

SALVAGE



HOLLY DENISE





THE FIRST THING BUFFY REALIZED UPON MAKING THE JOURNEY FROM sleep to wake was that hey, no nightmares last night. No hard gasp, no blinking up at the inside of her coffin lid, no all-consuming panic as she tore at the fabric and wood and then punched fists through dirt to make her way to clean air. Just a peaceful, quiet nothing. The sort of nothing she'd honestly started to think she'd never experience again. Another part of her that she'd left in the grave.

The second thing Buffy realized was she was not exactly comfortable. Or warm. In fact, she was the opposite of both those things. She'd fallen asleep somewhere bad. Somewhere with a hard, stone-cold surface, and she was pretty sure she was covered in dust and grime—and oh god, she hadn't realized those muscles even existed, let alone that they could hurt. Gooseflesh waved across her skin as she opened her eyes to gaze at a ceiling that was as unfamiliar as it was distant. Like, normal ceilings weren't twenty feet from the floor, were they? Or nearly as patchy, with stray rays of sunshine spilling through loose or nonexistent shingles. Not home, then.

And then it came back. All of it. The whole sordid mess. Meeting Spike on the way home. He'd been mad—*shock*—and then in the way, and then she'd hit him and he'd hit back, and the chip hadn't gone off because *shit*, the chip hadn't gone off. And he'd hit her again—"Came back a little less human than you were"—and that possibility had pushed her off her feet and into an endless fall. The sort she could only fight by lashing out, and that was exactly what she'd done. So tired of being tired, of being okay for the sake of being okay, of pretending and smiling and trying, trying, trying to be the Buffy they had known, not the Spike-kissing version that had fallen from Heaven.

So she'd given in *again*. Kissed him *again*. And unlike the kisses they had already shared, this one had been full of intent. No more hit-and-run. No more denying herself the one comfort she'd been able to find in a world stripped of any. That Spike could hit her now just made everything equal—made *him* her equal as he had been before. There was a thrill in knowing he could kill her, that he was still choosing not to kill her, that the playing field was level again and his desire for her hadn't abated. He'd wanted and she'd wanted and they'd both wanted so she'd yanked down the zipper of his jeans, made use of the slit in her skirt and

then he'd been inside of her. Hard, thick, and for the first time since the coffin, she'd felt alive. Really, truly alive.

Perhaps that had been the look he'd given her. Similar to the way his face had changed the second he'd realized the Buffy walking down the stairs wasn't the bot he'd commissioned. That complete and utter astonishment—*the word you're looking for is awe*—that he wasn't dreaming. That the thing he wanted more than anything was really happening.

She hadn't known it at the time, but that look had brought something to life under all the dead. Sparked something inside of her that she hadn't understood, even if it had drawn her back. Back to him for more, and more he gave. He kept giving. Kept being alone with her in the quiet. Kept being her escape. Kept being her living grave.

And last night...

Honestly, given everything, it had been inevitable. She couldn't stop kissing him despite knowing she should so what was the next logical step?

Something was stirring to her left. No, someone. Spike. Buffy sucked in a deep breath and glanced over, wondering how they had managed to get as far from each other as they had while they slept. The distance wasn't vast but vast enough to notice. For some reason, she would have expected Spike to be a cuddler.

*And what are you, upset? This is Spike we're talking about. You had sex with Spike!*

Yeah, she really had. Quite a lot of sex, to be honest. And, even worse, she wasn't sorry.

Like at all.

A slight laugh bubbled through her. She slapped a hand over her mouth, though not quite fast enough to smother the sound entirely. Spike had lifted his head and was now regarding her with the sort of look only he could pull off. Puzzled, optimistic, dazed, satisfied, leering. A whole hodgepodge of human emotions stretched across the face of someone very much not human. Or so she had tried fervently to believe over the last few weeks.

"When did the building fall down?" she asked, more to give him something other than her to focus on. Being the center of Spike's atten-

tion was a heady experience on a normal day, and this was anything but a normal day.

He blinked and looked around as though he hadn't noticed their surroundings. It was possible he hadn't, for as intently as he had been studying her. "I dunno. Must've sometime between the first time and the..." He didn't finish, just looked at her again, this time with a slightly dopey smile that managed to look both wildly out of place and perfectly fitting at the same time. "Bit nippy this mornin', is it?"

"What?"

Spike smirked and dipped his chin meaningfully downward, drawing her attention to her bare breasts which, yes, boasted two very pointy nipples. Buffy threw her arm over her chest to cover herself, though much too late. She could feel where her flesh was the tenderest courtesy of his mouth. There wasn't an inch of her he hadn't nibbled at some point, but Spike definitely had his favorite places.

