

Dead Man's Party

August 6, 1998 (YELLOW)

Written by: Marti Noxon

Teaser

INT. BUFFY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Buffy, looking a little worn from her return journey home, finishes unpacking her duffle. She puts the last of her clothes away, then stops for a long beat as she contemplates her room - in some ways so familiar, yet so strange after months away. Finally, she grabs her coat - heads out.

INT. BUFFY'S HOUSE - JOYCE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Buffy enters - unseen by Joyce, who is hanging some exotic African art from the gallery in her bedroom. Joyce taps a nail into her wall with a hammer-

BUFFY
Mom-

Joyce jumps. Knocks a chunk of plaster out of the wall.

JOYCE
Oh! Buffy...

BUFFY
Sorry, I-

JOYCE
No, no... Don't worry about it. I
guess I just got used to all the
quiet while you were gone.
(then)
But it's no problem. Look-

Joyce lifts a particularly mean-looking MASK from her dresser and places it on the wall, covering the hole.

JOYCE
Do you like it?

BUFFY
(trying)
It's, um, really... I think I'd go with
the hole.

JOYCE
It's from Nigeria. We got a very
exciting shipment at the gallery. I
thought I'd hang a few pieces in
here. It cheers up the room.

BUFFY

It's angry at the room. It wants the room to suffer.

JOYCE
You have no appreciation of primitive art --

Now Joyce notices that Buffy is holding her coat. Works at sounding casual - but the fun just left the building.

JOYCE
Oh. You're... going out?

BUFFY
If... if it's okay. I want to find Willow and Xander.

JOYCE
(worried)
And - will you be slaying?

BUFFY
Not unless they give me lip.

JOYCE
Do you want a sandwich or something before you go? You must be starving.

BUFFY
I was until that four course snack you served me after dinner...

JOYCE
Well then - let me drive you. I mean, they could be anywhere-

BUFFY
Mom, if you don't want me to go...

JOYCE
I want to put this whole thing behind us. Get back to normal.
(then)
You go - have a good time.

Buffy nods - exits. Joyce looks after her, uneasy. Turns back to her task. Then Buffy pokes her head in again.

BUFFY
Thanks.

WHAP. Joyce jumps and her hammer sinks into the wall again.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

BUFFY walks along a quiet street, alert. Things don't feel quite right. Then a LOUD NOISE - like someone knocking over a trash can - comes from a nearby alley. Buffy immediately kicks into full slayer mode. Follows the trail into the -

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

- where a MENACING FIGURE moves stealthily in the darkness. Buffy approaches. Then she kicks a SODA CAN by accident - sending it skittering noisily across the alley floor.

The FIGURE SPINS, startled. Now we can see that it's XANDER - and he has a STAKE HEADED RIGHT FOR BUFFY'S HEART.

BLACK OUT.

END OF TEASER

Act One

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Back to that stake. Buffy manages to STOP IT with her hands, just before it plunges into her chest. A beat - then she smiles at Xander, unable to contain how glad she is to see him.

BUFFY

Didn't anyone tell you about playing with pointy sticks? It's all fun and games until someone loses an eye.

A stunned Xander takes in what just happened. And WHO it just happened with.

XANDER

You... shouldn't sneak up on people like that.

Another moment. Xander loses the cool, shakes his head.

XANDER

Jeez, Buff-

He opens his arms and they move to HUG EACH OTHER. It's about to be a nice moment, but suddenly A PISSED OFF VAMPIRE TACKLES XANDER.

Xander wrestles with the vamp, almost has the upper hand... Then BUFFY BLINDSIDES THE VAMP and knocks him off Xander.

While the vamp tries to recover, BUFFY DRAWS A STAKE. Xander leaps to his feet - also with STAKE DRAWN.

The VAMP GROWLS, starts to get up. BOTH Xander and Buffy move to take him. They glance at each other.

BUFFY

Oh. Go ahead.

XANDER

No, you go.

BUFFY

No, it's-

Now they are interrupted by a SHRILL ELECTRONIC SQUAWK followed by-

CORDELIA (O.C.)
"Come in, Nighthawk. Everything
okay?"

Buffy looks down and sees A FISHER PRICE STYLE WALKIE TALKIE affixed to Xander's belt. She glances back at him - dubious.

BUFFY
Nighthawk?

Embarrassed, Xander fumbles for the walkie. The VAMP takes advantage of their distraction and RUSHES THEM - this time plowing into BUFFY.

CLOSE ON BUFFY AND THE VAMP

Struggling - as FOOTSTEPS sound the arrival of THREE MORE PEOPLE. The VAMP IS YANKED off her.

REVEAL WILLOW AND CORDY

Who each have the VAMP by an ARM as they SLAM him into an ALLEY WALL. The vamp thrashes madly.

CORDELIA
(struggling)
Hello? This would be dust time!

Now the VAMP tosses them off. Willow hits the ground hard while Cordelia falls into Buffy - who is back on her feet, stake raised.

CORDELIA
(mild surprise)
Oh. Buffy. Hey-

Buffy SHOVES CORDELIA out of the way of the vamp - who is now behind Cordy, teeth bared. Without further ado, Buffy stakes the guy and HE'S TOAST.

Buffy turns - faces WILLOW, OZ, CORDELIA and XANDER. We can now fully register that they are all dressed for VAMP HUNTING. In addition to slightly MILITARISTIC outfits - they wear CROSSES, make-shift STAKE HOLDERS and those colorful WALKIE TALKIES.

LONG BEAT - as everyone contemplates the suddenly returned Buffy. Finally, an emotional Buffy manages-

BUFFY
Hey.

At last the gang reacts, shocked and excited. Move in to greet her.

EXT. GILES' APARTMENT - COURTYARD - NIGHT

Everyone gathers around Giles' door. Buffy, looking anxious, moves to knock - but

stops.

BUFFY
Are you sure it's not too late? Maybe
we should come back tomorrow.

Everyone just looks at her - not buying it. Buffy goes to knock again. Stops again.

BUFFY
What if he's mad?

XANDER
Mad? 'Cause you ran away and
abandoned your post and your friends
and your mother and made him lie
awake every night worrying about you?
(to the others)
Maybe we should wait out here.

Buffy gives Xander a look - takes a big breath - and finally raps on the door.

A beat. Then Giles opens the door. Sees her. He's clearly taken aback. Nobody says anything. Xander can't stand it.

XANDER
Check it out. The watcher is back on
the clock. And just when you were
thinking career change. Maybe
becoming a "Looker" or a "Seer" -

Giles cuts Xander off.

GILES
Thank you, Xander.

Giles turns to Buffy - his expression closed, impossible to read. Finally, his features soften and he addresses her - trying hard to keep his composure.

GILES
Welcome home, Buffy.

INT. GILES' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Buffy, Giles, Willow, Oz, Xander and Cordelia all sit in the living room. They are in mid-conversation.

BUFFY
Yeah, I just got in a few hours ago.
Went to see Mom first...

GILES
Of course. And how did you find her?

BUFFY
I pretty much remembered the address.

GILES
I mean, was everything all right

between you --

He's cut off by the sound of A KETTLE BOILING.

GILES
Ah. Excuse me.

The gang talks amongst themselves, while we follow Giles into the -

INT. GILES' APARTMENT - KITCHEN AREA - CONT. - NIGHT

He proceeds to finish making a pot of tea.

