

Loose Ends

by Lynne C.

Rating: NC-17

Disclaimer: It's all Joss' – I worship at the altar of his genius, and acknowledge that he owns all these folks and everything that they do and say.

Setting/Spoilers: AtS Season 5, generally – and, Spike's "semi-canon" past (London, mid-1970s)

Summary: An unexpected epilogue to an incident in Spike's past, inspired by a throwaway line from Buffy 7.8

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Loose Ends

Ever since his improbable return from the sinkhole-inducing, great fiery beyond, Spike had been contemplating loose ends. Not just that he was most definitely at them, but, that there were so many of which he was aware.

Many had to do with Buffy, but not all of them.

Dawn...he'd felt like perhaps her steely attitude towards him had softened towards the end, but they'd never really talked about any of it. Not that he had any idea what he'd say – not that he even felt that he deserved her forgiveness or the return of her affection towards him. But that didn't stop him wanting those things.

Joyce and Tara...he wished he'd gone once more to their gravesites, now unreachable, to say his *final* final good-byes to them. He still couldn't imagine the world without these two kind, empathetic, strong-willed, no-nonsense women in it. Women who, despite the illogic of it, gave a damn about him....

It wasn't *all* as maudlin as that.

He'd participated in training those potentials at Ft. Summers...it would be nice to be able to check in on them to see what they'd done with it, now that they had the full Slayer cred going on. He'd heard about the backup that Andrew had called in on Operation Psycho Slayer, and would have liked to see and feel all that Slayer power concentrated in one place. Too bad he'd had his own troubles at that point and had missed out.

But, honestly, plenty of those loose ends *did* revolve around Buffy. *Still love's bitch...*, he'd think to himself, and shake his head.

Things reminded him of her – the shampoo that one of the secretaries used, a new pair of shoes that Harmony had prattled on about the first day she'd worn them, a turn of phrase that he'd overhear that would catapult him back into her presence.

And then, there were the unfinished stories. Over those last couple-three years, when they'd let their guards down just a bit, and talked like they weren't mortal enemies, they'd traded anecdotes from the past. True, he had a deeper pool of them, and a greater willingness to share, especially when they'd been seeing – okay... doing – each other, and he'd been more than a little desperate to pretend that they were a real couple. And then again, after his return from Africa and the school basement. But, too often, those stories were interrupted. He'd piss her off and she'd storm out of his crypt. Or, one of the Slayerettes would come out on the back porch and they'd clam up guiltily, having been caught in clandestine chumminess. Or their quiet, conversational night of patrol would be invaded by some baddy in need of killing and the threads just wouldn't be picked up again.

Now, since memory was all he really had, he'd recall not having gotten to make his point, or give the punch line, or brag about his victory (or escape, depending). And then, there was the story that he'd thought was finished. Until, it acquired an unexpected epilogue. And he'd wanted nothing more than to share it with her.

It had happened when he'd been allowing this Doyle-Lindsey person lead him about, playing the Dark Alley Crusader. He'd been canny enough to know there was something fishy about the setup, and figured he'd better do a little more to take care of himself. There was an old converted warehouse in one of the dive-y-er parts of LA that operated as a legitimate, but still on-the-edge, pseudo-rave dance club. Occasionally, they managed to book real acts onto their stage, and when they did, Spike would act as extra security. It was a strictly back-door, cash-and-carry arrangement with the management. But, it provided him with a bit of independent dosh, no questions asked.

He'd been sent by D-L's "visions" into this particular neighborhood twice, and so had started patrolling through it on his own impetus. Just as the alleyway behind the Bronze had been a favorite place for vamps and other nightcrawlers to troll for a tasty morsel, this club had a dark lane that attracted the undead and unhuman. Not especially surprising, really. Anywhere that people gathered in large numbers, at night, especially if there was a chance their judgment might be impaired by booze or drugs, made for a good feeding ground.

Spike ought to know. He used to prowl the same sort of venues himself. Enjoy the entertainment, create a little of his own, and enjoy a meal on the way out. A scenario that dovetailed, ironically, with the crux of this particular belatedly-finished tale.

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The violent notes ricocheted off the dark, damp walls, reverberating back at the stage where four young men vomited their rage into the heavy, dank air of the club. As musicians, they were simplistic and unpracticed. But the dissonance of the notes, the grating, sneering vocals, were for both the audience and the band the equivalent of mainlining riot and revolution. It was a big enraged communal anarchy trip. It was electric; his teeth quivered and itched, and the demon inside growled low in anticipation.

Spike slunk along the edges of the dirty room, breathing in the must of decades and the tang of sweaty, disaffected, pheromone-laden fury that was continually intensified by the music that assaulted the senses, and which, in turn, spurred the band to new heights of cacophony. It was a thing of beauty.

