

DRABBLEPHABET



HOLLY DENISE



A IS FOR ACTUALLY

THERE WERE SO MANY OF THEM THESE DAYS. THAT WAS HOW THE stories spread. The true and the not-so-true. No one knew what to believe anymore.

That was the price of being a legend.

The stories had become even more outlandish once Buffy had withdrawn from daily contact with the academy. It had been a hard decision, but necessary, and ultimately symptomatic of success. That she had a staff and people to do things for her left her free to focus on what was really important. Like the next apocalypse. Or making sure Spike didn't pick where they got dinner too many nights in a row if she didn't want heartburn.

That was where she was tonight. In a slayer town, because there were now slayer towns all over the place, waiting in line for their takeout order. And listening to a bunch of young slayers who were talking about her.

"I heard she's married to a vamp, if you can believe it," one of the girls was saying.

"Oh, gross," another replied.

"He has a soul. Apparently, that makes a difference."

"I heard he's her second," another girl chimed in. "The first one lost his soul because the sex was so good."

A general murmur ran through the group. "That can't be right," the first girl said. "Everyone knows vampires can't have sex. They're dead, you know. *All over*."

Buffy bit the inside of her cheek, remembering last night. Remembering the parts of Spike that were never ever dead, even when she sometimes wished they were.

And then she figured, what the hell? She had time.

"Actually, ladies..."

B IS FOR BITTEN

HE'D TOLD HER THAT SHE WOULD BEG FOR IT. THAT THE SECOND SHE caved, she'd become as addicted to it as he was. Not for the same reasons, of course, but that hardly mattered. And as it was with all addictions, all it took was once.

She'd thought he was full of himself. And she hadn't been wrong.

But he hadn't been either.

It was a game now. One of her favorites. One of his, too, if she knew him. And oh, how she knew him. Knew every line of his body, every curve of muscle, every season that crossed his face. Especially when they were like this. The wall at her back, her legs around his waist, his hands at her hips as he drove into her at a rhythm. Pushing and whispering, filling her head with all sorts of filthy words as he filled the rest of her with his cock. Again and again, waiting for her to say it. Waiting for her to beg.

Someday, she would win. Someday, she wouldn't give him what he wanted.

But someday was not today.

"Do it," Buffy rasped into his ear before tugging at the lobe with her teeth. He tightened his grip on her, and she tightened her grip on him, and he moaned and she laughed and he laughed back at her. A low, husky

sound that could get her there on its own in the right circumstances. He had a great laugh. "Bite me."

She watched his face change—it shouldn't excite her, but she was well through her list of *shouldn'ts* where he was concerned by now—and held her breath as he lowered his head. He dragged his fangs along the column of her throat, making her heart jump and the rest of her clench with anticipation.

"Scream for me, love," Spike murmured against her skin.

Then he was inside her there, too.

And she did.

C IS FOR CATCH

SOMEONE ASKED HIM ONCE HOW LONG IT HAD TAKEN, FALLING INTO sync with her. The way they moved together—a perfectly choreographed dance, always aware of each other even when separated by the length of a room or more. How he didn't need to warn her before throwing a lethal weapon at her head. How she could casually launch a stake at him and trust that he'd catch it with something other than his chest.

Truth was, Spike didn't know when it had happened—if it had been one moment or a series of moments. The result of studying the way she moved, of fighting alongside her for however many years, of his trust in her and the trust she repaid tenfold. If he'd adapted to her style or she'd adapted to his, or if they had created something that was theirs, unspoken as it was unbreakable.

It was just instinct, when to turn. When to shoot out a hand to seize the scythe she'd tossed his way. When to duck and when to swing, and when exactly to throw it right back to her. As far as he was concerned, there had been no switch to flip. All he'd had to do was wait to meet her.

And thank his lucky stars tonight and every night that he had.

"Well," she said, leaning against the scythe she'd planted in the ground, admiring the demon corpses strewn around them. "That was quite a workout."

“Don’t tell me you’re tired, pet.”

Buffy narrowed her eyes, heaving deep breaths, blowing wayward strands of blonde out of her face. That was the mark of a good fight, that was—one that actually had her hair falling out of the bun she’d packed it in before they’d left their flat. “Tired?” she echoed. “Who’s tired?”

“Not you.”

“Not by a mile.”

He stopped when he was a breath away. “Then you’d be up for a different kind of...workout?”

She gave him one of those all over looks and fought back a grin. “I could be persuaded,” she said, then yanked the scythe out of the earth and thrust it hard against his chest. “But you gotta catch me first.”

And she was off at a run, laughing wildly and disappearing into the evening’s shadows.

The miracle of it was he’d caught her a long time ago. She just let him relive the victory on a nightly basis. Which was just fine with him.

He loved the chase.

D IS FOR DUST

DUST.

For a year, that was how she'd thought of him. All that bullshit about remembering the good times, not fixating about how it was at the end—she'd tried that. She really had. And maybe it worked with other people. People who had fewer regrets, lived with fewer unanswered *what-ifs*; people who hadn't been told, "No, you don't, but thanks for saying it," after they'd finally owned up to the love that had been burning inside for months.

Or longer, if *people* were being honest with, err, themselves.

But that wasn't the point. The point was Buffy had spent a year—an actual year, he wasn't the only one who could count the days—reliving that terrible moment when she'd lost him before she'd had the chance to have him.

And all this time, he'd been living it up in LA.

God, she was *so* going to kick his ass for that. And the *no, you don't, but thanks for saying it* nonsense. And probably a bunch of other stuff she hadn't even thought of yet. Yeah, Spike had quite the ass-kicking coming to him.

Right after she saved it, that was, because that idiot vampire

was *not* going to take the easy way out a second time. He owed her an after.

The forever kind.

E IS FOR EFFULGENT

HE'D ONCE THOUGHT DRU WAS THE DEFINITION OF unpredictability. That perhaps you had to be a bit mad to really keep a man on his toes.

Then he'd met *her*. And god help him, no one on this earth or any other held a candle to Buffy Summers.

There were times now that Spike wondered if *that* had been what Dru had meant in the alley where she'd rescued him from himself. Looking into his eyes and seeing, as she often did, all the things that were to come. Why she'd plucked the word *effulgent* out of his head, knowing that light was what drew him in. At the time, he'd thought she'd been talking about herself. The places she could take him, the things she could show him, and he'd been able to convince himself she was right for a good stretch—he hadn't wanted to be wrong.

Thing was, Dru was a lot of things. But she wasn't effulgent.

Buffy standing there in the alley, surrounded by celebrating slayers, holding a blood-stained scythe and glaring at him as only she could, was the epitome of effulgent. Christ, he'd never seen anything so beautiful in his life.

"What are you doin' here?" Spike sputtered between deep, unneeded breaths, blinking rain out of his eyes.

"Thought it'd be obvious," she said dryly. "Saving your ass."

"How—"

"Does it matter?"

He swallowed. Supposed it didn't.

"So," she said, eyeing him up and down. "You're alive."

"Well, I don't—"

"Spike. You're alive. And you have been for...how long?"

He didn't answer. He didn't need to. She already knew.

"I could kill you, you know." Her eyes took a shine that had nothing to do with the rain, her lower lip—swollen and bloodied from battle—starting to tremble. "I could absolutely kill you for doing that to me."

Fuck him. "Buffy—"

"No. You don't get to talk." She prowled forward, keeping her gaze on him, and he was helpless to do anything but stare at her. This vision that had ridden in like a thunderclap and done the thing Buffy did best—save the bloody day. "Here's how it's going to work. I'm going to tell you that I love you and you're going to say, 'I love you, too.' If I hear the words, 'No, you don't,' I start swinging my scythe."

Spike inhaled a breath that made his lungs wheeze, impossible as it was.

"And then you're gonna spend the next however-long making me forget that you've been back for a year without telling me."

God, this couldn't be happening. He'd dusted. The battle was still going on and this was the afterlife, or a cruel version of it. Any second now, the vision of Buffy would fade, and his reality would settle.

But she didn't fade. Instead, she invaded his space, filled his nostrils with her warm, familiar scent, and pressed her bloodied lips to his. And the rest of him blistered with awful, impossible hope, for no heaven or hell could hope to capture just how she felt. Make it this warm. This real.

"I love you," she whispered. "Please believe me this time."

Somehow, in a crowded alley, battle-worn and exhausted, standing on pavement that was littered with the debris of dead demons, Spike experienced the most effulgent moment of his life.

F IS FOR FRENEMY

SHE WASN'T STUPID. HE'D OBVIOUSLY COME HERE TO KILL HER. HOW he hoped to achieve that, well, Buffy didn't know and was certain she didn't want to ask. Just another thing for her to worry about in the endless line of things to worry about, and it wasn't like he'd get very far if he tried. Besides, after receiving news like the news she'd received, it was hard to get too worked up about what scheme Spike had convinced himself would work this time.

And she had to admit it didn't totally suck not being alone with this. Even if *not alone* meant Spike.

Which was how she supposed she found herself saying, "There's something wrong with Mom."

She saw Spike tense out of her periphery, but she didn't look at him, rather kept her gaze focused on the stretch of grass just beyond the deck.

"She's been feeling...off the last couple of weeks. Telling us not to worry. That it's nothing." She swallowed, her eyes burning again. Crying in front of her mortal enemy was not on her bucket list, but hell, she couldn't summon enough energy to care. And she was pretty sure he wasn't her enemy at the moment, judging by that awkward back-pat

thing. What did she have to lose? "But it's not nothing. Or it might not be nothing. She's staying at the hospital tonight so she can get a test."

Spike didn't respond. Just let the words hang there in the air, awful and true and terrifying. Then, "She's a tough lady, your mum. Had to be, raisin' you."

Buffy pressed her lips together. "Yeah. I guess."

