eyes. As she felt herself falling over to the right, still chanting the last words, her last conscious thought was "I hope Buffy can handle this."



Avon had a hard time staying on his feet. The feeling of uncontrolled movement had been much worse this time. He'd nearly lost his lunch right after he appeared in this place. Wherever that was. All around him were vehicles which he recognized as twentieth century automobiles from the pictures he'd looked up after Blake had described President Sarkoff's vehicle to him. Quite a few of them were moving around. Avon wondered how a frontier world like Bana had managed to get so many antiques transported here, and why they would use them for everyday transportation. He tried calling the Liberator again, but there was still no answer. Oh well, they had at least managed to save him from the tender mercies of Robert. And now he was in a

place with recognizable, if strangely obsolete, technology. Finding a way to communicate with the Liberator should be easier here. If he contacted the local authorities, they might even be able to find his ship for him. They'd certainly have communications equipment which could send out a stronger signal than his bracelet. As long as he didn't tell them his real name, or the name of his ship, that should be safe enough.

The sound of two people quarreling broke through his planning. A young woman was walking briskly in his direction, followed by a pleading youth. "Please, Sparky, you have to listen to me."

Sparky was clearly not impressed by this argument. "I don't *have* to do any such thing. And stop calling me by that horrible nickname."

"But Sparky, you used to like it when I called you that."

"That was before I found out what a double-crossing, rotten liar you are."

"I've never lied to you, Sparky, I swear I haven't."

At that point in the argument they reached Avon, who was still looking around trying to figure out how to find a place with communications equipment. He'd already decided not to ask this pair, since being caught up in their argument would undoubtedly prove to be unproductive. Sparky, however, was not going to let him off that easily. "I'm sure I can do better with just about anyone. Like this nice gentleman right here." Avon suddenly found the girl's arm wrapped possessively around his own. The young man's eyes were shooting daggers. "You've been going out with *him*?" Avon raised his eyebrows at the accusation, but the girl was nodding proudly. The youth believed her. He turned to Avon with a snarl. "You...., you...." Unable to come up with words to describe his feelings, the young man tried to punch Avon. He was no Robert, however, and Avon was beginning to get really fed up with people he didn't know trying to hit him. So he used his free hand to grab the youth's arm and twist it around until he was forced down on his knees. "I'm not in the mood for this," he informed the suddenly white-faced boy. "Now do us both a big favor and leave."

"That's right, Ira, just go back home to your mommy."

Ira's face turned from white to red at that remark. Avon still had a tight grip on his arm, though, so he had no choice but to nod. Avon let go of him and he slowly stood up and started walking away, looking back several times while he was doing so. Sparky apparently decided she hadn't done quite enough yet to bring her message across to her former boyfriend, so she wrapped her other arm around Avon's as well. Since this seemed to speed up Ira's retreat, Avon didn't mind too much. And now that there was no longer an argument to confuse matters, he might as well ask her for directions. "I'm looking for a communications center," he told her.

"You mean, like, radio?" she asked.

Avon recognized the term as one for an archaic form of transmitting messages. He'd never heard of

it being used even on frontier worlds. There were easier and cheaper ways to run a communications network. Add that to the antique vehicles being used as everyday objects and only one conclusion was possible. Something very strange was going on here. Something that had nothing whatsoever to do with a malfunctioning teleport. "Where am I?" he asked Sparky.

"Oh, this is Chestnut Street. The radio station is two blocks in that direction, then take a left turn. You can't miss it."

"I mean, what town is this?"

"What *town* is this? Wow, you must have been using some pretty heavy shit not to know the name of the town you're in." At Avon's confused look she added, "We're, like, in Sunnydale. You know, Sunnydale, California, the U S of A, Earth, the solar system?"

From her reaction, Avon assumed that "pretty heavy shit" meant drugs. It also proved that there was indeed more going on here than a malfunctioning teleport. If he wanted to get anything useful out of this girl, he'd have to correct her impression of him somehow. He didn't think the truth would work. He could just imagine his own reaction if someone were to walk up to him and tell him "Hi, I think I'm from a different time. Could you help me find my way back?" Scratch *that* idea. This girl might not seem very bright, but he was quite sure that she'd see how unlikely that claim was. Even Vila would have. Probably.

His most immediate problem was finding a place to stay while he tried to figure out a way to contact the Liberator across time so they'd know where and especially when to find him. The easiest way he could think of was sending a time delayed message to Orac. That would mean learning about the operation of the computers of this time and finding out how to gain access to a public broadcasting system that was strong enough to send its signals out into space. All of this would take a considerable amount of time and he would need a guide to help him find the things he would need.

"I'm sorry if I'm acting a little confused," he told Sparky, trying to be as charming as he could. "I've had an accident recently, and now I sometimes forget things." It was a rather feeble lie, but Vila might buy this one.

"You mean you've forgotten where you are, like, with amnesia?" The girl now had that look all overly sympathetic types got when they found someone to look after. Good. All that remained now was to use those caring urges to his advantage.

"Yes, and the problem is that I've also forgotten where I live. I'm sure it'll all come back to me soon, but in the meantime I will need a place to stay. I don't have a lot of money on me at the moment. Could you suggest someplace where I could stay that isn't too expensive?"

"Oh that won't be necessary. My parents are out of town this week, so you can stay at my place. You'll have to sleep on the couch, of course."

Since he had no local currency at all, this was exactly the reaction Avon had hoped for. He nodded his acceptance and, already planning his next move, followed Sparky as she chattered her way home.



"Did you get it to work, yet?" Sheila put a cup of hot chocolate on the table where Avon sat working. He accepted it gratefully. During the four days he'd been here, he'd developed a fondness for hot chocolate. He'd also learned the hard way not to call her Sparky. She had one hell of a temper. He took a few careful sips, then answered her: "No, not yet." In the background, the radio was playing a song by what was apparently Sheila's favorite group, called Bam or Wham or some inane name like that. According to her it was the best new group of this year. He idly wondered why this radio was set up so that everyone in the room had to listen to the same kind of music, regardless of personal preferences. Probably something to do with group behavior. He preferred the personalized sound systems of his own time.

"So what exactly are you planning to do with this..." Sheila was at a loss for words to describe what was lying on the table in front of Avon, so she just gestured at it.

"Nothing important," Avon reassured her. "Just something to keep me busy until my memory returns." He'd been pleasantly surprised to find that Sheila's father had a workshop at the back of the house with quite an assortment of what passed for tools in this time. In the back of the workshop, Avon had found a large stack of magazines dedicated to the building and maintenance of what they called computers. He would have called them little more than calculators with an attitude, but they could be made to retain and even transmit data and that was enough for his purposes. He was currently working on something which he hoped would do just that.

"I don't think my dad will be too happy about you messing around with his equipment." Sheila seemed a bit nervous about his experiments.

Avon held back a biting remark about the equipment being little more than a mess too begin with, and instead tried to reassure her. "I'll make sure everything is back in place before he comes back. That won't be for another three days, right?"

Sheila nodded and sat down next to him. Avon started to feel irritated. The girl had been acting possessive about him ever since the first night he'd spent in her parent's house. It had been fun at first, a little bonus on top of having found a place to sleep. But now he felt that it would have been wiser if he'd held his distance. He constantly tried doing so now, but he didn't want to alienate her to the point where she'd ask him to leave the house.

"You know, you don't really have to leave," Sheila told him, as if reading his mind. "When my parents get back, I mean."

"I think I'll have recovered my memory by then," Avon reassured her. Sheila didn't look reassured. In fact, she looked like he had just said something re-

ally offensive.

"You mean, you don't want to stay?"

"Well, there's really no point once I remember where I live, is there?" He was getting fed up with the deception, necessary as it was. The energy needed to keep it up at all times could be used to far better effect, in his opinion.

Sheila suddenly stood, her face redder than it had been during her fight with Ira. "No point? No point? You ungrateful wretch! I took you in, I took care of you and this is the thanks I get?"

Avon looked at her, totally surprised and quite irritated by her sudden fury. "I don't know what you expected," he told her, "but it couldn't possibly have been a lifelong commitment."

"Get out!" Sheila was nearly unintelligible when she screeched at him. "Get out of this house right now, or I'll call the police. I swear I will!"

Avon's irritation was quickly turning into annoyance. "There is no need for hysterics," he told her. She gasped at his answer and walked over to the telephone. She dialed, and told the person on the other end "There's an intruder in the house. Please send the police, quickly."