And at the same time, he laughed at them. They imagined they knew animal rage – pure, uninhibited violence. They were children too bored and privileged to realize how good they had it; how little they truly had to rage against; how ill-equipped they were to utterly give themselves over to it, to become its instrument and its creator, to incite it as easily and as thoughtlessly as they breathed or spoke. He looked them over with the superiority of knowing that he was the king of the beasts in this room. Those who imagined themselves to be the agents of chaos were still bounded by their tiny little experiences. One of them would encounter the real thing before the night was over.

But it was early yet, so he hung back, reveling in the charged atmosphere, his senses humming.

His eyes fell briefly on a young woman at the pinnacle of exhibitionism, wearing torn leggings with braces over a brassiere whose cups had been cut away, leaving her tits hanging out.

*Neh, too obvious ~ tryin' too hard...a real go-er don't flaunt it quite so...*

Besides, she seemed attached at the hip to a cadre of chums, ranging from a fairly average-looking pale boy in a black leather jacket to a young man in fishnet stockings and heeled shoes being led around by a leash. It might be tough to separate her from the herd.

He moved on, visually sifting the crowd until he spied a blond girl, 20-ish. She appeared to be by herself, and had given herself over to the energy seething around her. Her eyes were closed, and she moved with the beat of the music, not dancing – “dancing” implied a coherence to which the music didn’t even bother to aspire. But, she channeled the driving chords and ragged notes through her body in an ecstasy of interpretive movement. Yes, she was the one. He could already feel the curve of her hips under his hands, and the yielding skin of her neck.

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He’d heard of the band by chance, on a regular visit to a curious clothing shop in King’s Road. It had been not long before he had brought Dru to the UsofA for the second time – he recalled it as either ’75 or ’76. Not like he owned a calendar. But by his reckoning afterwards, it was somewhere in there.

They’d been back in London. Wherever they roamed, they always seemed to end up back there – where they’d each been born, both times, in fact – as humans *and* as vampires. She’d spent much of this particular sojourn caught up in “reliving” her last months as a human. She seemed drawn to churches and the very few Church of England convent houses, including the one that had been her own, all those years ago.

Spike had accompanied her as often as his patience allowed, but he would just never draw the same satisfaction as she did from the symbolism she assigned the games she played with her food before she ate. He loved her, but he’d never understand how that beautiful, broken, depraved mind of hers worked. Besides, all those middle-aged holy women were so bland. Generally, they hadn’t a lot of fight in them, just a devout acceptance that this had been foreordained by the Almighty, and it was their duty to accept it. Not that they weren’t properly terrified – they were. But the fact that they didn’t get that he was an independent operator in the universe, rather than the pawn in some divine predestination, was insulting.

What’d they think? He’d wondered, that they’d done something so evil themselves that He’d decided they deserved this as punishment? Else, if they held to this ‘loving God’ as they claimed, how to explain an end so vile, from their perspective, anyway?

Those meals were sustaining, but not especially enjoyable. So, more and more, they’d hunted separately. And while Dru was visiting the past, and dining on the meek and the good, Spike was exploring in a whole other direction. He’d taken a fancy to bleach his hair not long before they’d come home to England, having eaten an albino in Italy, and appreciated the way the fellow stood out in the crowd. *All the better to see you...* as the fairy story said.

And Spike was most definitely interested in being seen.

He’d gotten a bellyful of Angelus’ blend-in-and-enjoy-the-comforts-of-society approach to vampire existence. They’d fought about it any number of times, thrashing one another to the point of bloody exhaustion, Angelus always so cool and calculating and pompously serious in his effort to “teach the boy a lesson”. *Blighter never got that I was baiting him ~ the fight was half the bloody fun!*

So, even all these decades later, Spike was still looking for ways to be seen, to create chaos, and generally tell “society” to “Fuck Off!” with everything he did. Yeah, he knew it was the most basic psychology of rebellion and “father issues”, but he didn’t care. He’d never before felt so alive, and that was what mattered.

Thus it happened that Spike found himself in King's Road in Chelsea early one evening, swaggering down the middle of the sidewalk in combat boots, daring the other pedestrians to refuse to give way. None did. Between the attitude that he exuded, and the striking look of his singed and ripped t-shirt held together with safety pins, heavily lined eyes and chain wrapped double around his neck, their wariness was tinged with fear, without him even looking directly at them.

This is more like it! He recalled breathing in the satisfying whiffs of adrenaline that would peak infinitesimally as he neared and then passed each person, their primal fight-or-flight instincts recognizing him for the predator that he was, though their conscious minds assumed he was just a common street thug. It was a delicious tease that primed him for whatever entertainment he'd devise for himself later on.

He wasn't going anywhere in particular, just working his way through some of the grittier neighborhoods of London. He figured he'd know where he was going when he got there, or had, in one way or another, sated his appetite(s), and it was time to return to the lair just ahead of the sunrise.

A tall, leggy redhead had caught his attention, crossing from his side of the street to the other, so that he didn't notice the place right away. But, when the very eatable girl had gotten into a waiting car and pulled away, Spike had turned to look at the place he was passing, and stopped. The door was standing open, and voices drifted out into the evening air. But it was the spraypainted graffiti covering the inside walls that had caught his attention.