There was a beat, and another, then his hand was on her back again, tapping her so lightly it might have been in her imagination, except she knew it wasn't.

"Bloody awful, isn't it?" he asked a second later. "Knowin' something's wrong and there bein' bugger all you can do but wait."

She frowned. That almost sounded like experience talking. But then, of course, he did have experience in this sort of thing, didn't he? The entire reason he'd come to Sunnydale in the first place was because Drusilla had been whatever passed for sick in the world of vampires. Granted, if she thought about that too much, she'd just get annoyed with him and strangely, Buffy didn't want to be annoyed with Spike right now. She just wanted to be.

So she didn't say anything, and he didn't either. Just let her be alone without being alone.

Which was kinda nice...even if it was Spike.

G IS FOR GLARE

IT WAS GETTING HARDER TO REMEMBER HE WASN'T SUPPOSED TO touch her when they were in public. Particularly when she was throwing him looks.

Even if the look was a glare.

A glare that lingered a bit too long.

Well, if he couldn't touch her, he could smirk. So he did. It would just rile her up further, anyhow, and that was the way he loved Buffy most. Fiery. Brassed. Ready to give him a good what for. All that passion she had to once channeled into popping him one having turned into something so bloody good even he had trouble believing it at times.

It had been like this since Glory. Or after Glory, he should say. Victory of that magnitude did something to a person, and in Buffy's case, that *something* had been flipping a switch. Letting him see her home as the sun chased them off the streets. Telling him he could stay until dusk, closing the blinds and making up the couch. Disappearing upstairs for what he'd assumed would be a long sleep, only to return fifteen minutes later, climb onto his lap, unzip his jeans, and whisper that it was a one-time thing and not to read too much into it.

That had been more than seven months ago. Seven months during which Buffy had eventually dropped the pretense that she was in it only

for the shagging. Not to say she didn't love the shagging—he'd gotten her drunk enough one night to get her to confess that she'd been a goner the first time she'd taken his cock for a ride—but there were other things too. Arguments that were more an excuse to flirt openly. The invitation to movie night with her and her mates. The long patrols that usually ended up at his crypt with her thighs cradling his face and his name on her lips.

The only thing that was keeping them from being in the open was Buffy.

So, until he could touch her freely, Spike had to get creative.

And it wasn't exactly his fault that Harris had opened the bloody door for him. The topic of conversation? Messiest foods to eat while researching, all because the designated doughnut boy had taken a bite of a jelly that had squirted out the wrong end.

"How many times have I told you not to eat around the books?" Giles had demanded, trying to salvage the mess.

"You let Willow and Buffy eat and research!" Xander had protested. "And you're quite the jelly fiend yourself, mister. The messiest food you can eat!"

At which point, Tara had volunteered that the messiest food was probably barbeque, and everyone had forgotten what it was they were supposed to be researching to start throwing in suitable contenders. Everyone, it was, except Buffy, who had only expressed mild interest in the topic until Spike decided he couldn't keep quiet any longer. Touching her with his hands was out of the question, fine. He could do it with words instead.

"Love a good, ripe peach, myself. Best thing I've ever tasted," he'd said, holding her gaze, watching as color flooded her cheeks. As she started to wiggle and squirm, sending delicious wafts of arousal his way. "Can't eat without makin' a mess, though. The right circumstances, juice gets everywhere. On my fingers, chin, even in my hair if I'm not careful. Hard to lap it all up but I'm game for the challenge."

Buffy had slammed closed the book she'd been pretending to read and hastily changed the subject. Ever since, she'd been sitting at the table, letting him know just how much she would punish him when they were alone again with nothing but her eyes.

Fuck, he was a lucky bloke.

He might even stop on his way home for a peach. Show her that wasn't all talk.

"All right, I can't take it anymore," Anya abruptly announced, forcing him to break out of his thoughts and away from Buffy's death glare. "There's way too much sexual tension in here and none of it is directed at me. Can we please stop pretending we don't know that Buffy and Spike are having sex?"

"Ahn!" Xander squeaked. "We talked—"

"You all know?" Buffy demanded, flushing bright red. "You know?"

A series of furtive glances were exchanged. Then Willow cleared her throat. "You're not exactly discreet."

"Or quiet," Anya agreed.

"Dawn's made some noise complaints," Tara said with a sorry-to-break-it-to-you wince. "Asked if we'd cast a soundproof charm on her room. Which we did."

"It was only polite," Willow said, nodding.

"Oh god." Buffy dropped her head into her hands. "*Dawn* knows?"

Tara nodded as well, this time with a smile. "If it helps, she's pretty happy about it. We've all been lectured."

"Multiple times," Xander said.

"I daresay we have her speech memorized by now," Rupert agreed, visibly uncomfortable but also, unless Spike was reading him wrong, a bit relieved. "Suffice to say, Buffy, who you choose to... Well, I can't say any of us are thrilled—"

"Except Dawn," Willow said. "Also, umm, I kinda decided I'm okay with it."

"So am I," Tara added brightly. "Whatever makes you happy, Buffy."

Anya sniffed. "I just want to go back to sexual tension being about me. So go and have an orgasm so we can get back to researching diamond-thieving demons who can turn invisible, which I maintain do not exist."

For a long second, Buffy said nothing. Did nothing. Just sat, somewhere between bewildered and horror-struck, as though trying to suss out whether Anyanka was having her on. Silly Slayer ought to know the bird never mucked about when it came to shagging.

“Could do with a peach, if I’m bein’ honest,” Spike said, looping his thumbs through his belt loops. “Slayer...wanna help me find one?”

That earned him another glare. The sort that said *I love you even though I hate you*.

And that was all right with him.

H IS FOR HEART

HE JUST WASN'T GETTING IT.

At first, Buffy had thought it was the typical post-apocalypse shock—the same she somehow never knew to expect no matter how many times she experienced it. And she had to admit, Angel's world had turned upside down in more ways than one, most notably in gaining a heartbeat, though at the cost of everyone who meant anything to him.

Everyone but Buffy. He'd thought she would be his prize at the end, especially after he'd won that heartbeat.

He *badn't* expected her to catch sight of Spike over his shoulder, or to take off and leap into her vampire's arms. And yeah, there might have been some mixed signalage with Buffy alternating between slapping every inch of Spike she could and trying to kiss his lips off, but by the time the first rays of dawn had started to lighten the sky, she'd thought she'd made it pretty clear that Buffy Summers was no longer on the market and not likely to ever be again.

Instead, Angel had muttered something about cookies and disappeared into the night. It seemed becoming human hadn't robbed him of that ability.

Things following the fall of Los Angeles had been a bit of a blur. There was the clean-up, of course, and the political side of being in

charge of a global institution, all of which she'd balanced between long conversations with Spike about anything and everything. Why he'd stayed away. How *dumb* he was for having stayed away. No, she hadn't been dating The Immortal and yes, he was an absolute moron for falling for such an obvious lie, but that was okay because she loved him anyway. He *did* know she loved him, right? Like intense, deep, forever kind of love that, yeah, she might have been slow to realize but she *had* realized it and he just had to accept that his life would have her in it, forever and ever until one or both of them were dead.

Her fear that Spike might not love her anymore had also come up. Specifically, the fear that he'd stayed away because he'd realized, freshly resurrected, that she was not *the one* after all. Spike had been all too happy to dissuade her of this notion with both words and action. So much so that it had become a private joke between them.

"You fell out of love with me, didn't you?"

"For fuck's sake, Slayer, we've been over this a time or two."

"Well, why else did you stay away?"

"Because I thought you loved a dying hero. Get me in the flesh and the story changes."

"And I'm supposed to just take it on faith that you still love me?"

"Is my lady lookin' for a demonstration?"

"I'm just saying, it wouldn't be the worst usage of your time."

And gentle readers, it totally wasn't.

That wasn't to say that life together as an actual couple was wine and roses. There were arguments that became fights, nights where she'd storm out of the house they shared just to make sure she didn't stake him for being such an ass. He never remembered to soak his dishes, which meant they went through more plates than any two people on the planet, as there wasn't enough Ajax in the world to get her to eat off a surface that had once been crusted over with blood. She had a habit of letting foods spoil, which didn't bother her but *did* bother him—"Bloody rancid, Slayer. You can't tell me you don't smell that!". And for reasons unknown to her—"You don't even feel the cold!"—he was a cover hog. But the fights they did have, even the really big ones, usually ended up in broken furniture and a case of shared amnesia over what had them both so angry in the first place.

Something that never failed to cause a fight? Angel. He called every few months now, and always with the same question.

“Done baking?”

At first, Buffy had been understanding. Exasperated, sure, but understanding all the same. Angel had apparently not given up on the rosy picture of them living happily ever after—or had convinced himself it was what he wanted when she suspected, deep down, he knew it wasn’t. There wasn’t much left for him now, with his people gone and the business he’d built for himself destroyed. Being human wasn’t what he thought it would be. He hadn’t even gotten the girl.

It had been the last call, the one where he’d said, “You told me he was *in your heart*, not that you *loved him*. That means you’re not done baking!” that she’d had enough and decided drastic measures were to be taken.

What kind of drastic measures? The kind that had her anywhere near an oven.

“I promise,” she said, handing Spike a cookie with one hand and balancing the camera with the other, “if this doesn’t get him to stop, we’ll change numbers.”

Spike studied the cookie. “Still say it’d send a clearer message if we took a picture of me eating something else.”

“How many times are you going to suggest that?”

“However long it takes to get you to agree.” He grinned a grin she wanted to both smack and kiss right off his stupid pretty face. “We can try it your way first.”

It took a few attempts and some serious slayer ingenuity to get the angle right, but Buffy was nothing if not persistent. The winning shot was the one they took while seated across from each other at the small table in their kitchen nook, a heaping plate of cookies between them, their cheeks full and their eyes dancing.