Avon was never one to argue with the weather. While Sheila was still reciting her address at the phone, he picked up the transmitter he'd been working on and in a controlled and orderly fashion dashed out of the house. Behind him he heard Sheila yelling at him. Well, at least he'd managed to get out before she started throwing things at him. And the four days he'd spent here had given him a basic idea of how he could get around in this time and place. First on the agenda was finding a new place to sleep. On his first night here, Avon had studied and partially memorized a map of Sunnydale. He thought he remembered the location of a motel. He still didn't have any money, but if he was teleported out of here within the next few days, that shouldn't be too much of a problem. He wondered why this hadn't happened already. After all, they'd made their first try to get him back only seven hours after he'd first arrived at Amelia's doorstep. Whatever the reason, all he could do about it was what he'd been trying for the past four days: to get a message with his location to them.



"Oh, drat, I broke a nail." Cordelia was clearly not amused by having to participate in such unladylike pursuits as heaving stones.

"I'm sure you can glue a new one on," an exasperated Angel told her.

"Well *Excuse* me, Mr. Fashion Critic, but these nails just happen to be natural."

"Yes, well, right now I'm a little more concerned with finding Mr. Rosenberg than with your nails."

"Hey, if Willow's father is behind those stones, then he's now perfectly safe with you here to protect him. Do you have any idea how long it takes for a nail to grow back properly? At least a week! And then



there's a lot of very careful work in polishing and filing it so it looks just right between the other nails."

"I stand corrected. Now could you please help me move away this pile over here? I think I felt a draft there a moment ago."

"So what, it isn't that hot in here. Besides, if you want fresh air, it's a lot easier to just open a window."

Angel sighed. "A draft means an open space behind those rocks. Such as a room or a hallway? That Mr. Rosenberg could be held in?"

"Oh, right, I knew that."

"Of course you did. Now why don't you start on that side."

"Would you please stop ordering me around? I'm not your servant or anything."

"You're absolutely right. You choose at which side you want to clear away the rubble. But might I point out that the stones are smaller on that side?"

"You don't have to get all uptight about it. All you had to do is ask."

"All right then, would you please start clearing away the stones at that side?"

"Well, since you ask so nicely, I think I will."

"Why, thank you."

"You're very welcome."

Angel decided it would be best to stop the conversation right there and started clearing away the rubble at his side. For no particular reason at all, quite a few of the stones he threw aside hit the wall at the other side of the room. Really hard.

"And *please* stop throwing stones against the wall. All that dust is bad for my skin."

"Whatever you say, M'lady."

"Excuse me?"

"Nothing."

"Oh, eeeuw, I just grabbed into something *really* gross."

Eeeuw number twelve and gross number seven, tallied Angel. And still two hours to go until sunrise.



"Are you quite sure you're up to this?" Giles was hovering over Willow like a concerned mother hen.

Buffy thought her friend still looked a little pale.

"I'm all right, really." Willow tried to sound brave and cheerful and failed miserably. They all knew she had to try again, though. Spike and Drusilla had threatened to leave to find some other witch who'd do the spell for them. They hadn't needed to spell out what that would mean for Willow's father. Buffy had been getting ready to fight the both of them at the same time to keep them from leaving the library.

"All right, then, let's check if everything is in place before you start again." Giles was stalling and Spike saw right through it. "Everything is still right where it was the last time she was doing her yammering. Now could we get on with it already?" Drusilla's serene smile didn't betray whether she felt amusement or pride at Spike's outburst. She looked only vaguely interested when Willow once again sat down on the opposite side of the pentagram. Giles lit the candles again and Buffy got ready. The previous two times, she'd kept an eye on Spike and Drusilla during the spell. Willow, however, had been adamant that she should be ready to face whatever it was that would be appearing in the pentagram. Despite Giles' assurances of the previous evening that the spell couldn't possibly be working, she seemed convinced that something would be coming. As a matter of fact, when Willow came to after she'd fainted, she'd been very much relieved to learn that nothing had appeared yet. She insisted that it was close, though. So now Buffy was getting ready to kill anything that appeared in the pentagram if it so much as sneezed the wrong way. She remembered only too well Angel's warning that whatever appeared would have no soul.

Willow started chanting again. The eerie sound of it soon began to annoy Buffy to the point where she actually found herself agreeing with Spike. It really did sound like a lot of pointless yammering. She was glad to note that Willow looked relieved. So there wasn't much of a pull at the moment. Good. With any luck, this time traveling monster would be taking a nap instead of traveling just about now. The spell had already lasted about two minutes, so they needed only three more minutes of inattention at the other end to get through it without trouble. Buffy intended to remain fully alert during those three minutes. If anything did appear, it was going to find itself in the worst and probably last fight of its life.



"What you are suggesting is quite ridiculous and entirely unnecessary. Now please stop interrupting my work."

"Interrupting your work? You worthless pile of junk!" Vila was getting ready to tell Orac exactly and in great detail what he thought of uppity computers that wouldn't do as they were told. Tarrant wasn't interested in Vila's opinion. He wanted to hear Orac's.

"Orac, please explain why it is unnecessary for you to help us perform a sensor sweep of the area around the town."

"Because Avon isn't there, obviously."

"Obviously," agreed Tarrant, trying very hard not to lose his patience. "So where is he, then?"

"I have not yet been able to establish that."

"I see, so you know where he isn't, but you don't know where he is?"

"That is correct."

"And exactly how long do you think it'll take you to find out where he is?"

"Since our last contact with him was established while an outside force was acting on our teleport systems, it is only reasonable to assume that we will be able to find him again when this force returns. When this happens, I shall attempt to home in on Avon's signal and retrieve him."

"An outside force?" Tarrant was immediately moving to man his station. "What kind of outside force? Zen, is there anything on the long range scanners?"

"All scans are negative. There are no other vessels in the area." If he hadn't known better, Tarrant would have sworn that Zen was bored at having had nothing to do but maintain an orbit for the past two days. He shook his head. Thoughts like these only proved how tired he was. At the moment Cally and Dayna were resting in their quarters while he and Vila were trying to coax some answers from Orac. Well, he was trying to coax answers from Orac. Vila was just yelling at the irritating little glowbox every now and then. And now the problem of Avon being MIA seemed to be compounded by a mysterious attack. He tried again. "Orac, what kind of outside force were you talking about? There is no-one near us and the people on this planet don't have the technology to interfere with our teleport systems."

"That we know of," amended Vila. Tarrant had to agree with that, but Orac ignored the remark.

"I have not yet.."

"..been able to establish that. Yes, I know. So how long will it take you to find out?"

"I have as yet insufficient information to answer that question. However, since this force has just now returned, I may be able to give you an answer within the next two hours."

"What? Can you get a fix on Avon?"

"Of course. I am attempting to teleport him now."

Tarrant and Vila looked at each other. Then they both ran to the teleport area. When they got there, Avon was visible again, shimmering in mid-teleport just like the last time they'd seen him. Almost immediately after they arrived, he faded out and disappeared again. Tarrant punched the button on the wall communicator. "Orac, what happened?"

"I was unable to retrieve Avon."

"We noticed that. Can't you try again?"

"Not until the force that worked on our teleport systems does so again."

"And if it doesn't happen again?"

"Then we will not be able to find him again."

"Marvelous," said Vila, looking glum. Tarrant entirely agreed.



Buffy was worried. While chanting, Willow had suddenly gone pale. Uh oh, she thought, one undead thingy coming up. She flexed her muscles, ready to do some serious slaying. She noticed that Giles was looking worried, too. Apparently he was now a lot less certain that nothing would happen. In the middle of the pentagram, the air started to shimmer. Buffy blinked, to make sure it wasn't just something in her eyes, but the effect remained. While Drusilla's smile turned from beatific to that of a five year old about to receive a puppy for her birthday, the shimmering effect grew. It slowly turned into a white cocoon of light surrounding a dark haired man wearing white clothes and holding a bag. The man stood perfectly still, as if trapped in the cocoon. For several seconds he remained that way. Then Willow stopped chanting and the white cocoon burst open and disappeared. The man remained still for a moment, looking around him. Then Drusilla stood up and reached for his neck. "Hello daddy," she crooned. The man took one look at Drusilla, who was in full vampire mode, bared fangs and all, and dropped the bag to reach for the thing hanging at his waist. Buffy, who assumed that the thing was a weapon, immediately attacked. Yes, he was trying to defend himself from Drusilla, but any weapon could easily be turned on her friends, too. At a kick and a double punch from her, the man went flying across the floor and came to rest against the library front desk. Buffy jumped after him and then suddenly got pulled away by Drusilla. "Stay away from my daddy," she hissed. "He's mine." Buffy immediately backed away. The guy was now well away from her friends and therefore no longer in a position to hurt them. If Dru wanted to fight him, it would give her one less thing to worry about. Now that Dru was here, she could always force Spike to give them Mr. Rosenberg's location by threatening to kill Dru. Then the library doors opened and Angel came walking in with Cordelia and Willow's dad. Buffy heaved a sigh of relief at seeing Mr. Rosenberg safe before yelling "Angel, watch out! Dru's dad is here!"

