

# Helpless

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## Teaser

INT. MANSION - NIGHT

The CAMERA FLOATS PAST FLICKERING CANDLES casting shadows that dance across the walls, PAST a blanket laid out with various foodstuffs: bottled mineral water, French bread, grapes, etc. Gothically romantic. Apropos of the mood, we soon hear HEAVY BREATHING and...

BUFFY's head falls into frame, her brow sweaty, muscles taut, straining, her hands gripping the shoulders of ANGEL, appearing in frame, above her.

A moment, and she brings her knees up hard, flipping him over her and onto his back. THUD! Buffy springs to her feet. Angel quickly recovers and he rushes her.

They tussle. She sweep kicks his legs out from under and he hits the floor hard, knocking the wind out of him.

Swiftly, Buffy snatches the French bread, ROLLS over to Angel's prone body, then kneels on his chest, pinning him, the bread poised over his heart like a stake.

BUFFY  
Gotchya.

ANGEL  
Right in the heart.

She tosses the bread back. They are still entwined, still close.

BUFFY  
Satisfied?

ANGEL  
I'm not sure that's the word...

A little close to home - self-awareness intrudes and discomfort sets in. She quickly stands.

BUFFY  
Well, I didn't mean satisfied  
like-

ANGEL  
No, I wasn't trying to -

BUFFY  
'Cause we're not having satisfaction,  
in the personal sense...

ANGEL

Of course.

BUFFY  
(gathering her stuff)  
I should take off. Giles is -

ANGEL  
Waiting for you. I know.

She stops, realizing the moment has passed and she can relax.

BUFFY  
Thanks. For the work out.

ANGEL  
Am I going to see you this weekend?  
You probably have plans...

BUFFY  
Birthday, right. Actually, yeah, I do  
have a thing.

ANGEL  
A thing? A date?

BUFFY  
(smiling)  
Nice attempt at casual. It is a date.  
Older man. Very handsome. Likes it  
when I call him "Daddy."

ANGEL  
(smiles)  
Your father.  
(sudden worry)  
It is your father...

She nods, happily.

BUFFY  
He's taking me to the ice show. It's  
great fun. And I could definitely use  
a little more fun.

INT. LIBRARY - NIGHT

CLOSE ON: Buffy's glum face.

She is staring at a crystal dangling right in front of her from a leather string.

GILES (O.S.)  
And this one?

WIDEN to find GILES holding the string and Buffy sitting at the table, a variety of  
stone and crystals laid out before her. She scrutinizes the crystal with a lack of  
enthusiasm.

BUFFY

Amethyst.

GILES  
Used for?

BUFFY  
(stumped)  
Breath mint?

GILES  
(growing impatient)  
For charm bags, money spells,  
and cleansing one's aura.

BUFFY  
Okay, so: how do you know when  
your aura's dirty? Somebody come  
by with a finger and write "wash me"  
on it?

GILES  
Buffy, I'm aware of your distaste for  
studying the vibratory stones, but as  
it's part of your training, I'd appreciate  
your glib-free attention.

BUFFY  
Sorry. I just figure with Faith on one  
of her unannounced walkabouts  
someone should be out patrolling.

GILES  
Faith is not interested in proper  
training, so I rely on you to keep  
up with yours.

BUFFY  
I hate being the "good" one.

GILES  
And as for patrolling, you'll be out  
there soon enough, why so anxious?

Buffy appears self-conscious.

BUFFY  
Let's just say I've got a lot of energy  
to burn off.

GILES  
Due time. For the present, if it's not  
entirely beyond your capabilities...  
try to concentrate.

Giles places a large BLUE CRYSTAL before her. Buffy sighs heavily, then lazily eyes  
the crystal.

Faint WIND-CHIMES are heard...

EXT. PLAYGROUND - LATER (NIGHT)

The CHIMES blend into the RUSTY SQUEAKS of child swings, a small whirligig, moving slowly in the night breeze.

Then, a SCREAM as a VAMPIRE'S airborne body comes crashing down near the top of a slide. Gravity takes him for a ride to the ground.

ON BUFFY

in prime fighting mode, easily dominating her adversary.

BUFFY  
Wow, that was really funny looking.  
Could you do that again?

VAMPIRE  
I'll kill you for that!

BUFFY  
For that? What were you trying to  
kill me for before?

She deftly roundhouse kicks the vamp in the face, sending him sprawling onto the whirligig.

She whips out a stake and holds it high.

BUFFY  
Okay, so here's the deal -

WHOOOF - she suddenly appears DIZZY and staggers a bit.

THE VAMP eyes her suspiciously. Then, seeing an opportunity, he LUNGES, throwing her to the ground.

Instantly, he's on top of her, much like Angel earlier, only this time Buffy's far from in control.

The vamp GRIPS the stake in Buffy's hand and, with little effort, twists it until the sharp point touches her chest.

He pushes down on the stake hovering over her heart and WHISPERS to her in a manner both intimate and obscene:

VAMPIRE  
Let me know if I'm not doing this  
right.

ON BUFFY

terrified and struggling, but weak and disoriented, as the stake presses down on her chest.

BLACK OUT.

END OF TEASER

# Act One

EXT. PLAYGROUND - CONTINUOUS (NIGHT)

As before, the vampire has a scared, woozy Buffy pinned, pressing the stake down toward her heart.

BUFFY'S EYES

The pain brings her focus back and she gives the vamp a ferocious HEAD BUTT. He rolls off her, nursing a bleeding brow.

As Buffy wearily pushes herself up, she spots

THE STAKE

lying on the ground where it was dropped. She scrambles toward it on all fours as the vampire recovers and sees her.

Snarling, he DIVES at her. Too late. Buffy turns over, and he impales himself on the stake propped up in her hands. Dust.

Buffy sits up, brushing off dust, trying to shake off her near death experience.

She opens and closes her fists, feels her arms. Finally, concerned, she stands, takes a last glance around, and walks away.

As she moves off, the CAMERA PANS to find a FIGURE, unseen by Buffy, lurking in the shadows.

PUSH IN on him to discover, in the half-light, the face and graying hair of an OLDER MAN watching her.

INT. LIBRARY - EARLY MORNING (DAY)

Giles enters for the day, carrying his case, engrossed in some old book, half noticing:

BUFFY - a throwing knife in hand, concentrating intently at some unseen target.

GILES

Bit early in the day...

She lets it fly (off-camera) - THWACK - then grimaces.

BUFFY

Giles, something's wrong.

GILES

Wrong?

Giles follows her gaze to the:

ARCHERY TARGET WITH KNIVES EVERYWHERE

sticking out of walls, a bookcase, book bindings - only one or two made the target,

though none in the immediate vicinity of the bull's-eye.

GILES  
Ah. Maybe you shouldn't -

She hurls another knife - thwacks way wide.

GILES  
-- do that anymore.