Oz (O.S.)
By the way, you're not wanted for
murder anymore.

BUFFY (O.S.)
Oh, good. That was such a drag.

XANDER (O.S.)
So where were you? Did you go to
Belgium?

BUFFY (O.S.)
Why would I go to Belgium?

XANDER (O.S.)
I think the relevant question is "why
wouldn't you?" Belgium!

Giles moves to get the sugar - stops when he hears BUFFY'S LAUGHTER ring above the other voices.

BUFFY (O.S.)
I'm glad to see you haven't changed,
Xander...

CLOSE ON GILES

Hidden from the others by a cabinet, they do not see Giles' mask fall for a moment. He fights tears, his relief is palpable. But... he pulls it together. Puts his WASP face back on as he moves back into the -

INT. GILES' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

GILES
Right, then. Tea's on.

Cordy grabs a cookie from the tray. Turns to Buffy.

CORDELIA
Okay - were you, like, living in a
box or what?

BUFFY
It's a long story.

XANDER

So leave out the heartwarming stuff about kindly old people and saving the farm and get right to the dirt -

GILES

Perhaps Buffy could use a little time to adjust before we grill her on her summer activities.

BUFFY

What he said.

XANDER

Fair enough. In fact - you can leave the slaying to us while you settle in - we got you covered.

BUFFY

I noticed. You guys seemed down with the slaying. All tricked out with the walkies and everything -

CORDELIA

Yeah, but our outfits suck. That Rambo thing is so over. I'm thinking sporty. Hilfiger, maybe.

WILLOW

(enthusiastic)

Still - we're getting good. I mean, we dust, like, 9 out of 10!

OZ

6 out of 10.

WILLOW

(with equal enthusiasm)

6 out of 10!

XANDER

Whatever. We've been kicking a little undead booty.

BUFFY

Thanks for the offer, but I kind of want to get back to my routine. You know - slaying, school, kid stuff... You guys up for hanging tomorrow? I'm jonesing for some brainless fun.

An awkward beat. Then-

XANDER

I would - but I'm tied up.

He puts a hand on Cordy. She smiles.

CORDELIA

You wish.

BUFFY
What about you, Will?

WILLOW
Tomorrow? I...

BUFFY
Come on. Friends don't let friends
browse alone.

Will glances at Oz - hesitates, then-

WILLOW
Okay. I had some school stuff,
but... I guess I can change my plans.

GILES
As for school, Buffy, you know you'll
have to talk with Principal Snyder before-

BUFFY
On it. Mom's making an appointment
with his ugliness.

GILES
It may be tough going. He's quite
emphatic about a Buffy-free
Sunnydale High.

BUFFY
(covering her worry)
No problem. I'm bringing The
Intimidator. One look at "Mom Face"
and I know he'll break.

INT. PRINCIPAL SNYDER'S OFFICE - DAY

CLOSE ON JOYCE

Who, indeed, is sporting a stern and intimidating "Mom Face." But her look falters as-

PRINCIPAL SNYDER (O.S.)
Absolutely not. Under no
circumstances.

REVEAL SNYDER

At his desk - completely delighted with himself. Buffy sits next to Joyce looking unhappy, but not shocked by Snyder's attitude.

JOYCE
But... you can't keep her out of
school. You don't have the right.

PRINCIPAL SNYDER
I have not only the right but also a

nearly physical sensation of pleasure at the thought of keeping her out of school. I'd describe myself as tingly.

JOYCE

Buffy was cleared of all those charges.

PRINCIPAL SNYDER

Yes, and while she may live up to the not-a-murderer requirement for enrollment, she is a troublemaker, destructive to school property and the occasional student and her grade point average alone is...
(smiles, forgetting himself)
I'm sorry. Another tingle moment.

JOYCE

I don't see how you can be so cavalier about a young girl's entire future.

PRINCIPAL SNYDER

I'm quite sure a girl with talents and abilities such as Buffy's will land on her feet.
(glee returning)
In fact, I noticed on the way in this morning that Hot Dog On A Stick is hiring.
(to Buffy)
You'll look so cute in that hat.

Buffy stands. Grabs her bag.

BUFFY

Let's go, Mom.

JOYCE

This isn't over. If I have to, I'll go all the way to the mayor.

PRINCIPAL SNYDER

Wouldn't that be interesting.

Smiling, he opens the door - showing them out.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Joyce follows Buffy out into the hall. Giles, who's been lingering but trying non to look like he's been lingering, approaches.

GILES

Well. How did it go?

JOYCE

(furious)

Have you ever noticed his teeth?
They're like tiny, little rodent teeth -

GILES

Oh, dear...

JOYCE

Horrible gnashing little teeth. You just want to pull them out with pliers.

GILES

Perhaps there's some way he can be over-ruled...

Now Joyce and Giles move away from Buffy, talking intently about her "situation." The BELL RINGS and the hall is suddenly flooded with students - all moving with purpose from one class to the next.

CLOSE ON BUFFY

As the kids pass, not seeming to notice her. She looks, and feels, lost - displaced.

INT. JOYCE'S CAR - DAY

Joyce pulls up to the curb with Buffy in the passenger seat. Both look discouraged, but Joyce tries to sound cheery.

JOYCE

Don't worry about school, honey. If we can't get you back into Sunnydale, we may be able to swing private school.

BUFFY

(horrified)

Like with the jackets and kilts? You want me to get field-hockey-knees?

JOYCE

It's not that bad.

BUFFY

How about home schooling? It's not just for scary religious people anymore.

JOYCE

We'll work something out.

Buffy just nods. Joyce gives her a quick peck on the cheek.

JOYCE

Tell Willow I said hi.

EXT. COFFEE HOUSE - SHOPPING DISTRICT STREET - DAY

Buffy waits for Willow outside of a coffee house. It's clear that she's been waiting for a while. She checks her watch... She sits on a bench - decides to give it a few more minutes.

EXT. BUFFY'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - DAY

Buffy comes up the walk as the front door opens and an unfamiliar woman in her

40's steps out - PAT. She's of the chatty, nervous variety.

PAT

Oh my word, you must be Buffy!
Look at you - aren't you a picture?

BUFFY

Thanks...

PAT

(shaking Buffy's hand enthusiastically)
I'm Pat - from your mother's book club? I'm sure she mentioned me.

BUFFY

Actually-

PAT

I sort of took it upon myself to look after her while you were, you know, off and away or what have you. Between your "situation" and reading "Deep End of the Ocean" she was just a wreck. You can imagine.

Buffy might reply but Pat is already heading for the street.

PAT

Well, I'm off. We're making empanadas in my Spanish class tonight. You go be with your mother. The two of you need to re-bond.

Pat hustles away - leaving Buffy a little dazed.

INT. BUFFY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Joyce is looking through a cook book when Buffy enters, looking irritated.

BUFFY

Pat wishes us quality time.

JOYCE

Oh - I met her in-

BUFFY

Book Club. Got it.

JOYCE

Before I forget - Willow just called.

BUFFY

Where was she?

JOYCE

She got held up. But she said she tried to call.

BUFFY

Was there a message?

Again, Joyce tries to put a happy face on things - but the stance is growing more forced.

JOYCE

No... But I had a thought - what if I invited Willow and Mr. Giles and everyone for dinner tomorrow night. Don't you think that would be nice?

