

TUTOR

Enemies with Benefits #1



HOLLY DENISE



BUFFY WIPED HER HANDS ALONG THE SIDES OF HER SKIRT. IT WASN'T enough that the fiend would be able to smell her nervousness the second she stepped into Giles's house. Oh no, the rest of her body had to betray her too. Sweating palms, rabbiting heart, racing pulse—all signs pointed to this being the worst possible idea of all bad ideas, yet here she was with the putting one foot in front of the other. If anything, her fear had sort of lit a fire under her ass to go ahead and make with the insane proposition before she could lose her nerve. And it wasn't like the world would end if this went as badly as she thought it'd go. An end-of-the-world scenario was something she could handle, anyway.

No, if this went as badly as she thought it'd go, she had a rather elegant solution—one solution tucked inside the cross-body bag she'd slung over her shoulder before leaving the dorm. Fact one: it was wood; fact two: it was discreet; fact three: it was pointy.

Yeah, if so much as a sneer crossed the evil bloodsucker's lips, she'd make him a vacuum's problem.

Buffy stopped right outside Giles's place, squared her shoulders, and willed her stupid heart to stop being stupid.

Remember. You have all the power here.

With that last confidence-boosting thought, she inhaled deeply and pushed the door open.

"Giles?" she called, stepping across the threshold.

"Polite thing to do before you enter a man's home is to knock, Slayer." Spike was in the kitchen, staring at her over the breakfast bar. "Doesn't anyone in this sodding town lock their doors?"

"Spike, the day I take etiquette lessons from you is the day Harmony gets awarded the MacArthur Genius Grant," she replied, thankful he'd started with snark because, hey, familiar territory. "Also, not your home."

Spike snickered and rolled his eyes. "Your old man's not here, blondie. Go annoy someone else."

Buffy would in fact *not* go annoy someone else, being that she'd come over here knowing full well that Giles was out of town. What exactly he was doing out of town, well, she still didn't know, only that it might involve that Olivia woman he occasionally did gross adult things with. And she knew this because he'd begged Xander to take Spike for a few days so as not to give the vampire free rein of his apartment and Xander had patently refused. Willow, still trying to make up for the wonkiness that was her Will Be Done spell, had offered to housesit in his stead. The request had come at a good time, at least, what with winter break and all. But Buffy had volunteered to take over so she had an excuse to ask the dumbest question in the history of question-asking.

"And he left you here," Buffy retorted, closing the door behind her. "Alone. And not all tied-up."

He regarded her with the same lazy contempt she'd come to expect over the past few days. "What game you playin' at, Slayer?"

"What?"

"Patrol goin' slow? Not helping you scratch a certain itch of yours?" He arched an eyebrow, and now some of the trademark meanness she'd come to expect leaked into his too-expressive eyes. "Can't think of why else you'd storm in here actin' all brassed and pretendin' you don't know your watcher decided to take a break from your sorry lot."

There were times that Spike played the role of an idiot so well she forgot how freakishly insightful he was. How, no matter what was

going on, he seemed somewhat perfectly attuned to her thoughts, from frustrations to epiphanies to everything in between. His calling her out on her crap about ten seconds into the game shouldn't have been a surprise, but somehow was because there was no way he could just *know* everything.

"I-I didn't," Buffy argued, crossing her arms. Even *she* heard the waver in her voice.

"Yeah, you did, and you're a bloody terrible liar." Spike huffed and pointed to the phone by the kitchen. "Rupert set the whole thing up with Willow before he left. Told *me* to keep an eye on the little witch in case she started sniffing around the good stuff."

"Like Giles would ever trust you with anything."

He rolled his eyes. "Well, he wagers I don't much fancy the idea of getting stuck in another sodding spell of hers and that I might be able to stop her if she starts playing with fire she can't control just yet."

As much as she hated to admit it, Buffy could see the logic in that plan. While Giles wouldn't trust Spike with anything of mega importance, and Spike wouldn't agree to help for anything less than a king's ransom, the threat of possibly being thrown into another spell where they were joined at the lips was likely something he wanted to avoid. Scratch that—*definitely* something he wanted to avoid. Which made her presence here, the stupid idea that had spurred her to her watcher's place, even more desperate and pathetic than it had been any of the fifteen bajillion times she'd tried to talk herself out of it.

"And, in case you're forgetting, Ditzzy the Vampire Slayer, vampires' senses are sharper than yours," Spike continued. "So I know you were in your bleeding dorm room while Rupert and the witch set this up."

"Just because I was in the room doesn't mean—"

"You told her to tell Giles that if he hadn't already been sacked by the Wankers Council, leavin' me all by my lonesome here would seal it." Spike crossed his arms, his mouth tugging upward in a victorious smirk. "You knew I was here and that I was alone. What's the matter, pet? So worried you won't be able to keep your hands to yourself that you had to come up with that flimsy pretense?"

Buffy stared at him for a moment, her insides squirming. And rioting, because no one could touch her buttons the way Spike did. The

way he seemed to *revel* in. She had half a mind to just forget the whole thing and storm back home, tell Willow that she'd changed her mind and do her best to forget that the idea had existed at all, let alone that she'd gotten this far into putting it into action. That was the sane thing to do. The right thing to do.

Because everything else was just full of ick.

And yet, her feet refused to move.

"I've started seeing someone," she managed in a low voice. Well, blurted was more the word for it. As though if she got the words out fast enough, the fact that she was saying them at all wouldn't catch up with her.

Spike blinked at her. "There a point to this story, Slayer, or are you just tryin' to bore me to death?"

"Shut up."

"Oh, any more talk like that and I'll be in a right fright."