They sent that one to Angel. The perfect image to show him that Spike being in her heart meant he was also home.

And if he still wasn’t convinced, well, they still had the camera, and Spike had certainly had worse ideas.

I IS FOR INTIMATE

HE WAS MESMERIZED BY HER HEARTBEAT. THE GENTLE *THUMP-THUMP*, *thump-thump*, *thump-thump* against his chest, the subtle harmony it created with her soft whispered breaths. Her body working even as she slept, working, working, working so that when he awoke, the miracle in his arms would still be there.

Humans took that for granted, how tenuous the line between warm and cold truly was. He should know.

Spike drew in a breath of his own, one that tasted of her and him and them together. A hint of sweat and dirt, of blood and tears and even some of the words she'd lobbed at him like weapons. How could he, why had he, had it meant so little, and how he better not do anything like it again. He didn't get to decide who she loved, not when it was someone else and especially not when it was him. Also, wasn't *he* the prat who had once promised he didn't hurt her?

"I was wrong," he'd said.

"But you didn't want to be," she'd replied. "You risked everything to not be that man anymore. And then you do this."

He hadn't had any way to respond. Truth was he'd never meant to hurt Buffy, not then and not now, but he'd learned the hard way that his intentions were the thing the path to hell was paved with. He'd promised

her and he'd broken that promise, bad on its own and damning when he considered that not going to her had been breaking it every day, again and again. Ignorance was no excuse. He was lucky she didn't hate him.

She didn't, she said. She loved him too much to hate him.

But he hadn't known that. Not when he'd agreed to fight in Angel's war. Not even when he'd made the call he'd avoided making for nearly a year now. Spilling his useless soul over what he'd thought had been the ocean that separated them, telling her that he'd find her after, assuming he survived. That he'd be better than the man she'd known before, and the Immortal ought to be ready for a fight because one thing William the Bloody didn't do was give up on the woman he loved. He'd been playing it Angel's way too long now and look where it had gotten him. Time to be his own man again.

Spike didn't even know if Buffy had received that message. He hadn't thought to ask—not when she'd swooped in with her army to show the lot of them what a real hero looked like, or when she'd threatened to knock his head off his body if he dared reject her love again. Not once in what had followed, barking orders at her soldiers, getting the injured to the hospital, making sure Angel was all right. Not even when, at last, she'd turned to Spike, wounded in places only he could see, and asked him to take her home.

"Where's home?" he'd croaked.

"I think you know," she'd said. And he hadn't been thick enough to ask for clarification.

They'd crashed into his flat in a tangle, high on each other and the fierce rush that was survival itself. Buffy crying and Spike crying, too, hating himself for making her cry and loving her for loving him enough to cry. Falling into bed together, her above him, holding onto his shoulders, nails digging into his skin as she swallowed him in her heat over and over again. Hard enough to bruise but somehow not hard enough, as though determined to make him feel just how alive he was. How alive *she* was, too, and everything he'd sacrificed in not returning to her the second he'd had the chance.

After, she'd slumped against him, kissed his mouth with her swollen lips, and asked him to hold her like he had before. To tell her again that he loved her—can't blame a girl for being skittish; after all, he had done a

piss-poor job of showing it this last year—and that he knew she loved him too. And finally, just please, please be there when she awoke. She'd rather be mad as hell with a him who was alive than mourning a him who was dust at the bottom of the Sunnydale crater.

Spike had told her once that holding her had been the best night of his life. He'd been right to say it then, but wrong to think it couldn't get any better. Or more intimate. That he couldn't get any closer to Buffy than he had that night.

He'd been an idiot then. He was an idiot still. An idiot who had managed to make the wrong call over and over. And yet, Buffy had let him inside every part of herself. No hesitation, no second-guesses, just that mad, burning love she did so well.

Maybe this shouldn't be the new best night of his life, given all he'd lost, but it was anyway.

And the next one would be even better.

J IS FOR JUBILANT

THERE WAS A REASON SPIKE HAD FOUGHT FOR THE SOUL.

Well, a host of reasons, if he were being honest. Any wanker could find himself cursed. Angel liked to prance around and act like he was special or sommat when all he'd done was run afoul the right kind of magic users. Not very hard, that, and given how bloody prolific he'd been as a soulless sod, it had probably been just a matter of time before his luck had run out.

For Spike, not attaching his soul to a curse had also been practical. Curses could be broken, after all, and he'd much prefer only going through the experience of gaining a soul just the once. Who wanted to go through life trying to keep from being too happy?

Even if he'd thought as much impossible at the time, and he had. The notion that he might ever be happy again had been hard to swallow.

Yet here he was, staring at Buffy, who was right brassed with him at the moment, as she punched the number pad on their microwave. She did it without thought, without so much as looking at him for confirmation, just knew the right number and the right setting for how he took his blood. Hell, she didn't even lose her place in her lecture—something about getting himself cornered in that nest they'd taken out tonight, a situation he maintained he'd had under control, thanks ever so for the

vote of confidence—for it had become routine. At least during times like these—the lull between apocalypses. Come back from a night's hunt, scarf down a snack, then bicker their way back to the bedroom where any lingering frustrations were properly exorcised.

“—next time, I won't even say anything,” she told him, moving to the cabinet to fetch a box of Weetabix. The microwave beeped and she turned to release the door with the same effortless grace with which she did everything else. “I'll just let you dust, and this time when you're resurrected, I'll make you suffer through a very Buffy rendition of the ‘I told you so’ dance. There might be a song, too.” She slid the mug of blood out of the microwave and crumbled in a couple handfuls of Weetabix, gave it a stir with her index finger, then all but shoved it at Spike's chest. “And I'd sing it badly. So badly your sensitive vampire ears would cry for mercy, and it would serve you right, you big, careless idiot.”

Spike snatched her wrist before she could pull her hand away, kept his eyes on her as he sucked that blood-soaked finger into his mouth, every bit of him threatening to burst.

These were the moments he knew best why he'd fought for his soul.

If he lost it every time Buffy made him happy, there would be no point to having it at all.

K IS FOR KEEPERS

“WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?”

It was a stupid question—she knew what he was doing here. Had known it was only a matter of time, especially after his little “I’m in your system” speech from the night before. Believing that she’d get at least a day to gather her bearings had been naïve optimism. Or just flat-out stupidity.

Spike arched an eyebrow, closed the basement door through which he had just barreled. “Came ‘round to check on the Bit,” he said, all innocence. “How she doin’ this morning?”

“Hurt,” Buffy replied flatly. “And not here.”

“No?”

“It’s a school day.”

At this, he did betray the barest modicum of surprise. “What, and you made her go? No day off on account of injury?”

“With social services breathing down my neck? No. She’s had way too many absences and why the hell am I telling you this?” She fixed him with her fiercest scowl, which only earned a smirk in turn and, at last, one of those roaming looks that told her he was picturing what she looked like naked. A picture he could fill in now from experience, thanks

to the absolute insanity that had been the night before last. “Go away, Spike.”

“Mmm, and why would I wanna do that?” He swaggered a step forward, hooking his thumbs through the loops in his jeans. “Sounds like we got the place to ourselves.”

That wasn’t true. “Willow’s here.”

“Upstairs, sawin’ wood from the sound of it.”

Yes, and wasn’t that just *peachy* for Willow. She screws around with magic for the umpteenth time, gets Dawn hurt, has a little breakdown and gets to sleep in. And what does Buffy get? Another day of worrying about bills and a visit from the world’s most annoying vampire to talk about something she was never talking about ever again. “Well, still, she’s home. So scram.”

But Spike didn’t scram, because scrambling would have meant doing what she asked, and god knows he was allergic to that. Instead, he sauntered even closer, getting up right inside her personal bubble. Making her stupid, traitorous body react like the stupid traitor it was, and had been ever since she’d come back from the dead. Not at all aided by the fact that she had firsthand experience of just what he could do to her. Moreover, just want he *wanted* to do to her, and that was quite the lengthy list. She should know—he’d spent hours detailing just how thoroughly he’d explore her every inch...while exploring her every inch. He was a big fan of narrating his every action.

And she’d promised herself she wouldn’t go there again. Not with him. That night had been a freakish hiccup that she would just as soon forget. Trouble was, it was hard remembering exactly why she needed to forget it when he was standing so close.

“Don’t think you want me to do that, Slayer,” Spike murmured, reaching out to tease his fingers down the length of her arm. “In fact, think you’d rather I do...this.”

She opened her mouth to argue but never got the chance, for he was kissing her. Kissing her like he had the previous morning. Like he’d kissed her every time since she’d thrown herself at him in that stupid alley—all fire and passion, all heat and desperation, and she didn’t want to give in, but she wanted to fight even less. Goddammit, he was right.

More than right, he was all the things she wasn't and that was bad but also oh so good.

When Buffy next became aware of her surroundings, she was on the couch in the living room, in Spike's lap, straddling him, chasing his tongue with her teeth and grinding hard into the erection pressed against the apex of her thighs. Swallowing the little moans he spilled into her mouth and feeding him back her own. And she could get lost—wanted to get lost. Wanted him to take away all the bad that had happened last night and all the bad she sensed was still to come, and he could. He could, if only briefly. And brief was better than nothing.

The only thing that could have wrenched her away was the sound of her own name, shouted rather than whimpered, and in someone else's voice.

"Buffy, you down there?"

Buffy pulled back with a deep gasp, blinking at the living room. At the vampire panting up at her, his eyes dark and his cock hard and his face full of promise and pain.

Pain because he knew what came next.

Even so, Buffy thought she'd have more trouble getting him out the door. That he'd hedge or stall, let Willow stumble down the stairs and discover them, she with swollen lips, flushed cheeks, and messy hair, and Spike looking way too alive for a dead guy. But he didn't. Just adjusted himself through his jeans, watched as she watched the motion, before winking and blowing her a kiss.