Buffy's clearly not sure - but...

JOYCE

(sheepishly)

Since I sort of already did, I'm hoping for a yes.

BUFFY

It'll be fun.

JOYCE

Why don't you run downstairs and get the company plates.

BUFFY

Mom. Willow and everybody aren't company plate people. They're normal plate people.

JOYCE

We never have guests for dinner. Indulge your mother.

She gives Buffy "Mom Face." Buffy starts to move - then stops.

BUFFY

So how come that works on me - but not on other people?

JOYCE

It's genetic.

Buffy nods - goes into the basement.

INT. BUFFY'S HOUSE - BASEMENT - DAY

Buffy enters, gets the china from a shelf and notices a stack of framed photos nearby. She turns one over.

CLOSE ON THE PHOTO

It's a picture of BUFFY, WILLOW & XANDER from a year or so back. They are arm in arm, laughing.

ON BUFFY

As she regards it for a long beat - feeling like she's looking at a picture from

someone else's life. She moves to put it back on the shelf, but in doing so dislodges AN OBJECT which nearly falls on her head.

When it lands on the floor we see that it's a DEAD CAT, stiff with RIGOR MORTIS. Buffy shrieks with surprise, jumps.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

The sun is setting as Buffy DIGS A HOLE in a flower bed. She puts her spade aside and Joyce drops the cat (now in a plastic hefty bag) into the hole.

BUFFY

Next time? I get to pick the
mother/daughter bonding activity...

A sad beat as they contemplate the grave.

JOYCE

You want to - say something?

BUFFY

What? Thanks for stopping by and
dying?

JOYCE

How about - goodbye stray cat, who
lost it's way. We hope... you find it.

Joyce's last comment resonates a bit too much for both of them. Buffy starts to shovel the dirt back into the grave.

INT. BUFFY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Buffy gets into bed and turns out the light - but she just lies there with her eyes open. She looks toward the window and the night shadows playing on the wall. It all looks unfamiliar, cold.

INT. JOYCE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Joyce is asleep and unaware of THE MASK on her wall as IT'S EYES START TO GLOW.

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

The ground where the stray cat lies buried MOVES. Then a PAW merges from the dirt and the CAT CRAWLS AND SCRATCHES ITS AY OUT OF THE GRAVE - A ZOMBIE PET.

INT. JOYCE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Now the eyes in the mask BURN RED.

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

The zombie cat straggles across the yard and stops under JOYCE'S BEDROOM WINDOW.

It looks up toward the window and MEOWS in a discordant, otherworldly tone.

BLACK OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

Act Two

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

The hallway stands empty, except for BUFFY, who wanders a bit aimlessly. Doors stands open, revealing deserted classrooms.

EXT. SCHOOL - FOUNTAIN QUAD - DAY

Now Buffy is outside. Again, she's alone. The school is desolate. A ghost town.

Then someone moves to her side. Angel.

BUFFY

I thought they would be here.

ANGEL

They are. They're waiting for you.

BUFFY

Am I dreaming?

ANGEL

(smiles)

I'm probably the wrong person to ask.
You'd better go.

BUFFY

I'm afraid.

ANGEL

(matter-of-factly)

You should be.

AND A SCHOOL BELL RINGS.

INT. BUFFY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Buffy's ALARM is sounding. She wakes from her dream.

INT. BUFFY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Joyce is pouring herself some coffee as Buffy looks in the fridge. The tension between them is not quite "cut with a knife" thick - but it's getting there.

JOYCE

I've been on the phone with the
superintendent of schools. He seems
more reasonable than that nasty
little horrid bigoted rodent man.

She says it offhand, as though it were Snyder's full name.

BUFFY
Mom-

JOYCE
-anyway, I'm going in to speak with him
this afternoon. As for private schools-
(she pushes some papers toward Buffy)
Miss Porter's accepts late admissions.
I wrote down the information for you-

BUFFY
A girl's school? Okay - so now it's
jackets, kilts and no boys? Care to
throw in a little foot binding?

JOYCE
(hard)
Buffy. You made some bad choices.
You may just have to live with some
consequences.

Buffy reacts to Joyce's tone. Joyce immediately relents.

JOYCE
Nothing's settled yet. I just wish
you didn't have to be so secretive
about things. I mean, it's not your
fault you have a special
circumstance. They should make
allowances for you.

BUFFY
Mom. Please. I'm a slayer. It's not like
I have to ride the little bus to school.

Joyce carries some trash to the kitchen door, opens it. Still, she pauses to finish her thought.

JOYCE
Couldn't you tell just a few people?
Like Principal Snyder? And maybe
the police? I'm sure they'd be happy
to know that they have a superhero -
is that the right term? It's not offensi -
AAAAHGH!

Joyce and Buffy react to the ZOMBIE CAT - who ZIPS through the open door and into the house.

INT. BUFFY'S HOUSE - FOYER - DAY

A grim looking Buffy opens the door for GILES, who carries a small animal cage.

BUFFY
Welcome to the Hellmouth petting zoo.

INT. JOYCE'S BEDROOM - DAY

ON THE ZOMBIE CAT

Who SCREECHES HORRIBLY as Giles catches it. He HOLDS THE CREATURE FAR AWAY from his body as he deposits it in the cage, reacting visibly to its BAD SMELL.

GILES

My lord - what a stench.

BUFFY

I told mom, get the Forest Pine or the April Fresh - but she wanted dead cat.

Giles looks to Joyce, who stands nearby - freaked. On top of the obvious weirdness - there's also still tension between them after their last talk.

GILES

I'll take it back to the library and we'll try to determine its exact origin.

As he's leaving, Giles notices the MASK among the artifacts on Joyce's wall. Tries to make nice with her.

GILES

This is striking. Nigerian?

JOYCE

Yes, I have this wonderful dealer who specializes in ancient-

They'd go on but Buffy jumps in, eager for some distraction.

BUFFY

You know I love art talk as much as the next very dull person - but Giles, shouldn't we go? We're in research mode.

She starts for the door, but Giles hesitates.

GILES

You ought to stay here with your mother, Buffy. I'm sure you have lots of-

JOYCE

(interrupting)

Please. It's fine. She can go with you.

GILES

Actually, she can't.

(to Buffy)

You're not allowed on school property.

BUFFY

Oh.

(embarrassed)

This marks a first. I want to go to

school - but school doesn't want me.

GILES

I'm sorry. I'll call as soon as I know something.

JOYCE

And we'll see you tonight. Dinner?

GILES

Ah - of course. Tonight, then.

And he goes leaving Buffy feeling even more the outcast.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

ON ZOMBIE CAT

Who is pacing, restless, in his cage.

WIDEN TO INCLUDE CORDELIA AND OZ

Who are close to the cage - checking it out. The cat HISSES at them in its strange cadence.

OZ

Looks dead. Smells dead. But moving around. Interesting.

Cordelia moves away from the creature, disgusted.

CORDELIA

Nice pet, Giles. Don't you like anything regular? Golf or USA Today or anything?

Now we see that GILES, WILLOW and XANDER are all hitting the books. Looking up "reanimation" and stuff like that.

GILES

We're trying to find how and why it rose from the grave. It's not as if I'm going to take it home and serve it a warm saucer of milk-

OZ

I like him. I think you should call him Patches.