BUFFY  
On top of that, I got a bad case of the  
dizzies last night and almost let a vamp  
stake me. With my own stake!  
(throws again, wide)  
I am way off my game, my game's  
left the country, it's in Cuernavaca,  
what's going on here?

GILES  
Well... probably you've just  
contracted a flu-bug or something.

Buffy registers the possibility with grave disappointment.

BUFFY  
Oh, no. Not sick. I can't get sick.

GILES  
Buffy, with precautions, there's no  
reason to think you'll end up in the  
hospital like last time.

BUFFY  
No, my father's coming up to take  
me to the ice show. We do it every  
year for my birthday. If I cancel on  
him, it'll break his heart.

GILES  
Perhaps you should take it easy for  
the next forty-eight hours. Forego  
any more patrolling until you're  
feeling yourself again.

BUFFY  
No, no - I think I need to spend a  
little more time training...

Buffy throws another knife (off-camera), followed by the CRASH of breaking glass.

BUFFY  
I'm gone.

GILES  
Thank you.

EXT. SUNNYDALE HIGH SCHOOL - PALM COURT - DAY

Buffy sits with XANDER, WILLOW and OZ, under a tree, having their lunch as other students mill about.

XANDER

(to Buffy)

An ice show. A show performed  
on ice. And how old are we, again?

WILLOW

I saw "Snoopy on Ice" once when  
I was little. My dad took me backstage  
and I got scared and threw up on  
Woodstock.

BUFFY

I know you all think it's just a big,  
dumb, girly thing, but it's not.  
Some of the skaters are Olympic  
medal winners and my dad buys me  
cotton candy, a different stuffed  
animal wearing fuzzy skates every year  
and okay it is a big, dumb, girly thing,  
but I love it.

OZ

Not so girly. Ice is cool. It's water.  
But it's not.

WILLOW

I think it's sweet you and your dad  
have a tradition, 'specially now that  
he's not around so much.

(beat)

Ixnay on the caramel corn if you're  
goin' backstage...

XANDER

(to Buffy)

Okay, but we're still talking party,  
right? I mean, some of us relish  
celebrating the birth of the Buf.

BUFFY

Maybe it's time to call a moratorium  
on parties in my honor. They tend to  
go badly. Monsters crash, people die...

WILLOW

Eighteen is a big one, Buffy. You  
can vote now. You can be drafted.  
You can vote not to be drafted.

BUFFY

Still, I think maybe I'll just  
celebrate this one with quiet  
reflection.

XANDER

Where's it written quiet reflection  
can't be combined with cake and

funny hats?

INT. BUFFY'S KITCHEN - EVENING (NIGHT)

CLOSE on a small MYLAR BALLOON with the ever so cute picture of a duckling blowing out candles on a birthday cake. The balloon sticks out of a pleasant, though not extravagant, bouquet of flowers on the table.

WIDEN to find JOYCE at the stove, stirring sauce. We hear a DOOR SLAM.

JOYCE  
Buffy?

Buffy enters.

BUFFY  
Present.  
(sees arrangement)  
Oo, presents!

JOYCE  
(concerned)  
They're not... They're from your  
father.

It takes Buffy a nanosecond to register its meaning. Her face goes slack as she notices a small card with two tele-tickets attached to the bouquet. She sits down at the table, her back to Joyce.

JOYCE  
His quarterly projections are  
unraveling and he can't afford  
to take off right now. He promises  
he'll make it up to you. It's all there  
in the note...

PUSH IN on Buffy.

as she removes the note and tickets and eyes them stoically.

JOYCE  
If you want, I could ask someone  
to cover for me at the gallery. I  
mean, if you want me to take you...

TILT DOWN to BUFFY'S HAND

as, unseen by Joyce, she crumples the unread note.

JOYCE  
Do you want me to go?

Buffy pulls herself together and puts on a brave smile, then turns to face her mother.

BUFFY  
That's okay. Really. I was thinking  
earlier how nice it would be to have



a quiet birthday.

EXT. ABANDONED BOARDING HOUSE - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING

Large and broken down. Overgrown shrubbery. Dead lawn. A faded sign near the end of what once was a walk dangles limply from its rotted post: "SUNNYDALE ARMS. ROOMS TO LET. BREAKFAST INCLUDED. INQUIRE WITHIN."

INT. ABANDONED BOARDING HOUSE ANTEROOM - NIGHT

MOVING THROUGH a DARK sparsely furnished anteroom, past the staircase, BRICKED UP windows - in and out of pockets of light generated by different fixtures. A real spook house.

For a few moments, we observe a weary YOUNG MAN perched at the top of a teetering stepladder, laying mortar and the final bricks in the frame of a windowsill.

SWING AROUND to discover we've been in the P.O.V. of

QUENTIN TRAVERS, whom we recognize as the older man from the playground: his manner and dress are British academia. (For all intents and purposes, he's Giles in thirty years.)

ANOTHER YOUNG MAN, looking as overworked as the first, descends the stairs, his work clothes splattered with mortar. TRAVERS turns to him.

TRAVERS  
How much longer, Hobson?

HOBSON  
Five, maybe six hours, sir.

Travers checks his watch.

TRAVERS  
Once you've finished, you and Blair  
can get some rest...  
(a warning)  
... but sleep in shifts.

Travers follows a LOW, GUTTURAL SOUND that's been droning on for some time to a heretofore unseen large, heavy wooden CRATE propped up against the wall, next to a mantelpiece. The wood is old and scarred. The lid padlocked in four places. HUM emanates from it.

TRAVERS  
We're getting very close...

He takes a step or two toward the box.

PUSH IN on a small slit cut out near the top, though the darkness reveals nothing.

P.O.V. FROM INSIDE CRATE - TRAVERS STARING BACK

Whatever it is inside, it's HUMMING. Softly, tunelessly; echoing within its confines.

TRAVERS  
... the Slayer's preparation is nearly

complete.

INT. LIBRARY - NIGHT

Buffy sits again at the large reference table, as Giles lays out the chorus line of stones and crystals before her. She's making conversation, he's all business.

BUFFY

I mean, I know there's cartoon  
characters but they also do pieces  
from ballets and operas... Brian  
Boitano in Carmen, it's a life changer...  
He doesn't actually play Carmen...  
But a lot of sophisticated people go.

Giles moves the large blue crystal in front of Buffy.

GILES

I thought we'd start with the  
Grounding Crystal again.

BUFFY

... it's the kind of thing fathers do  
with their daughters...

GILES

Now, look very carefully for the tiny  
flaw at its core.

BUFFY

I mean if someone were free they'd  
take their daughter or their... student...  
(still nothing from Giles; sotto)  
... or their Slayer...

GILES

Buffy, I think we need to concentrate  
now.

Buffy sighs a little, looks at the crystal.

GILES

Look for the flaw at its center.

BUFFY'S P.O.V. - CRYSTAL

PUSH IN on it as those faint WIND CHIMES fade in.