"I haven't actually started seeing him. I mean, we had a picnic and then..." And then the Will Be Done spell had happened and Buffy had hit a brick wall. It had happened right after she'd sworn to Riley that the entire *I'm getting married* thing had been an elaborate and tragically unfunny joke, a way to make him pay for catching her bespelled self ogling at wedding dresses.

The thing Riley had said to her then, right before he'd walked off, had shaken her to her core. Mostly because it left her thinking that he thought she was... Well, she didn't know. But that had spiraled into a whole internal pep talk that had turned into an internal freak-out that had led her to where she was now. Standing in front of Spike, bursting with the need both to get this out there and to pop him in the nose, collect her dignity, and make for the door.

"Not that this isn't a riveting story... Actually, no, it's exactly that. Thought you hero-types weren't too keen on torture."

"Do I need to gag you?"

That smirk was back in full force. "Do you want to?"

"Ugh." Buffy dropped her face into her hands, took a deep breath, fortified herself, and looked up again. She was going about this all wrong—all dainty virgin when she really needed to do what she did best and bring out the inner Slayer. So she squared her shoul-

ders and fixed her bloodsucking nemesis with a hard stare. “Okay, some ground rules. First of all, this conversation? It’s not happening.”

“That’s a right relief, considering you’ve gone all toys in the attic on me.”

“Second of all, shut up.”

Spike’s eyes widened, but only a little. And either he heard her or was too stunned to come up with something to shoot back because his mouth remained shut. *Hallelujah.*

“Third of all, if I find out you’ve broken Rule One, and I cannot emphasize this enough, you are dust. I mean it, Spike. I will stake you so fast you won’t have time to appreciate the breeze before your brain disintegrates into a bunch of particles that no one, and I mean no one, will cry over. Do you understand me?”

Spike stared at her a moment longer, and she knew she had him. Familiar, hot anger flared behind his eyes, the same that told her one or both of them would be bruised by now were it not for whatever the commando guys had done to keep him from biting. It was good, that anger. Good and also intimidating. She needed Spike to hate her, needed this to not sound as pathetic as it was bound to sound, but she also needed him to respect the rules she’d laid out. Which was ridiculous and naïve, because *respect* in no way belonged in any word association with Spike, no more than *rules* did. But she also knew he would be curious—had been counting on that fact, actually, and was more than prepared to see her threat through if he gave her so much as the wrong kind of smirk.

“I need an answer here,” Buffy bit out when he still didn’t say anything.

“Need to know more than that. What’s it you’re tryin’ to get me to promise to?”

“No. That’s not how we do this. You agree or you don’t. If you don’t, I walk out that door and you never find out.”

Spike’s jaw hardened but he didn’t argue. Instead, after another obscenely long moment, he jerked his head in a clipped nod.

“The words, Spike.”

“Fine,” he growled. “I understand. What the sodding hell is—”

"I'll get to that." Buffy blew out a breath. Okay, one hurdle down. "Do you know why Angel left?"

"Cause he's a tosser." The response seemed automatic, like it flew out before his brain could process the question. The next second, Spike narrowed his eyes and took a step forward. "Not all that sorry, myself. He was always gonna walk out on you. Wanker's good at that."

Okay, that hurt, and she could have kicked herself for having not seen it coming. "I'm not interested in your opinion of Angel."

"You brought him up, ducks."

"He left because he wanted me to have a normal life. Or a normal relationship, if not a normal life."

At that, Spike barked a laugh.

"What? That's funny?"

"That actually the line he fed you?" he asked, laughing harder. "That he wanted you to have a *normal* relationship?"

The part of her far too raw from Angel's walking away collided with the part of her far too accustomed to popping Spike in the nose whenever he mouthed off. Buffy moved forward without thinking, pulled her arm back, and sent the pest flying. She tried not to smirk when said pest smashed the wall hard enough that Xander would have to come over and help patch it up. Emphasis on *tried*.

"Oi!" Spike climbed to his feet, holding his nose. "Don't take it out on me, Slayer. I'm not the one that fed you a bunch of rot and ran off with my bloody tail between my legs."

"He did it because he was right!"

"He did it because that's what he does," he shot back, studying the blood now pooling against his hand. "It's what he *always* does. Just what sort of *normal* relationship is a slayer supposed to have, anyway? Your mates sure as fuck don't stay outta trouble for more than five sodding seconds—you reckon anyone you *normal* it up with is gonna be any better? What happens when the local beasties get wind that you got yourself a nice bruisable fuck-toy? You've been lucky this far. Willow can take care of herself, more or less, by workin' her mojo. Harris is a bloody insult but that demon bird he's shackled up with knows enough to keep him kicking. But you get a normal bloke and you got yourself a nice piece of leverage for every creepy-crawly to

hang over your head. And it's not like that's never happened before, even with a man who's stronger than the average bear." Now he was grinning again, rocking on his heels, the bloody nose forgotten. "Seems I recall you had to come in and save the great sod from yours truly. Mighta spared him a bit of pain in LA, too, come to think of it. Bloke I hired to torture the ring outta him was a bloody artist." He paused, scowled. "Also a bloody backstabber, but he knew how to swing a hot poker."

Buffy balled her hands into fists, her insides twisting again for reasons thoroughly unrelated to the idea that had brought her here. Well, not thoroughly—more like, *how could you even pretend to consider this* after the breakdown she'd gotten from Oz regarding Spike's attempt to recover the Gem of Amara. Apparently, Angel had been inches from caving and giving the ring over to the vampire Spike had recruited to locate it.

"Yeah. Good times, that," Spike said, grinning more broadly. "But it proves my point, doesn't it? Any lad thick enough to fall for your doe-eyes is gonna be in for it. Either you land yourself someone who doesn't know you're the Slayer and he gets himself killed by his own bloody ignorance, or you find someone who trails after you when you make the rounds at night, none of the skills or the instinct, and his neck ripe and waiting for any big ugly to sink his fangs into."