"You know where to find me, love," he said, then slipped from under her and helped himself back down the hall while she struggled to locate both her voice and the feeling in her legs.

It was so unfair that he had that power over her. That he'd somehow become something she craved the way she did, and that there was little she could do about it. She couldn't have him—not again. He was the one thing that brought her any solace these days, and also the one thing she couldn't keep.

Later, when she found the lighter that had slipped out of his pocket during the latest in a string of intimacies she would deny had ever happened, she wondered if maybe that would work in his stead. She

could use it like a talisman—give her some of him without seeking *all* of him.

And if he wanted it back, tough.

Finders keepers, after all.

L IS FOR LOVED

SOMETHING SPIKE HAD LEARNED EARLY ON ABOUT BEING LOVED BY Buffy Summers—she had many ways to tell a man she loved him without relying on the words themselves.

That wasn't to say she never gave him the words. She did. But she always seemed a bit shy about it, like she was breaking some rule. Like the universe might hear her and swoop in to punish her for daring. He saw that fear as clearly as he saw anything else. Her cheeks would flush, her eyes would widen, and there would be a tremor to her voice that only came out on such occasions.

But her reticence didn't bother him. Just made the times the words actually left her lips all the sweeter. Cemented him in the knowledge of how much she meant it, that she was braving her fears to give him something she knew he cherished.

In the time between, though, she had other ways of saying the words. All a man had to do was pay attention.

She told him that she loved him on the mornings she awoke before he did, trailing her fingers through his hair and greeting him with a smile when he opened his eyes.

She told him she loved him by getting mad when he entered a room before she'd had the chance to close the blinds.

She told him she loved him when she slathered toast with blood as though it were jam just because she thought he might want some texture today.

She told him she loved him every time she leaped blindly into a fight, trusting that he would catch her if she needed catching, and that he wouldn't try if she didn't.

She told him she loved him with every kiss in how she always chased his lips with hers for one more taste before she'd let him pull away.

She'd find him after they'd had a row, even when they were still mad at each other, and bury herself in his arms, hold onto him like she thought he might vanish. She'd slip into the shower behind him and trail kisses along his neck. She'd snuggle up to him on the couch while he was watching a soap he knew she hated.

Buffy Summers was a master at making a man feel loved.

And because he was the luckiest bastard on the planet, sometimes he got the words too.

"I love you," she told him now, rubbing her cheek against his shoulder as he placed the book he'd been reading to her on the nightstand.

Spike turned to meet her eyes and catch the flush. He wasn't disappointed. "Love you too, pet."

"I know," Buffy said quickly, then darted her gaze away as she always did, as though she'd been caught doing something she shouldn't. "Just had a moment where I realized I couldn't remember the last time I said it, so, I wanted you to know the Buffy Loves Spike Express is still running at full capacity. In case there are any doubts."

She couldn't be more perfect if she tried. And god help him, she tried.

Every day.

M IS FOR MIRROR

SHE WAS A BLOODY VISION.

But then he'd always thought so. From that first moment, the glimpse that shouldn't have been life-changing but had been all the same. Watching her, young and carefree, moving with a girl's optimism and a warrior's grace. He hadn't known he loved her then, hadn't seen the trajectory his life would take, though perhaps that was another *should have*. Should have recognized the clenching in his gut for what it was. Should have recognized what she was beyond the obvious. What she was to him.

He hadn't, though. Sometimes he could be a truly thick git.

Of course, even if he had recognized it then, he would never have guessed this would be in his future. That the smiling, dancing girl he'd seen that night would one day be straddling him backward and riding him to a bloody gallop, breasts bouncing, skin slick with sweat, her pussy clenching and pulling at him with every drive. Every drive that he got to watch for the mirror he'd mounted along the wall of his crypt.

He hadn't known she'd take to it when he'd hauled the bloody thing in from the dump. Just had been a hare, was all. An idea that he'd wanted to put to the test. She fancied saying he was nothing so much, he'd wagered she might like seeing what it looked like to be fucked by *nothing*.

Watch as *nothing* made her buck and moan and gasp and beg for a little more. How *nothing* could tease her nipples and spread her open wide. How *nothing* could make her come so hard she'd make the stone walls shudder.

Oh yes, Buffy loved being fucked by *nothing*.

And so long as the *nothing* was him, he wouldn't complain too much.

"More." The word left her lips, a whisper of a breath. As though she were afraid of being heard.

Spike sucked in a breath of his own, one that tasted of her, digging his fingers into her hips and guiding her up and down his cock in hard strokes. Trying not to think about how good she felt, how warm she was, how she burned and scorched. Trying not to think about how much he loved her because loving her made saying goodbye harder. And goodbye would come. It always did. "More what, baby?"

She didn't answer, just mewled and picked up the pace, her eyes—dark and intent—fixed on the mirror. On the sight she presented. Just her. Just Buffy.

Only it wasn't just her when she trembled a second later. When he slipped his hand over the curve of her hip, danced his fingers along her slippery flesh and nudged the swollen pearl of her clit. It wasn't just her when she threw her head back and clamped down hard around his cock. It wasn't just her when she began to spasm and seize.

No, he was there with her. In her mouth, his name riding out on her lips. Begrudging, maybe, but there all the same.

But when she collapsed into a warm tangle of satiated slayer against him, he had a hard time imagining she begrudged him anything, except perhaps the heartbeat he didn't have.

Maybe one day she would see it. Realize the *nothing* in the mirror was something after all.

Just not today.

Until that day came, he'd enjoy these stolen moments.

And the irony of them being better than nothing.

N IS FOR NOSFERATU

THERE WERE A FEW HARD AND FAST RULES WHEN IT CAME TO STALKING prey, one of the most foundational being it was easier to sneak up on someone when the floor didn't betray your every move. This was even more essential when hunting vampires, particularly vampires of a certain age—those who had managed to evade the Slayer's stake for eons by instinct and cunning alone.

Which was why Spike was absolutely flabbergasted as to how this tosser had made it five sodding minutes, never mind however-many centuries. Every step he took up the old, rickety staircase betrayed his presence. A telling whine. A loud creak. A snap of wood likely older than the geezer they were following. Not once did the so-called master vampire's ears so much as twitch.

It could be an act, he supposed. Feigning ignorance or the like. Buffy certainly seemed to think so. She was on the step ahead of Spike's, distracting him nicely with a view of her pert arse, tightening her grip on the scythe every time one of those loud, presence-announcing sounds burst through the den of quiet. Ready to start swinging.

He wished she'd just get on with it. There were worthier foes out there to hunt.

Point of fact, maybe he could speed the process up a bit.

"Can we hurry this up?" Spike drawled, not bothering to keep his voice down. "I'm bored."

"Shut up," Buffy hissed.

"Oh, don't get your knickers in a twist. This git—"

"Is responsible for slaughtering half the village out there, so excuse me but we're doing this my way."

Spike rolled his eyes, firmed up his grip on the stake in his hand just in case things got interesting. They didn't. Balls, this was no good. Only reason he'd insisted on coming along was he'd thought there might be a decent tussle. This lad had, after all, been making a name for himself for a minute now. Had to be something to it beyond pomp and circumstance.

That had been his fault, buying into the hype. Thinking there might be something here that actually warranted their attention.

"Dunno what you're waiting for," he said.

"Will you be quiet?"

"Seriously, pet, you—"

"Good heavens, you are the most unprofessional hunters I've ever had the displeasure of hosting," drawled a thickly accented voice.

Buffy froze. So did Spike. As one, they shifted their attention to the shriveled raisin of a vampire, who had come to a stop at the landing, his shoulders hunched. Hell, even his batlike ears seemed to droop.

"You...knew we were here," Buffy said.

"Obviously." The vampire who called himself Count Orlok heaved a deep, long-suffering sigh, then turned to glower at the pair of them. "Do you have any idea how many tourists come to take a glimpse at the great Count? How many zhink zhat they can best *me*?"

"I have a feeling we're about to find out," replied the Slayer, and in her tone, Spike heard the reason she hadn't started swinging yet.

She was disappointed. His Slayer, who had traveled the world and then some, stopped so many apocalypses she'd stopped keeping score in between training full legions of warriors, had been a mite starstruck. And just like Dracula before him, Orlok was a big ol' letdown.

When would she learn that *she* was the most impressive thing in this or any world? He'd have to give her hell when they got home.

"I zhought to have a bit of fun. Zhought you might make...how you

say, a nice change of pace.” Orlok glared at Spike. “*She*, at least, treats this like the sacred honor it is.”

“Honor?” Buffy asked in her flat deadpan. “What’s this honor?”

“Being killed by yours truly, of course. A true *nosferatu*,” answered their quarry, now offering a crooked smile and a little bow.

“You think that’s what’s going to happen?”

Orlok, or the *nosferatu*, grinned even wider. “Vhat else, my dear? Vhy do you shink I allowed you entrance? To come this far into my humble home?”

Buffy blew out a breath, rolled her neck from side to side before finally deigning to meet Spike’s gaze. “Just don’t do the dance this time, okay?”

“Vhat dance, my dear?”

“Lady’s talkin’ to me,” Spike said, smirking. “And she’s off her tree if she thinks I won’t—”

The next thing he knew, he was addressing a pile of dust. Buffy apparently hadn’t been in the mood to let the bloke hear the finer details of his *told-you-so* routine. Pity. He’d just have to put some extra hip movement into his dance to make up for it.

Not that his lady would complain. Much. Worst came to worst, she’d just try to shag him so hard it left a mark, and wasn’t that just the worst thing in the world.

“Are none of the old vampires I’ve read about cool?” Buffy asked, staring at the dust now gathered on the floor.

Spike blew out a breath, climbed up so they were sharing the same step, then threw an arm around her shoulders and steered into him. “Could always read up about me, if you fancy,” he murmured against her brow before brushing it with his lips.