"Don't get shy on me, love," he all but purred, easing himself over the debris that separated them. He took her wrist and lowered her arm from her chest with an appreciative groan. Then his head was dipping and his mouth was on her there. Tongue swirling around one of her nipples before he closed his lips around it, and Buffy, who had never been all that into breast play, suddenly found herself very glad she was on the ground and hadn't yet tried to climb to her feet. And also very aware of just how naked she was when she felt the corresponding gush of wetness between her legs. Thank god she was lying on something soft—she didn't know what for sure, though it was fabricky and familiar. Maybe the skirt one of them had ripped off at some point last night. Point was, it was there. The alternative was too icky to consider.

"Mmm," Spike murmured, releasing her breast with a wet plop that seemed almost obscenely loud against the quiet. "That for me, then?"

"Is what for you?"

He grinned and licked her nipple again, scaling one hand down her body until he had her pussy pressed against his palm, and *god*, all the good sense in Buffy's head started to flutter out again. "Someone didn't get enough last night," he whispered before teasing his teeth over her nipple. "Didn't either, myself. Fuck, there is no getting enough of you."

Right. Last night. That thing they probably needed to talk about, and

sooner rather than later. But it was hard for the brain of Buffy to be functional first thing in the morning, especially when she was already disoriented and her body was actively working against her. Spike released a low growl, parting her folds with his fingers, and her dumb traitor legs decided to help by spreading open wide.

“You’re amazing,” he murmured, now pressing kisses along the side of her neck. Stopping to tease the place where he’d bitten her last night. Not a hard bite and definitely not with fangs, but with enough pressure that she’d wondered if he would break the skin with his blunt teeth. If he was daring her to tell him no, to stop, or seeing just how far he could push her. Considering she was lying naked amid the ruins of a building they had apparently fucked into rubble, his fingers sinking into her all-too-willing pussy despite the protests of her overused muscles, Buffy thought it safe to say that he could push her plenty. And that she wanted him to, wrong as that was.

Oh god, and it was. So wrong. But the line had been crossed. The thing she’d been fighting giving herself over to since that first night. Since realizing what flared in her chest upon meeting his eyes had felt a lot like life. As though he could will it into her like that, even before knowing just how much she needed it. Like it was that simple.

A line crossed once was much easier to cross a second time. And a third. And if they were counting every time she’d given in to him, surrendered to what her body wanted rather than pulling the brakes and taking inventory of where her decisions had landed her, then they were in the double digits. Spike had been insatiable last night.

But then, so had she. Every orgasm she’d crested just left her hungrier for the next one, and the one after that. For the sensation of Spike’s hands and mouth on her body. For everything he wanted to give her and then some. And then her own curiosities, her own needs. Exploring him as she never had before—his every perfect curve, the hard lines that made up his muscles. And of course his cock, because even before she’d started considering him as no slayer should consider her mortal enemy, she’d wondered about what he was packing. If he could back up all his leering and suggestive looks and smirks and innuendos... and it turned out, he had plenty to brag about. No wonder he was so *cocky*.

That cock was now bobbing between her legs, hard and thick and maybe even better in the daylight. And Spike was over her, curling his fingers inside of her to tease the same place he'd discovered last night—and oh, how his face had lit up when she'd barked out a startled, honest, "What?" at discovering the G-spot did indeed exist. All masculine pride and satisfaction, which would have been annoying if he hadn't earned it so thoroughly.

"Spike," Buffy whimpered when he pulled his head back to consider her, his eyes dark with passion. "We should... We can't—"

"Bloody right we should," he said, settling his thumb over her clit once more. "And bugger *we can't*. Think we proved that wrong by now."

"I need to get home."

"What you need, Slayer, is right here." He pulled his fingers from her pussy with a sound that was downright indecent and held her gaze as he sucked them clean. "Admit it. Last night was a bloody revelation for you. Finally gave you somethin' to sing about."

Buffy rolled her eyes and pressed her hands against his chest, though admittedly, her heart was not in it. Going home was a thing she knew she should do—knew she needed to do, even, as part of the Buffy Summers costume she'd been wearing ever since Heaven—but she didn't want to move. Didn't want to try to find her clothes or pull herself together, pretend like she hadn't spent the night being railed by a monster and, yes, enjoying every second of it.

Maybe it wasn't something to sing about—that had hardly been what she'd been asking the universe for when that particular lyric had left her lips—but it was something else. Something more than the life she'd been reluctantly stumbling through these last few weeks. No more playing by the rules or trying to live up to the expectations of other people, and certainly no more denying herself the things that brought her the most comfort in a world that was sorely lacking.

She would never be able to explain it, but she also didn't want to explain it. She was exhausted from analyzing her every thought and impulse, feeling guilty for wanting the things she wanted, or finding comfort in the only place offering something more than a platitude.

"Could you be any more full of yourself?" she managed to ask Spike, the hands on his chest having somehow ended up around his neck. Huh.