Buffy swallowed, crossing her arms again. "Xander learned to take care of himself."

"Hardly."

"You just said he had!"

"No, I said he's managed to hoodwink some centuries' old former demon into lookin' over his shoulder."

"But that's not even true! He's fought with me."

"Like I said, he got lucky. Both of your chums have survived as long as they managed because of luck. And you know it. They might know enough to be ahead of everyone else in this miserable town, but they're not us."

"Oh, there's an *us*?"

"Creature of the night."

"I am *not* a creature."

“Right, but you’re not entirely human, either, are you?” He looked her up and down again, the same way he had when she’d stormed in, his eyes hooded. “Comes from somewhere, your power. Somewhere that’s not human. Closer to my side.”

“You know what? Coming to you was a terrible idea.”

“Probably, but you’re not runnin’ off yet, are you?”

No, she really wasn’t. At some point in the future, she’d have to do some serious self-reflection to figure out just what it was about her that went toward frustration and pain instead of away from it. “So,” she said with borrowed patience, “that’s what I did. Try to find someone normal. As you well know.”

He favored her with his patented sneer. “That little fleshbag you decided to take for a spin. How is good ole Porky these days, anyway?”

“Parker,” she corrected, though not knowing why. Wasn’t like it mattered. “And I’m sure he’s charming his way into some girl’s pants right now. *So* not the point.” Mostly. “The point is... I have a proposition for you. A proposition that involves me helping you undo whatever those commando guys did to you so that you can, once and for all, leave this town and get the hell out of my life forever.”

Yeah, she had his attention now. Just as she’d known she would. The sneer faded, giving way to shock he couldn’t hide. And Buffy allowed herself a moment to enjoy this because once he heard her terms, she’d lose the high ground. He’d either laugh himself to dust or make the sort of comment that could only be answered by a stake in the chest. So right now, this second, she basked. Spike thrown off his game was all kinds of fun to look at.

“So what is it?” Spike asked. “The catch.”

All right. *Here goes everything.*

“I need you to teach me how to not suck at sex.”

HE WAS HEARING THINGS. HE HAD TO BE. BECAUSE THE SLAYER certainly hadn't just offered to help him start munching on civilians again in exchange for the low, low price of taking her to bed. That couldn't be it.

So Spike waited a beat. Then another. Then one more for good measure. When she neglected to cough up the punch-line, he was left with nothing to do but ask.

"Say what now?"

He watched, fascinated, as her creamy skin reddened. And suddenly, she seemed incapable of looking him in the eye.

Bloody hell, was it possible she was serious?

"It's just been the twice," she told the floor. "The... Well, you know what happened with Angel. And he made it clear that I was severely lacking in the...*that*."

Yeah, Spike was sure he had. Just as sure as he was that the sod had been lying through his teeth just to get the girl to cry. That was what Angelus did, after all. Couldn't be an upfront monster—it was all about the head games with him. Though how Buffy could, nearly two years later, still think whatever the ponce had said was true was beyond him. After all, it had been good enough that he'd achieved that one moment

of happiness, hadn't it? Not to mention all the bloody gabbing Angelus had done about that night. How often he'd regaled the lackeys that had formerly been Spike's with tales of how the Slayer tasted. How she sounded when she was coming. How much sweeter she'd looked for it the next day, when he'd rubbed her nose in the mistake she'd made.

"And then with Parker..." Buffy kept her gaze on the ground, the red in her cheeks becoming more pronounced. "I did something wrong."

Bloody hell, it was one thing when *he* was spouting off this rot—it was something else entirely for the girl to believe it about herself. Something in Spike's chest lurched and he found himself wanting to... to... Well, he didn't really know what he wanted to do, only that he was certain he wasn't *supposed* to want to do anything but take this golden piece of information and twist it until he could turn it into a weapon. Wouldn't take too much, he reckoned. She'd given him everything he'd need to make her life miserable for the foreseeable future. Might not be able to get his kicks in anymore, but he could still make it hurt.

But Buffy being vulnerable with him was something he hadn't been prepared for.

"Let me get this straight," Spike said, not missing the way she tensed the second he started talking. "You want me to take you for a spin and give you pointers?"

That put some fire in her—at least got her looking at him again, her jaw set and her nostrils flaring. "You're a pig, Spike."

"So that's *not* what you're asking?"

"I... No, it *is* what I'm asking, but you don't have to say it like that."

He huffed. "Like what?"

"Like...like *that*!" She frowned and shook her head. "So are you in or not? And either way you answer, please remember that breathing a word of this to anyone will result in me staking you so fast—"

Spike rolled his eyes, waved at her. "Yeah, yeah. Got that much." Not that he was certain he knew anyone who would believe such a tall tale. Wagered he could crow all he liked to Angel himself and nothing, save capturing the whole delicious encounter on film, would do rot to convince him it was the truth.

"So?"

“So what?”

Buffy scrunched up her face, flexing her hands in that way he knew meant she was trying to keep from socking him. “Do we have a deal?”

Of course they did. What bloke in his right mind would say no to this? A chance to get whatever the army blokes had done to him nice and undone—freeing him up to kill the Slayer in the process—and get an answer to a certain question that had dogged him for over a century. Get all of that out of his system before he took the bitch’s head back to Dru to prove, once and for all, that he was monster enough for her and any other bird he might take a shine to.

Though instead of sealing their deal, Spike instead somehow found himself blurting, “Why’s it you’ve come to me with this?”

“What?”

“Seems there are plenty of blokes around who’d be more than willin’ to—”

“Don’t even.”