ON BUFFY

keeping a fixed stare, her eyes no longer blinking.

GILES

Buffy?

He studies her for a bit. She's FROZEN. And Giles doesn't seem a bit surprised. He reaches under the table, picks up his case and from it produces a small leather box. He opens it to reveal one FREAKIN' HUGE HYPODERMIC NEEDLE filled with a faintly yellow liquid. Turning back to Buffy, he swabs her arm and (off-camera) injects her.

She doesn't flinch.

One more swab then he quickly shoves the hypo back into the box, the box back into his case, the case back under the table. Satisfied that all is as it was, he reaches out...

CLOSE ON: The crystal as Giles' hand envelopes it, breaking the optic connection. Buffy blinks back to life.

BUFFY

What? Did I zone on you? Sorry,  
must be this flu-bug I'm nursing.

GILES

Best take care of that. Why don't  
you...

BUFFY

Call it a night. Good idea. See ya'.

Buffy turns to leave.

ON GILES as he watches her intently, his warm look quickly evaporating and replaced with a steely-eyed demeanor.

GILES

Good night.

BLACK OUT.

END OF ACT ONE.

## Act Two

EXT. SCHOOL - FOUNTAIN QUAD - THE NEXT MORNING (DAY)

Amid the mid-morning bustle, Buffy and Willow emerge.

BUFFY

How goes it with Amy the rat?

WILLOW

Good. She really likes the new  
exercise wheel. When she runs,  
her little nose wiggles so happily...

BUFFY

I meant, how goes it with changing  
her back into a human being?

WILLOW

Oh. Still working on it. But I did  
get her the cutest little bell -

She stops when they overhear:

GUY (O.S.)

You don't do that to me!

Buffy looks over to see

CORDELIA and GUY, a hulking wrestler-type, hovering menacingly over her, in a secluded corner. Though speaking in reasonably hushed tones, Guy's anger is unmistakable.

GUY  
I waited for you at the Bronze all night! What's the story?

CORDELIA  
Came to my senses. And the big deal is...?

He grabs her arm, roughly.

GUY  
You made me look like some kind of dork in front of my posse.

CORDELIA  
First of all, "posse?" Passe.  
Second, anyone with a teaspoon of brain would know not to take my flirting seriously. Especially, with my extenuating circumstances.

GUY  
What circumstances?

CORDELIA  
Rebound. Look it up.

She turns to leave and he throws her against the tree.

CORDELIA  
Hey!

GUY  
I'm not through here.

A hand grabs his arm.

BUFFY  
I beg to differ.

She pulls. His arm does NOT budge. Guy looks at her like she's a loon. Buffy tries again with both hands, STRAINING. He casually SHOVES her away - she slams into the wall and slides to the floor. Willow immediately rushes to her side.

Cordelia stares aghast at the prone Buffy, then turns to Guy and RAINS BLOWS on his chest and shoulders. Guy cowers.

CORDELIA  
(to Guy)

What is wrong with you?

GUY

The chick started it.

As Guy continues to retreat from Cordelia's assault...

ANGLE ON WILLOW AND BUFFY

WILLOW

(to Buffy)

Are you okay?

Buffy stares up at her, looking very not.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - MINUTES LATER (DAY)

Buffy catches up to Giles.

BUFFY

Okay, I just got swatted down by  
some no-neck and rescued by Cordelia.  
What the hell is happening, Giles?

GILES

All right. Calm yourself.

BUFFY

Are you getting the big picture here?  
I have no strength. No coordination.  
I throw knives like... like...

GILES

A girl?

She looks at him, her face a mask of fear and vulnerability.

BUFFY

Like I'm not the Slayer.

They stand speechless for a moment.

Giles tentatively reaches out to put a hand on her shoulder, then notices the black and blue mark where Guy shoved her.

GILES

Nasty bruise.

BUFFY

Should see the one farther south.

GILES

Buffy, I assure you, given time,  
we'll get to the bottom of whatever's  
causing this... anomaly.

BUFFY

Promise me?

Giles eyes her uncomfortably. She's too upset to notice.

GILES  
I give you my word.

TRAVERS (V.O.)  
You're having doubts...

INT. ABANDONED BOARDING HOUSE PARLOR - DAY

A sitting room with bricked-up windows and fireplace. Giles sits on a sofa, absentmindedly stirring a cup of tea.

TRAVERS  
I understand your concerns, of course, Giles.

WIDEN as Travers sits in a chair across from Giles.

TRAVERS  
But you lodged your appeals with  
the watcher's council. And, still,  
they've decided to go forward.  
There's nothing we can do now but  
carry on.

GILES  
You know, I've always had nothing  
but the utmost respect for the council.  
I've followed their dictates to the letter.  
But this...

TRAVERS  
The Cruciamentum is not easy. For  
slayer or watcher. But it's been done  
this way for a dozen centuries.  
Whenever a slayer turns eighteen.  
It's a time-honored rite of passage-

GILES  
(cutting him off)  
It's an antiquated exercise in  
cruelty. Locking her in this tomb...  
weakened, defenseless...  
(re: Kralik's crate)  
unleashing that on her.  
(then)  
If any one of the council still had  
actual contact with a slayer they'd  
see. But I'm the one in the thick of it.

TRAVERS  
Which is why you're not qualified to  
make this decision. You're too close.

GILES  
I'm not. No test is necessary of  
her - especially not one as...

as perverse as this.  
(then)  
I'm appealing to you as a friend and  
colleague, Quentin. I know you can  
put a stop to it.

Quentin seems struck by Giles' words. A beat. Then his resolve returns.

TRAVERS  
I'm sorry. A slayer must be more  
than physical prowess. She must  
have cunning, imagination... a  
confidence derived from self-reliance.  
Believe me, once this is all over - your  
Buffy will be stronger for it.

GILES  
Or she'll be dead for it.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE FRONT HALLWAY - DAY

Hobson is working at the open front door, adjusting a large spring mechanism. Giles starts out, escorted by Travers.

TRAVERS  
Rupert...

Giles stops and turns to him.

TRAVERS  
If this girl's everything you say,  
then you've nothing to worry about.

Giles nods slightly and, wordlessly, exits.

HOBSON  
(to Travers)  
Sir, if you can spare me for a short  
spell, I'll need to make a run to the  
hardware store. I just need -

A SCREAM cuts him off. A BLOOD-CURDLING, WET YOUR PANTS, FERAL SHRIEK.  
Hobson and Travers exchange a look as Blair appears.

TRAVERS  
Take care of it.

Blair and Hobson go to work.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE ANTEROOM - CONTINUOUS (DAY)

CLOSE ON: Blair's hand as he removes a key ring from his pocket and starts  
unlocking the padlocks.

Travis stands by, wielding a large FIRE AX. The two young watchers pry open the  
crate's lid.

CLOSE ON: Eyes, clenched shut, partly from light sensitivity, but mostly from

searing pain. All at once, they snap open.