So, he went in. It took him a moment to realize that it was, essentially, a clothing shop. The sex toys and rubber curtains tended to catch the attention first, but when he looked past them, there were racks of t-shirts with scrawled epithets and slogans screened or written on them.

Interesting...

There was a buxom girl with a very blond beehive and shiny black vinyl dress near the cash register, being chatted up by a couple of teenage boys dressed in products obviously purchased on the premises. They spared him a quick glance, but their attention returned immediately to the shop girl, focused intently somewhere below her chin.

Spike toned down the attitude of outright insolence with which he'd made his way there, for one of nonchalant superiority, hooked his thumbs in his beltloops, and strolled around the place. Beehive-girl might make a tasty morsel, and if he looked around a bit, he could make up his mind if it was worth waiting for her to finish work and take to the dark streets.

He could feel himself being watched, from the back corner of the place, but didn't look up until he'd found a trinket he liked. He picked up a studded leather wristband, turned it over, slowly running his fingertips over the protruding bits of steel. He paused, then wrapped it around his wrist and snapped it into place. Spike flexed his fingers, making a fist and feeling the resistance from the new leather.

Feels good... looks good... yeh, no need to hang about to eat ~ this could be fun.

Finally, he looked up and met the challenging gaze that could only belong to the proprietress – a striking woman in her 30s with pale hair shaved close and spiked up on top. Their eyes held for a long moment, before Spike gave her a defiant sneer, tongue caressing his front teeth, flexed his fist once more, then turned and strolled out of the shop. She never said a word or stirred, having correctly read the danger emanating from him. But her relentless eyes were on him until he'd left.

He liked that – *tough broad, not backin' down, but sharp enough t'stay outta m'way.*

He'd prowled the Tube for a bit after that, finally grabbing a bite, in the form of a lone tourist, a few transfers away, driving a game of cat and mouse with her into the recesses of an abandoned branch line.

Spike had let a couple of weeks pass before he returned to the store, but his curiosity had been piqued. So, he'd gone back, interested to see what his reception would be like. After all, the place seemed to be almost as intent on giving the world the two-fingered salute as he was. Who knew what might come of it.

The second visit was a bit disappointing, as the owner-lady was in an argument with some tosser who was trying to tell her that the place needed to "make a statement" (*Oi! Like the bondage gear don't speak up loud 'n' clear!*) and "defy commercialism", by which Spike assumed that the bloke was of the opinion that if it was making enough money to sustain itself, it had become part of the establishment. Besides being a patronizing git, he was ruining Spike's return to the scene of his petty crime. So, he did a quick turn of the place, again being ignored by beehive-girl, but earning a nod from a scrawny young man with green hair. At the very end of his tour, he bumped into the self-important pillock, cutting him off mid-rant.

"Hey, watch where you're..."

Spike's response was a low growl right up in the fellow's face, coupled with a yellow flash of the eye that came and went so quickly he'd never be sure later that it had actually happened.

The color drained from the wanker's face, and though his mouth opened and closed a couple of times, he couldn't seem to find the breath to say whatever was swirling in his head.

And then Spike left. He could never be quite sure afterwards, when he thought back on it, why he hadn't just ripped the guy's throat out. He would finally conclude he'd just wanted to keep his options open.

After that, he returned sporadically, always taking away a souvenir of some kind. He liked their dedication to giving shock and offence, so decided not to mess with anyone he found there. It was worth dining elsewhere to let it continue to exist. And he enjoyed the fact that he was getting away with taking what he wanted, bold as he pleased.

It was lurking about the establishment in King's Road that he heard about a new band playing out. Despite the fact that the tosser, who turned out to also be the husband – or boyfriend – Spike wasn't quite sure which, of the brassy owner-lady, seemed to be the one who'd put the whole thing together, he decided to give them a go.

So, he showed up at a grimy little club in North London to hear the Sex Pistols.

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Spike had approached the blonde from behind, not even addressing her, just wrapping an arm around her middle, pasting his body to the humidity of hers. A self-congratulatory leer alit on his features as she made no protest, accepting his overture without even a backward glance. *Ole Spike knows how to pick 'em...* In his present humor, he wanted one who would come along willingly. Then he closed his eyes and assumed her movements as his own, so that they became a unit, letting the shattering rhythms crash and echo through them.

He had no sense of how long they'd remained like that, in tandem with the music, and mirroring its chaos. The scent of her was exquisite, and combined with the melange of sights, sounds and motion surrounding them to produce a highly intoxicating sensory experience.

Spike's free hand had found one of her breasts, and fondled it through her swastika-decorated t-shirt. Being staunchly opposed to social norms, she wore no bra, and her nipples stiffened immediately in response to the contact. One of his denim-clad legs had found its way between hers, and her plaid mini schoolgirl-style skirt was

riding well up as he moved with and against her. The arm that had held her around her middle had migrated south, and he was teasing the hem of her skirt in the front. If he needed further evidence of the rightness of his choice of companion, it was given by the pressure of her ass against his groin, and the way that she leaned into the hand at her breast. When the fingers at the front of her skirt had explored sufficiently to glean that this girl was opposed to the restriction of **all** undergarments, he heard her moan and her head fell back on his shoulder.