Then everything happened at once. While Angel pushed Cordelia and Mr. Rosenberg behind himself, Drusilla kept walking towards the stranger. The stranger aimed the stick he'd pulled out of it's holster at her. Damn, thought Buffy, I thought he'd lost that when I kicked him. The end of the stick lit up and suddenly Drusilla screamed. Her shoulder smoked and a foot long bright blue flame shot out of it. Spike immediately pulled off his jacket and attempted to put out the fire. The stranger seemed to be extremely surprised at the effect of what he'd done, but not too surprised to aim his fire stick at Drusilla and Spike again. Spike heaved Dru over his shoulder, ran towards the nearest window and crashed through it. Buffy was tempted to do the same, but now only she and Angel were left to deal with the stranger. Make that just Buffy. She didn't want to see what just happened to Drusilla being done to Angel. Then sud-

denly Willow's dad pushed his way forward past a surprised Angel, his face red with anger. He pointed at the stranger. "You....," he growled, walking towards the stranger. He seemed to be getting ready to punch him. Strangely enough, the stranger put his fire stick back in its holster and looked resigned. "Let's not start this again," he said. Buffy was at a total loss for words. How on earth could Drusilla's and Willow's fathers possibly know each other?



Avon was huddled in the bushes outside Sheila's house, waiting for the lights to go out. When he'd left the house earlier that day, he'd taken along the transmitter he'd been working on, but after he'd checked into a motel, he'd found that some of the tools he needed had been left on Sheila's table. He was planning to retrieve them tonight. He watched as she went through her bedtime routine of locking the doors and switching off the lights. She followed her usual route through the house, so Avon felt it was safe to start looking for the key under the mat by the back door even while she was still walking around upstairs. He wondered why anyone would leave a key in such an obvious place. Perhaps to prevent damage to the doors when someone broke in? The locks of this time certainly weren't likely to stop a halfway competent thief. Vila would have walked through this door without ever noticing that it had been locked.

Just to be on the safe side, he waited until the last light on the top floor had gone out before unlocking the door and walking into the kitchen. He first checked a metal box on the top shelf of the kitchen. As expected, there was money in it. It was a good thing he hadn't shown his interest when he'd seen her taking some money from it two days ago. Next on his list were supplies. He took a bag from a closet and started filling it with anything he could find that might be edible, paying special attention to take only non-perishables. When the bag was almost full, he moved towards the living room. The tools he needed were still where he'd left them. Quickly and efficiently, he transferred them to the bag, which was now full. He turned to leave, when suddenly the lights in the room came on. Ira stood in the doorway, holding a long wooden stick in his hand. Apparently, Sheila hadn't been lovesick over him for too long. Ira's face lit up when he saw Avon. "I was hoping it would be you," he said. Then suddenly his mouth fell open. "What the hell?"

Avon could have told him that the white light that surrounded him was caused by the atoms of the air around him being agitated by the effect of the teleport working on him. But to him, Ira and Sheila's living room were already invisible as he was once again moved through time and space. So he never saw Ira faint when he disappeared.

The next thing Avon was aware of was a large room full of endless shelves filled with books. It looked a lot like a library that he'd visited during his stay with Sheila. For a moment he was worried that

he'd been moved back to a more primitive era, but then he saw the computer on the table next to the one he was currently standing on. It looked somewhat different from the ones that he'd seen in photos in the magazines he'd read, but it was still recognizable as one of the overgrown calculators that pretended to be computers in this time. A movement made him notice the woman in front of him. She was obviously humanoid, but he didn't recognize the species. She stood up and smiled sweetly at him. "Daddy," she said. As she reached for him she bared her fangs. And even though she didn't look like she was physically capable of harming a mouse, she made the hairs on the back of his neck stand on end. He immediately reached for his gun. Then, totally unexpectedly, he went flying off the table and across the floor when a skinny girl attacked him. He ended up lying against some kind of desk, his head ringing, trying to get some air into his lungs again. He felt like every bone in his body had been bruised. He barely had time to feel surprised at being beaten so thoroughly by such a slight young thing when she started towards him. While he was still trying to stand up to get in a better position to defend himself, the woman who'd called him daddy went after the girl and pulled her away. "Stay away from my daddy," she told the girl. "He's mine."

The skinny girl backed off and yelled at someone behind him "Angel, watch out! Dru's dad is here!"

Avon was confused for a moment, thinking the girl was talking to him and wondering briefly what made the women of this era think of him like that. He put it out of his mind when the woman came near him. Unable to get up and away from her for the moment, he fired at her when she once again bared her fangs and reached for him. The effect was unexpectedly spectacular. Her shoulder started smoking and a flame shot out of it. A man of the same species as the woman ran towards her and tried to put out the fire. Avon shook off the surprise at the result of his shot and aimed at the man, intending to shoot again if either one of them made another move in his direction. The man reacted by throwing the woman over his shoulder and jumping through the nearest window, using his shoulder to break it as he went through. It made quite a spectacular crash.

Avon looked at the window for a few seconds, wondering how much strength it would have taken for the man to jump through it that way, but quickly turned when he heard a choking sound behind him, and an enraged voice growling, "You...". The mousy looking man who'd looked familiar when he'd first seen him entering the room was walking towards him, obviously working himself up to the point where he could punch Avon.

He considered the facts. Since he'd been going through one of those dizzying teleports again, he could assume that he'd once again been traveling through time. But the technology didn't seem to be very different from the time he'd just left, so he hadn't been traveling very far. Add to that the fact



that he was fairly sure that he recognized the man from that time... He sighed and put away his gun. None of the other people in the room made a threatening move towards him and all things considered he believed that talking would be more productive than fighting right now. "Let's not start this again," he told Ira. "The last time you tried this I nearly broke your arm. And since I seem to be a guest here for now, that might be considered rude." Ira flinched at that, and stopped moving towards Avon. He noticed the surprised reactions from the other people in the room. In front of him, the skinny blonde who'd attacked him earlier was watching him warily, keeping herself between him and the people who'd been there when he arrived. It was a motley group, consisting of a middle aged, bespectacled man, a redheaded, nervous looking girl and an equally nervous looking boy. On his other side, behind Ira, was a man of the same species as the two who'd just jumped through the window, keeping himself in front of a pretty dark haired girl and trying to get Ira behind him again, as if trying to protect the both of them from Avon. A growling sound drew his attention to a cage at the other side of the room. It had some kind of animal in it. Blake, with his interest in natural history, might have recognized it, but he had no idea what it might be. He briefly wondered why it was kept there, but quickly decided there were more important questions to be answered right now. Starting with: "Why did you call me Dru's dad? And who is this Dru?"

The blonde seemed startled by his question, but answered anyway. "Drusilla is the lady who just went out the window. And I called you her dad because that's what you are: her father."

Avon arched an eyebrow. "Even considering that I've just traveled through time, that is highly unlikely. Contrary to romantic beliefs, humans can't interbreed with other species. Not even the humanoid kinds."

"She used to be human." The alien behind Avon walked towards him. "Until I turned her into a vampire," he added. His face was extremely serious. The acid remark Avon had been going to make stuck in his throat when the alien's face suddenly changed. He now looked like a perfectly normal human male.

He vaguely noticed the redhead running towards Ira and putting her arms around him. She seemed to be very relieved to see him.

The skinny blonde went to stand next to the alien, never letting Avon out of her sight. "Nice work. Had any trouble?"

The alien nodded towards the brunette. "Fourteen eeuws, nine grosses, twelve yucks and a lecture on nail care. No trouble."

The blonde winced. "I guess you could call that a slow night."

The bespectacled man had been gaping at Avon ever since he'd talked to the alien. Now the man walked towards him, a distracted look on his face. "May I ask what year you traveled from?"