When had that happened? And then she didn't care because his mouth was on her, and it was just like those other times. The same passion and need and want, everything he kept showing her through taste and touch. Some deep-down part of her had always wondered if his interest would wane should they ever actually have sex, love mistaken for idle curiosity, but nothing had changed with him. He fisted her hair at the back of her head as his lips and tongue moved against hers in concert, making the same low rumbling noises he had the night before. Like he was feeling too much, experiencing too much, to contain within himself, and it had to pour out somewhere.

Then he broke away from her mouth, panting, and nudged her brow with his own. "You could, you know. Be as full of me as you fancy."

She laughed in spite of herself. "Spike, it's—"

"I'm stuck here, aren't I? Sun's up."

That was a very good point if she just ignored all the times he'd managed to negotiate his way around town during the day. "I left Dawn alone all night."

"Oh, what, afraid she had herself a nice time without you?"

"You know she's—"

"Old as you were when you started savin' the world," he finished for her, reaching between them. Taking his cock in his hand and sliding it along the seam of her pussy. Spreading her wetness until the head was completely coated and she was almost too far gone to think thoughts that didn't involve him sinking inside of her. Was this what it meant to have your brains fucked out? She thought it might be. Then his breath, which shouldn't even exist but did, was at her ear, playing with the loose strands as he rumbled in a low voice, "Stay with me. Please."

Buffy's knees shook, even with her lying down. "This can't work. No matter what happened last night, it can't work."

"Works just fine, thanks, need a reminder?"

"Spike, I'm serious. I know this meant a lot to you—"

He pulled back abruptly, the stormy blue of his eyes meeting hers. "Meant *a lot* to me," he retorted in a flat deadpan. "Did you not hear me last night, Slayer? I'm in love with you."

Her stupid heart decided to stupid skip at the words, as though she hadn't heard them before. As though part of the reason she kept seeking



him out *wasn't* because those words, spoken or not, were always in the air between them. She could feel Spike's love for her every time he met her eyes, made her laugh, poured her a drink, threw a punch at her side. Not only that—it was why she'd sought him out so many times since that first night. He offered the quiet, yes, and a place where she could unload her truths. No judgment or horror, no trying to tell her it would be all right. Nothing except the comfort of his shoulder and the use of his ear, and yeah, she'd known damn well that relying on him was dangerous. She'd known he loved her, and she'd still kept going to his crypt night after night, a dare to him but mostly to herself. Whispers built upon the dreams she'd had during her first life, passionate and sordid and shameful but she'd told herself not to be ashamed as dreams didn't need to mean anything. Dreams were just what the subconscious got up to while the brain was at rest. Or, sometimes, a portent of doom she was better off heeding because, well, Slayer.

Buffy knew what she'd been doing. She also knew Spike would never have called her out on it if the singing and dancing demon hadn't forced his, err, vocal cords. And finally, she knew what the last few nights for her had been like. Waking up and knowing that because of the demon whose power had prompted Spike to air his feelings, she couldn't keep showing up at his place, and definitely not after she'd made the colossally stupid decision to kiss him.

Except she'd wanted to kiss him. She'd wanted to kiss him for a while now. Maybe not from the start but near the start. The third or fourth night after her head had cleared enough for her to remember who she was—when she'd started to emerge from the fugue, assigned the people in her life the roles she remembered and understood that fundamentally, she shouldn't be attracted to Spike but was anyway.

Maybe he'd seen all of that swirling inside since the beginning. Probably he had. Maybe he saw it now, too. Probably he did. For the edge in his eyes began to wane, and he was suddenly looking at her as though seeing something he hadn't before. Then he was close, closer, and his lips were on hers and she wasn't pushing him back. Wasn't trying to fight or argue or make excuses or leave, because she didn't want to leave. She wanted...

God, she had no idea. Only that it wasn't what she should want.

But why not? *Why not?*

Then the world was moving, and she was moving with it. Spike seizing her by the hips and pulling her along with him, over him, until he was on his back and she was astride his hips, his cock strained toward a ceiling that was a million miles away, attached to a house that no longer stood. She inhaled sharply and wrapped her hand around him. Watched as his skin moved under her fingers, dragging foreskin up around the cockhead and down again, and—*yes*—relishing his soft gasp, the way his eyes widened, how vulnerable he looked lying beneath her, naked amid the remaining debris of their fight.

The others had brought her back to life, and she hadn't felt alive at all except during those stolen moments with him.

Moments like this one.

"Okay," she said softly, uncertain but also very certain. "Okay, Spike."

He lifted his head, his heart in his eyes. Right where it had always been. "Okay?"

She nodded, lifting herself up, dragging his cock along her pussy, letting him feel her. Letting herself feel him. Really feel him. And he felt wonderful, even right.

*Goddamn.*

"Yeah," Buffy said, easing his cock back until she was sliding onto it, onto him, and this decision she'd made. And god, that felt right too. "Okay."