WILLOW

Hey - what about Buffy's Welcome home dinner tonight? I told her mom we'd help out. Bring stuff.

CORDELIA

I'm the dip!

Everybody looks at her. Xander beams.

XANDER

You have to admire the purity of it.

CORDELIA

What? Onion dip. Stirring. Not cooking.
That's what I bring.

OZ

Well - let's figure it out. What kind of
deal is this? Is it a gathering, a shin dig
or a hootenanny?

CORDELIA

What's the difference?

OZ

A gathering. Brie and mellow song
stylings. Shin dig. Dip -
(he nods to Cordelia)
Less mellow song stylings. Perhaps
a large amount of malt beverage. And
a hootenanny... just chock full of
hoot and a little bit of nanny.

XANDER

I hate brie.

CORDELIA

I know. It smells like Giles' cat.

Giles starts to protest.

GILES

It's not my-

XANDER

And what would we talk about at a
"gathering" anyway? "So Buffy - run
into any nice pimps on your travels?
And by the by, thanks for ruining our
lives for the past three months..."

WILLOW

Xander-

XANDER

You know what I mean. She doesn't
want to talk about it. We don't want
to talk about it. Maybe we should
shut up and dance.

WILLOW

Buffy did say she wanted to loosen
up. Have some kid time.

(to Oz)

Hey. Aren't you guys rehearsing
tonight? Why don't you play at the party.

OZ

Yeah. I think I could supply some
Dingo action.

Giles looks up from his studies, a little concerned.

GILES
I'm not sure that a... shin dig-

Oz politely stops him.

OZ
Hootenanny.

GILES
Hootenanny... is the order of the
day. Maybe it's best to keep things
more intimate. Buffy just got
home - I'm sure she's still feeling
disoriented.

WILLOW
All the more reason to make her feel
welcome. And a big party says,
Welcome Buffy!

XANDER
Okay - so one vote from the old guy
for smelly cheese night - and, how
many votes for actual fun?

Everybody else's hand goes up. They all look at Giles.

GILES
Very well. Have it your way. I'm
just glad to have her home...

CLOSE ON GILES' BOOK

As, distracted, he turns PAST a picture of THE MASK that hangs on JOYCE'S WALL.

GILES (O.C.)
Now things can get back to normal.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JOYCE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

PUSH IN ON THE MASK ITSELF

As the EYES START TO GLOW.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

As A CORONER'S AIDE outlines a BODY at a crime scene with a piece of chalk. TWO POLICE CARS, lights flashing, separate the aide from the COPS and EMERGENCY WORKERS, who bustle in the background.

Suddenly the CORPSE AWAKENS. It grabs the aide by the throat, silencing his cries.

Now the zombie DRAGS THE FLAILING AIDE into some bushes - unnoticed by the others on the scene. The piece of chalk trails on the pavement, drawing a line as he goes...

INT. BUFFY'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Buffy is setting the table when the DOORBELL RINGS. She goes to the door, expecting her buddies - but instead is confronted by her mother's friend PAT.

PAT

There you are. Not thinking about any more flights of fancy, I hope? (not giving Buffy a chance to reply)
Joyce said there was room for one more - so I said "forget facial night - let's party!" I bet you like empanadas.

She thrusts a tupperware container into Buffy's hands. Now they just stand there - uncomfortable. Finally-

BUFFY

You want to see my mother?

PAT

Please.

BUFFY

MOM!

Joyce comes down the stairs, just finishing dressing - sees Pat.

JOYCE

Oh, Pat. Good. Buffy, I hope you don't mind-

But she's interrupted as the DOORBELL RINGS AGAIN. Buffy answers it and is more than a little surprised to see DEVON from the band and a bunch of GROUPIE TYPES.

DEVON

Hey, Buffy.

BUFFY

Uh, hey.

DEVON

So - where do you want the band to set up?

BUFFY

(stunned)
The band?

CUT TO:

INT. BUFFY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

DINGOES ATE MY BABY jam in the living room. There are too many people - most of

whom Buffy doesn't even know - crammed into the room. It's a weird vibe.

Buffy wanders, not knowing what to do with herself. She spots WILLOW across the room watching OZ play. Buffy moves to her and they yell over the band.

BUFFY
Hey!

WILLOW
Hey!

BUFFY
This is... large!

WILLOW
You like?

BUFFY
It's great. It's just - I was thinking
more, just us. The gang?

Willow shakes her head. Can't hear Buffy over the music.

WILLOW
Sorry - what!?

BUFFY
This is amazing. But I still want to
hang with just-

Willow smiles - but mouths the words "I Can't Hear You." Turns back to the band.

Buffy starts to move away - but changes her mind and pulls Willow aside, where they can hear one another.

BUFFY
Is everything okay? You seem to
be... I don't know - avoiding me.
In the one-on-one sense.

Willow smiles - but she's clearly uncomfortable.

WILLOW
What? This isn't avoiding. See?
Here you are. Here I am.

BUFFY
So - we're cool?

WILLOW
Way. That's why - with the party.
'Cause we're all glad you're back.

A beat. Buffy nods. But she sounds uncertain...

BUFFY
Okay.

WILLOW
Okay. Good.

And Willow moves back toward the band. Buffy watches her - wondering why she doesn't feel any better.

INT. JOYCE'S ROOM - NIGHT

The eyes of the MASK glow.

INT. HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

A guy lies DEAD on the table, a victim of a horrible burn. Flat-line city. A YOUNG DOCTOR does CPR on him. An INTERN and a NURSE stand nearby.

The doctor stops his efforts. Checks his watch.

YOUNG DOCTOR
It's 7:43. Let's call it. He's not
coming back.

Suddenly we see the ZOMBIE SIT UP ON THE TABLE and LUNGE for the doctor.

As everyone rushes to pull the zombie off, we see the HEART MONITOR. It's STILL SHOWING A FLAT LINE.

CLOSE ON MONITOR

As, REFLECTED IN THE MONITOR, everyone screams as very bad things ensue.

INT. BUFFY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The party is verging on WILD. People dance. The ubiquitous JONATHAN chats up a CUTE GIRL, who looks like she'd rather be anywhere else.

JONATHAN
...I think you'll be impressed. It's
the Cadillac of mopeds...

That's it. The girl walks away. Jonathan plays it off like it's all good. No problemo...

Now we see BUFFY moving among the guests - a stranger in a strange land. She nods her head to the music - trying to look cooler than she feels, passes two STONER TYPES who stand surveying the crowd.

STONER
(to the other stoner dude)
This party? I heard it's for some
chick who just got out of rehab.

The other stoner just nods. Buffy overhears this - decides to make herself scarce. Exits the living room.

INT. BUFFY'S HOUSE - FOYER - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Buffy turns a corner and runs right into XANDER and CORDELIA, who are in heavy-petting mode.

She does an about-face, but Xander SEES her. He continues to hold and caress Cordelia while he addresses Buffy.

XANDER
Hey, Buff. What you doing?

Buffy turns back - caught.

BUFFY
Don't mind me. I was just - taking
a break from all that wacky fun.

XANDER
Some party, huh? Guess a lot of
people are glad you're back.

BUFFY
Yeah. Seems like people I don't even
know missed me.
(then)
Did Giles say if he was going to be late?