"Your future." Since the man seemed to accept

his claim of having traveled through time, Avon felt that he might be of some help, so he tried to explain. "We started a new year count only a few centuries ago and this looks like further back in our history. I don't know when the previous system of counting years was exchanged for the new one, so I couldn't tell you exactly how far in the future I've traveled from. At a guess, I'd say at least five centuries."

"The future?" The redhead was bubbling with enthusiasm, nearly jumping up and down. "I knew there was something wrong with the direction, I wasn't just imagining it. And when I gave that really hard shove the first time, I must have flung you right past this time and into the past." The girl fell silent for a moment, as if she was just now realizing what she'd said. "Wow," she added.

The bookish man looked interested. "That explains how he can be Drusilla's father and still have his soul. He simply hasn't traveled past the moment of his death."

"Yeah, whatever," interjected the brunette, "but I still don't see how Willow could have brought him here. Didn't you say she and Dru and this guy here had to be related or it wouldn't work?"

"Now hold it right there, young lady," Ira had been gaping at what he'd heard, but now he possessively put his arm around the redhead's shoulders. "I don't know what he told you, but Willow is my daughter." He looked at Avon with undisguised hatred. "My wife was only with that... that bum for a few days, and that was a month before we were married."

Willow looked at him, her eyes the size of saucers. "But I was born less than eight months after you and mom were married."

Ira turned red, but any remonstrations he'd been planning to make were forgotten when his daughter looked from him to Avon and back again and then bonelessly slid to the ground, her eyes rolling upwards until only the whites showed.

The boy turned to the brunette. "Way to go, Cor."

The brunette shrugged. "Hey, it isn't my fault if she doesn't get enough vitamins."

Avon had just about had it with this bunch. He'd only been here for ten minutes and already these people had attacked him, tried to convince him that he suddenly had two daughters and claimed that vampires were real instead of just characters in a horror story. Even the fact that he wouldn't have to convince them where he came from couldn't make up for the fact that they were quite obviously insane. "Right, I'll be on my way, then. I have a ship to get back to."

"Oh, but I'm afraid you'll need us to return to your home." The man who'd asked him earlier what time he'd traveled from, managed to give the appearance of checking his notes even without his papers or a computer. "By the way, I believe we've been somewhat lacking in manners. Allow me to introduce us. The young lady who attacked you earlier is Buffy Summers, the young man behind me is Xander Harris, the young lady by the door is Cordelia

Chase, the gentleman in front of her is called Angel, the young lady on the ground is Willow Rosenberg and the gentleman standing over her is her father, Ira Rosenberg, but I believe you've already met somehow. Oh, and my name is Rupert Giles."

Everyone in the room except Ira and Willow nodded as they were introduced. Avon didn't feel like nodding. "I'm Avon. So what exactly do you think you can do to return me to my time?"

"Right now, not much. There simply isn't enough time to find out how to send you back this night, and if it turns out that the necessary spell has to be performed during a full moon, you will have to remain our guest for a month at least."

"A spell." Avon was now entirely sure that he was surrounded by lunatics. He slowly walked backwards, trying to get to the door without getting into another fight.

The girl called Buffy noticed his attempt at a strategic withdrawal. "Why don't you stay here for a few hours at least?" she suggested. "We can prove most of what we've been telling you."

"Now that," said Avon, "is something I'd like to hear."



Willow opened the cage and gave Oz his clothes back. She noticed that Avon was watching from where he'd sat talking to Giles and Buffy. Willow felt he'd taken the sudden change from werewolf to Oz rather well, but then after traveling through time and fighting with a vampire and a slayer, a werewolf was probably not that strange anymore. Oz finished putting on his clothes and joined Willow in front of the cage. "How'd it go?"

"Ok, I guess." She pointed at Avon. "That's Dru's father."

Oz looked at him and then at Willow. "He doesn't look undead."

"He isn't. You see, he's from the future, only when I did the spell the first time he traveled too far through time, so he ended up in our past, with Dru's mom." Willow drew a deep breath before continuing. "And then the second time he almost made it here, only not completely and that's how he ended up with my mom." She trailed off because she didn't quite know how to go on from there.

Oz looked from Willow to Avon and back again. "I guess you've got your mother's nose, huh?"

Willow shrugged. "I guess." They were both silent for a moment. When the silence turned awkward, Oz cleared his throat. "Well, look at the bright side. You told me once that you always wanted a sister. So now you've got one."

"Well, technically, she's my half-sister."

"I guess that means you won't have to ask her over for Chanukah, huh?" Oz was silent a little longer. "So where's your dad? I mean, uhh..." he trailed off as he realized that this could now refer to two different people.

"He's home. Cordelia drove him and Angel home half an hour ago. She said she had to go make her-

self presentable before she could show herself while there were people in here."

Oz grinned, then looked over at the table where Avon was talking with Giles. "So what's he like?"

Willow wasn't sure how to answer that question. Despite his sarcastic remarks, it hadn't been too difficult to convince Avon that vampires existed. Angel had changed from vampire to human form and back again another time to prove that it wasn't some kind of trick and by then Willow had been feeling well enough to do another small spell. Just a glamour, this time, that had turned her hair from red to nearly white. It had only lasted for a few minutes, another sign of how tired she was, but it had been enough to start Avon thinking. He'd seemed more annoyed than surprised at learning about magic.

Willow suddenly realized that Oz was still looking at her, waiting for her answer. "I don't know," she answered. "He's ok, I guess. And he's been showing about as much interest in my social life as my mom, so that fits."

Oz put his arm around her shoulder. "Well, it's almost time to get ready for class. Let's go get some breakfast first."

Willow nodded, following Oz with a sense of relief. "Ok, but let's stay away from anything with "surprise" in the name. I've had quite enough of those for one night."



Buffy jumped straight up and kicked the vampire in the chest, sending him stumbling into a gravestone behind him before answering: "that would be 1867." She ducked under the vampire's swinging arm and punched her stake into his heart. She turned around to Avon. "So what's the next question?"

Avon looked up from the dissipating vampire cloud he'd been staring at. "What causes them to vaporize when you pierce the heart?"

"I don't think that's in my history test." Buffy grinned at Avon's frown, then backed up slowly when he drew his gun. "Hey, I was just joking. I don't know why they do that, I just know you have to stake 'em to kill 'em." She didn't even have time to duck when Avon fired. She spun around at the sound of a scream right behind her. A vampire stood writhing in agony while a lance of fire was shooting out of its chest. A few seconds later it collapsed and became dust. Buffy turned back to Avon and tried to look composed. "Or you can just zap 'em with your ray-gun." With an evil grin, she aimed a stake in his direction and threw it at him. It missed him by less than an inch. Avon spun around at the sound of wood penetrating flesh just in time to see the vampire that had been creeping up on him being transformed into a cloud of dust. When he turned back to Buffy, she had already put on her most innocent face. "Just returning the favor."

"Thanks." Avon managed to look amused and chagrined at the same time.

"You're welcome. Well, it looks like we're through here for the night. We might as well go home."

"Not quite. I promised Giles I'd help you study for this test so he could stay at the library to find a way to send me home."

"Yeah, well, he had to stay there anyway. Willow's too tired to stay up for another night and Xander fell asleep the last time he watched Oz."

"Yes, he did remind me of Vila."

"Who?"

"Never mind. Giles is allowing me to stay in his house while we look for a way to get me back to my ship and in return I promised him I'd help you study for your test. By the way, according to this book that last answer was supposed to be 1857, so I'd say you need the help."

Buffy plunked herself down on a gravestone. "all right already, you don't have to rub it in. So what's the next question?"

From the shadows of some nearby trees, Drusilla watched the slayer and her father while they bickered after they'd fought and defeated the three vampires she'd sent at them to test them. Each alone would have made a formidable enemy. The two of them together were just about invincible. And her father was staying at the watcher's home, which meant that neither she nor Spike could reach him while he was resting. Drusilla turned around and smiled as she walked away, a thousand plans forming in her mind. She just loved a good hunt. Prey was always so much more tasty when it squirmed.



"Ah, there you are." Giles looked up from his book when Avon entered the library. "I may have found a way for you to be sent back home." He started reading the book again, looking rather distracted. Avon walked to the nearest chair and settled down. Getting a quick answer out of the librarian might be harder than getting useful information out of Orac.

"So what is this way you've found?" He waited patiently while Giles leafed through his book a little more, walking towards the table while he was reading. When he got halfway, he stopped and looked up as if he had just now remembered that Avon was in the library with him.