His name is ZACHARY KRALIK. He's a vampire, clearly. But the eyes reveal, not just demonic evil, but MADNESS. Heavy steel brackets bind him to the back of the box. His thin wiry frame is dressed in a pale green jumpsuit and trundled up in a STRAIT JACKET. Blair and Hobson are momentarily stopped by Kralik's gaze, until they are startled by:

TRIVERS  
Come on! Come on!

Blair attends to one of two PRESCRIPTION BOTTLES on a nearby mantel. He places two pills on the tip of a thin, metal telescoping wand. Standing a few feet away, Blair directs the wand to Kralik's mouth. The vampire is oblivious, too caught up in his pain.

BLAIR  
Kralik. Your pills. Open your mouth.

Kralik takes the pills. Now Hobson approaches the crate with a pair of tongs that hold a glass of water. Standing to the side, he brings it to the vampire's lips. Kralik drinks voraciously, water dribbling down his chin.

TRIVERS  
That's enough. Close it up.

The watchers close the lid and reattach the locks. Travers crosses to the crate, inspecting their work.

BLAIR  
Are you sure he's containable?

TRIVERS  
I am. As long as we give him his  
medicine...

KRALIK'S P.O.V. - TRAVERS

peering through the slit

TRIVERS  
And the opportunity to kill a slayer.

INT. LIBRARY - LATE AFTERNOON (DAY)

Buffy, Willow, Xander and Oz are scattered about combing through piles and piles of books.

WILLOW  
Aha! A curse on slayers - oh, no,  
wait. It's "lawyers."

XANDER  
Maybe we're on the wrong track  
with the spells, curses and whammies.  
Maybe what we should be looking for  
is something like slayer kryptonite.

OZ



Faulty metaphor. Kryptonite kills.

XANDER  
(recovering comic book geek mode)  
You're assuming I meant green  
kryptonite. I was referring, of course,  
to red kryptonite which drains Superman  
of his powers.

OZ  
Wrong, gold kryptonite's the power-  
sucker. Red kryptonite's the one  
that mutates Superman into weird -

BUFFY  
Guys!

They turn and look at he. She indicates their environs.

BUFFY  
Reality.

Buffy and Willow now settle in a quiet corner away from the geek squad.

WILLOW  
Buffy, I know you're definitely,  
without a doubt, going to get your  
powers back...

BUFFY  
Thanks, Will.

WILLOW  
But - what if you don't?

Buffy looks at her, thrown.

WILLOW  
I mean, there's a slight, eensy  
possibility and it just seems like,  
maybe, it's a good thing to get on  
out there and discuss. Just in case.  
Right?

Buffy tries to cover her fears on the matter.

BUFFY  
Okay. If I don't' get my powers  
back - I don't. I'll deal.

WILLOW  
On the short side for a discussion.  
But okay.

BUFFY  
I mean, there's a plus side to being  
a regular girl. The whole not-bleeding-  
and-killing-and-dying experience.

WILLOW  
As for example.

BUFFY  
Then there's the buying outfits without  
worrying if they're good for bleeding-  
and-killing-and-dying in. There's a lot  
of good to it.

WILLOW  
Actually, it could really open up-

Willow doesn't have a chance to finish before Giles enters. Buffy anxiously stands, her brave front disappearing.

BUFFY  
Did you find out... anything?

Giles takes a deep breath, considering his answer.

GILES  
Not yet.

He looks pained as Buffy registers resigned disappointment.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE BEDROOM - NIGHT

Hobson enters, Blair is sleeping on a cot. Hobson lies down. We hear THAT SCREAM again. Blair bolts awake - looks at Hobson.

HOBSON  
It's your shift.

Blair reluctantly gets up and exits as Hobson pulls the pillow over his head and tries to go to sleep.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE ANTEROOM - NIGHT

Blair opens the last of the padlocks and raises the lid revealing Kralik who appears to be in excruciating pain. Blair takes off to the kitchen with the nearby empty glass.

Kralik takes note of Blair's departure, then purposefully strains within the strait jacket, SCREAMING as he pulls.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE KITCHEN - NIGHT

BLAIR  
It's coming!

INT. BOARDING HOUSE ANTEROOM - NIGHT

With one last mighty effort, the strait jacket TEARS LOUDLY and Kralik's right arm is free.

BLAIR

returns with the water, glancing at Kralik who appears delirious with pain, though as

strait-jacketed as ever.

KRALIK  
Pills!

Blair places the pills at the end of the wand, then, hanging as far back as he can, offers it to the seemingly pain-stricken vampire. The vampire doesn't take them.

BLAIR  
Take them.

KRALIK  
Pills!

BLAIR  
They're right in front of you!

KRALIK  
Where?

The watcher apprehensively moves in a bit.

BLAIR  
Here.

KRALIK  
Can't see... Can't reach it...

BLAIR'S FEET inch forward.

BLAIR  
Open your ey-

With startling suddenness, Kralik's hand grips Blair's throat - his eyes bulge as he's lifted off the ground.

KRALIK  
Shhh... Everything's okay now...

BLAIR'S FEET

kicking in the air. We hear the SOUNDS OF FEEDING as the pills and wand clatter to the ground and roll away.

INT. MANSION - NIGHT

CLOSE ON

A gift, wrapped in cloth, tied up with twine.

ON BUFFY AND ANGEL

Who sit together as she unwraps a book: an old edition of Browning's Sonnets. She lifts the front cover.

INSERT: A one word inscription, signed by Angel: "Always."

## BACK ON BUFFY AND ANGEL

Buffy, clearly touched but also clearly bothered by something, closes the book.

BUFFY

Angel. Thank you. It's beautiful.

Angel looks unsure, reading her mood.

ANGEL

You really like it?

Buffy tries for more enthusiasm. Leafs through the book.

BUFFY

Of course I do. It's thoughtful and sweet and, uh, full of neat words to learn and say like "wilt" and "henceforth..."

ANGEL

(kindly)

Then why did you seem more excited last year when you got a severed arm in a box?

Buffy sees that she's nailed. Lets down.

BUFFY

I'm sorry. Really - I love the book. And I love what you wrote.

(then)

It's just... Suddenly, there's this chance that my calling could be a wrong number. I guess it's freaking me out a little.

ANGEL

That's understandable.

BUFFY

What if I have lost my powers, Angel? I mean, for good?

ANGEL

You lived a long time without them. You can do it again.

Buffy stands - agitated.

BUFFY

I guess.

(then)

But what if I can't? I've seen too much now. I know what goes bump in the night. Not being able to fight it - what if I just hide under my bed, all scared and helpless...  
(worse thought)

Or what if I just get pathetic?  
Hanging out at "The Old Slayer's  
Home" - talking people's ears off  
about my glory days... showing them  
Mr. Pointy, the stake I had bronzed...

Angel moves to her, speaks soothingly.

ANGEL

Buff. You couldn't be helpless or boring.  
Not even if you tried.