“I said cool.”

“Hey now, no need for that. I’m the one vamp who’s never disappointed.”

She was still scowling when she lifted her gaze to his. A beautiful pout that never failed to drive him out of his mind, both for want of snogging it off her and the knowledge that he could. That somehow, this was where life had led him. This place by her side.

And when the scowl softened into a grin, when she said, “I’ll give you

that,” and pressed up to kiss him, he felt it even more. The pure fantastic fortune that was being the one at her side.

“You say the sweetest things,” he murmured against her lips.

“Does this mean you’ll skip the dance?”

“Not a chance.”

O IS FOR OCCUPIED

SHE WAS SUCH A LITTLE FLIRT, AND HE FUCKING LOVED IT.

It started innocently enough. Another fight. Another victory. Another tally mark for the heroes. He'd asked her once if she kept count of the number of times she'd saved the world, and she'd answered, in all honesty, that she'd stopped trying. Buffy just doing what she did, treating it as business as usual, which of course it was. She fought and she won, and she celebrated. Enjoyed the time between crises as only a champion could.

The thrill of the fight was its own drug and she'd been much happier since she'd embraced it. Stopped second-guessing why she felt the way she did, why throwing herself into battle got her hot, or why she tended to be a mite reckless in ways she ordinarily wasn't while riding the high of her most recent win. Such as now, in a crowded club, surrounded by her army of slayers as they took in the spoils of their success, grinning up at him in that bright, vibrant way of hers that somehow made him forget he wasn't alive where it counted. Because in so many ways, he was.

And when she pressed into him, her eyes taking on that look he knew so well by now, Spike was hopeless to do anything but surrender.

Not that he'd want it any other way.

He seized her hand and off they went, weaving through the throng of

the sweaty humans drowning in their own hormones, and toward the loo he'd eyeballed the second they'd stormed into the place, knowing it was where they'd end up. He didn't check if it was empty—didn't much care, and he knew Buffy didn't either. Just shoved her inside the nearest stall and started pulling at her clothes between kisses and whispered little nasties and confessions of love that he could never hold back, and thank god she was long past wanting him to try.

Then she was in his arms, her back pressed to the door, her legs around his waist and her pussy, slick and hot and perfect around him, clenching him so tight he could weep. Her teeth tugging at his ear, his lips, her breath warm and her voice warmer, telling him how good he felt, how he filled her up, how she wanted it harder, wanted him, that she loved him, and this was her favorite part of the fight. The part where they got to be together and celebrate that they had lived to stop another apocalypse, and they could do this every day until the world needed them again.

Somehow this had become his life. And it was bloody fantastic.

Spike took her mouth with his when she shuddered, swallowing the cry that had been his to begin with. Holding her as his spine tingled and his balls tightened, and then pulsing inside of her with that white-hot ecstasy that somehow managed to take him by surprise every time. Slowing his thrusts until he was just holding her and she was holding him, kissing him the way only she ever had or could. Bringing him to that special place where only they lived together.

Getting lost in her was easy. Easiest thing he'd ever done. Such that he was genuinely surprised when the door at her back thundered under the force of some poor sap's hard knocks.

"Uhh, hello?" came a voice from the other side. "Do you mind?"

Buffy froze, her mouth against his. Then she pulled back, her cheeks flushed and her eyes full, a flash of guilt stealing across her face. And he hated that. Hated how quickly her joy could fade into something else. Hated the wankers who would deny her anything.

But she knew he felt like that, and she knew what he would do next. It was why she sighed and rolled her head back when he nudged his hips forward, when she felt him moving inside of her again, hard once more. Always hard for her. For this. For every second they could steal and make

theirs. And thankfully, that was all it took for the guilt to fade in favor of a grin.

We saved the world again, that grin said. *Might as well enjoy it.*

“Sorry,” she called, clamping her muscles around his cock and tugging him down again when he moaned in turn. “Occupied.”

Good Christ, but he loved this woman.

And he relished every opportunity she gave him to show her how much.

P IS FOR PERIODICALLY

SHE WASN'T SURE WHAT CONVINCED HER TO GIVE IN. BUT THAT WAS her life these days—Buffy saying no, Spike saying *trust me*, Buffy not trusting him but also not trusting herself and ultimately, secretly, too intrigued to continue feigning disgust. Plus, truly, she was tired of denying herself what she wanted when that want was at its peak.

It would be once, she'd decided. Just once. Just to get him to shut up about it and to satisfy her curiosity.

But even Buffy didn't believe that. For one, Spike never shut up about anything ever, and for another, this felt amazing.

Too amazing for *just once*.

She felt rather than saw the smile that stretched across Spike's face, felt his eyes peeking open and roaming in that way of theirs. No one had ever looked at her the way he did—a way that had form and texture. Maybe it was a slayer thing, her body inherently knowing when it was being evaluated by a predator, but somehow she didn't think so. Somehow, she knew it was all him.

"Even sweeter than I imagined," he purred before taking another long, indulgent lap of her pussy, and Buffy bit her lip to trap the cry that wanted out. It was bad enough that she'd given in—he didn't need the satisfaction of knowing he was right.

Not yet, anyway.

“You’re a bloody vision, you know.” Much like his gaze, his voice also had texture. Slid over her skin like satin. Not reacting was not an option. “Lived a lot of years. Seen a lot of truly spectacular sights. But nothing begins to compare to this.” Spike lowered his head again, and she allowed herself a peek. Caught the crimson stains that rounded his mouth before it dipped out of sight and then he was feasting on her once more. Licking, lapping, sometimes slurping, and her skin was on fire and the bed was on fire and everything was fire, and she hated how much she loved it. Hated that he knew her. Hated that she would want this again. That she already wanted it again and it hadn’t even stopped happening yet.

“Mmm, yeah,” came his low rasp. Then his tongue again, drawing circles around her clit before he covered it entirely and all of it feeling so good it almost hurt. “Was wrong before. *This* is the only way to eat a slayer.”

It was the sort of comment that should earn him a kick to the head.

Instead, Buffy curled her fingers around his hair and yanked. “More,” she breathed.

And more he gave.

Q IS FOR QUICKIE

SHE KNEW HE DID THIS ON PURPOSE. NO MATTER HOW MUCH TIME had passed, no matter that old grudges had been long buried, no matter how blissfully happy he knew she was, Spike couldn't resist making sure they showed up all ruffled and reeking of sex.

He claimed most people wouldn't notice, and he was right. Most people didn't have a vampire's heightened sense of smell and were far from shrewdly observant. But he didn't do this for the benefit of *most people*. Just one people, err, person. And that person was Angel.

For those keeping score at home, Angel checked both the *heightened sense of smell* and *shrewdly observant* columns.

"Protest all you like, love," Spike growled, giving her clit a quick, teasing stroke. The growl morphed into a grin when the back of her head smacked the door she was propped up against. "You wouldn't let me do this"—he stroked a line down the seam of her pussy before thrusting two fingers inside—"wouldn't be this wet for me if you didn't crave it as much as I do."

"Oh god."

"Been over this a time or two, now. Don't be givin' another bloke the credit when I make you scream." He captured her mouth with his before she could think of a response. Probably good, considering her brain was

doing that short-circuiting thing it always did when Spike got her like this. Got her rubbing against him, mewling and whimpering, and then tearing at his lips with her teeth so that he would make all those delicious sounds. Feel his chest rumble and his grip tighten in that heartbeat before her favorite moment—the one where he gave up the pretense of control and surrendered to her in full. Sometimes it was a gasp, other times a sigh. Sometimes he whispered her name like a prayer, other times he just buried his neck in her throat and bit into her skin. No matter how the moment came, Buffy couldn't get enough. Years they had been together and it was still *this*. Still Spike melting into her like he was surprised she was there. That he was touching her, that she wanted him. That she loved him.

It was worth all the time they stole together. Maybe that was why she gave in. She was a junkie for that moment and could never deny herself the fix.

Then he was there, his cock parting the folds of her pussy, making her gasp and tremble. He kissed the hollow of her throat and followed the line until his lips were grazing hers, their eyes locked. He loved watching her as he slid inside. She loved watching him back. It made everything better, real and grounded yet always out of the stratosphere in intensity. Neither one of them could ever do anything halfway.

"Always fun to watch you try to keep quiet," he murmured as he started to push into her. "But he'll hear you anyway. So go ahead and scream. At least one of us'll enjoy it."

For half a second, Buffy experienced a rush of guilt—Angel had a habit of picking fancy restaurants whenever he was in town. The kind that had things like the coat check-in closet Spike had shoved her inside literally seconds after they'd walked through the door. The kind *not* meant for very public quickies.

But then that half a second matured into a full second, and her guilt rode its way out on a moan when Spike gave his hips a sharp thrust. And then they were kissing again, moving together amid the jackets and shawls that had been handed over by people with better manners than they.

And god, she wouldn't have it any other way.

R IS FOR RUB

“GOD, YOU ARE TOO GOOD AT THAT.”

Spike grinned up at her, giving her one of those little winks that drove her mad. “Beginnin’ to think you do it on purpose, love,” he said, bringing her foot to his mouth. Buffy had never once thought of feet as something sexy before him, and it was still a hard sell. Except not quite as hard as it had been before she’d known what it was like to watch him lick his way around her big toe or tease a ticklish path along the arch. Which he did every time she asked him for a foot rub. She was starting to think he had a fetish. “Told you not to wear them, didn’t I?”

“Yes,” she sighed, wiggling her toes in his face. “And maybe if some vampire hadn’t decided to trip me—”

“I did no such thing.”

“And I am not clumsy! I used to patrol in heels all the time.”

He chuckled and dragged his lips over her instep. “I remember. Little saucy numbers designed to drive the Big Bad wild. Bloody miracle you’ve gotten this far without snapping an ankle.”