XANDER
He was library man last time I saw
him. But he'll be here. He wants to
celebrate your homecoming. We all
do. I mean, it's great having the
Buffster back.
(to Cordy)
Isn't it?

CORDELIA
Totally.
(to Xander)
Except - you were kinda turning me on
with that whole "boy slayer" look.

XANDER
Was I now?

CORDELIA
You bet - "Nighthawk..."

She giggles. And that's it - they're lost in touch town again.

BUFFY
Okay. So. I'll just...

Buffy - totally forgotten - backs away as they start to nuzzle each other.

INT. BUFFY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Joyce is getting some more ice - stops when she sees A BOTTLE BURIED IN A WALL OF ICE.

JOYCE
Ooohhh. Look what I found.

Joyce YANKS on the bottle, finally ripping it free. She turns to Pat, presenting her

bounty - an ice encrusted bottle of PEACH SCHNAPPS. Then she grabs a couple of glasses and pours them each a shot.

JOYCE

The kids have their fun - we have ours.

A beat as they sip the schnapps. Now Pat changes gears - addressing Joyce in a maternal, concerned manner...

PAT

Now - how are you holding up, Joyce?
Really?

JOYCE

Really? I'm....

(then/letting down)

I don't know. While Buffy was gone - all I could think about was getting her home. I just knew if I could put my arms around her and tell her how much I loved her - then everything would be okay...

PAT

But?

JOYCE

But things are never that simple, are they? I mean, she's here. She's right in front of me... So now I can see how unhappy she is. And I still don't know what to say - what to do - to make things right.

INT. HALLWAY LEADING TO KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Buffy, still looking for a safe place to hang, moves toward the kitchen. Stops when she overhears-

JOYCE (O.C.)

Having Buffy home - I thought it would make it all better. But in some ways, it's almost worse...

CLOSE ON BUFFY

Who takes her mother's words like a slap. Retreats.

INT. BUFFY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Buffy enters - reeling. A long beat. Then she grabs her duffel from her closet. Starts packing.

EXT. PARK - PLAYGROUND - NIGHT

From the shadows emerges the ZOMBIE we saw on the highway and the ZOMBIE from the ER.

Behind them MORE zombies arrive. A small army of them. Once gathered, they set

course and lumber with purpose - RIGHT TOWARD US.

EXT. BUFFY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Where we can hear the party, the revelers within blissfully unaware of what's coming.

INT. JOYCE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

As the eyes of the mask GLOW BRIGHTER...

BLACK OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

Act Three

INT. LIBRARY - NIGHT

Giles is reading another book about reanimation. He stops, finding something troubling.

GILES
Oh lord.

Now he grabs a book off his desk - rifles through it until he FINDS THE PICTURE OF THE MASK that he missed earlier. He reads anxiously - then goes to his phone. Dials. Waits impatiently as it rings and rings.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. BUFFY'S HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT

THE PHONE chimes, unnoticed, as music BLARES and the party rages on.

Finally, one of the STONER DUDES that Buffy overheard talking earlier ambles by. He notices the phone. Picks it up.

STONER
Party villa. Can I rock you?

GILES
Excuse me? Hello?

STONER
What can I do you for, London
sounding guy?

GILES
I need to speak with Buffy. Right
away. I have some information here
that's rather urgent-

Somebody breaks a glass somewhere. People cheer. The stoner cheers.

STONER

YEAH! Fiesta foul! You gotta do a shot!

GILES
(losing it)
I need to speak to Buffy! Right now!

STONER
Bunny?
(to his stoner bud, concerned)
That guy has to do a shot.

GILES
BUFFY!

Stoner dude holds the phone out to no one in particular.

STONER
Hey! Is there a BUDDY here? I need
a Buddy...

A beat. Nobody pays any attention to him. He shrugs.

STONER
Sorry. He's not here. You got the
wrong casa, Mr. Belvedere.

And he HANGS UP ON GILES.

INT. LIBRARY - NIGHT

Now Giles is talking to dial tone.

GILES
Hell- Hello...?

Exasperated, he slams the phone down. A moment as he considers his options.
Then he grabs his coat and TAKES OFF.

INT. BUFFY'S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Willow comes up the stairs, heads toward the bathroom. She notices that the door
to Buffy's room is open a crack - and sees Buffy moving around inside.

Willow stops - feeling remorseful about her earlier snub - and moves to the door.
Reacts when she sees that Buffy is PACKING UP HER STUFF.

INT. BUFFY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Willow enters, unseen by Buffy.

WILLOW
You're leaving again? What, you just
stopped by to pick up your lint brush
and now you're ready to go?

BUFFY
It's not like anyone'll mind.

WILLOW

Oh, no, go ahead. Have a great time,
don't forget to not write.

BUFFY

Why are you attacking me? I'm trying --

WILLOW

Wow, and it looks so much like giving up!

BUFFY

I'm just trying to make things easier.

WILLOW

For who?

BUFFY

You guys seemed to be doing fine
without me.

WILLOW

We did the best we could! We didn't
have much choice in the matter.

BUFFY

Look, I'm sorry I had to leave, okay?
You don't know what I was going through.

WILLOW

Well, I'd like to.

BUFFY

You wouldn't understand.

WILLOW

Maybe I don't need to understand.
Maybe I just need you to talk to me.

BUFFY

While you're avoiding me like a
virulent ebola strain?

WILLOW

This isn't easy, Buffy. I know you're
going through stuff but so am I.

BUFFY

Willow, I know you were worried, but --

WILLOW

I don't just mean that. I mean my
life. I have all sorts of -- I'm dating,
I'm having serious dating... with a
werewolf, and I've been studying
witchcraft and killing vampires, and
you were my best friend, I didn't have
anyone to talk to about all this scary
life stuff. Then you come back and you
didn't even ask about me. You just

worried about whether I was mad at you.

OFF BUFFY

Stunned and shamed by Willow's words.

INT. GILES' CAR - NIGHT

Desperate to get to Buffy's, Giles SPEEDS down the street.

GILES
Unbelievable...
(as Joyce)
"Do you like my mask? Isn't it pretty?
It raises the dead!"
(himself)
Americans...

A FIGURE steps into his path. There's no time to stop and he HITS IT with a sickening THUD.

Giles stops the car - mortified.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Giles steps out of his car. The street is eerily quiet and the person he hit LIES FACE DOWN AND COMPLETELY MOTIONLESS.

GILES
Are you all right? Can you move?

Giles approaches and gently turns the body over. Reacts when he sees that IT'S A HORRIBLY DECAYED CORPSE that has clearly been dead for DAYS.

GILES
Good God-

Then the corpse's EYES SNAP OPEN. Giles starts and pushes away from the dead dude, only to see THREE MORE ZOMBIES SLOWLY MOVE OUT OF THE SHADOWS - RIGHT TOWARD HIM.

The Zombie on the ground grabs him.

INT. BUFFY'S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Joyce comes up the stairs - picking up discarded cups and napkins people have left on the floor. She stops when she hears Buffy and Willow in heated conversation.

BUFFY (O.C.)
...how much I missed you, and
everyone! I wanted to call every day-

WILLOW (O.C.)
It doesn't matter, Buffy! It still
doesn't make it okay that you-

Drawn by the sound of their argument - Joyce moves to Buffy's room.