BUFFY

Oh, don't be so sure. Before I became  
the Slayer I was... well I don't want  
to say shallow, but... let's just say a  
certain person who shall remain nameless,  
let's call her "Spordelia", looked like a  
classical philosopher next to me. If I'm  
not the Slayer, I mean... what do I have  
to offer?  
(quietly)  
Why would you like me?

ANGEL

I saw you before you became the  
Slayer.

BUFFY

What?

ANGEL

I watched you, I saw you called. It  
was a bright afternoon, out in front  
of your school, you walked down the  
steps and I loved you.

BUFFY

Why?

ANGEL

Because I could see your heart. You  
held it before you for everyone to  
see and I worried that it would be  
bruised or torn. More than anything  
in my life I wanted to keep it safe,  
to warm it with my own.

She folds into his arms, whispers.

BUFFY

That's beautiful.

A moment, as he holds her.

BUFFY

Or, taken literally, incredibly gross.

ANGEL

I was just thinking that too.

INT. ABANDONED BOARDING HOUSE ANTEROOM - NIGHT

The LOW, TUNELESS, HUMMING of Kralik drones on as we see Blair's corpse lying at the foot of the crate.

TIGHT ON: Blair's face as it MORPHS to vampire form and his eyes snap open. He gets to his feet.

KRALIK

You're up. I was afraid I drained you too much. I do that sometimes.

Wordlessly, Blair picks up the ax and moves toward Kralik.

KRALIK

Ever have a tune that you can't get out of your head? Playing over and over and over? Drives me nuts.

Blair raises the ax above his head.

SERIES OF QUICK CUTS

as the ax comes down where the brackets are bolted in.

Finally, Kralik steps out of the box, the strait jacket slips off of him. He's completely free.

KRALIK

Thank you. That's much better.

He turns his head, cracking his neck.

KRALIK

It's a game, you know. We're not going to play by their rules... But that doesn't mean we're not going to play. Call in your friend... and we'll discuss it over dinner.

BLACK OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

## Act Three

INT. BOARDING HOUSE ANTEROOM/FRONT HALL - NIGHT

All is quiet as Giles enters from the front hallway.

GILES

(calling out)  
Quentin?

He peers in to the parlor to find it empty, then takes a wary glance toward

THE CRATE, its lid closed, its contents, silent.

Finding no one, he crosses to the staircase and starts up the stairs, continuing to call out.

GILES

Hello? Quentin? Hob-

Something causes him to hesitate. He lifts his hand off the banister and turns it into the light. His palm is WET and TACKY with BLOOD. He quickly glances up to the top landing, then at the crate. Squinting in the dim light, he notices for the first time the unlocked padlocks and open latches.

His eyes widen as terror seeps into them. Instinctively, he backs away from the crate, the KICKS one of the staircase's vertical posts. Once, twice... It breaks off and Giles picks up a makeshift stake.

He cautiously moves to the box, takes hold of the lid. Summoning his courage, he RIPS IT OPEN.

Empty. Just shattered brackets, a torn strait jacket and splintered wood. Then Giles notices something else...

A STAGGERED TRAIL OF BLOOD

leading to a closed door to the right of the mantelpiece. Crossing to it, he turns the knob and opens the door slowly, his stake poised and read...

INT. BOARDING HOUSE PANTRY - CONTINUOUS (NIGHT)

TIGHT ON: Giles' hand, as it fishes along the wall for a light switch. Finding one, he flicks it on.

BLOOD, EVERYWHERE - Streaked and splattered all over the wall, the door. We don't see what's in that room but Giles does. He quickly slams the door shut...

INT. BOARDING HOUSE ANTEROOM - CONTINUOUS

...pulls out a handkerchief and gags. He takes one more anxious look around, then bolts from the house.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Buffy walks along the empty street, lost in thought as she peruses her new book, completely unaware of

THE TWO FIGURES in her path. Startled, Buffy stops and looks up to see...

TWO DRUNK CONSTRUCTION WORKER TYPES loitering on a corner, eyeing her. As she passes them, one calls out:

DRUNK GUY

Hey, sweet girl... how much for a  
lapdance for me and my buddy?

She freezes. Slowly she turns and starts toward them. Then stops. What's she

gonna do about it? Frustrated, she keeps walking, turning down a back alley.

BUFFY  
(self-mocking)  
"Walk me home? Don't be silly,  
Angel. I can take care of myself."

Then, she hears something: HUMMING. LOW, GUTTURAL, TUNELESS.

She looks around. Nothing. Unnerved, she looks behind her.

BUFFY  
Hummers - big turnoff. I like guys  
who remember the lyrics.

No response. She turns back around and GASPS, finding herself smack up against...

KRALIK  
Wish I could. But my mind's not  
what it used to be.

She tries to pull away, but he grabs her sleeve. Instinctively she hits him in the face. Twice. He doesn't feel it at all. Her terror builds as she WHIMPERS:

BUFFY  
Let me go.

KRALIK  
Didn't say please.

He pulls her closer, fangs bared. Then her sleeve slips off her arm. She uses the opportunity to scramble out of her coat, then retreats a few steps, only to find

BLAIR

blocking the way. She takes off in the opposite direction, running for her life.

BUFFY  
Help! Somebody help me!

Kralik gestures with his head and Blair gives chase.

Buffy looks around, desperately, then spots a high chain-link fence and makes for it.

BUFFY  
Help me please!

She LUNGES for the fence, but, with her leaping ability on the fritz, she can't... quite... reach the... top.

Frantic, she suddenly notices a small hole in the chain link a few yards in front of her. She looks back to find Blair is almost upon her. Sprinting as fast as she can to the opening, she clumsily pushes herself through. The jagged cut links in the fence scratch her face, her arms.

Blair grabs her leg. She SCREAMS, then manages to pull away, staggering backwards. Blair's hand is reaching for her. Before she can get her bearing, she's



bathed in an INCREASINGLY BRIGHT LIGHT. She turns and squints into its source.

HEADLIGHTS from an oncoming car. Buffy tries to wave it down.

BUFFY  
Stop! Please! I need-

The car never slows, almost mowing her down.

BUFFY  
(pleading)  
Stop!!!

She looks back to the fence to see Blair scaling it. She SCREAMS and turns to run, failing to notice the LIGHTS from another oncoming car, heading straight for her.

Too late to jump out of the way, Buffy braces to be hit. At the last instant, the care swerves to her right and screeches to a halt. The passenger door swings open and Buffy sees...

GILES  
Hurry!

She gets in and Giles puts pedal to metal even before she has the door closed, which is pertinent since Blair is at her door pulling on it. Finally Buffy manages to kick him off. He hits the road and rolls for a few feet.

LOW ANGLE - As the headlights get smaller in the distance, and Blair pulls himself up, we see

IN THE FOREGROUND - Kralik's pale green legs standing in the middle of the street.