He would have taken that as his opportunity to move the festivities outside, but a new sound joined the general eardrum-battering that had ensued to that point. Spike looked towards the stage to see a microphone stand come flying out into the audience. The green-haired kid from King's Road, who was the lead singer for this little band, had evidently flung it, and now stood screaming epithets and surveying his handiwork, a contorted grin showing off his decayed teeth.

People were running around, taking the opportunity to crash into each other, with an outbreak of fisticuffs in one corner quickly drawing a crowd. A short teenage girl in pigtails and a dominatrix getup was flailing away at a support column with the mic stand, which molded itself further to the shape of the support with each blow.

Never one to stand by a good fracas, Spike grabbed a glass of beer which no one seemed to be minding from a nearby table, took several swallows, then whaled it back at the stage, missing the drummer only because he leaned down to pick up his own drink from the floor. The glass shattered, spraying glass and beer all over the stage.

Now real chaos threatened, though the bass player gamely played on, accompanied by feedback from a mic which had fallen too close to an amplifier.

Supremely unconcerned about the two bouncers who were closing in on him, Spike backed blond girl up against another support column (the remnants of the original mic stand lay in a crumpled heap of metal at the base of the one across the room) and had her pinned there, his tongue deep in the hot recesses of her mouth and one hand fully engaged under her shirt. She was returning the kiss with great enthusiasm, while strangled mewling sounds came from her throat.

*What a gorgeous throat...blood so close....* A hand falling on one of his shoulders interrupted his appreciation of the rich, melodic hum of her circulation just below her pale skin. He snapped his head backwards quickly, catching the first of the bouncers square in the face, knocking him senseless and sending him reeling off to the side and into a pack of kids who took turns spinning him around and pushing him in a new direction, denying him an opportunity to get his bearings. Surprised at his mate's fate, the second bouncer briefly broke stride, but rallied quickly and drew back a fist, expecting to deliver a crushing blow to Spike's jaw. Instead, Spike grabbed the blonde's right hand in his left, dodged sideways with her, and clamped his own right fist around the beefy forearm of the bouncer. A quick snap to the outside dislocated the guy's elbow, dropping him to the floor where he shrieked and writhed.

Spike had done an infinitesimal amount of damage, relative to his capacity. But as much fun as a good brawl could be, he was now more interested in drenching himself in the moist warmth that the girl's body offered him. He dragged her towards the club entrance and out into the night.

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The chief object of Spike's desire had always been, and, he expected, would always be, his Dark Princess. She had introduced him to sexual pleasure, after all, and between his gratitude at the thoroughness of her schooling (he tried **never** to recall Angelus' role in producing her degree of expertise), and his intense love for her, he could not imagine wanting anyone with the all-consuming passion that she elicited.

And yet, there were times when he craved the physical heat of an encounter with a live girl. Dru had taught him

this as well, so that neither of them looked at sex with a victim as an infidelity -- as long as it was in the context of the kill. Nevertheless, Spike tended not to indulge himself this way very frequently, thinking it was all the better for the anticipation.

And anticipate he did. As he drew the girl deep into the alley behind the club, he was already uncomfortably hard, his sexual and predatory hungers warring for primacy. They had still not exchanged a word, as he pushed her roughly against the brick wall, her hands taking her weight as he positioned himself behind her.

Her heartbeat was a triphammer, and her breath was short, speaking to him of her own anticipation, though the earthy scent of her arousal had already done as much. He could almost recall the feeling of his own heart banging against his ribs, though never under such circumstances as these.

Bloody wanker! William'd 'ave passed out by now. Couldna 'ave imagined what he was missin'.

Despite the almost painful strain of his cock against the zipper of his jeans, he teased himself a few moments more, lifting her skirt and rubbing his clothed member against her bare bottom, filling his hands with the warm flesh, his kneading motions had the effect of stroking his erection through the taut fabric.

She pressed back against him impatiently, and he laughed huskily low in his throat, finally unzipping his jeans and freeing his cock.

He reached around her and grasped her mons, pulling her back sharply against him, guiding his head to the entrance of her damp channel. "This what you want, pet?"

Her only answer was a moan, accompanied by a rotation of her hips against him. He laughed again. *So easy... but 'nough playin'....*

He tilted her forward just a bit at the waist, leaning backwards himself, and savored the slow sensation of being engulfed in the tight, hot wetness of her.

Now it was his turn to groan, and though he didn't need to breathe at all, he was panting with the explosion of sensation around and through his dick. *Nothin' else feels like this...Nothin'.*

He drew back slowly, feeling her flesh clinging to the length of him, before pushing back into her, just a tiny bit faster than the first time. He increased the pace just a touch with each stroke, drawing out the pleasure, and enjoying the way she tightened around him, her muscles massaging him, each time he withdrew.