INT. BUFFY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Joyce pushes the door open - sees the half-packed bag and clothes littered around. Can't believe her eyes.

JOYCE
This is a joke - right?

BUFFY
Mom - can you just - Willow and I are talking-

JOYCE
No - I can't "just!" What is this, Buffy?

WILLOW
She was running away again.

Buffy's getting overwhelmed.

BUFFY
I wasn't. I mean, I'm not sure what-

JOYCE
(interrupting her)
Well you better get sure and explain yourself right away! Because if you think you can just take off any time you-

BUFFY
Stop! Just - stop! I don't know. Okay?
I don't know what I'm doing.

She pushes past her mother and OUT OF THE ROOM. Joyce is hot on her heels.

INT. BUFFY'S HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT

Buffy, trailed closely by Joyce, finds the front door BLOCKED by XANDER AND CORDY - still in make-out mode.

JOYCE
Don't you leave this house, young lady!

Xander and Cordy react to Joyce - breaking their embrace and turning toward Buffy. Not wanting to face them, Buffy changes coordinates and moves into the-

INT. BUFFY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Where she barely makes it into the room before Joyce is on her - grabbing her by the elbow.

JOYCE
That's it! You and I are going to have a talk.

Buffy notices people react to her mother's obvious anger.

BUFFY
Mom. Please-

But Joyce just gets louder.

JOYCE
You know what? I don't care. I don't care what your friends think of me - or you for that matter - because you put me through the wringer, Buffy. I mean it. And I've had schnapps!

Willow comes into the room - moves to OZ. Also - Xander and Cordy have entered to see what the commotion is about.

JOYCE
Do you have any idea what it's been like?

BUFFY
Mom-

JOYCE
You can't imagine. Months of not knowing. Not knowing if you were lying dead in a ditch somewhere or - I don't know - living it up-

That's it - Buffy really loses it.

BUFFY
But you told me! You're the one who said I should go. You said - "if you leave this house, don't come back." You found out who I really am and you couldn't deal - remember?

CLOSE ON PARTY GUESTS

As they get more and more uncomfortable. People start to back out of the room - slip out the front door.

BACK ON BUFFY, WILLOW, XANDER, CORDY AND OZ

JOYCE
(aghast)
Buffy! You didn't give me any time. You just dumped this... this thing on me and expected me to get it. Well - guess what? Mom's not perfect. I handled it badly. But that doesn't give you the right to punish me by running away-

BUFFY
Punish you? I didn't do this to punish you-

XANDER
Well you did. You should have seen

what it did to her.

BUFFY

(exasperated)

Great. Would anybody else care to weigh in? What about you? By the dip.

ON JONATHAN

Over by the dip. He shakes his head.

JONATHAN

No thanks. I'm good.

RESUME

XANDER

Maybe you don't want to hear it, Buffy.
But taking off like that was selfish
and stupid-

Buffy's breaking down. It's all too much.

BUFFY

Okay - I screwed up! I know it - alright!?
But you have no idea. You have no idea
what happened to me or what I was feeling-

XANDER

Did you even try talking to anybody?

BUFFY

What's the point? There was nothing
anyone could do. I just had to deal
on my own.

XANDER

And you see how well that went. You
can't just bury stuff, Buffy! It'll
come right back up to get you...

INT./EXT. GILES' CAR - NIGHT

The zombie holding Giles rises into a close up, gruesome proof of Xander's statement.

The other zombies are closing in as Giles finally breaks free of the zombie's grip. He scrambles back to his car. He PULLS THE DOOR CLOSED - overpowering the ZOMBIE who TUGS at the handle. He slams the lock down and frantically fumbles for his keys while the zombies ROCK his car and pound at the windows.

Then Giles sees something. Stops.

WHAT HE SEES

Outside - his KEYS GLISTEN ON THE PAVEMENT.

BACK ON GILES

GILES
(darkly)
Good show, Giles.

A beat as his mind races. Then he starts to fiddle under the dash, YANKS some wires out. He's HOT WIRING the car.

Now a ZOMBIE SMASHES THROUGH his car window - hand flailing - reaching for the door lock. A desperate moment before the CAR STARTS. Giles looks pleased with himself despite the tense circumstances. He drives off, CASTING THE ZOMBIES ASIDE-

GILES
Like riding a bloody bicycle.

INT. BUFFY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Back at the ranch - the "party" continues...

BUFFY
As if I could have gone to you, Xander.
You made your feelings about me and
Angel pretty clear-

XANDER
Look - I'm sorry your honey was a
demon, but most girls don't hop a
Greyhound over boy trouble!

Unexpectedly - CORDELIA steps forward.

CORDELIA
Time out, Xand. I mean, put yourself
in Buffy's shoes for a minute. I'm
Buffy - freak of nature - right? Naturally,
I pick a freak for a boyfriend...
Then he's Mister Killing Spree, which
is pretty much my fault, and --

BUFFY
(interrupting)
Cordy. Get out of my shoes.

CORDELIA
I'm just trying to help. If you haven't
noticed, Buffy, people aren't exactly
lining up to give you props-

WILLOW
Buffy, you never --

BUFFY
(overloaded)
Will, just - stop, okay? I can't --

XANDER
Let her finish! You owe her that at least!

BUFFY

(to Xander)
God, Xander! Do you think you could
stick to annoying me on your own behalf?!

XANDER
Fine. You stop acting like an idiot -
I'll stop annoying you!

BUFFY
Let's talk acting like an idiot -
"Nighthawk"!

Xander and Buffy actually start to get in each other's face - like things could get physical. Oz gets between them.

OZ
Okay. Stepping in now. Being
referee guy-

Now Willow shouts over all of them - losing it.

WILLOW
Let them go, Oz. Talking about it
isn't helping; we might as well try
some violence!

A ZOMBIE COMES CRASHING THROUGH A LIVING ROOM WINDOW - while the rest of the zombie army POUNDS at the door and windows, also trying to get inside.

Instant and TOTAL MAYHEM ENSUES. Glass flies everywhere. The remaining party guests SCREAM and SCATTER, a few making it out the front door.

WILLOW
I was being sarcastic!

CLOSE ON THE STONER DUDE

Who snaps out of his mellow daze and heads for the door. Only to run RIGHT INTO THE ZOMBIE - who grabs the stoner dude and SNAPS HIS NECK in one powerful, swift motion. He drops the stoner like a rag doll and moves on.

INT. BUFFY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

As ZOMBIES NOISILY SMASH through the windows and door.

INT. BUFFY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Everyone reacts to the sound in the kitchen. Without even thinking - Willow, Xander, Buffy, Oz and Cordelia respond to the crisis by coming together. Instinct kicks in and they are back to functioning like a fine oiled machine. Buffy grabs a fireplace poker - tosses it to XANDER.

BUFFY
Xander! The kitchen!

With cool precision, Xander snatches the poker from the air.

XANDER

Got your back.

He and Cordy move off.

ON BUFFY

Who FIGHTS THE ZOMBIE with all her might - but no matter how hard she hits it - it just keeps coming. Despite her wiggins, Joyce GRABS A VASE and BREAKS it over the ZOMBIE'S HEAD. Natch - it doesn't faze Mr. Zombo a bit. Joyce shouts to Buffy-

JOYCE
Are - are these vampires?