INT. GILES' CAR - MEANWHILE (NIGHT)

Buffy shivers uncontrollably, her breathing sharp and erratic.

BUFFY  
I... couldn't... couldn't fight  
them... I was...

GILES  
Don't speak.

Shame washing over him, Giles swallows hard, then turns his eyes back to the road. Buffy is welling up with tears.

BUFFY  
I was helpless...

INT. LIBARAY - NIGHT

Buffy is wrapped in a blanket to stave off shock. She speaks to Giles quietly:

BUFFY  
I hit him... it felt like my arm  
was broken, it hurt so much...  
Giles, I can't be... just a person,  
I can't be helpless like that...

We have to find out what's  
happening to me.

He places the box in front of her, opens it to reveal the hypo and a vial of pale yellow liquid.

GILES

It's an organic compound of muscle  
relaxants, adrenal suppressors...  
The effect is temporary. You'll be  
yourself again in a few days.

With a quivering hand, she takes it from him and stares at it with growing revulsion.  
Giles deposits something on the table in front of her. The blue crystal.

GILES

A mesmerizing crystal. Stare at it  
for more than a few seconds and  
it puts one in a deep trance. While  
you were... under, I-

BUFFY

(in a stunned haze)  
You...

Giles swallows hard.

GILES

It's a test, Buffy. The Tonto di  
Cruciamantum. It's given to slayers  
when they reach - if they reach  
their eighteenth birthday.

He pauses for a reaction, but Buffy just stares at the hypo.

GILES

The Slayer is disabled then  
entrapped with a vampire foe  
whom she's to defeat in order to pass.  
(pacing)

The vampire you were to face  
has escaped. His name is Zackary  
Kralik. As a human, he'd murdered,  
tortured, more than a dozen young  
women before being committed to a  
sanitarium for the criminally insane  
when a vamp-

He ducks just in time as the leather box comes flying at his head, the hypo and vial  
SHATTERING against a bookcase.

Giles looks over at Buffy, on her feet, still shaking, though now more with rage than  
shock.

BUFFY

You bastard! All this time you saw  
what it was doing to me. All this  
time and you didn't say a word!

GILES  
I wanted to...

BUFFY  
Liar!

GILES  
In matters of tradition and protocol,  
I have to answer to the Council.

Buffy buries her face in her hands.

GILES  
My role in this was specific... I was  
to administer the injections, then  
direct you to the old boarding house  
on Prescott Lane-

BUFFY  
I can't hear this, I can't...

GILES  
Buffy, please -

BUFFY  
Who are you? How could you do this  
to me?

GILES  
(reaches for her arm)  
I'm deeply sorry, Buffy, you have to  
understand-

BUFFY  
If you touch me I'll kill you.

GILES  
You have to listen to me. Because I  
have told you this, the test is  
invalidated. You'll be safe, I promise.  
Whatever I have to do, to deal with  
Kralik and to win back your trust -

BUFFY  
You stuck a needle in me. You  
poisoned me.

CORDELIA  
What's going on?

She has entered, surveys the scene. Two portraits of misery.

CORDELIA  
Oh god. Is the world ending? I have  
to research a paper on Bosnia for  
tomorrow but if the world's ending  
I'm not gonna bother.

Buffy starts out of the library.

GILES  
Buffy you can't walk home alone -  
It isn't safe!

He moves toward her - she turns.

BUFFY  
I don't know you.

CORDELIA  
Did something take her memory?  
(to Buffy)  
He's Giles.  
(pronouncing it)  
Ji-ylls. He hangs out here a lot.

BUFFY  
Cordelia... could you please drive  
me home?

Her voice is small, plaintive. Cordelia kindly responds:

CORDELIA  
Of course.

Buffy starts out. Cordy follows, saying to Giles:

CORDELIA  
But if the world doesn't end, I'm  
gonna need a note.

INT. BUFFY'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Joyce is at the table, bills laid out, doing household finances when she hears- or senses-something. If we hear it at all, it sounds like faint crying. She crosses to the front door...

EXT. BUFFY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

...and opens it. A look of grave concern crosses her face when she sees someone balled up in a fetal position at the foot of the porch. She immediately recognizes the coat.

JOYCE  
(alarmed)  
Buffy...?

She goes to Buffy and touches her arm. The figure rolls over.

KRALIK  
Mother.

BLACK OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

# Act Four

INT. BUFFY'S KITCHEN/DINING ROOM/PORCH - NIGHT

Buffy enters from the back door, still shaken and upset. She warily eyes the flower arrangement on the table, then grabs the bunch and tosses it in the garbage under the sink.

That's when she notices:

BUFFY'S P.O.V. - The front door, AJAR.

BUFFY  
(concerned)  
Mom?

As she looks closer, light from the porch spills in the open doorway illuminating a small square object. Buffy crosses to it and picks it up.

CLOSE ON: a Polaroid photo of a terror-stricken Joyce - with Kralik, his hand resting menacingly on her throat.

BUFFY blanches, then turns the picture over. Written in silver marker, across the black backing: "COME."

INT. BUFFY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Buffy, dressed for battle, throws her weapon's bag on the bed and proceed to stock it: stakes, crosses, crossbow... She stuffs a jar of holy water in her coat pocket, a cross in her back pocket.

Done, she grabs the handle and lifts the bag off the bed... WITH UNEXPECTED DIFFICULTY. She puts it down again, REACTS to its heft, coupled with her diminished strength. She throws the bag's strap over her shoulder, and with great effort, lugs the heavy thing out.

FLASH CUT TO:

INT. BOARDING HOUSE CELLAR - NIGHT

In the DIMMEST POSSIBLE LIGHT, we can just make out the figure of Joyce, her mouth gagged, bound to a chair in the middle of the dank, empty room, by thick ropes.

KRALIK (O.S.)  
Mother... May I call you mother?

Joyce's frightened eyes squint in the blackness, then...

FLASH! Joyce is startled, blinded by the popping flashbulb of a polaroid camera, followed by the WHIR of a developing picture being spat out.

KRALIK (O.S.)  
My mother was a person with no  
self-respect of her own, so she  
tried to take mine, ten years old  
and she had the scissors, you wouldn't

believe what she took with those...

FLASH! Joyce cringes from the assault on her dilated pupils.

KRALIK (O.S.)

She's dead to me now. Mostly 'cause  
I killed and ate her. But also because  
time's been a healing salve. I'm  
shunned by my kind... I'm aware  
of that.

FLASH! And in it, we focus on:

ANGLE: A pitcher of water and a glass, which sit on a stool. Kralik's pills beside them.

KRALIK (O.S.)

But it's okay. I can be sealed inside  
a box for six years, give or take, and  
not care. Because I know I won't be  
alone much longer. I'll have your  
daughter. I won't kill her... I'll make  
her like me. Different. She'll go to  
sleep and when she wakes up... your  
face will be the first thing she eats.  
(off Joyce's terrified look)  
I have a problem with mothers. I'm  
aware of that.