As the rhythm increased, he changed his angle to lean into her, his hands covering hers, and his hips hammering into her with increasing force. Each time he hit bottom, a small gasping cry escaped her, growing in volume and pitch. The sensations were crashing over him in waves, and he knew he was getting close to completion.

He had begun to growl low against her ear, and as the smell of her became more intense, his teeth descended, and his eyes glowed yellow in the dark of the alley. He continued to thrust in and out of her slippery core, until her gasps turned into sobs and he felt her grip on him tighten to an impossible degree, and then begin to ripple up and down the length of him. The rest of her body had gone still.

His growl now a roar, he pulled back once more, then slammed himself home, going rigid at the bottom. He sank his teeth into her throat at the same instant that he exploded inside her. She filled his mouth almost faster than he could swallow. His cock continued to twitch and spasm inside her, and her muscles to quiver around him as he lapped the life from her neck.

In little more than a moment, she cooled in his arms, slumped back against him, and her heart failed.

He had stopped drinking, but held her for a moment yet, his muscles not yet capable of relaxing. Slowly, he released her, and her body slid down his, into a crumpled heap at his feet.

Spike stared at her, staring sightlessly up at him, as he tucked himself back inside his jeans, and zipped them up.

"Mighty good fuck, pet..." The sound of his own voice startled him, sounding much too loud in the stillness that had filled the alley after the echoes of their copulation had faded away.

He turned, drawing his forearm across his mouth, the better to lick up the last traces of her blood. He froze, however, when he saw a figure silhouetted at the end of the alley, some 50 or more yards away, seemingly rooted to the spot.

"Fuck!" *Perfectly good shag-'n'-shant buzz gonna go ta waste...Bloody witness!*

Spike advanced slowly, and the young man began to back away, scrambling towards the brick wall on the far side of the alley. He paused by the wall, his shoulders shaking, evidently relieving himself of his dinner. Spike smirked, still stalking him coolly and unhurriedly. This would just take a minute, and then he could get back to savoring the evening's recreation. But the kid recovered himself, and lit out running, taking Spike by surprise.

He set off in pursuit, rounding the corner out of the alley, in time to see the kid swing into the driver's seat of a Ford transit van parked nearby. *Bloody, soddin' hell...* In a flash, Spike was alongside the van, which was just beginning to pull away from the curb. His arm shot through the driver's side window, causing the kid to pull the wheel sharply away and to the right. The back end of the van slid sideways, the impetus knocking Spike off his feet.

He slid a short distance on the pavement, the asphalt enhancing the distressed condition of Spike's jeans. The gears of the van were grinding frantically as he pulled himself to his feet and threw himself back in the direction of the van. Reaching it, he paused, his hands planted on the hood, and they regarded each other in the glow of the streetlamp. Spike grinned, his yellow eyes glittering. He recognized the boy in the leather jacket he'd seen inside the club earlier and could see individual drops of sweat standing out on his terrified face. Spike threw back his head and howled, kicking a hole into the grillework of the van, and bracing a boot in it for a frontal assault through the windshield, at just about the same time as the kid found reverse. The van shot out from under Spike, backing all the way to the intersection, where he changed direction again and merged into the traffic on the main road.

Spike watched from his hands and knees, not even bothering to take the chase up again. He knew there was no point. Besides, he was feeling a bit sluggish. So, the kid would have an interesting story to tell his mates, who would proceed to disbelieve and mock him, and hold him up as an extraordinary pratt.

So, he'd returned to the lair, to curl up around Drusilla, where they'd whispered their night's adventures to each other.

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He'd never expected to see the kid again. But he knew him the minute that he did.

"Fucking little pissant!"

It was Chicago, fall of 1982.



They had been laying relatively low of late, the result of some latter-day van Helsing who had been on their tail for some weeks, following them east from San Francisco. Spike had pretty well decided that it was about time to leave the country, and was making a beeline for one of the most convenient Great Lakes ports -- Toledo or Cleveland would probably do -- there to hop on some innocuous cargo-hauler, and beat it down the St. Lawrence to one of the Atlantic ports, to find a ship back to Europe.

So, they'd reached Chicago on the lam, but with Spike confident that they were a day or more ahead of their pursuer. It was all very irritating -- he figured that the Crusader must be some Watcher who was operating independently -- he knew too much about vampires in general and, Spike had the feeling, him in particular. After all, he was the Slayer of Slayers, wasn't he? What a trophy to bag Old Spike! He never engaged directly. He just kept being there, somewhere over Spike's shoulder which, incidentally, had already taken a bolt from his crossbow.

Because he never got too close, Spike hadn't been able to get a scent, and so had had trouble hunting him. But he seemed to be an uncanny urban tracker, picking Spike and Dru's trail up seemingly at will, even after they'd shaken him for several days running. Spike had grown concerned about unwittingly leading him back to their lair, and being roasted in his sleep. So, they'd gone underground and begun moving fast. Which also meant dining cautiously and inconspicuously.