Ugh. Love him though she did—and she totally did, despite many attempts to not—he was particularly insufferable when he had something to gloat about. She was beginning to think he’d reverse-psychologied her into wearing her brand new and now newly broken Jimmy Choo

knockoff pumps just so he'd have a reason to gloat. And if she weren't getting one of his world-class foot rubs out of the deal, she might even be mad about it.

But she was, so she wasn't. At least not while he kept doing that thing with his hands.

"What's this?" Spike replied, kissing his way up her ankle. "No smart retort? Don't tell me you're admittin' defeat."

"I am choosing not to listen to you," Buffy replied, closing her eyes. Because everyone knew that closing one's eyes was essential in proving that listening was not happening. "There's a difference."

"Poor little Slayer." The kisses were making their way up her shin now. Soft and suggestive, and so not working...except she'd uncurled her legs and parted them in welcome because her body was a big traitor and he knew just how to get it to defect to his side. Even when she was annoyed with him. Even when all she wanted to do was sit on the couch, watch some trashy movie, and enjoy some quality time with Spike's hands in a completely platonic way. Sex should not be a reward for someone who had cackled madly when her heel had snapped off in some fledgling's eyeball. That had been gross and a waste of good money and her ankle was still hurting, not that he'd bothered to ask.

"I know you think you're getting lucky tonight, and I can tell you now, the kitchen is closed on account of injury and mean boyfriends."

Spike paused and lifted his head, stretched now between her legs. "But 'm hungry," he said with a pout, sliding one of those amazing hands along her inner thigh. "Can't you find me somethin' to nibble on?"

"Go back to the foot rub. I was enjoying that."

"Mhmm. You'll enjoy this more." The hand disappeared under the hem of the tee she'd commandeered as her own. She did that with a lot of his clothes and he didn't mind. Said he fancied carrying her smell around with him when they had to be apart for any reason. Made him feel warm. And no, she should not be thinking of the times Spike was sweet, because then she'd do something stupid like give into him, and that was not on the menu tonight.

He wasn't going to win.

And that was what she was still telling herself when his head followed suit, and when the first, decadent lap of his tongue made her gasp and

arch into his mouth, and her feet went from perched on his either side to digging into the small of his back.

He wasn't going to win.

Except if this was what happened when Spike won, she could be okay with it.

S IS FOR SLAIN

THERE WAS A SPRING IN HER STEP. THAT WASN'T A GOOD SIGN. WELL, all right, so a happy slayer often netted positive things for him too, but Spike had learned not to trust her when she was regarding him with that particular smirk.

"Everythin' all right, love?" he asked warily, watching as she flitted from one end of their kitchen to the next in a perfect mimicry of what had become their morning routine. Or early afternoon, as it were. Whenever one of them managed to successfully climb out of bed, which was a tossup these days. Depended on if there was an apocalypse on the calendar.

"Peachy," Buffy replied, still with that bright smile. He'd enjoy it a lot more if he weren't certain it was at his expense.

Spike knew from experience it was better to wait. The Slayer was too much like him in many respects, her nonexistent patience being bloody well near the top. She wanted him to push, which was the only thing that could convince him to hold his tongue. At least at first. No matter how much practice he got under his belt, waiting was a younger man's game.

"Fine," he said just as Buffy was preparing her coffee. "Cough it up."

She paused, then blinked at him, all innocence. All except that smirk. "What?"

"You know bloody well what. Just have it out already."

"I don't know what you're talking about." But she was turning a bit pink now, and her smirk was struggling to hold as a real smile threatened to take over. "Unless you mean this."

Buffy reached down the neck of her shirt and pulled out what looked like a square card from between her breasts. She glanced at it, grinned a bit wider, then handed it over.

It wasn't a card. It was a photo. The type spat out just seconds after being captured.

In it was a vampire. Specifically, him. Specifically, him in their bed. Naked, his cock in full view, spent and resting under his navel. His mouth was open and his eyes were closed. He was bloody dead to the world.

"When did you take this?" he asked, already knowing the answer.

"Last night," the Slayer replied sweetly. "I wanted proof."

Spike looked up again, his brow furrowing. Proof what? That they'd shagged? Wasn't exactly headline news, that. Would have been at one time, but he and Buffy had been living in what could only be called domestic bliss for a stretch now. Ever since she and her little slayer army had swooped in before all of Los Angeles could be swallowed by the legions of Hell itself.

Granted, they *had* been a bit wild last night. Especially charged from a late-night patrol, barely able to part long enough to stumble across the threshold of their flat. It was like that sometimes. It was like everything sometimes. That's what made life with Buffy worth living. There was always hunger, primal and deep, and on occasion, that hunger exploded into action. Like last night. She'd pushed and he'd pushed and she'd given and he'd given and it had been brilliant. All too brilliant. He didn't even remember when he'd passed out, only that it had been with her in his mouth, on his tongue, all around him the way he always wanted her, and she'd still been lingering there when he'd awakened.

"Look again, dummy," Buffy said, and tapped the photo with her index finger.

So he did, and this time he saw it. Scribbled along the bottom in ink dark enough to blend at first glance but legible all the same.

I, Buffy Anne Summers, officially did the impossible and wore out Spike, AKA William the Bloody, on November 7, 2006. May his dick rest in peace.

Spike stared at the words for a long second. Then he couldn't help himself. He laughed.

And Buffy laughed.

And he said, "Don't think it counts if it's gonna rise again."

"No. It counts. I have proof." Buffy snatched the photo back with those lightning-slayer reflexes of hers and made it dance in front of his face. "See? Consider yourself slain."

"Oh, is that how we're playin' it?" Spike offered a smirk of his own and started toward her, every inch of his body feeling it but loving it anyway. He'd always fancied the way she made it hurt. "Guess it's time for some payback."

"You've eaten the Slayer plenty," Buffy said, but the words came out between laughs. Everything about her was bright and beautiful.

"That's for me to decide."

And she giggled and made a run for it because she knew it was.

T IS FOR THANKS

“SLAYER...”

“Shut up.”

“No, don’t think I’ll be doing that.” He was staring, fixated at the place where the arrow had pierced her skin. Couldn’t help but stare. The second that delicious fragrance had bloomed in the air, his stomach had given a terrible lurch—the sort he felt all the way in his fangs.

“Just sayin’ a nip of that’ll do me fine, thanks,” Spike replied.

“I’ll take Things That Will Never Happen for eight hundred, Alex,” she shot back, righting a fallen lamp.

“Come on. Damage is already done, right? No sense lettin’ that go to waste.”

Buffy favored him with her famous if-looks-could-stake glower that made his jeans feel a bit too tight for reasons he was better off ignoring, then sauntered over. Fully sauntered, for the Slayer was one thing above all others, and that thing was a tease. “You’re disgusting,” she said.

“And you’re so bloody fixed on havin’ a perfect holiday you’ve forgotten the spirit of the thing.”

“The spirit?”

“Yeah, comin’ together, and all that rot.”

“That is the lamest thing I’ve ever heard.”

“Oi, I didn’t come up with it, did I?” Spike eyed the wound again, knowing his window was running out. Her slayer healing would soon make the whole point moot. “Just a couple sips’ll do the job. Won’t need anyone to go fetch me blood until tomorrow.”

That much surprised her, he could tell. Her eyes went all wide, her lips parted in a way that might give a man ideas if that man hadn’t known better. Then that pink little tongue poked out to drive the image home.

It was by virtue of the fact that he managed to keep his mouth shut that she closed the last bit of space between them, he wagered. The others were setting the table and clearing away the last of the debris from the siege. And Buffy was studying him, one-part fascination and one-part revulsion, but the decision was already made. He didn’t know which appeal had swayed her—maybe the rot about the true spirit of the holiday or what-all, maybe knowing it would shut him up for the rest of dinner, maybe a combination thereof. Spike just watched as she worked through it, given a quick glance around to make sure everyone was otherwise occupied, then started to tug up her sleeve.

“Not a word to anyone,” she said.

He rolled his eyes. He would have also strained a bit against the ropes binding him in place, but worried that the slightest twitch might have her running scared, deciding it was better to just let a man starve, and he’d never bloody forgive himself. Slayer blood was something no vamp turned down, and even if it weren’t the hard-won sort he fancied, Spike was absolutely not going to say no to a nip of Buffy Summers.

“I mean it, Spike,” she said. “Not a word. The butcher shops aren’t going to be open anyway and you’ll take that without complaint when I bring it up later. You’ll also be on best behavior through dinner, understand?”

He straightened, preening a bit. “Would cross my heart but my arms are a bit—”

“Shut up,” Buffy snapped again, and held her arm to his mouth. “And be quick, before someone sees.”

That fragrance hit his nose again and he had to swallow back a moan.

Before today, Spike would have argued that Dru had jinxed him or what all after their last parting. Nothing had gone his way since... Well, he couldn’t remember how long anymore, but the last stretch had been

the true insult. There was the buggering pain in his head, Harm tossing him out on his arse, being forced to tuck his tail between his legs and make nice with the enemy. But all of that had happened and he was here, on the other side of a siege that had gotten him the only blood he truly cared to get on his tongue.

Maybe his luck was changing.

When her blood hit his lips, he knew it had.

It didn't last, of course. Nothing good ever did. He got a pull, two, three before she jerked back and stumbled away from him, tugging her sleeve back down. And he wanted to complain. Wanted to throw a right little stink, but it wasn't like he had any leverage here. Buffy might be the sentimental sort, but she wasn't above shoving a bloke out on his arse if given reason.

"Not a word," she said again, then hurried back to the kitchen to check on the state of dinner.

Leaving Spike to stare after her, this wonderful taste in his mouth.

"Thanks."