“What? Wonder why it is you trust me to teach you how to fuck? Sorry, pet, gonna wonder.” And wank about it later, no doubt. “Don’t be shy on me now. Not like you’ll have any secrets from me if we do this.”

“Oh, get over yourself.” But she was blushing and staring at the floor again. “I trust you to tell me what I’m bad at. In fact, I trust you to make me so mad in the process that I might want to stake you after all.”

“And no one else would give it to you straight if you’re a rotten shag?”

There was that little twitch again. Just how many times had she kept herself from unleashing on him? By his count, he was at least three nose punches behind his normal tally.

“Humans,” Buffy said through gritted teeth, “typically don’t like to hurt someone’s feelings. I don’t want to be molly-coddled, or any kind of coddled. You definitely aren’t the molly-coddling type.”

Was it possible she’d never actually met another human? Spike decided it was better not to ask that.

“Plus, you’re experienced.” Now she shifted a bit, her face burning brighter still, her blood heating up in all sorts of delicious ways. “I

know that from the...things you said when we were under that spell. And the... What you did to me in the kitchen.”

Spike blinked, fighting off a grin. And here he'd thought Buffy would go to her bloody grave without mentioning that to a soul—or non-soul, as it were. Bad enough her mates had caught her enthusiastically snogging her worst enemy—if they'd known just how much *Buffy taste* had been in his mouth after that spell, it seemed likely the whelp would have seen to staking him by now.

“Been thinkin’ about that a lot, have you?” Spike asked, unable to keep from prowling a step forward.

“Shut up.”

“We do this, pet, and I expect this honesty thing to go both ways.”

“Meaning what?”

“Meaning when I ask, you tell. Bloke’s gotta right to know.”

And fuck, he wanted to know. Had wanted to know from the moment she'd exploded in his mouth. Spike had never guessed the Slayer to be particularly adventurous in the sack—she'd been wound too tight, blushed a little too easily, particularly for a bird who'd spent the better part of the evening wiggling on his lap like a bitch in heat. Every time the Watcher had gone stumbling around, Spike had seized the opportunity to whisper little dirties into his girl's ear, relishing how her blood would rush and her heart would pound. He'd asked her to steal off with him for a quickie just to take the edge off, but Buffy had been a purist, all about waiting until the wedding night to shed her inhibitions, as well as her clothes.

But Spike was nothing if not resourceful. While she'd been searching for something to crumble into his mug of blood, he'd cornered her in the kitchen, tugged down her trousers, sunk to his knees, and proceeded to show her just how talented he was with his mouth. This much Spike had been determined to put out of his mind because remembering just how hot she was, how sweet she smelled, how bloody good she tasted would leave him hard and aching and brassed off that the Slayer could have that effect on him. Made pushing out Dru's batty insistence that he was covered in Buffy more difficult than it was already.

“Are you saying you'll do it?”

"It being *you*, you mean."

Buffy snapped her head up, her eyes narrowing. "You're disgusting."

"And you're the one over here tryin' to get into my pants." He raked his gaze up and down her again. "Deal is I teach you how to be a decent shag and you help me chase the other puppies again? Any part of you think I'd say no to that?"

"Well, yeah. You hate me."

"Mhmm. Yeah, I do." He hated every stupid thing about her. "Here's the first lesson, Slayer. A freebie. Sometimes there's nothing more satisfying than a hate fuck."

Spike was prepared this time when her fist came flying toward his nose, and he caught it with a grin. "Now now. Is that the way to treat your teacher?"

Buffy didn't so much as flinch, and hell, that was brilliant. The girl had always been radiant, beautiful in ways that defied description, but when she was pissed off, she went from beautiful to stunning. All that fire and passion, bottled up so tight she was a ticking time bomb. And she had been ever since the first night he'd seen her. Hers was a fire that couldn't be tamed.

"I need you," she said in a low, dangerous tone that did little more than make his cock swell, "to say you're not going to tell anyone."

"Of course I'm not gonna tell anyone. I have a sodding image to keep up. Unlike some people in this room, shagging the enemy isn't my idea of a good time."

Buffy shoved him away with a grunt. "I hate you."

"I hate you more."

"Trust me, so not possible."

"Wanna put it to the test?"

"Are you trying to get yourself dusted?"

"Just tryin' to unlock some of what you got inside you." At the confusion that flooded her eyes, Spike grinned and tapped the end of her nose with his finger. "Feel that heat? That anger? All that energy just beggin' to be let loose?"

"The kind of energy that results in vamp dust clouds?"

"Very same, love. Gonna bring that to the sack with you? 'Cause if you're not, don't even bother showing up."

"And if I were interested in dating *vampires*, maybe that would make some kind of sense. Did you miss the whole *normal* thing?"

"There's normal for blokes like *Porky* and normal for you," Spike replied. "Thing about you, Slayer, is you're not built for the human normal. That kind of normal will never be enough. 'Cause you need this too, and you can't unleash that on anyone *normal* unless you're aimin' for the ride to be their last."

That, he saw, had gotten to her. More than anger this time or embarrassment over what she was asking. No, now she just looked worried. Like she hadn't thought of that—or worse, that he was voicing a concern she'd been shoving deep down. Seemed about right, too, considering the rot that Angel had fed her about the sort of man she ought to look for. Spike knew slayers better than any vamp, living or dust, and one thing he knew beyond doubt was there was a reason they walked the earth alone. Buffy might have played with the script a bit, letting her friends assume some of the danger that went with her calling, but there were certain things she couldn't outrun. That she still had aspirations of settling down with anyone, picket fence, and a couple of rugrats for good measure, was naïveté at its best. Even the slayers who'd squirted out sprogs of their own had been lone-wolf types. They were too much woman for any one man to handle.