"Eat to live, not live to eat, luv" he'd told Drusilla when she'd turned her nose up at the wino he'd subdued in a dark courtyard of an abandoned housing project near the El tracks. Her hunger had finally persuaded her to partake, and they'd shared the meal, though she was really only eating enough to make him quit nagging her. He'd begun to worrying in recent days as she grew even thinner and paler than usual, and her periods of lucidity seemed notably less frequent.

Concern for Dru was, however, driven from his mind when he caught sight of the face staring up at him from the pages of a discarded rock'n'roll magazine.

"Buggering shithead! Cock-sucking motherfucker!"

He carried on in this vein as he snatched the offending periodical from the ground. It had lain there through at least one rainstorm, leaving the pages rippled and the edges torn. But there he was...the kid from the Sex Pistols concert, and, from the alley afterwards. And from the top of his bleached head to the steel toes of his combat boots, with all the studded leather and ripped denim and eyeliner and safety pins in-between, he'd completely and utterly ripped off Spike's look of the period.

Most of the ranting and swearing that followed was lost on the cold wind that whipped and whined through the empty window frames of the surrounding buildings, and in the clatter of the train that passed just out of sight.

After he'd calmed down a bit, Spike had sworn he'd "make drawin' and quart'rin' look like a bloody picnic" and "feed him his own bowels" if he ever got his hands on the boy. Drusilla had giggled wickedly, and predicted that, indeed, "the ravens will dance at the cotillion" on that day. Then she'd begun to whine about going to find a pretty little girl to dress up and eat, and he was forced to divert her from this idea, and attempt to remain incognito. So, he put aside his ire towards the derivative pop star and focused on the matters at hand.

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More than twenty years had passed since then; returning to Europe, and then back to America again -- to Sunnydale and, eventually Los Angeles, with plenty of side trips for good measure.

On occasion, Spike would hear or read about the "bad boy" rocker, and he would inevitably shake his head and call him

a "right bloody wanker".

Buffy had finally asked him, at some point in her year of resurrection depression, about the obvious resemblance. He'd regaled her with the tale, glossing over the specifics of his activities in the alley that night, but emphasizing the degree of insult he felt he'd been done.

She'd pointed out to him that imitation **was** the sincerest form of flattery, but he'd been far from mollified by that old saw. To Spike's way of thinking, the boy should have looked back on that night in abject terror, wetting himself at the memory and thanking his lucky stars to have survived it. He should **not** have fancied himself sufficiently equal to Spike's badness to imitate it. Buffy had dismissed this argument, and the subject entirely, with a toss of her head and the roll of her eyes and a bored "whatever!"

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As a result of his experiences in recent years, and particularly since the return of soul, sanity, and finally, physical form, Spike had gained a new appreciation for irony. He seemed to be surrounded by it -- sometimes, to embody it. And he'd begun to expect it. So it came as very little surprise the evening he turned up at the rave-o-teque and discovered that the now over-the-hill performer was headlining that night.

While it was hardly the opportunity he'd looked for two decades before, it was still one not to be passed upon. Though Spike usually stuck to patrolling the outside of the building during the events he worked, this time he arranged to switch off at the final intermission with a pair of semi-professional wrestlers who were employed as general crowd control.

It had been The Animal who had suggested that he offer his services to the nightclub (Hacksaw Houlighan hadn't said much of anything beyond a grunt and a nod), after they happened upon him dusting a vampire near the loading docks. They had both been surprisingly unphased at the sight, so, by way of showing his gratitude that they would put in a good word with the management, Spike had offered them some suggestions should they encounter the undead on their own.

Now, he figured they could handle themselves and mind the back alleys for the final couple of hours until the show ended and the crowd disbursed. Spike took up post on the somewhat worn sofa in the empty dressing room and waited.

With about 15 minutes to the end of the show, two giggling young women crept through the door, stopping short when they realized the room wasn't vacant as they'd expected.

Spike raised an eyebrow at them, causing them to blurt their excuses at the same time.

"Oh, like, we just want to wait for an autograph --"

"One of the, uh, crew guys told us we could party with --"

"I mean, ummm, they **told** us we could, you know, come here to ask for an autograph...."

Spike's dubious silence seemed to rob them of a bit of their brazenness, and the second girl was tugging her skin-tight mini skirt further down on her legs. He sighed. *I hope Dawn's smarter'n these birds....* He wasn't entirely convinced that she was.

"Sorry girls, strict instructions that 'e wants 'is privacy after th' show...and," he stood up and advanced towards them a bit menacingly, "you should both be a bit careful 'bout presentin' yerselves to bad men..." he leaned in and took a loud and pointed whiff of the excessive perfume that emanated off of girl number one. "They might just get the wrong idea..." the last was offered sotto voce, his lips just inches from her ear.