U IS FOR UNCHAINED

IT WAS THE LITTLE THINGS. THE SENSATION OF THE WIND IN HER hair, against her face. The vibration of the engine beneath her, how it felt both between her thighs and as it traveled through the vampire she was gripping. There was a strange sense of freedom out here, detachment and belonging at the same time. Like it was just that simple—she could hop on a motorcycle, tangle her arms around Spike, and leave all things *slayer* and *hellmouth* behind.

“Special day,” he’d said in greeting. She’d invited herself into his crypt—Slayer’s prerogative—just as the sun was beginning to make its trek toward the horizon. “Didn’t know if you’d pop in. Wager your chums are throwin’—”

“Wanna get out of here?” she’d blurted before he could finish the thought.

Spike had paused, blinking. “Where’s it you’re aimin’ to go?”

“I don’t know. Just somewhere.”

He hadn’t answered right away, making her feel a sort of self-conscious she hadn’t felt around him in a long time. Then his eyes had warmed, and he’d stepped toward her with a little nod.

“Anywhere you want, love. You know that.”

And she did. There was a lot in this world Buffy knew and even more

she didn't, and any of it could change on a dime. Such was the way of things. The way of her life. And that was true for everything except Spike.

Spike was the constant. If she asked, he'd give. If she commanded, he'd follow. If she gave, he'd look at her in that special way of his and make her insides melt.

Now she was behind him, hugging herself to his back and resting her chin on his shoulder. Though she couldn't hear him over the roar in her ears, she somehow knew he was making a happy rumble sound, and that certainty flooded her with pure affection.

Or love. She was comfortable calling it love.

Buffy tightened her arms around his middle and dipped her head toward his, and he met her, rubbing against her like a cat. It was brief but charged, enough so she no longer felt the chill of the wind. She just... felt. And it was nice. Even wonderful.

He didn't tell her happy birthday until much later. After stopping for a bite to eat—

"Could feel your tummy makin' all kinds of gurglies."

"You have no way of knowing that was my tummy!"

"Beg to bloody differ."

—complete with a piece of chocolate raspberry cake—"Of course you're gonna bloody have cake"—Spike led her back to the bike under blanket of stars and tugged her to him. Took her cheek in his hand, watched rather hungrily as she rubbed along his palm.

"Good birthday?" he asked, his voice a bit tight.

Buffy grinned. "The best," she said, and lifted herself on her tiptoes to kiss him.

V IS FOR VIRAL

OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS—REALLY, EVER SINCE SHE'D REALIZED THE long-term consequences of Willow's resurrection spell—Buffy had come to understand that immortality giveth and immortality taketh away.

Giveth: She and Spike could still pass for twenty-somethings though she was officially forty-two and he was...well, a lot older than that.

Taketh: Apparently, there was no such thing as "too old" when it came to lectures from the watcher. Who wasn't *even* her watcher anymore. In fact, she was kinda the boss of him. That was the way this whole brave new—not so new anymore, though, *Giles*—world worked ever since the old Watchers Council had been blown to smithereens.

"Do you have any idea how careless you were?" Giles demanded, turning to pace back toward Spike's end of the room, even though pacing was something that he didn't do as well anymore and needed a cane to do at all. One too many bonks on the head and interference roles in world savage had made him extra breakable and wobbly and fall-prone. "How this undermines the efforts we have made in our international alliances with the—"

"Oh, put a bloody cork in it," Spike said, rocking back on his heels, his hands in his pockets. "Just a bit of fun we were havin', yeah?"

"Fun?" Giles echoed. He reached for his glasses before remembering

that he'd had that eye surgery years ago and they weren't there for the dramatic removal. "*Fun?* Does this look like fun to you?"

With a flourish, he turned to the screen behind him—the one *her* Slayer Academy dollars had paid for, thank you very much—and with a dexterity that defied his age, he had the video that had been captured just hours before pulled up and stretched across the wall in all its 1080p glory. Technology was rather remarkable these days—so remarkable there was no question that the two people against that alleyway wall were her and Spike, and likewise no question what they were doing. Or exactly what her O-face looked like, or just how loud she screamed when his fangs were in her throat.

It was hardly their fault. They had just had a really good fight—with others, not each other—and had been intent on celebrating in style. Particularly since they'd been forced to cut their anniversary short by that gang of tourist-snatching vamps in the first place. Which, hello, where were the, "*Good job, Buffy!*" or the, "*Nicely done, Spike!*" accolades they so deserved? It was like all Giles could focus on was the fact that some dweeb had noticed them sneak away after the dustage to resume what had been a nice evening.

"Do you have any idea how difficult it has been to get the Demon Hunters Association of Luxembourg to agree to talk with us?" Giles demanded, again like he was her boss and not the other way around. "I rather think—"

"Oh, those repressed sods can either see that the lady knows how to have a good time or bugger off," Spike snapped. "If you think they'll watch this and see what she does—how she leaps in without hesitation—and worry about who she shags for afters, they're not the sort we need to worry with in the first place."

Giles glared at Spike for a moment as though glaring had ever had any effect on him in the past. Then, at length, he sighed.

"Could you two just..." He frowned, seeming to struggle for words. "*Try* to be discreet?"

Spike slid a glance to Buffy out of the corner of his eye. She knew what he was thinking without needing to be told.

After nearly twenty years of being together, working like this, fighting side-by-side, sharing the same bed, and tirelessly dedicating

themselves to make the world a better place, odds were good they were pretty set in their ways.

But Giles was old. Ancient, even. And what's more, he looked it. Things like sex and fun were probably a touchy subject, seeing as he'd been allergic to both most of the time she'd known him, and especially over the last two decades.

"We'll try," Buffy said, nodding. And she did try—try to keep a straight face.

"That's right," Spike said, following her lead as he always did. "Next time we have a mind to enjoy ourselves, we'll think of you."

"Instant buzzkill," she agreed.

Giles's eyes darkened for a second. "Do that," he said, then hobbled out the door as quickly as his cane could carry him.

Buffy and Spike stood still for a moment. Then, together, started to laugh.

"Nice angle they caught this time," her vampire purred as he closed the distance between them and threw an arm around her shoulders. "Love the way the light hits your face."

"You are such a bad influence."

"You love it."

Buffy grinned and worked her arms around him, gazing into the eyes that were home and always would be. "Don't tell anyone," she whispered.

"Not bloody likely," he replied, firing back a smirk of his own, and kissed her before she could think to complain.

W IS FOR WORSHIP

THERE WERE ACTUALLY MANY REASONS BUFFY NEVER STUCK AROUND long after she and Spike collapsed into a tangle of limbs.

Don't let the vampire know how much you care. Don't betray to the vampire that you enjoy being with him in the quiet. Don't give away just how not casual these casual intimacies actually are.

And especially—

Don't get so comfortable you fall asleep.

It was, after all, much harder to pretend the sex was transactional when she cuddled up to him afterward.

Not that there was much cuddling. Cuddle a guy once or twice and he'd start to get the wrong—*right*—idea, and few things in this world were more dangerous than Spike with an idea.

Buffy also had practical reasons to laugh off his almost constant invitations to spend the night, the foremost being Dawn...though it was becoming harder to argue that Dawn needed her surrogate parent around all the time now that she was the age Buffy had been when her slayer destiny had come calling. Indeed, Dawn seemed to resent it every time she came home to find she didn't have the house to herself, and seeing as being home was not at the top of Buffy's favorite things right now, the more excuse to not be there, the better.

Except the place she wanted to be, Spike's place, was not an option for anything more than sex. Shouldn't even be an option for that but she was beyond kidding herself anymore.

Just as long as she didn't break one of her rules.

But when the first lick came—slow, soft, and exploratory—Buffy immediately jolted out of the fuzzy haze of sleep and into the realization that she had once again failed to keep a promise to herself. She was in Spike's bed—they'd made it last night, good for them—and he was awake. Awake and between her legs, coaxing her back to the land of wakefulness with his fingers, lips, and tongue. Grinning when the first sound that escaped her was a moan shaped around his name before pulling her clit into his mouth in a brief, insistent suck.

"Oh shit," she said, letting her legs fall wider open in spite of herself, the initial panic at realizing where she was succumbing, as it almost always did, to the thrill of what he was doing to her. Still, she knew she should protest. Should put up at least some semblance of a fight. "Spike, I shouldn't be—"

He nipped at her inner thigh, his fingers finding that magical place inside her that she hadn't realized existed until he'd discovered it. "Hush. Enjoyin' my breakfast," he whispered before licking up her slit again. Stopping short of her clit this time, knowing what she would do. That she would whimper and roll her hips to get more of the *more*, and all thoughts of leaving would flit out of her head.

Or most of the way.

"I've got to—"

"Know what day it is?" he asked, dragging his fingers out of her pussy with a soft, wet suctioning sound that had every nerve in her body alight. "Have some respect."

"Huh?"

"It's Sunday." Spike shifted, then slid a hand under her right thigh to fit over his shoulder. "And what happens on Sunday?"

Buffy shook her head, not trusting herself with words. Not trusting herself to look at him, either. But look she did, and that was all it took. Seeing Spike there, looking at her the way he did—that *impossible* way he did, his hair ruffled the way she loved most and his mouth shiny with her. He held her gaze until he understood she wasn't going

anywhere and kept holding it as he lowered his mouth to her pussy once more.

“On Sunday,” he murmured, “we sinners go to church.”

Then he plunged his tongue inside of her and began to pray.

X IS FOR XEROX

THE DEPTHS TO WHICH SPIKE WOULD SINK IN ORDER TO RUB something in were limitless. No surprises there. No nuance, either. Just Spike being his damn self, proving time and again that he had the emotional maturity of a grapefruit. Angel would expect no less, and no less was what he got. It barely even phased him anymore.

So when he took his seat behind his desk that morning, the sunlight that would kill him meeting the special retrofit glazing that kept him from disintegrating into so much dust, he didn't blink at the stack of papers that awaited him, or the attached sticky note covered with Spike's familiar scrawl. It made sense that his errant offspring would have had to get in the last word. One final dig. All it proved was that Angel was right, and eventually Buffy would see it too.