Any one human man, at least.

"That's right," Spike said, voice a bit thicker than it had been a moment ago. "And the sooner you stop kidding yourself, the bet—"

"I am *not* kidding myself."

"Then why the hell are you here with me?"

Buffy blinked at him dumbly, and for a moment he thought that might have been the end of it. And if it was... Well, he wouldn't be too surprised—Buffy suggesting anything of the sort to begin with had been brazen enough for her—but hell, he *would* be disappointed. Beyond his own curiosity, beyond the fact that he'd been thinking about shagging her since the first time he'd seen her moving on that dance floor, part of him wondered if putting it to the Slayer wasn't the way to get her completely out of his system. Because whatever else, Dru had been right about something.

He should have been able to kill this bird. Any other slayer and

she'd already be a memory. There had been plenty of opportunities, especially given that invite he'd secured to her home that she still hadn't revoked, last he'd checked. While he preferred taking down warriors in a decent brawl, he hadn't been averse to taking the easy route in the past. The Order of Taraka. The Judge. A way to deal with the Slayer problem without doing the deed himself. And sure, his heart had never been in either of those plans, but he wouldn't have cried over the girl had either of them come to fruition.

No, he would have danced on her grave, then gotten pissed wondering just how the fight would have gone had he taken it on himself. If he hadn't *staffed it out* to the bleeding help.

The moment for Buffy to call his bluff and back down came and went, though. She stood there, fuming in that special way of hers, practically vibrating with all that delicious anger. It wouldn't take much to get her wound up for him should they ever get past the verbal foreplay, and if she brought that to bed with her...

"So where is it you wanna do this?" Spike asked.

"What?"

"Don't mind sullyng the old man's sheets." He pointed to the stairs that led to the open loft above. "Got yourself a nice little set-up on that campus of yours, too. Could give you the whole experience—sock on the door and everything."

"I am *not* having sex with you in Giles's bed, you depraved—"

"Just asking. You're the one over here doin' the propositioning."

"No. Nowhere where I have to actually sleep." Buffy scrunched up her nose and shuddered. "I was thinking we'd get a room somewhere."

"Ooh, how seedy of you."

"Shut up. Do you have any better ideas?"

His idea involved a cozy little crypt, somewhere he could get her to scream her bloody heart out without rattling walls or disturbing the neighbors. Not that he minded the thought of her rattling the walls or disturbing anyone, but both presented the opportunity for the outside world to intervene and for better or worse, he didn't want that happening if he made it as far with Buffy as she seemed to think he would.

"Suppose I don't." Spike hooked his fingers through the belt loops

of his jeans and took a slow step forward. "So when we gonna have this little rendezvous? You gonna at least buy me dinner first?"

Buffy inhaled deeply, and since he was going to have his hands on them in the near future anyway, Spike allowed his gaze to follow the way her breasts rose and fell. Bloody hell, but he was going to have fun with her. Teach her all kinds of neat tricks that miracle of a body could perform. It was the least a bloke could do, give her just enough to get her jollies in before she made good on her end of the deal and got herself all nice and dead.

The history books had loved him before. Once it got out that he'd shagged a slayer before killing her, he'd become a thing of legend.

"I'll make the arrangements," she said in that businesslike voice of hers. "Get the room and things."

"And blood?"

"I don't want you doing anything to me with blood in your mouth."

"Usually the idea is to swallow it, Slayer."

"I mean it. I don't want to taste anything gross."

"Taste?" Spike couldn't help it—he was grinning again. "Taste meanin' you think we'll be snogging, is that right?"

"I am not even going to pretend to understand what that word means."

"You think I'm gonna kiss you?" He did a decent job, in his estimation, of sounding both amused and somewhat repelled by the prospect, but he knew better. In truth, the thought of getting his mouth on hers, tasting her freely, not under the influence, made it harder to ignore just how much his cock liked this plan—all parts of it. "Bit intimate, that."

"And sex isn't intimate?"

"Not quite as much as snogging, no."

Buffy crossed her arms, favoring him with that narrow-eyed stare of hers. "So your rules of engagement are pretty much on par with Julia Roberts in *Pretty Woman*."

"Don't have any rules, pet. Just didn't think you'd fancy it, is all. Especially after that spell."

She licked her lips and he bit back a groan. "Well...that's actually a good point," she said in a voice that didn't sound nearly as confident as it had a moment ago. "That we probably don't need to kiss. I mean,

I've never gotten a complaint about my kissing technique so that's... not something I think I need to practice. So we'll just stick to sex."

"Ah huh. And what all is it you think you need to practice? Just so I know where to apply my focus goin' in." He was still staring at her lips. "Just fucking itself, or you need to know how to do a man proper with your mouth?"

"Are you asking if I'll give you a blowjob? Allow me to answer with a stake."

He sprang back just as she darted a hand into the bag strapped across her body. "Don't dust a bloke for asking. Just not sure where all your education is lacking, am I? So Angel already taught you what you need to know."

Something he highly doubted. Not because Angelus didn't like having his dick sucked, but because he hadn't mentioned fellatio of any kind in any of the numerous retellings of the great cherry-popping. Likely that was something he would have worked the girl up to had things not gone south.

The look on Buffy's face was enough to confirm this. She seemed torn between dismay and disgust. "Is that...something guys expect, then? Mouth stuff?"

"You askin' for real or just trying to be funny?"

"Ugh." Buffy turned on her heel and started for the door. "I'll be by tomorrow at sundown. We'll do a quick patrol—"

"Patrol? I'm not going with you on any sodding patrol."

"You are and you will. It won't take long."

"Famous last words, Summers. You lot ever get tired of jinxing yourselves? And I *can't* fight, remember? Would think I wouldn't have to spell *this* out for you, but romancing your date usually means not getting him killed."