"Ah, yes, well, to send you back we'll need several ingredients, most of which are easy enough to come by. There are, however, two requirements which may be a little more difficult to fulfill. For one thing, both of your daughters have to be there during the spell."

Avon had already given up on trying to convince these people that Drusilla and Willow were not his daughters. Besides, he wasn't so sure anymore, himself. He had been in rather close contact with their mothers, after all. And yes, he had had his four year contraceptive shot less than three years ago and he knew that the chances of two different women becoming pregnant after just one sexual encounter with each were slim to none, but with this magic of

theirs there was simply no way to predict what could or could not have happened. So instead of arguing the point, he concentrated on practicalities. "Just let me know where she is, and I'll get Drusilla here. I suppose Willow's presence won't be a problem."

"No, of course not. But I don't think you can force Drusilla to be here."

"I think I'll manage."

"I don't doubt it, but that's not the point. You see, the second requirement is some blood of both your daughters."

"That shouldn't be a problem once we've caught her. You didn't strike me as particularly squeamish."

"It has to be freely given during the spell."

Avon nodded thoughtfully. "Now that may be a problem. I don't suppose Drusilla is going to be very interested in some father-daughter bonding?"

"Drusilla killed every single surviving member of her family within two weeks of having become a vampire. She only wanted you here so she could kill you, too."

"I noticed that. It put me in mind of her father. You know, the one who was married to her mother?"

"We've been over this before. If Robert had been Drusilla's father, Willow could never have brought you here. And for that very same reason you must also be Willow's father."

Avon sighed. "Look, I'm going along with your magic theory because I really can't think of any other way to return home. But I'll believe that it works when I see it. All you've shown me so far is Willow changing the color of her hair. I've seen more impressive tricks in a children's magic show."

"Vampires and werewolves are a regular program item in the children's magic shows of your time?"

"I've seen aliens who could change their shape so they looked human. They turned into a green puddle of sticky goo when they were killed."

"Oz and Angel aren't aliens. And you admitted that you can't think of any way this teleport of yours could have brought you here."

"The teleport was designed by others. There may be parts of it that I don't understand yet." Avon didn't think he was convincing Giles. He wasn't even convincing himself. The teleport was important for their survival whenever they were off the ship, so he'd made a point of learning as much about it as possible. Time travel was simply not one of its options. But it was less difficult to believe than the existence of magic. "Let's say we do need this magic to get me back. If we're to find a way to convince Drusilla to cooperate, we'll need to know as much about her as possible."

"I have several books that describe parts of her life after she became a vampire. I'll start looking through them right away."

"Right. You might as well give me some of them, too. And I'd also like to read some books about computer networks."

"You'd best ask Willow about that. She taught a class in the subject last year, after the regular teacher died."



Avon looked up sharply from the book he'd just opened. "Willow understands computers?"

"Well, yes. That's how she's been helping us mostly. She's only been dabbling in the arcane arts for a short time."

"I see." Avon sat at the table looking thoughtful, the book forgotten in his hands. "In that case I may have to talk to her."



"So what exactly do you hope to accomplish here?"

Willow swallowed nervously as Avon looked disdainfully at the bottles, candles and assorted fetishes she had spread out in front of her. She had to swallow again before she could answer him. "I'm going to try to make you look different, so that it'll be harder for Drusilla to find you. Well, I know it probably won't take her long to find out that the new you is you, but at least it'll give you a little time to get used to things here. You know, a little breathing room. And besides, it really helps during a major spell when everyone who's there believes in what I'm trying to do, so I was hoping that this would help to convince you that magic is for real." She was relieved when Avon sat down in front of her without further comment.

"All right, what do you want me to do? Advanced voodoo was never a part of the curriculum in the schools I've attended."

"Oh, you won't have to do anything, except hold still a little. I was thinking of making your hair blonde and your eyes blue and maybe make your nose a little bigger. And you could wear glasses, too, and some different clothes."

"That should help."

Willow noticed that Avon didn't say what, exactly, should help. He obviously felt that the new clothes would do more to change his appearance than magic. She held her peace while he kept questioning her.

"How long will I stay that way? Being blonde for five minutes might be fun, but it won't do me a great deal of good against Drusilla."

"Oh, a glamour can be maintained for a very long time when it's fixed on a talisman. You can just stop wearing it when you want to look like yourself again."

"Very practical, if it works. What does this talisman look like?"

Willow picked up the talisman she'd made for this purpose. It was a leather thong with a small linen bag hanging from it. She'd filled the bag with feathers and herbs and some other magical items that would help to reinforce and maintain the glamour. She offered the talisman to Avon, who accepted and studied it.

"It'll be easier if you wear that while I cast the spell."

Avon put the talisman around his neck without comment. For the moment he seemed content to see what would happen. Willow found that she was

really eager to prove to this strange man that she could do as she said. More eager than could be explained by the mere need to deal with his skepticism before she was going to cast the major spell that would send him home.

"Giles tells me you're a computer expert."

Willow looked up from her ruminations, startled by the sudden question. She nodded. "Uhhuh, that's how I usually help Buffy, by getting into computer networks and looking things up on the internet."

"The internet? I've heard about that. It was the first planetwide computer network, designed to remain operational even if parts of it were lost due to attack or natural disaster."

"That's right, although most people never think about that part of it. Mostly we just use it to look things up and talk to other people. Oh, and to sell things, too."

"That's what happens to any network that's publicly accessible."

Willow was startled and alarmed to realize that she was enjoying this conversation with Avon. She didn't want to enjoy being with this man who was probably her biological father. It felt too much like a betrayal to her dad. She tried to cover her embarrassment by changing the subject. "I really should put that glamour on you now." Willow was relieved to see the startled look on Avon's face at her sudden change of topic. After she lit the candles, mixed the herbs and started the incantation, she looked at him again. With a sinking feeling, she saw understanding in his eyes. He knew why she'd changed the subject and had decided to respect her wishes. For now.



Giles rubbed his eyes in an attempt to clear them of the sore feeling that was the usual result of too much time spent reading without rest. The tiredness always seemed worse when hours of reading yielded no results to speak of. There simply was no way around the fact that Drusilla would have to give them at least three drops of her blood during the spell. And every book that touched on the subject agreed that she had to shed the blood with her own hands, so tying her up and taking the blood was simply not an option. He looked up tiredly when a man entered the library. Giles returned his attention to the book, distractedly saying "This is the school library. I'm afraid we only help students and teachers of this school."

"So I've heard. Maybe I should apply for a job here, then." The man took a chair and sat down across the table from Giles. The librarian looked him over carefully. The man had blonde hair, blue eyes and a crooked nose. He wore jeans and a knitted sweater and had a leather cord around his neck with a small linen bag hanging from it. Giles nodded thoughtfully. "I must say Willow has done a splendid job on you. I didn't recognize you until you spoke."

Avon sat back in his chair. "Yes, it's really quite remarkable, especially considering how it was done." He pulled the leather cord over his head and sud-

denly his face was back to normal. The clothes remained the same. At Giles' questioning look, he explained: "Xander loaned them to me."

"Good, but it would be best if you were to wear the talisman at all times. A disguise won't do you any good if you take it off where everyone can see you." Avon nodded and put the cord back around his neck. His face seemed to run like wax for a second and then he looked like the man who'd entered the library again. Giles studied the linen bag that held the glamour. Willow had outdone herself, creating a perfect illusion that clung to Avon's head like a tight-fitting mask. A faint whiff of lavender proved that this was indeed Willow's work. He would have to ask her how she'd done it, but he strongly suspected that the blood ties between her and the man sitting in front of him had something to do with it. Perhaps he'd better leave the subject alone, then.

He closed the book he'd been studying and stood up when Cordelia entered the Library. "Right, I'm going to have to pursue some other sources. Cordelia can help you to find your way around the library."

"What, me? Why do I have to baby-sit him?" Cordelia didn't quite pout and stamp her feet, but there was a definite impression that she might.

Avon took it rather calmly, simply arching an eyebrow. "The feeling is mutual, I assure you."

Cordelia ignored him. "And who is he, anyway?"

Giles looked back at her from where he was putting on his jacket. "Oh, I'm sorry, this is Avon."

"Have you bumped your head again?" Cordelia looked at him with a mixture of concern and exasperation. "This is a blonde guy in the latest unemployed fashion. Avon is the dark guy with the bad haircut and the failed seventies fashion statement."