BUFFY
I don't think so-

ON WILLOW

Who runs and grabs a piece of broken window frame, breaks off a makeshift stake. She calls to Buffy-

WILLOW
Buffy! Heads up!

And she throws the stake to-

BUFFY

Who grabs it and SLAMS IT INTO THE ZOMBIE'S HEART. Nothing happens. She looks to Joyce-

BUFFY
Nope. Not vampires.

INT. BUFFY'S HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT

PAT, terrified, inches for the front door. She doesn't see the ZOMBIE emerging from the hall until it's too late. He grabs her - silencing her with a rotting hand over her mouth.

INT. BUFFY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Xander and Cordy battle a zombie who has made it all the way into the kitchen. Xander CONKS IT REPEATEDLY WITH THE FROZEN SCHNAPPS BOTTLE while Cordy grabs a BARBECUE FORK and SKEWERS IT. All to no avail.

XANDER
Man, this sucker wobbles but he won't
fall down!

INT. BUFFY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

More zombies try to get inside the house - but Buffy and the others keep BEATING THEM BACK.

ON DEVON AND JONATHAN

As Jonathan grabs one of the band's GUITARS to beat zombies with.

DEVON
Not my guitar! Use the bass.

ON BUFFY, WILLOW, ET AL, who still battle the zombie that Buffy staked earlier.

WILLOW
He just keeps coming!

BUFFY
I know. Try to get him back outside-

Willow and Joyce wrestle the nasty looking dude toward the front door. OZ grabs the door handle.

JOYCE
On three!
(then)
One... Two... THREE!

HE SWINGS OPEN THE DOOR AND BEATS the zombies who try to enter back with a heavy brass candle stick. Joyce and Willow HERD the ZOMBIE out the door. Then THEY ALL LEAN ON THE DOOR until it closes.

ON BUFFY

Who marshals Devon, Jonathan and some terrified party guests.

BUFFY
Help me barricade. Come on!

The guests starts piling furniture, etc., against the broken windows.

INT. BUFFY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Xander and Cordy have pinned Mr. Zombie on the floor and are tying his hands and legs together with phone cord.

XANDER
I got it - go help Buffy!

Cordy moves off.

INT. BUFFY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Cordy enters as the others finish with the barricade. Their fortress seems to be holding and everyone breathes a sigh of relief.

BUFFY
Great. Good job every-

SMASH! The barricade comes TUMBLING DOWN AND IT'S ZOMBIE-RAMA AGAIN. Everyone freaks, scatters. DEVON, JONATHAN and the other misc. guests (non-speaking extras, alright?) beat it out of the living room and into the-

INT. BUFFY'S HOUSE - FOYER - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

- where they race down the hall. Now Buffy enters and encounters XANDER

returning from the kitchen. She grabs him as she calls to the others.

BUFFY
Upstairs!

OZ and CORDY help Joyce go up the stairs before them - and end up running right into a ZOMBIE WHO COMES CRASHING THROUGH THE FRONT DOOR, forcing them to change directions.

OZ
This way!

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE CLOSET - NIGHT

Cordelia and Oz race to the closet, pile in and shut the door behind them.

INT. BUFFY'S HOUSE - STAIRWAY - NIGHT

Buffy, Joyce and Willow encounter PAT'S UNCONSCIOUS BODY on the stairs as they race for safety. She moans, barely alive. They collect her and run into

INT. JOYCE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Where they barricade themselves anew, shoving the dresser, the bed - anything they can get their hands on - in front of the door. Joyce and Willow move to a corner with Pat.

CLOSE ON WILLOW AND JOYCE

Willow checks Pat's pulse. She looks at Joyce - alarmed.

WILLOW
She's...

JOYCE
Oh my God.

But they have no time to deal because they see that BUFFY AND XANDER are struggling with a zombie who has WEAKENED THE BARRICADE. Xander gets thrown back and into the opposite wall - knocking THE CEREMONIAL MASK TO THE FLOOR.

CLOSE ON THE MASK

As the EYES START TO GLOW

RESUME

Willow and Joyce reluctantly leave Pat and go once more into the fray.

JOYCE
(worried)
What do we do if they get in?

XANDER
I kind of think we die.

They are all so zombie-occupied that they don't notice-

PAT

AS HER EYES SNAP OPEN.

BLACK OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

Act Four

INT. BUFFY'S HOUSE - CLOSET - NIGHT

It's totally DARK. Two voices rise from the blackness.

CORDELIA (O.C.)
Is that your foot?

OZ (O.C.)
Oh. Sorry.

CORDELIA (O.C.)
I don't hear anything. Should we check?

OZ (O.C.)
Go for it.

INT. BUFFY'S HOUSE - HALLWAY OUTSIDE CLOSET - NIGHT

Oz and Cordy peer out of the closet - both holding SKI POLES as weapons. They can HEAR activity UPSTAIRS - but there's no zombie action. They cautiously round a corner, running right into GILES. Everyone yells with surprise and Cordy RAISES her pole to strike him, but Giles stops her with-

GILES
Cordelia - it's me!

CORDELIA
How do we know it's really you and
not zombie Giles?

GILES
(exasperated)
Cordelia - do stop being tiresome!

CORDELIA
That's him.

Cordelia lowers the pole. Oz addresses Giles.

OZ
I think the dead man's party has
moved upstairs.

Giles nods as they move down the hall to look up the stairs.

GILES
It makes sense. It's the mask in

Joyce's bedroom they're after.

CORDELIA
Mask? They're here to exfoliate?

GILES
(ignoring her)
The mask holds the power of a zombie
demon called Ovu Mobani - "evil eye."
(re: sitch upstairs)
I don't think we can get past them.

OZ
What happens if they get the mask?

GILES
If one of them puts it on... he'll be
the demon incarnate.

CORDELIA
Worse than a Zombie.

GILES
Worse.

Off their worried faces,

INT. JOYCE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Buffy, Joyce, Willow and Xander fend off A ZOMBIE who has now broken through
the barricade.

CLOSE ON THE MASK

Its eyes still GLOWING RED.

CLOSE ON ZOMBIE PAT

Who RISES - slowly. Deliberately.

JOYCE

Sees her - gasps with relief and moves to her.

JOYCE
Oh, God - Pat! We thought you were-

But PAT SHOVES HER ROUGHLY ASIDE AND falls on THE MASK. She raises it to her
face and her eyes instantly FLASH RED. The mask now MELDS into PAT'S FACE and
becomes her DEMONIC VISAGE.

The other zombie in the room HITS THE FLOOR, cowering and bowing to PAT.

Xander glances nervously at Joyce - filling her in.

XANDER
Generally speaking? When the scary

things get scared? Not good.

Zombie Pat stands - surging with NEWFOUND POWER. She speaks in a creepy, garbled tone.

ZOMBIE PAT
I live.
(looking at the others)
You die.

NOW PAT'S EYES BEGIN TO GLOW - emitting the same eerie light that came from the mask. Buffy starts toward her - but Pat immediately turns her gaze on her and her eyes FLASH an even BRIGHTER RED. This has a PARALYZING EFFECT, STOPPING A PERPLEXED BUFFY IN HER TRACKS.

BOOM! Pat BRUTALLY BACKHANDS a defenseless Buffy - who goes sprawling. Now Pat turns toward a cowering WILLOW. Buffy, recovering, sees this-

BUFFY
Don't look, Willow!