Joyce, terrified beyond words, violently and vainly struggles.

FLASH CUT TO:

INT. BOARDING HOUSE FRONT HALL - NIGHT

Buffy enters, moving slowly into the dark space. And it is **dark** - there may be a couple of lamps on, but they only serve to throw huge shadows across the walls. Great portions of the space drop completely off into black.

Kneeling down, Buffy sticks a stake in the doorway, letting the door close on it, keeping the door just slightly ajar. She stands and pulls a loaded crossbow from her shoulder bag. Not knowing where to go, and with no real sense of the layout of the place, she heads to the left, into the parlor.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE PARLOR - CONTINUOUS (NIGHT)

She moves through this dark space slowly as well, trying not to shake. There is a doorway at the other end and she approaches it. Summoning her courage, she opens it.

It opens onto a brick wall.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE FRONT HALL - NIGHT

We see the stake as Blair pulls it out, lets the door swing shut.

INT. GILES' OFFICE - NIGHT

Giles is on the phone, getting nothing but ringing, when Travers walks in. Giles

hangs up.

GILES  
I've been trying to reach you.

TRAVERS  
I was on watch, by the boarding house.

GILES  
Then you know what's happened.

TRAVERS  
Yes.

GILES  
He's killed Hobson. And made Blair  
his own - your perfectly controlled  
test has spun rather impressively out  
of control, don't you think?

TRAVERS  
It changes nothing.

GILES  
Then allow me. I've told Buffy  
everything.

TRAVERS  
That is in direct opposition to the  
council's orders.

GILES  
Yes - interestingly enough, I don't  
give a rat's ass about the council's  
orders. There will be no test.

TRAVERS  
The test has already begun.

Giles stares at him.

TRAVERS  
Your slayer entered the field of play  
about ten minutes ago.

GILES  
Why...?

TRAVERS  
I don't know - I returned there just  
as she entered.

Giles starts for the door - Travers steps in his way.

TRAVERS  
Giles, we have no business interfering -

Giles grabs him and throws him out of his way. Travers hits the cabinet by the wall,

stumbling not to fall.

GILES  
This isn't business.

Giles leaves.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE PARLOR - NIGHT

Buffy drops her cumbersome bag. She inches forward, crossbow at the ready. She comes back out into:

INT. BOARDING HOUSE FRONT HALL - CONTINUOUS (NIGHT)

She goes to the door - sees it's shut and unopenable.

Blair steps out behind her.

She spins, fires, but it goes wild, and he grabs the crossbow, wrenches it from her grasp. He grabs her throat - she wriggles free and ducks into the

INT. BOARDING HOUSE PARLOR - CONTINUOUS (NIGHT)

and makes for her bag behind the sofa - Blair comes in and climbs on the sofa, grabbing at her over the back of it, she scuttles away, not time to get a weapon, Blair comes around the sofa and Buffy backs up next to a bookcase-

Blair comes and she pulls the bookcase down on him, lots of extremely heavy things fall on him, just his arm and head exposed. Dazed, he grabs Buffy's ankle - she grabs a table lamp and brings it down on his head - again - again -

His hand goes limp. Buffy is breathing hard, definitely more freaked than usual. A moment and she goes for her bag, taking the whole thing with her.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE FRONT HALL - CONTINUOUS (NIGHT)

Buffy moves slowly out, looking about her. Looks toward the stairs, then in front of her, toward the anteroom. Moves that way, when a whisper seems to come from all around:

KRALIK (O.S.)  
Hide and seek!

Buffy spins -- where did it come from? A moment more and she moves into the

INT. BOARDING HOUSE ANTEROOM - CONTINUOUS (NIGHT)

She comes near the crate. It is closed, just as it was when Giles found it. She puzzles at it a second, approaching - and Kralik leaps out of it like a jack in the box, grabbing the girl.

She squirms. He smiles.

KRALIK  
Why did you come to the dark  
of the wood...



He takes the bag with one hand, looks in it.

KRALIK  
... to bring all these sweets to  
grandmother's house.

He tosses the bag aside, grabs her with his other hand. Makes with the teeth.

Buffy pulls a cross from her back pocket and holds it up to him. He lets go, moving back a bit and hissing.

Cross still held out, Buffy inches toward her bag. Kralik suddenly grabs her hand, cross in it. He pulls open his jumpsuit and shoves her hand in, holding the cross against his chest. He smiles as smoke begins to stream out of the jumpsuit. Moves her hand down just a bit to his stomach -

KRALIK  
A little lower... there.

-- like he's got an itch. He beams with nearly sexual gratification.

Buffy jerks her hand away, frightened and repulsed. She bolts away from him, down the hall into:

INT. BOARDING HOUSE KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS (NIGHT)

-- where she slams the door behind her. Gets her bearings-nothing useful here-and moves across to exit out the other side, which puts her in:

INT. BOARDING HOUSE FRONT HALL - CONTINUOUS

at the opposite end from the door, under the stairs.

She looks up them - this must be where her mother is. She moves slowly toward the foot of the staircase, expecting Kralik to seep in from the anteroom and head her off.

He doesn't. There is only silence.

Buffy reaches the stairs and moves quickly up them.

Kralik's hand bursts through the rails and grabs her ankle.

She's halfway up and he's on the hall floor, having followed her through the kitchen. One yank and her legs come out from under her, she falls, her head hitting a step HARD, a WHITE FLASH of pain as she momentarily blacks out -

-- as she comes to in a second, he's still grabbing at her - she fumbles for a splintered rail, jabs it at his face. He snarls and withdraws enough for her to get up.

Blood is coming down her face where she hit her head - a small stream, but more than the Slayer is used to shedding. Hand to her head she limps up the stairs as Kralik comes around to the foot. She enters the

INT. BOARDING HOUSE UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS (NIGHT)

and quickly dashes into the

INT. BOARDING HOUSE BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS (NIGHT)

and slams the door shut behind her, bolting it.

It's pitch black in here. Buffy stumbles, looking for a light.

A huge SLAM and the door shakes, Kralik outside trying to break through. Again. Buffy still stumbles about - till her hand finds a dangling light cord. She pulls it.

The room is lit by a bare bulb. Every square inch of wall space is covered with polaroids of Joyce. Every inch. Buffy wigs at first - then looks more closely:

ANGLE: A PHOTO OF JOYCE

Behind Joyce is clearly the boiler. She's in the basement.

Kralik's fist BURSTS through the door, starts reaching for the bolt. Buffy looks - there's another door and she goes out it, coming out again into the

INT. BOARDING HOUSE UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS (NIGHT)

To one side is the laundry chute. The other leads back downstairs - she heads that way but Kralik steps in the way, grabs her. Not smiling.

KRALIK

If you stray from the path you  
will lose your way.

He bears down on her neck - she fights wildly but she's just a girl, pinned and wriggling as he gets his mouth closer to her, he whispers urgently -

KRALIK

I won't take it all, I won't take it all...