"He borrowed clothes from Xander and Willow put a glamour around his head. Now, if you'll excuse me, I really must be off." Giles hurried through the exit, managing to get out before Cordelia could raise any more objections.

Cordelia turned to Avon. "So these are Xander's clothes, huh?" At Avon's nod, she continued: "That explains a lot. So what are we looking for, here?"

"Anything we can find about Drusilla."

"Why, are you looking for stuff that you can bug her with at a family reunion?"

"Something like that. Do you know where to find the books we need?"

"Duh, under V for vampires of course." She paused, a thoughtful look crossing her face. "Or maybe it's under D for Drusilla. Or was it C for creepy crawlies?" She shrugged, "Oh, whatever, there's lots of vampire histories here somewhere, and I think Giles put them away alphabetically. Let's go check."

"I can see that you're going to be quite helpful."

"Yes, well, don't let the others know that, or they'll be expecting me to do it all the time. Ah, here's some vampire books."

"All right, let's each take one."

"Oh great, that'll be just like reading an episode

of *Tales From the Crypt*. Not exactly my idea of having a good time."

"I'd rather be somewhere else, too, but we don't have much of a choice right now. The sooner you start reading, the sooner you'll be done with it."

"Uh-huh. Eeeeeeuw."

"Is that a comment or a question?"

"Oh this is so gross, just look at this!"

Avon looked where she pointed. "It would seem that these are not nice people."

"No kidding! Oh, yuck, I can't believe she did that."

Avon suddenly remembered the quick conversation between Angel and Buffy, just before Giles had introduced them. "Fourteen eeuws, nine grosses, twelve yucks and a lecture on nail care", he'd said, and Buffy had called that a slow night.

He wondered how these people would react if he'd tie her to a chair and put a gag in her mouth. He estimated a better than even chance that they'd thank him.



Working with Willow turned out to be far more pleasant than working with Cordelia had been. He'd approached her three days after his arrival in the library with a request for information. He had worked some more on his transmitter and had asked for her help in arranging it so that his message would be sent out into space along with the normal transmissions of one of the stronger radio or television stations. With any luck the signal would be picked up and stored by the computer of a space station which would be built about five hundred years from now at a distance of a little over 550 light-years from Earth and which would still be around in his own time. The message would include instructions to contact Orac at the proper time. He wasn't sure if the signal would still be understandable when it reached the station, but he could think of no other way to contact Liberator that could be implemented in less than a month. And he had to get a message to Orac, if only to make sure that the Liberator didn't leave its orbit around Bana until he returned to it. A further complication was that he couldn't just have Orac freeze the navigational controls right after the moment he'd left. Given enough time, Tarrant and Vila could almost certainly circumvent this somehow. So he had to give them a few days leeway, and make sure Orac didn't warn them about the controls being frozen. All in all a fairly complex message, and he'd be lucky if even a small part of it ever reached Orac.

To his surprise his daughter had another, very practical, objection to this plan.

"If you try sending a message that way, there's a pretty good chance that you'll get caught. I can't send you home if we're in jail because we broke into a TV station. For one thing, the visiting hours are always during the daytime, so Drusilla couldn't be there then. And for another, they'd put us in different jails, seeing as you're a man and I'm a woman



and they don't put those together."

"Why not?"

"I don't know. Maybe they don't want the inmates to have any fun?"

Avon looked at her. "You have a better idea?"

"Well, maybe, if we're lucky." She used the mouse to click on some icons on her screen until text filled it. "Does any of this look familiar?"

Avon stared at the screen as if struck. "Where did you get this?"

"Well, this is a part of the source code for an operating system called Linux. What you're looking at right now is a hardware driver. The hardware it's for has been out of production for at least twenty

years, but the driver was never removed from the original Unix version that it was a part of, and in fact was added to Linux, which wasn't even around back then. Partly because it might still be in use by some people who'd get mad if it was removed when they're still using it and partly because building new stuff is much more interesting than checking the program for obsolete code. Besides, most of these drivers don't take up enough space to matter, anyway." Willow looked up at him. "So you do recognize this?"

"Not this particular bit of code, exactly, but it does look familiar. Some of the operating systems of my time have apparently retained some of the old code. I know that quite a bit of obsolete coding

was left in place because no-one knows what it does anymore and removing it might cause all kinds of problems. Apparently several of these "drivers" are among the code that will remain in place."

"Oh, good, old code from the future that's new right now. That's just what I was hoping for. If you just give me the message that you want to send to this "Orac", I can make a whole lot of drivers with that message hidden away in it. And then I can try to get them added to Linux over the course of several years. That way, there's a much better chance of the message getting through, especially if the drivers are supposed to be for really obscure hardware, like those Braille things for blind people or something."

Avon had already thought of that, but he was glad that Willow saw it, too. He was slowly getting used to the idea of having daughters. The fact that at least one of them had inherited his intelligence helped. The fact that the other one could make Servalan look like an innocent kitten didn't, though. He wondered if he'd ever really get used to either one of them. Avon looked at the screen again. It was almost exactly the same as a few bits of obscure code that he'd wondered about when he'd been trying to reroute the money from the bank. Now if he could find those exact bits of programming again and fiddle a little with them, he might just be able to produce some interesting results in his own time. Some very interesting results indeed.



Drusilla's smile would have convinced anyone who didn't know her that something wonderful was going on. Those who did know her would have taken the first bus out of town and kept going until dawn. It was the smile of a predator about to pounce on its prey. The prey in question was sitting on a bench with his back turned to her. He was reading a book, apparently oblivious to his surroundings. Dru was almost disappointed. She would have expected her father to be more of a challenge than this. He hadn't even brought his gun.

Not that it mattered much. Drusilla had never believed in giving her prey a sporting chance. She walked quietly towards the bench until she stood directly behind her father. She put her hands around his neck and brought her head next to his in a position where she could easily reach his carotid artery. "Hello Daddy," she breathed in his ear. To her surprise he didn't even struggle. He simply closed his book.

"I was wondering how long it would take you to find me here."

Drusilla was intrigued. So her father had some kind of trick up his sleeve after all. It had to be an extremely good trick for him to be so confident while she was only seconds away from drinking his blood. Drusilla decided to play along with his game for a while. She liked games.

"So you wanted me to find you here?" She slid around the bench until she could sit on it beside her father and, her hands still clamped around his neck,

pulled him across her lap, forcing him to look up at her. If he found the position uncomfortable, he didn't show it. "Then you must be very brave, or very suicidal. Or did you think I'd spare your life because you're my father?"

"Hardly. I know very well that you intend to kill me *because* I am your father. I wouldn't advise it, though."

Drusilla smiled delightedly, happy to play for a few more moments before she snuffed out his life. "And why not?"

"Because at this very moment Willow is sitting in the library with something called an Orb of Thesalus in front of her and both Buffy and Angel there to keep your flunkies from interfering. If I'm not back in less than an hour, you're going to have to deal with having a soul again. I don't claim to know what that means, but Angel has assured me that you wouldn't like it."

Drusilla looked at him, her eyes wide. He smiled at her, seemingly at ease while she still held him bent backwards over her lap, her fingers curled tightly around his neck. She gasped when all of a sudden her heart felt as if it was being wrenched from her body. For a moment she panicked, believing that her soul was being returned to her at that very moment. The feeling passed, however, and she understood that what she had just experienced was not the actual return of her soul but a very strong premonition of that event. It left her breathless with fear. A choking sound caused her to look at her father again. The shock of the premonition had apparently caused her fingers to cramp so that they were now crushing his windpipe. She released him and stood up, allowing his head to bounce on the bench. She looked down on him. "What do you want from me?"

Her father slowly rose from his prone position and shifted until he sat comfortably. He rubbed his head on the spot where it had hit the bench. "Willow is going to send me back to my own time during the next full moon. That spell requires you to be there and give a few drops of your blood. Now, if you don't show up and cooperate, Willow will still be doing a spell that night. The one that will return your soul to you, to be exact. Needless to say, that spell will also be used if you ever threaten her or her family again. Oh, and killing her won't help. She's given the spell to some friends who can and will use it immediately in case of her death."

Drusilla hissed with rage. This mortal might be her father, but he was still nothing but prey. And yet he had her in his power as surely as if he'd tied her up and aimed a crossbow at her heart. She stood behind him, her fingers gently caressing the bruises that started to form on his neck. She appreciated the way he managed not to flinch, familial pride overcoming her anger. Her father turned out to be the toughest prey she'd hunted so far. "I can wait," she told him, starting to smile again. "This spell will send you to a time when Willow and her friends will be long dead. When you get there, I'll be waiting for you."