But it's too late. Pat looks at Willow, eyes FLASHING again, and Willow is caught like a deer in Pat's headlights. Pat snatches Willow from her hiding place - moves to snap her neck.

ON BUFFY

BUFFY
No!

Buffy lowers her head, turns her eyes away - and POWERS INTO ZOMBIE PAT. Willow falls to the floor as Buffy plows Zombie Pat THROUGH ONE OF THE WINDOWS.

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

Buffy and Zombie Pat ROLL OFF the ROOF and land in the yard with a horrible THUD.

INT. BUFFY'S HOUSE - FOYER - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Giles, Oz and Cordy are heading upstairs - but stop as they hear Buffy's dramatic fall.

GILES
Out back!

They turn back but now find the bottom of the stairs BLOCKED BY A HULKING ZOMBIE.

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

Buffy and Zombie Pat recover from their plunge. Pat's eyes FLASH, trying to hit Buffy again with her PARALYZING POWER, but Buffy scrambles away from her - covering her eyes with her arm.

BUFFY
Not looking. Not looking...

INT. JOYCE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Joyce, Xander and Willow are also occupied - struggling to overcome the ZOMBIE still in the room with them.

Joyce manages to reach under her bed - unearth a BASEBALL BAT she's hidden there. She now WAILS on el zombo with the bat.

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

Buffy's regained her footing when Zombie Pat TACKLES HER, sending her back to the ground. Still, even with her eyes SQUEEZED SHUT, Buffy gets her feet under Zombie Pat and heaves Pat off of her.

INT. BUFFY'S HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT

Giles, Cordy and Oz are on the stairs, still detained by the hulking zombie. OZ manages to get clear to jump over the railing onto the hall floor. Giles shouts to him-

GILES

Oz! Tell Buffy - Moboni's power is
in his eyes. She has to go for the eyes
to defeat him!

Oz nods - escapes - just avoiding a KILLER BLOW from the zombie.

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

Zombie Pat is coming back from the blow Buffy just dealt her, as Buffy crawls across the ground searching wildly for something.

CLOSE ON DIGGING SPADE

As Buffy's hand seizes it.

ON BUFFY

Who looks up - and right into the FLASHING eyes of PAT, who now stands over her. Buffy is STUCK, MOTIONLESS...

ON OZ

Who arrives on the scene.

OZ
Buffy!

PAT

Spins at the sound of Oz's voice.

BUFFY

Jumps to her feet.

BUFFY
Hey - Pat!

Zombie Pat turns back to Buffy. Buffy LOOKS AWAY as she DRIVES THE SPADE INTO ZOMBIE PAT'S EYES.

BUFFY
Made you look.

A beat and then Buffy's action causes an INTENSE WHITE FLASH that VAPORIZES ZOMBIE PAT.

INT. JOYCE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

FLASH! Willow, Xander and Joyce react as the zombie they were fighting DISAPPEARS.

INT. BUFFY'S HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT

FLASH! The hulking zombie Giles and Cordy battled is history.

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

Zombie Pat is gone. It's over. No zombies. Nothing.

ON OZ

OZ
Never mind.

INT. BUFFY'S HOUSE - FOYER - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Oz and Buffy come back into the house. Buffy is shaken and looking a little worse for the wear.

JOYCE, WILLOW, GILES, XANDER and CORDY move to them, concerned.

JOYCE
Honey - Are you alright?

Buffy reaches for her mother.

BUFFY
Mom-

And they hug. Holding on tight. Finally, they break apart-

JOYCE
So is this a typical day at the office?

BUFFY
This? No.
(only half-kidding)
This was nothing.

Joyce looks appalled, but doesn't really have a chance to react before XANDER moves to Buffy - his tone conciliatory.

XANDER
Nice moves.

BUFFY
You too.

They slap hands, low and casual, sealing an unspoken truce. Now WILLOW, CORDY and OZ also crowd around for more hugs and words of encouragement.

CLOSE ON GILES

Who stands slightly apart from the others. Watching the group come together and enfold Buffy. He's clearly moved, but something else crosses his features - resolve.

INT. PRINCIPAL SNYDER'S OFFICE - DAY

GILES knocks - looks in. Snyder looks up from his desk - annoyed.

PRINCIPAL SNYDER
Did we have an appointment?

Giles closes the door. Steps inside.

GILES
I'd like to have a word with you.

Snyder moves from behind his desk - grabs a folder.

PRINCIPAL SNYDER
If that word is "Buffy" - then I have
two words for you. Good riddance.
(then)
Now. If you don't mind. I have an
appointment with the mayor...

GILES
You can't keep her out of this school.

PRINCIPAL SNYDER
I think you'll find I can.

GILES
You had no grounds for expelling her.

PRINCIPAL SNYDER
I have grounds, I have precedent, and
this tingly kind of --

GILES
It won't hold. Buffy Summers is a
minor and entitled to a public
education. Your personal distaste
for the girl does not legally enable
you --

PRINCIPAL SNYDER
Why don't you take it up with the
city council?

He starts out of the office, stopping right between Giles and the wall as Giles says:

GILES

I thought I'd start with the State supreme court. You may be powerful in local circles, but I believe I can make life very uncomfortable for you. Professionally speaking. And Buffy Summers will be allowed back in.

A moment, then Snyder regains an appearance of superiority.

PRINCIPAL SNYDER

Sorry. I'm not convinced.

Giles puts his hand to Snyder's chest and SLAMS HIM UP AGAINST THE WALL with one violent, swift motion. He looks coldly down at the man, all Ripper.

GILES

Do you want me to convince you?

OFF SNYDER - stunned, about to backtrack massively...

FADE TO:

EXT. COFFEE HOUSE - SHOPPING DISTRICT - DAY

The place Willow stood Buffy up earlier.

INT. COFFEE HOUSE - DAY

A cozy, bustling place.

ON BUFFY AND WILLOW

Who sit at a table, scraping up the last of a shared (big chocolatey messy) dessert. Totally oblivious to the world around them. We catch them mid-conversation.

WILLOW

I mean I'm not like a full fledged witch, that takes years. I just did a couple of pagan blessings and teeny glamour to hide a zit.

BUFFY

It doesn't scare you?

WILLOW

It has. I tried to communicate with the spirit world and I so wasn't ready for that. It was like being pulled apart inside. Plus I blew the power for our whole block. Big scare.

BUFFY

Oh, I wish I coulda been there with you.

WILLOW

Me too. I really freaked out.

BUFFY
I'm sorry...

WILLOW
It's okay. Really, I understand you
having to bail and I can forgive that.
I have to make allowances for what
you're going through and just be a
grown up about it.

Beat.

BUFFY
You're loving this moral superiority thing.

WILLOW
It's like a drug.

BUFFY
Fine. I'm the bad, I can take my lumps.
For a while.

WILLOW
All right, I'll stop giving you a hard time.
(beat)
Runaway.

BUFFY
Will...

WILLOW
I'm sorry.
(beat)
Quitter.

BUFFY
(beat)
Whiner.

WILLOW
Bailer.

BUFFY
Harpy.

WILLOW
Delinquent.

BUFFY
Tramp.

WILLOW (V.O.)
Bad seed.

BUFFY (V.O.)
Witch.

BLACK OUT.

THE END