"First of all—gross, you are so not my date."

"No. Just your shag for the night. You're right. That's so much better."

Buffy rolled her eyes. "You'll survive a trip through the cemetery, Spike. And if you don't, well, it'll be tragic but somehow, someway, the world will move on without you." She sniffed and resumed her trek toward the door. "I'll see you tomorrow."

And that was it. For a moment, at least. Spike cocked his head and stared pointedly at the door, waiting how long it would take for her to remember.

The answer was somewhere in the vicinity of ten seconds, though she loitered on the other side of the door far longer than that. Likely looking for some scrap of dignity she could pretend to wear when she marched her righteous little arse right back across the threshold. Still, he managed to stay right where he was. He knew it'd be worth it.

He was right.

Buffy edged back into the room, shucked off her purse, and placed it on the counter without meeting his gaze.

That was all he could stand. "Forget somethin', then?" he asked in a singsong.

"Is there anything you really, really hate on a pizza?" she asked brightly, moving around the corner in the kitchen. "I'll go crazy with the garlic."

"Bleeding hate olives." He didn't. "And onions."

"One extra onion-y and olive-y pie coming right up."

"Not gonna say it, then? Too embarrassed?"

Buffy flashed him a blindingly bright smile. "About what?"

"All that talk from before got you in a right tizzy. So much so you forgot you're house-sitting."

"Willow was the one Giles asked to house-sit, not me." She flipped open the phone book, going to obvious lengths to avoid looking at him. "So I don't know what you're talking about."

"You expect me to believe that the Slayer would casually drop by and proposition me for sex when her little chum might pop in at any minute?"

Buffy's cheeks went a shade darker but she didn't look up. "I don't expect anything from you, Spike. At all."

"Except a right brilliant shag."

"Anything involving you can't be brilliant."

"You think so?" He closed the space between them, keenly aware of how rigid she became when he was close. How the thumps of her heart sped up, how her pulse began to race. Whether or not she was aware of it, Buffy had always reacted to him like this. The warrior in her sensing

the enemy in him, most likely, but maybe there was more to it. He still couldn't quite wrap his head around what she'd asked of him, what she'd offered. Supposed he wouldn't believe it at all until he was balls-deep inside of her.

"I don't think," Buffy replied.

Spike hummed, running the backs of his fingers down the length of her arm, which trembled in response. "That much is obvious."

"I *know*." She jerked away and pinned him with a glare. "No touching."

"Right. Gotta save some of the mystery for the big night."

"Ugh. Leave me alone or I will chain you up again."

"Right circumstances, a fella could be into that."

Buffy stared at him for a long beat before pulling another face, and Spike couldn't help but curl his lips into a grin. She could act as high and mighty as she wanted, the miserable bitch, but he knew better. Hard to take the high road when she'd come here with a mind to slum it for at least a night.

If nothing else, the next couple of days with Buffy Summers were going to be memorable.

Personally, he couldn't wait.

ANY SECOND NOW, SHE'D COME TO HER SENSES.

Any freaking second.

Buffy gnawed absently on the crust from the pizza slice she'd otherwise decimated, trying and failing to keep from snagging glances at Spike, who, for the world, looked like he had no idea she existed, let alone was in the room with him, his attention glued to the television. Her own damn fault for having not thought this thing through—this thing being whatever it was she was going to let him do tomorrow. Or do to *him* tomorrow. Or...

Those second thoughts were really taking their sweet time.

Though that could well be because she'd already run this race a time or two hundred. Gone through the steps, experienced the highs and lows of each argument and counterargument, and everything came back to the same. She'd made some flippant remark to Riley about how he had a lot to learn about women, and he'd turned it all serious on her by saying she, Buffy, would be the one to teach him. She, Buffy, the still-eighteen-year-old mess whose two sexual encounters had left her feeling used and discarded. Sure, Riley was a Swell Guy™ but Parker had seemed like one too. Like the perfect Swell Guy™ to help her move on from The One™. Not that there really

was any moving on from The One™ because, well, he was The One™.

On a logical level, Buffy was reasonably certain that those two sexual encounters hadn't sucked because of her. Well, mostly. There wasn't much she remembered of her night with Angel aside from the awe that it was happening, the worry that it would hurt, the overwhelming desire to do it just right, to match whatever he'd experienced in the more than two hundred years he'd been getting horizontal with women. She'd been overly aware of the sounds she made—or didn't make—how her skin felt when pressed against his, how her muscles, so used to fighting, had tensed when he'd started to press into her. He'd been sweet and gentle, made noises that had done more to heat her cheeks than anything he'd actually done to her, and then it'd been over. He'd asked her how she was and she'd said...something? Maybe? The truth had been *rattled* and *shocked* and yeah, she'd felt loved. Her body had done things it had never done before, things she hadn't really understood but had liked, and she'd wanted the chance to do more. Have more. Explore more.

Waking up alone the next morning had been an insult, and everything that had followed—all of it—had more or less drowned out the few good memories she had of that night. It was hard to think of it in a vacuum when all she could see was Angel standing before her, feet from the bed where he'd taken her virginity, telling her just how awful she'd been.

And after Angel had returned from Hell, well, she'd never gotten around to asking him about that night. They hadn't talked about sex at all if they could help it, even when they'd accidentally gone to see an erotic movie that one time. Seemed the subject was better off forgotten. Safer for everyone that way, especially, well, the world, because sex made Angel happy and happy Angel was homicidal in a leave-your-teacher-in-your-watcher's-bed kinda way.