Buffy. Yeah, that one stung. So did the place on his nose where her knuckles had cracked cartilage.

"How could you not tell me?" she'd demanded, trembling with righteous fury he'd so rarely seen aimed at him.

"It wasn't my decision," he'd fired back.

"Bullshit, it wasn't your decision. The second he came out of that amulet, you should have been on the phone. *I* should have been here!"

"We didn't know what he was!"

“Well, I do!”

And then she'd reared back a fist and crunched it into his face with enough force he'd been thrown through the glass wall of his office. He'd sat up, brushing debris off his suit pants, and looked up just in time to catch Buffy tugging a cackling Spike into one of the many hallways that comprised the executive floor of the Wolfram and Hart building. Fred and Wesley had been standing off to the side, the former with a weak, apologetic smile on her face, owing to the fact that she was the one who had taken it upon herself to phone Buffy in the first place.

It had been hard not to react with hurt. Harder not to scream at the bad luck that was Buffy storming out of the elevator the second Spike had opened a package that had inexplicably re-corporealized him. No one had seemed to care that the lights were flashing or the phones ringing off the hook or even *how* it was Spike was once again able to touch people as well as annoy them. No, the headline had been the Slayer punching the boss in the nose and taking off with a former ghost for what Gunn called a nooner.

But Angel knew Buffy. Whatever it was she felt for Spike was strong—stronger than he was comfortable admitting—but also fleeting, likely heightened by the loss of her hometown and all the conflicting emotions that went with it. After all, if her feelings for Spike were as intense as all that, there was no way she would have kissed *Angel* when he'd swooped into Sunnydale those months ago. It was easier to love someone in absentia than it was when they were right in front of you, and that was especially true when the someone in question was Spike.

Spike, who claimed to care about Buffy, but had made sure that his last act before leaving Wolfram and Hart was to rub in what he saw as his victory over Angel, and at Buffy's expense, no less. Angel knew what he would find before he turned over the stack of papers on his desk—the note, *Enjoy the view, wanker*—leaving little to the imagination.

And as Angel started to thumb through the pages, which were indeed views of Buffy's ass, sans underwear, courtesy of the seat she'd claimed in the copy room, it was anger for her that started to bubble inside him. The violation. The betrayal. Even after all these years, she had no idea the levels Spike would stoop to in order to feel like he'd won.

Angel wondered how he might let her know about this. She likely

wouldn't talk to him if he called, but maybe he could find out where she and Spike were heading and make sure this was waiting for them when they arrived.

And that was his plan until he arrived at the final image and everything inside of his already-technically-dead body went cold.

It was of her breasts. They were pressed against the flat copy surface, the light of the xerox machine throwing the mark just above her left nipple into sharp relief. A mark that was undeniably a vampire bite, oozing blood that had been smudged into the image.

She'd let the bastard *bite* her.

And written just above the mark was another note, this one not in Spike's handwriting.

I'd keep this if I were you, Angel. You'll never see them or any other part of me again. – Buffy

Angel stared at the note longer than he would ever admit to anyone, willing the ringing in his head to lessen. But it didn't. Nothing did.

She knew. She knew exactly who Spike was and she'd done this anyway. *Chosen* him anyway.

Angel worked his throat, let his eyes roam over the image again. Over all the images—the stack of copies the two idiots had made just so he would feel this thing he was feeling now. Buffy's privacy hadn't been compromised; she hadn't been betrayed. She'd let this happen to make a point. She'd wanted him to know.

And now he did know. Finally, at last, Angel knew he was better off without her. She'd done him a favor. The favor he'd been trying to do her, oddly enough, but there was no saving those who didn't want to be saved. There was just regrouping, tossing these papers into the trash, arranging for the copy room to be sanitized, and moving on with his life.

And that's exactly what he did.

Except he put the papers into his desk instead.

Y IS FOR YUM

THERE WAS SOMETHING ABOUT SPIKE WEARING GLASSES THAT MADE the responsible adult in Buffy fly out the window. Whoosh, bye-bye, all gone. It made no sense to her but, over the years, she'd come to accept it, the way she had most everything else involving her reactions to Spike. And though he would protest, grumble, even scold her for what she was about to do, she also knew that he'd one-hundred-percent slid those glasses on because he very badly wanted what was coming.

One of the things they'd discovered was the soul didn't make him any less evil. It just helped him channel his evil into other things.

That was her story, and she was sticking to it.

"Right," Spike said from his seat at the table that doubled as a desk, trying—and failing—not to study the self-view on the Zoom session in such a way that his eyes never quite made it to the laptop camera. Someday, maybe, he'd outgrow his fascination with modern technology and how it helped him skirt the whole *reflection* thing, but as of today, he was still obsessed with his selfie stick and any other piece of equipment that allowed him to watch himself in real time. The result was the newbie watchers who were sitting in on the session would only get the occasional glimpse of their instructor looking at them as though this were an

actual class. “Dunno where the bugger I left off before. One of you brainy types take notes?”

He pulled his gaze off the screen long enough to meet Buffy’s eyes as she sidled into the room, wearing nothing but the very short bathrobe that he’d gotten her for their last anniversary—his creative solution to preserving her modesty if she needed to do something like answer the door but also grant him easy access. It had been mostly a joke, but she’d had fun with it more than once, especially since it hit her at her thighs. Spike had seen her naked so many times she kept expecting the novelty to wear off, but two decades in and his response to her remained Pavlovian—and always would, to hear him tell it; he’d meant it when he’d said he always wanted her. He also went just a little crazy when she was barely covered up, hence why the robe had been more a gift for him. So easy to bend over and flash him, which she knew had been the point.

Only now he didn’t look too happy to see her wearing it. Now he scowled at her through those stupid glasses she knew he only wore when he wanted her to jump his sexy undead bones and made a point about focusing on the Zoom session with this class of up-and-coming watchers. The subject? Entry-level basics. Specifically, if Buffy recalled correctly, and Buffy did, as this happened to be one of her favorite subjects, vampire anatomy.

A point one of the kids—because that’s what they looked like to Buffy these days—verified the next second, his voice squeaking like puberty was still well and underway. She swore they got younger and younger. But then, her own sister looked older than she did and that was something Buffy doubted she’d ever get used to.

“Good. This’ll be quick, then. Not much to remember,” Spike told the camera before throwing a challenging look over the laptop lid. Buffy just sashayed forward, playing the silky belt holding her mostly for-show robe closed, and stopped on the other side of the table. “First, there’s the strength. We have more of it. Not as much as slayers but you find the right sorta creature and that doesn’t matter a lick.”

Buffy arched an eyebrow and mouthed the word, “Lick?”

Spike pretended not to notice.

She thought that was rude and dropped to her knees under the table,

where the view was mighty fine. For being all doth protesty, Spike was already sporting an impressive erection—maybe that was redundant—the fabric of his jeans pulled tight over the bulge and his legs all splayed in welcome. Buffy crawled her way over, listening as his voice started doing the low rumbling thing that typically preceded a good spanking, and decided teasing was for wimps. She knew what she wanted and she went for it. Though she did spare a second to meet his eyes—he always looked down, like he couldn’t help it—as she popped his jeans button and slowly lowered his zipper.

Maybe he couldn’t help himself. There was little Spike loved more than watching her as she worked her lips up and down his cock. She knew this because he told her, usually between whimpers, every time she did it. And maybe Buffy was being a bit evil, but she was what she ate and considering what was in her mouth, she figured he had it coming. Or she did. Odds were good both of them would several times before the noon hour and that was just fine with her. What else was a slayer to do when there was no apocalypse to avert? When the world was protected by a not-so-small army that grew every day and she had no choice but to just live her life like a normal person?

As normal as she was capable of being, anyway.

Spike’s hand wound up tangled in her hair the way it always did, his nostrils flared and his cheeks sucked in and he kept talking—forgetting what he was talking about more than once, but soldiering on anyway—and when his shaft hardened, his legs tensing, Buffy was more than ready. She caught his eyes again and nodded, and he hissed and clutched her harder and spilled down her throat, and there was no way the baby watchers didn’t know, but she didn’t care.

This was her life, and she was living it the way she wanted.

And that was just delicious.

Z IS FOR ZIP

SHE KNEW WHERE THIS WAS GOING. WHAT HER CHOICE WOULD BE. His mouth on hers, biting and rasping and plundering, and her blood rushing in all the right ways. That *alive* feeling she'd been chasing since she'd clawed her way back to open air and hadn't experienced in full until right now. This choice. And there would be no running away, just complete surrender, and it was such a bad idea—such a terrible, awful, wonderful idea—but she was through fighting.

It was time to feel instead.

So Buffy seized his zipper and dragged it down, the sound glaring against their mutual moans and grunts. And she moved, jostled her skirt until she found the slit, pulled it aside, pulled her panties too, and he was there, and he was inside of her, and she wrenched her mouth from his with a hard gasp.

He was looking at her with eyes full of the soul he didn't have. Shock, awe, lust, and that love. That bad, dangerous, *wrong* love that she craved as much as she craved him.

But Buffy couldn't think about that now. Now, it was time to feel.

So she lifted herself on his cock with a slight whimper then sank down again, and again, and again, until there was no more room for thought at all. Just feeling. Just this. Just him inside, and inside, and

inside. Releasing a low, throaty growl, kissing her, then burying his face between her breasts. Gripping her hips, guiding his strokes, and sensation coalescing until there was nowhere to go but everywhere to explode. And the rush of falling back, his hand braced the back of her head, the floor between them disappearing, and when she landed on him he was hard again, and she was moving before the world could slow down enough for thought to catch up.

Right now she was inside her choice. Inside the moment.

Inside the *zip*.