He arched an eyebrow. "I'd be disappointed if you weren't."

Drusilla smiled and kept on massaging her father's neck, dreaming of future hunts. Her next family reunion was going to be truly wonderful.



Xander set two steps into the library and then came to an abrupt stop. "What the hell is going on here?"

Buffy looked up from her book. "We're sending Avon home tonight, remember?"

"Only if Drusilla shows up." Willow was shifting in her seat, but didn't seem to be able to find a comfortable spot. Two spaces were cleared on the floor of the library. Both contained a pentagram and several of the usual ingredients for magic. Avon recognized one of the setups as the one Willow had prepared when she'd been ready to return Drusilla's soul to her the night he'd "invited" her to this little party. He hoped she wouldn't have to use that one. He'd been told that it had been extremely dangerous for her the last time she'd done it. Nothing for it but to wait until sunset. Drusilla had promised to be there shortly afterwards. Angel was already there, careful to stay away from the small and rapidly disappearing patch of sunlight that fell through the window in the ceiling.

Avon was still a bit skeptical. "Are you sure this will work?"

Giles smiled reassuringly. "Not to worry, we've researched this spell extensively. It's really quite straightforward." He looked somewhat distracted while he cleaned his glasses.

"There's one catch," amended Willow. "I can't tell you exactly at what time you'll arrive. It could be the moment you left or years later or anything in between."

Avon looked at the group as they stood around him: a teenager, a vampire, a werewolf, a witch, a slayer and a librarian. And these were the good guys in this place. "That's all right," he said, "I'll take my chances." He watched while Oz entered the cage and started taking his clothes off. He'd seen the change from boy to wolf the evening after he arrived here and again yesterday evening, but he still thought it strange that this quiet and serious boy changed into a ferocious animal simply because of the phase of the moon. It didn't make sense, and that was precisely the reason he was eager to leave despite the fact that he was leaving two daughters and the perfect bolt hole behind. Staying here would mean being immersed in vampires, magic and other things that he could not possibly explain in a rational way. These kind of things never happened on the Liberator. Or at least not very often, anyway.

The sound of the door opening made them all turn. It was Drusilla, quietly walking inside. She smiled at him, a friendly smile that made his hackles rise. "Hello Daddy."

"I'm glad to see you're punctual."

"Oh yes. I can't wait to see you off to where I can

get at you." She smiled again and lovingly ran her fingers through his hair. Then she walked over to the pentagram that would be used to send him home. If she even noticed the other setup, she didn't show it. Maybe she didn't recognize it. Right, and maybe she was a nice, innocent and misunderstood little girl who never hurt anyone.

Another thing worried him. "Where's your boyfriend?"

She grimaced. "I left him three weeks ago. Spike is so close to acting like a human that he might as well have had his soul returned to him."

"I can see how that would be annoying."

Drusilla only smiled and sat down at her side of the pentagram. Somehow she managed to look regal even while sitting on her knees. "Shall we begin?"

"You wouldn't by any chance be related to someone named Servalan, would you?"

"No, but if I remind you of her, I'll be sure to look her up sometime."

"Let me know when you do, and I'll be sure to be somewhere else."

Drusilla looked delighted. "I'm so glad you're my daddy. That other one was such a bore. All he could do was preach."

"Then you're in luck. Preaching is one skill I've never had much use for."

Willow cleared her throat, drawing their attention. "I think we should start now, seeing as how the moon is now up."

Drusilla looked at her. "You're not going to be one of those annoying little sisters that pester their elders for attention all the time, are you?"

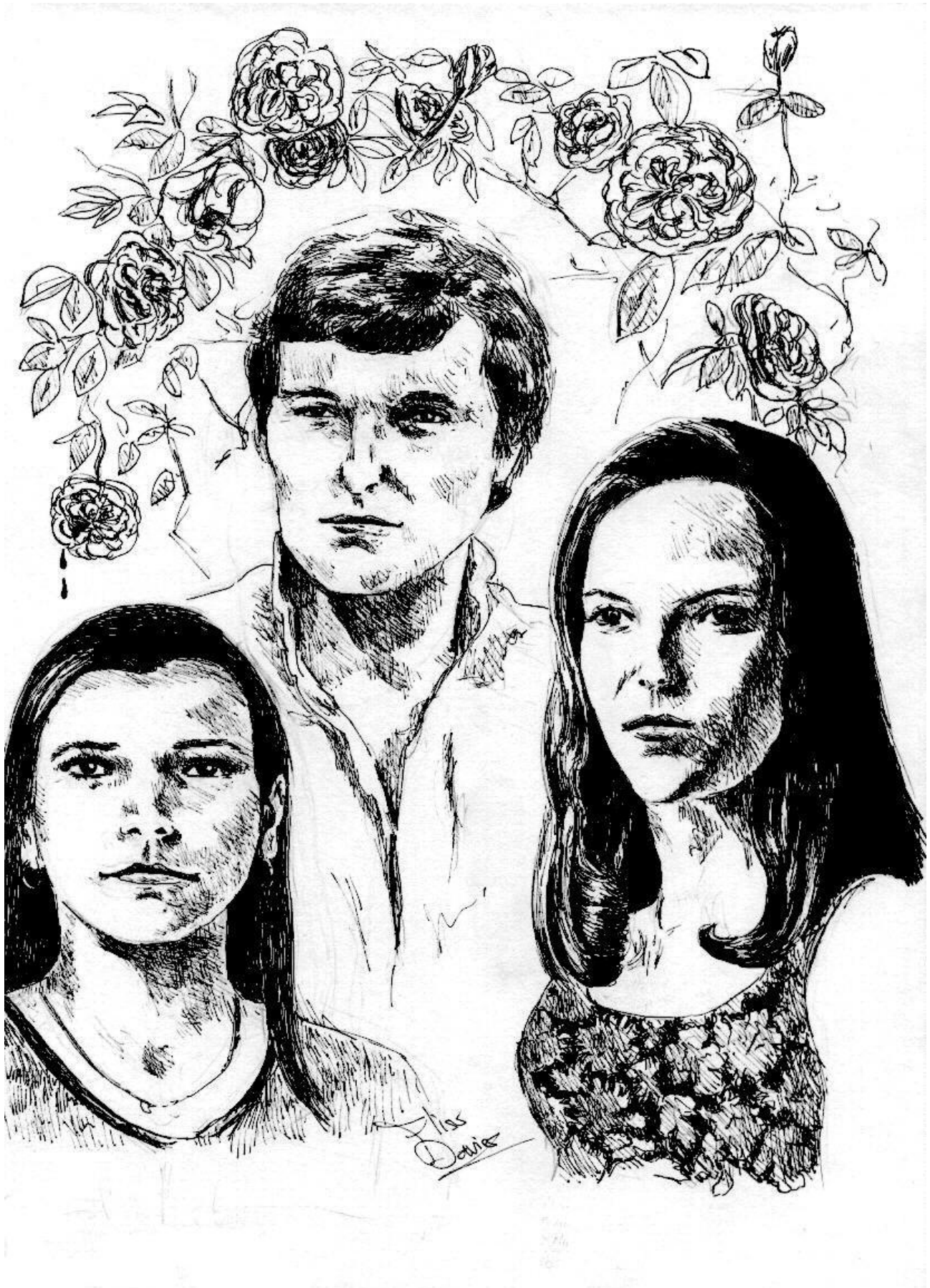
Willow vigorously shook her head. "Actually, I wasn't going to be a sister at all. Or at least not your sister. Which I am, but I wasn't planning on it. Not that such things can be planned, of course, but I wouldn't have if they could be."

"Right," said Avon, "now that we have that bit of sisterly bonding behind us, could we please get started?"

"Oh, right." Willow swallowed nervously and pushed back her hair. It immediately fell back to where it had been before she pushed it back, but she didn't seem to notice that. She sat down on her knees at another point of the pentagram. "You have to sit over there, to complete the circle."

Avon had expected to be told to stand in the middle of the pentagram, because that's where he'd arrived a month ago. But magic was not something he was ever planning to learn about, so he simply complied without asking annoying questions like why sitting around a five point star was called completing a circle.