But now, sitting there, next to the platinum pest who had agreed to help her not suck at sex, Buffy found herself resenting that she'd never been brave enough to confront Angel about the things he'd said that day. And, truthfully, she resented Angel a bit, too—not for the whole going-evil thing, as that hadn't been his fault, but that he'd never taken

the time to walk back those things. Maybe he'd thought it was implied, or that discussing it would be too difficult for her. Maybe he'd thought it hadn't been a big deal beyond the whole soul-ectomy thing, that *that* had been the banner headline for the next day, not that Buffy had given her virginity to him.

Except it made perfect sense why she'd never asked him, she realized a moment later. Because when she and Angel had gotten back together, Buffy had more or less accepted she was going to live out her days as a nun. There could be no more sex, so what did it matter if her first go at it had sucked beyond the telling of it? And when Angel had broken things off, well, her mind—not to mention her heart—had been all over the place. It hadn't once occurred to her to ask him just what he'd thought of her performance, now that he was leaving so that sex could be back on the table.

And Parker was... Well, a non-starter. That time she *had* asked if she'd done something wrong, and he'd brushed her off. Willow and, well, Willow said that had to be him, but what did Willow know? Willow's first time hadn't been marred by her boyfriend going evil, and she'd had plenty of times after that first to build her confidence and stuff. When Willow was finally over Oz, the next guy she was with likely wouldn't have the opportunity to screw with her head. Willow and her damn healthy relationships.

Healthy except for the whole werewolf-cheating-manslaughter thing, but by Hellmouth standards, that was almost Hallmark.

Buffy fidgeted, tossed the half-eaten crust into the box, and pulled her legs up so she could wrap her arms around them.

"Just tell me what you decide, pet. You welsh on this and I need to find some other way to undo whatever those soldier boys did to me."

It was the first thing Spike had said in more than an hour. Must have been a personal record for him.

Buffy shot him a glare and was annoyed to find he was not looking at her. He hadn't even bothered to turn away from the television. "What are you talking about?" she demanded.

"Not exactly hard to read, are you?" Spike shot back in a droll, almost bored voice. "Think I counted six times you've been through it now."

“Through what?”

“That little conversation you’re havin’ with yourself. Whether or not learnin’ how to do a man right is worth the cost of your dainty virtue.” Now he *did* look at her, a sly from-the-side look, accompanied by that insufferable smirk of his. “Did I get the count right?”

Buffy stared at him, torn between the very understandable desire to rip his head clean off his shoulders and melting into a puddle of embarrassment. This was the side of her no evil fiend should ever see—all her decisions were absolute when she was on the battleground, after all. She couldn’t second-guess anything about her actions or decisions or herself—that was for before and after. The planning part and the licking-her-wounds part.

It was the same reason she’d been so taken aback the day Spike had strolled into the sunshine right after Parker had told her that they’d had fun and it didn’t need to be more than that. Spike had caught her at a personal low and, monster that he was, utilized that to his advantage.

Now he was again, which bothered her more than the thought of actually having sex with him did. That he knew where she was vulnerable and how little he’d have to do to go for the hurt. No punches need be thrown, no blows exchanged, just the knowledge that as good a slayer as Buffy was, she utterly sucked at being a woman. Sucked so much, in fact, that she’d stoop to asking her mortal enemy to bang her so he could help her suck a little less.

But then something happened—the malicious glint in Spike’s eyes seemed to flicker out, the corners of that confidence-killing smirk of his softening.

“Did a right number on you, didn’t he?” he asked a moment later in a soft tone she didn’t think she’d ever heard from him before.

“What?”

“Angel.”

She winced—cursed herself for wincing—and tore her gaze from his. “I don’t want to talk about it.”

“Bollocks, it’s not like I care, is it?”

That sounded more like the Spike she knew and despised, at least. When she looked up again, that confusing softness had faded and he

was her mortal enemy again, staring forward, though not with the same determined focus as before.

After a moment, his face still in profile, he flicked his eyes back to her. "Wanna know why I hate the sod so much?"

"Because you're evil?"

"Yeah, and if memory serves, so was he. Came to you then, didn't I? Bloody lost everything because I came to you." Spike paused, then barked a laugh. "Not that I had anything left to lose at that point, anyway. Just had convinced myself that he was the problem."

"What are you even talking about?"

Now he turned to her fully, his nostrils flared and jaw set. "Angel," he snarled. "Angel and his bloody women. If not Dru, then you. If not you, then I'm sure some other sorry chit down the line will fall for those big cow eyes of his and get herself what every bloody woman who's ever crossed his path's got. He drove Dru mad but that wasn't even the cruelest thing, was it? He bloody well *became* her madness. Wanting him. Needing him. Desperate to please. Begging for a sodding biscuit when she did something she thought he'd like. Seems he just can't help himself, can he? Not sure what that soul of his is worth these days."

"Hey!"

Spike rolled his eyes and brought his hands up. "Here it comes."

"Here what comes?"

"The excuses. The *reasons* it's not like that, right? Slayer, not three hours ago, you asked your mortal enemy to shag you because of some-thin' he said to you, when? A year ago? Two? Closer to two now, right?" Spike arched both eyebrows. "But there's nothin' we can say against Saint Angel, is there? Not you or Dru."

"Stop *comparing* me to Drusilla!"

"Afraid the shoe might fit too well?"

"I am nothing like that raving lunatic and you know it."

He huffed a little laugh. "Yeah. He just stalked you both, tormented you both, got inside both your heads, made himself right cozy, twisted you up about him, made sure he was your whole bloody world, then left on his terms. Not sure where I got this barmy notion you and Dru had anything at all in common."

"He was evil then! Whatever he did to Dru, that wasn't *Angel*." Buffy didn't care for the shrill in her voice or the way Spike snickered and shook his head like she was the most pitiful thing on the planet. Because, dammit, hadn't she *lived* it? The guy who had held her as she trembled, told her that he loved her and couldn't stop, pressed her down on that mattress was *nothing* like the monster that she'd met the next day. "That was the demon."