They scrambled towards the door, girl number two falling off of her much-too-high heel and turning her ankle over in her hurry. The sound of their accelerated heart rates seemed to echo behind them as they exited the room, and Spike was satisfied that they'd been scared back home to their mothers, where they belonged, at least for tonight.

It was a curse, really, the way he now identified girls of a certain age with Joyce Summers' daughters. He shook his head at the follies of the young and (relatively) defenseless, as he made himself comfortable once more on the sofa, arms stretched along the back, and boots propped on the coffee table in front of him.

When the music ended, it was only a few moments before the sound of the star and his entourage approached down the corridor. Spike hadn't actually lied to the girls who'd tried to crash the dressing room -- apparently, these days, His Rebelliousness *did* expect a bit of solitude at the end of a show. *Prob'ly has to take 'is Viagra 'fore he can let the groupies in....* So, Spike knew he'd be able to savor the moment mano-y-mano.

It was almost as good as he'd hoped.

The voices had grown louder, and the doorknob had turned, though the door did not open right away. Finally, the door opened slowly, and he entered backwards, still in the midst of an animated conversation with someone, presumably the tour manager, in the hallway.

" -- you maybe book a venue that's not such a shithole? Fuckin' Christ!"

He shut the door and leaned his forehead to it, before turning around.

He froze when he realized that someone was waiting for him, and when he realized *who* was waiting for him, the distinction between the skin of his face where it met the peroxide work atop his head faded to nothing as the blood drained away.

Spike grinned up at him from his reclined pose on the sofa, and chuckled low when he began to reach behind him to find the doorknob again.

"Relax, Rocker-Boy. If I'd been 'ere to kill you, you'd be dead a'ready."

Garnering no response from the still-stunned celebrity, Spike took the opportunity to examine him closely for the first time. "Phht...1981 called, mate, wantin' their leather trews back!"

"You 'ere just to mock me, then?"

"Wot, it speaks? Not a statuary after all...no, not just to mock you. Wanted a look at the wee baby punker all gowed up, I s'ppose."

"Never thought to see you 'gain...." The voice was modulated, but very tense, and he was easing himself sideways, clearly attempting to work himself into a position to bolt.

"Yeh, likewise. 'Course, I've been seein' you all over for years, remindin' me I let one get away...." With that, Spike rose, and sauntered in the direction of the mini refrigerator that lived in the corner of the dressing room. "Yer standin' there all twitchy; sit down and we'll have us a chat." He perused the contents of the refrigerator, a bit taken aback by the tameness of the contents. *Reality not keeping up with the legend, here....* Finally, he extracted two Red Bulls and turned to see his "host" unmoved from his spot near the door.

He popped the tab on his can and took a healthy swig before casually closing the distance between them. He shoved the second can into the agitated man's hands, took him by a shoulder and propelled him towards and into the chair opposite the sofa. Spike then resumed his previous sprawl on the couch.

He waited for the questions that didn't come, and studied the man opposite him, who was alternating between an affectation of cool indifference, taking large swallows of his Red Bull and staring at Spike with surprising boldness,

and moments of palpable panic, when his breath would grow short and his eyes would shift rapidly about the room. Those waves of terror lapping at his senses were something Spike used to crave almost as much as he craved the blood that sped through the veins of the terrified. Like an alcoholic, he sometimes still missed it -- or maybe he missed reveling in it. Now it made him uncomfortable. He'd begun this thing, intending to get a kick out of giving the guy a harmless scare, but as his demon began to lift its salivating head, he realized it might just be backfiring on him a bit.

*'At's it, Spike, jus' doin' wi'out thinkin' things through....now best defuse this bomb you've set....*

He mentally gave the demon a kick in the chops, took a breath, and made an attempt at reassurance. "I said, relax, I'm not goin' t' hurt you...there was a time, but...I'm just indulgin' a curiosity. I'll bet you'd convinced yerself it was all a hallucination, eh?

"Well, I wasn't much pissed, but I'd had a bit o'grass, so fig'r'd 't was possible...so, why the fuck **are** you here?" Even as he was still trying to process what was happening, his fear appeared to be giving way to anger. He got to his feet then, crossing to stand over Spike, punctuating his words with broad gestures of his Red Bull-holding hand. "Since when d'you not 'not hurt' people, eh? 'At's not your way -- I may've been a wild man by times, but you're a fuckin' monster. So, either bite me, or get the fuck out!" At the last he deliberately exposed his neck in Spike's direction, a movement that was accompanied by his trademark curl of the lip, sending Spike into a fit of derisive laughter.

"Oh, quit posturin'! It's not goin' to work on me; I bloody invented it! Now, sit down and tell me where you come off goin' about lookin' like me!"

" 'S **'at** what this is about?" This time, his emphasis was such that some of the drink splashed out of the can onto the leg of Spike's jeans. He paid no apparent mind, however, to the raised eyebrow that served as Spike's response, but continued his diatribe, still flailing to make his points. "Yer in a snit 'cause I learned to live wi'the most fuckin' horrifyin' thing that's ever fuckin' happened to me, and that **includes** my drug O.D.s and bein' the father o' two teenagers, by usin' the image t'get ahead? 'S not like you'd patented it!"