There was a bowl with herbs and several unidentifiable but foul smelling things that Avon didn't even want to guess at in the middle of the pentagram. The smell was alleviated just a little by the smell of lavender coming through it. Willow took a pointed knife from Giles and, holding her hand above the bowl, pricked her finger with it, flinching only a little when she did so. She grasped the



finger with her thumb and her middle finger while reciting: "This is my blood, freely given to celebrate the everlasting bond of family." She squeezed several drops of blood out of her finger, allowing them to fall into the bowl. Then she passed the knife on to Drusilla. Avon tensed, even though he knew very well that Drusilla really didn't need a knife to be dangerous. Drusilla smiled at him as if she knew what he was thinking. Without fuss, she simply held her hand above the bowl and pricked her finger. "This is my blood, freely given to celebrate the everlasting bond of family." Her expression remained perfectly serene and her voice didn't betray even a hint of irony while she recited the formula and squeezed her finger until enough blood had fallen from it. She then passed the knife to Avon, who took it silently.

Like his daughters had done before him, he held his hand and the knife over the bowl and pricked his finger. Feeling like a fool, but putting a good face on it, he squeezed his finger while reciting the formula. "This is my blood, freely given to celebrate the everlasting bond of family." He gave the knife back to Giles, who immediately took it away somewhere. Avon approved of his caution.

Giles then came back with a book and held it open in front of Willow. She held out her hands to Drusilla and Avon and while they sat there with clasped hands she started to recite what was in the book in front of her. Unlike the formula about blood, it was in some strange language that Avon didn't understand. Willow read it haltingly, but with increasing confidence. Suddenly the things in the bowl ignited, sending blood red smoke streaming up towards the ceiling. The smoke surrounded the three of them and was then drawn towards Avon. It started to glow, forming a glowing globe around him that slowly contracted and lost color until he was surrounded by a bright white shell that fit him like a suit. And then the nausea struck and the world disappeared around him.

Willow looked at her father, sitting beside her and surrounded by a white shell of light that looked exactly like the one that had surrounded him when he first arrived here. He didn't seem too happy about it. As a matter of fact, he was starting to look decidedly green. Willow resisted the urge to move the smoking bowl in his direction in case he was going to get sick. While she chanted, a pressure came from the light, pushing her father's hand and hers apart. She could see the same thing happening on Drusilla's side.

Her half-sister was looking on with interest, a slight smile on her face. "Goodbye daddy," she said, "until we meet again."

Willow nodded her agreement with the sentiment. "Goodbye." Then both the light and her father disappeared.

The spell was finished, and Willow slumped with fatigue. She noticed that Drusilla was looking at her and at the same time remembered that they were still holding hands. She pulled her hand back quickly.

Drusilla smiled. "What's the matter, little sister? I'd almost get the impression that you don't like me."

"Jeez, wherever did you get that idea?" Buffy was now standing next to Drusilla, looking down on her. "After all, you've always been so nice to her."

Angel crouched on the other side of Drusilla, grinning like a wolf. "And remember, if you ever think of having a little sisterly squabble, there's an Orb of Thesalus here with your name on it. You should try it. There's really nothing like having a soul again after more than a century of murder and mayhem."

Drusilla hissed and backed away. "This isn't over yet. Someday, I'll make you all pay for what happened here."

"Someday," agreed Buffy, watching Drusilla leave, "but not today." She started to peel the cover off a bar of chocolate and then paused to stare at it thoughtfully.

"Giles?"

"Yes?"

"What *do* you use to fight the tooth fairy?"



"Information: three federation pursuit ships are approaching on an intercept course." As usual, Zen gave his message with no noticeable stress in his voice. His listeners displayed far more emotion.

"All right, that's it, we have to leave now." Vila ran to his station and looked at Tarrant, who had just arrived at his pilot's position. "Oh come on, Tarrant, it's been a week since the last time we picked up a signal from Avon. You can't honestly believe that there's still a chance that we'll get him back."

Tarrant checked his station and ordered Zen to put the pursuit ships on the main screen. Those preparations over with, he turned to Vila. "Vila, I agree with you completely."

"I mean it, Tarrant, we can't just hang around here waiting for them to start shooting at us." Then it suddenly hit him what Tarrant had said. "Eh?"

"I agree that we should leave and I also agree that there's very little chance that Avon will come back."

"Oh good, let's go then."

"I'm afraid we can't do that."

"What? Why not?"

"Because Orac has locked out the navigational controls. We can't leave orbit until Avon tells Orac to release them."

"Oh great, so all we have to do now is hold a seance so Avon can tell Orac to let us go." Vila slumped at his station.

"Seances are supposed to call up the spirits of the dead." Dayna grimaced while she manned her station. "Avon is enough of a thundercloud alive. I shudder to think what it would be like to have him haunting the liberator."

"Probably a lot like having another Orac around. Without an off switch." Tarrant looked at the viewscreen. "Zen, how long until they get within firing range?"

"Twelve minutes, eight seconds."

Vila made a face towards the viewscreen. "So that's how long we've got left to live, huh? Just enough time to get some adrenaline and soma."

"Not now, Vila." Tarrant walked from his station towards Orac. "Orac, we're about to be fired on. Now would be a good time to release those controls."

"That will not be possible. Avon's messages clearly stipulate that a code word must be given to free those controls."

"Messages? What messages?"

"Avon has sent me several time delayed messages specifying that we should wait for his return."

"From where? And why didn't we hear about these messages?"

"Since these messages have been stored in my memory for years, I saw no particular reason to inform you at this time. Besides, they were encoded with instructions for me to decode them at a particular time. That time was four days ago. I was unaware of the content of the messages until then."

"Eight minutes until intercept." Vila was starting to look nervous. "If we don't leave soon, those ships are going to start being unfriendly."

"Yes, I'm working on that, Vila." Tarrant didn't even try to keep the irritation out of his voice. "Orac, if we don't leave here within the next few minutes, there isn't going to be a ship for Avon to come back to."

"I am aware of that. However, there is no leeway in my instructions."

"Dammit Orac..." Tarrant was quickly losing his patience.

"The controls have been released. Both the navigation computers and manual controls are at your disposal." Orac managed to sound quite smug for a glowy box.

Tarrant raised his head. "Zen, plot an escape course and execute. Standard by ten."

"Confirmed." As usual, Zen didn't seem to be in a hurry, but he executed the order with more than his usual efficiency.

Vila watched the viewscreen until the pursuit ships had fallen far enough behind and then turned to Tarrant. "I never knew you could curse that effectively."

"He can't." Everyone turned to the flight deck's entrance to gape at the figure strolling towards them. "Navigation was returned to you after I returned to the ship, as specified in my orders to Orac." Avon sat at his station and briefly checked his board before standing up again. "Now if you'll excuse me, I've had a rather tiring month. I'm going to get some rest." And with that, he left the flight deck.

They all looked at each other and then Dayna looked back at where Avon had gone. "A month? but he was only gone for nine days."

"Must have been some party, then." Vila looked wistful. "And he didn't even bother to invite us."

## EPILOGUE

Avon lay on the bunk in his cell, trying to relax his sore muscles. The interrogations had been painful to say the least and he knew that it would only get worse. It was nothing compared to what had happened at Gauda Prime, but he had managed to push the pain those memories brought him away to where it could no longer reach him. Only the physical pain remained, refusing to be denied.

Down the hall from his cell sounded some thumps, the kind of thumps he'd become quite familiar with over the past few weeks. Unconscious and dead bodies made that sound when they were thrown on the floor of their cells when they were carried back after interrogation. The guards didn't want the duty of having to remove a dead body, so they usually didn't bother to check for vital signs before locking someone up. The strange thing about the thumps he was now hearing was that there were several, one after the other, and the sounds were coming closer to his cell. He resisted the urge to rise from his bunk. The cell door had no window, so there was no way for him to find out what was happening even if he did get up.

Then he heard another familiar sound, one he'd come to associate with imminent pain: the soft bleeps that sounded while the code to open his door was punched in. The door opened and a guard appeared, but instead of coming in to fetch him, he remained standing just outside the door. To his surprise, Avon noticed a look of fear on the guard's face. Then another face appeared next to that of the guard. A face that didn't belong here, that never should have been here.

Avon stood looking at her, not even remembering that he'd got up from his bunk. She looked older than the last time he'd seen her, but he had no trouble recognizing her. She smiled at him, a sweet smile that horrified him. "Hello Daddy," she said. Then she looked thoughtfully at the guard. "Hungry now."

And while Avon sank back on his bunk, putting his face in his hands, Willow began to feed.



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