Buffy is helpless, still making one last effort to push him away - and he rears back, roaring. Clutching his head.

Buffy tries to take the moment to get by him, but he SLAMS her against the wall. She's dazed as he fumbles in his pocket, pulls out his bottle of pills. With shaking hands, he tries to open it.

Buffy darts forward and grabs the bottle, racing AWAY from Kralik, down the hall and she dives into the laundry chute, two feet in front of him reaching for her:

INT. LAUNDRY CHUTE - CONTINUOUS (NIGHT)

Buffy shoots down it, head first, as Kralik - obviously too big to fit - grabs futilely for her. He is screaming.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE CELLAR - CONTINUOUS (NIGHT)

Buffy comes out of the chute and hits the ground hard. She almost can't get up. Then she hears:

JOYCE

Buffy?

She looks up to see Joyce tied to the chair. She pulls herself up, clothes torn, head

bloodied, shaking. But not down.

JOYCE  
Buffy, we have to get-

Buffy holds her fingers to her lips. Looks around for a weapon, an idea.

ANGLE: THE DOOR

Is just BLOWN off its hinges by the force of Kralik's blow. He comes down the stairs, screaming:

KRALIK  
Where are they?! **Where are they?!?**

He's dazed with pain, but twice as lethal. He moves into the cellar - sees Joyce still tied up -

Buffy tries to slip by him upstairs but he grabs her, throws her against the wall. He pulls the pills from her fingers and rips off the top, pouring them into his mouth. Grabs the water glass we saw earlier and washes them down.

The pain subsides almost instantly. He turns to Buffy, who has sunk down into the corner.

KRALIK  
You almost got away little girl.  
I almost lay down and -

He stops, sudden pain wrenching his gut. He is still holding the glass and the bottle of pills - he looks at Buffy.

KRALIK  
What did you... My pills...

Very calmly, Buffy shakes her head. She holds up a small, and now empty, container. Of holy water.

Kralik's eyes go wide.

As does his mouth, which smokes, sizzles, and is eaten away from the inside.

As Kralik's whole body begins to tremble and crack, Buffy stands.

BUFFY  
If I had the Slayer's power... I'd  
be punning right about now.

He explodes.

Buffy stares her deadpan warrior stare at the space he used to occupy. A moment, and she moves to Joyce, starts untying her.

JOYCE  
Buffy, thank God you're okay.  
That man...

BUFFY

I can't get these. They're too tight.

JOYCE  
Well, can't you just-

BUFFY  
Not right now. Maybe there's some  
clippers-

She moves away - and Blair is right behind her, looking pissed.

JOYCE  
Buffy!

As Buffy spins, Blair moves - and is tackled from the side by Giles.

The two of them go crashing into a tool shelf - Blair turns on Giles, punching him with jaw-snapping force.

Buffy looks around for a weapon - and a stake pops out of Blair's back, pushed through the front by Giles. Blair dusts, leaving Giles and Buffy staring at one another.

TRAVERS (V.O.)  
Congratulations. You pass.

INT. LIBRARY - NIGHT

Buffy sits at the table, holding a wet cloth to her head. Travers stands before her, Giles stands nearby. Nobody looks wildly happy.

TRAVERS  
You exhibited extraordinary courage  
and clearheadedness in battle. The  
council is very pleased.

BUFFY  
Do I get a gold star?

TRAVERS  
I understand that you're upset -

BUFFY  
You understand nothing. You set that  
monster loose and he came after my  
**mother**.

TRAVERS  
You think the test was unfair?

BUFFY  
I think you better get out of town  
before I get my strength back.

TRAVERS  
We're not in the business of 'fair',  
Miss Summers. We're fighting a war.

GILES  
You're **waging** a war. She's fighting  
it. There is a difference.

TRAVERS  
Mr. Giles, if you don't mind-

GILES  
The test is done. We're finished.

TRAVERS  
Not quite. She passed. You didn't.

Neither Giles nor Buffy knows what to say.

TRAVERS  
The Slayer isn't the only one who must  
perform in this situation. I have  
recommended to the council, and they  
have agreed, that you be relieved of  
your duties as watcher effective  
immediately. You're fired.

GILES  
On what grounds?

TRAVERS  
Your affection for your charge has  
rendered you incapable of clear and  
impartial judgment. You have a father's  
love for the child and that is useless  
to the cause.

A moment, as Buffy registers the truth in this. Giles does not even look at her.

TRAVERS  
It would be best for you not to have  
further contact with the Slayer-

GILES  
I'm not going anywhere.

TRAVERS  
No, well, I didn't expect you to adhere  
to that. However, if you interfere with  
the new watcher or try to countermand  
his authority in any way you will be dealt  
with. Are we clear.

GILES  
We're very clear.

TRAVERS  
(to Buffy)  
Congratulations again.

BUFFY  
Bite me.

TRIVERS  
(turning to go)  
Yes. Well. Colorful girl.

He throws a look at Giles and walks out. Neither Giles nor Buffy says anything for a while. She puts the rag to her head and winces-

BUFFY  
Ow!

--with pain. Giles moves to her, instinctively.

GILES  
Let me see...

She looks up at him. A moment of silence, and she slowly hands him the rag. He dips it in water and squats down, inspecting the wound, dabbing it with the rag.

She says nothing. Lets him tend to her.

INT. BUFFY'S KITCHEN - DAY

Buffy, Willow, Oz, Xander and Joyce mill about. They have all been making lunch together, talking, making with the lemonade.

WILLOW  
I just can't believe Giles was fired!  
How could Giles get fired?

OZ  
So how did you manage to kill Kralik?

JOYCE  
Oh, she was very clever.  
(off Buffy's look)  
You go ahead and tell it, dear. You tell it better.

WILLOW  
But when you say fired, you mean fired?

XANDER  
You're not cruising past that concept  
anytime soon, are you?

WILLOW  
It's just-he's been fired! He's  
unemployed! He's between jobs!

BUFFY  
Giles isn't going anywhere, Will.  
He's still librarian.

WILLOW  
Okay, but I'm writing an angry letter.

BUFFY  
Nothing's really gonna change. The  
important thing is, I kept up my

special birthday tradition of gut-  
wrenching misery and horror.

OZ

Bright side to everything.

Buffy grabs the peanut butter, tries to open the jar as she continues:

BUFFY

Things won't ever be exactly the same,  
but once I... get back to... full...

She can't do it. Xander smiles at her condescendingly.

XANDER

Give you a hand with that, little lady?

Playful daggers in her eyes, she hands him the jar.

BUFFY

You're loving this far too much.

He takes the jar-

XANDER

Admit it. Sometimes you just need  
a big strong...

-- and., smiling, completely fails to open it. He struggles, manfully, the smile fixed  
all the while to his face.

BLACK OUT.

XANDER (V.O.)

Uh, Will? You wanna give me a hand?

THE END