"Gotta hand it t'ya, mate, knowin' that the boogie man's real, an' that 'e's right 'ere with you, you seem pretty sure I was tellin' the truth 'bout not bein' here to kill you."

"I guess you don't seem so scary as I remembered. Maybe you weren't so bad after all! Maybe I **didn't** see what I thought I saw and you're jus' here lookin' for somethin' to steal that you can sell on the Internet!" He finally sat back down, the charges that he didn't really believe still serving to take the edge off of his apprehension.

"Piffle! You should talk...I get 'ere, 'xpectin' all kinds o' booze, drugs and wild sex to go wi' the rock 'n' roll, but instead, I find roughage in the refrigerator an' nary a broken bit of furniture to be found. Not even properly upholdin' the image yer cribbin'! Bloody poof! I bet most of those stories about your hell-raisin' days aren't even true!"

"You take that back!"

"Don't get your knickers in a twist. 'S not like I'm evil anymore...course, still a vampire, so could give you a good thrashin' wi'out much effort. But, got my soul back..." here, his voice dropped, " 'cause of a girl, no less...." He paused a bit wistfully for a second, before continuing at a more normal volume, " 'n' now, I'm bein' all Boy Scout and savin' the world from destruction. Repeatedly. Go figure...So, what's your excuse?"

"Finally outgrew my protracted adolescence, guess you'd say. I got kids who don't want a baddass rockstar, just want a dad." He gave Spike a wry smile then.

"What?"

"Jus' realized I 'ave you beat."

" 'Ow's that?"

"I was only 'bout 25 years late in approximatin' a responsible adult, 't least in my real life. How long'd it take you?"

"Bit over a hundred," was the grudging reply. They were quiet for a bit, while they both digested the foregoing ten minutes. The erstwhile doppelganger finally relaxed enough to put his feet up on the coffee table, mirroring Spike's laid-back attitude. The previously charged air became almost companionable. Spike, at length, continued as if there'd been no pause, "but at least *I* 'aven't lost my looks!"

"Bugger off!"

The remainder of the night was a bit surreal. They conversed like old acquaintances, but of a sideways variety.

When Spike remarked on the star's crucifix jewelry phase, he learned that he'd viewed that as an element of self-defense. He explained how, after that night in North London, he'd gotten paralytically drunk every evening for many months, in the hope of sleeping without the nightmare image of what he'd seen re-surfacing.

Spike, asserted that, if one thought about it, he was now much tougher than when he was soul-less, since, back then, he generally just preyed on a weaker species (he declined to go into the convoluted details of his history with slayers). Now, on the other hand, he was whaling on other non-human types, often older, bigger and/or stronger than he was. He was told to "stuff yer braggin', I'm not some piece o' arse to be impressed at the pub."

They swapped life, and un-life, and near-death, and back-from-death stories into the small hours.

As Spike finally departed the club, not long ahead of the sunrise, he thought ruefully of the chuckle he and Buffy might have shared over this improbable encounter. And he discovered that, although he wanted to share it with her, with each new experience that he could call his own, it hurt just a little bit less that he couldn't. It was a strange sort of comfort. But then, he *was* a strange sort of vampire.

~ *The End* ~

### **Author's Thoughts, at the end:**

No kidding, every time I'd sit down to work on this, a Billy Idol song would begin playing on the radio. That's just a weird sensation. I'm sure I've just grown more aware of them as I've been writing -- though that's not quite true either. Ever since *Sleeper* (BtVS 7.8), I've been aware of the connection, and the idea, and would be reminded of it every time Mr. Broad's "more, more, more" shouted through my speakers! It's like I have to write the story if I'm going to exorcise the idea. We'll see if it works!

Of course, in the story, I've never actually called "His Rebelliousness" by his actual name. It just seemed not quite right, to drop that wall of separation between the real person out there in the world (despite the fact that he's never going to read this), and the fiction I chose to write. I hope my gyrations to avoid a name, and still keep clear who "he" was at any given time, didn't detract too much from the narrative.

Interestingly, I noticed, once I started doing some research in order to try and get the chronology and details right, and looking at old photos (aside, anyone want to buy a packet of old Generation X and solo-Idol press clippings?) that...I think Idol really does look more like the derivative entity. He really didn't adopt the "look" that we associate with him until well after the true, semi-underground punk movement had passed it's heyday in the late '70s ~ like he invented the pop version of punk...which, of course, is exactly what those who considered themselves "true" punk accused him of. Either way, putting 1982-83 Billy Idol next to 1977 NYC Spike, the latter strikes me as more the "real" thing. Go figure!

Anyway, I hope you enjoyed this little stroll through a version of Spike's past, at least alluded to within the "canon."

For those who are interested:

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