"Oh ho. Whatever you say, love." Spike snickered again, settling back as though the matter was closed.

Which it should be—she gained nothing by pursuing this line of non-logic with the peroxide nightmare, but dammit, now she was just itching to fight.

"I suppose you want to tell me how wrong I am?" Buffy asked in what she hoped was a suitable I-couldn't-possibly-be-less-interested-but-I-also-can't-stop-you-from-talking manner. The last thing she needed was Spike believing that she gave a crap what he had to say.

"Not really," he replied before rising to his feet and approaching Giles's television. "Has your Watcher ever heard of a bloody remote?"

Buffy, who still wasn't quite over the novelty that was Giles having a television in the first place, watched numbly as Spike twisted the dials and hopped between stations. She thought about protesting, saying she'd been watching whatever he'd just turned off even though she'd be hard-pressed to name a single detail about it, but Spike moving around this space like he had a right to it was just...wrong. As was his neglecting to take the bait.

Stupid confusing vampire.

"I'm not even convinced he watches it all that much," Buffy said, crossing her arms in an attempt to restrain herself from outright staking him before he could be of any use to her. So she sat, glaring at Spike's too-perfect backside as he fiddled with the dial, switching between the four working stations that came through Giles's older-than-dirt set until he landed on what looked like a terrible daytime soap.

"Not like he has much else to do these days," Spike replied absently, walking backward until his legs hit the sofa and he came crashing down again.

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“Would have to be around to notice, wouldn’t you?”

“Notice what?”

“Your old man’s going bloody stir-crazy. Doesn’t seem there’s much for him to do here, is there?” Spike waved at the room. “Went and blew up his only source of income, right after getting him sacked from the Council of Wankers or what all across the pond.”

“You mean after he drugged me and tried to get me killed by a vampire even crazier than your ex?”

“Way I hear it, that vamp didn’t stand a sodding chance. Bloody irritating chit you are, superpowers or no.” He swung his head to face her, eyes narrowing. “And here I thought for all the bloody bitching and moaning you do about bein’ the Chosen bird, you’d be after Rupert to dose you up with that juice more. Handy little excuse, yeah?”

“An excuse for what?”

Spike rolled his eyes. “To not be the Slayer. You know, the chorus to that song you’ve been singing ever since I’ve known you?”

“Oh, you’d just love that. Get me out of the picture once and for all.”

“A picture you don’t wanna be a part of to begin with.”

Buffy didn’t know how to respond to that, because, well, it was a bit on the nose. Thinking about last year was still a bit painful for numerous reasons. Well, mostly Angel-shaped reasons. How she’d come to him in a panic that he wouldn’t want to be with her if she were just Buffy Summers, Average Citizen. How terrified she’d been that her powers had truly gone the way of the dodo and she’d become just another student. How she didn’t think she had it in her.

“Isn’t that the reason you said the enormous forehead gave you before he pranced off to LA?” Spike continued. “So you could do the normal gig like you have that in you? Mighta been a bit more charitable if he’d dosed you up with that rot, himself. That’s as close as you’ll ever get to it.”

Somehow they’d circled back to Angel. Which was good because she still wanted him to give her the answer to the question she hadn’t asked in a way that was easy to throw back in his face.

“Angel had reasons to leave. Good reasons.”

“Yeah. All starting below the belt.”

Buffy bolted to her feet. “That is so not true!”

Spike just stared up at her with that bored, impassive expression of his. “Oh no? Didn’t come up once, did it? That you and he get a little too close and suddenly he’s ready to suck the world back into Hell. Seems likely.”

“Angel’s leaving had nothing to do with sex.” Except that was a lie, Angel had mentioned it specifically, like it mattered. And that had been one of the primary driving forces behind her coming to Spike—Angel had said she deserved someone who could have sex with her, except if she wasn’t any good at it, what did it matter?

“Of bloody course it did, you dizzy bint. Why the hell else do you think you’d be over here, ready to throw your knickers in my face?” Spike sprang to his feet, his eyes burning into her. “You never talked to him about any of this, did you? What you did that he liked, things you might skip the next go ’round, just what it was that made him so bloody *happy* the soul left the building.”

Heat stormed Buffy’s cheeks, but dammit, she was not going to lose ground here, even if Spike was suddenly saying a lot of things that she’d been thinking. “I couldn’t talk to him about that!”

“Yeah? Why not?”

“Because it... It’s dangerous! You should know!”

Spike’s eyebrows did the arch-thing again. “You mean he had such little control over himself that even mentioning the night he popped your precious cherry mighta set him off? Or would he have just shoved you against any available surface and let the monster loose?”

She didn’t give herself time to think, rather acted on instinct.

And slapped him.

A slap. Not a punch. A totally girly move. Something a scorned woman might do—not something the Slayer would do.

And because he was Spike, he didn’t react the way a normal man would, rather just chuckled.

“That what you call foreplay, pet?” He rubbed his cheek, dragging his tongue over his teeth and favoring her with a grin meant for sin. “How you would get him all hot for you?”

“What? Ew, Spike. That’s disgusting.”

"That's bein' with a vampire." Spike prowled a step forward, looking her up and down now, the fire in his eyes raging harder. "Get us all roughed up just the way we like. Makes it all the more sweet when we're finally inside. Bloody animals clawing at each other for blood and gettin' something so much better instead."

Buffy did not squeeze her thighs together. No, she certainly did not. Nor did her heart skip. Well, it did, but with disgust, because that was what she was. Disgusted. And deranged. That she'd ever thought this was a good idea certainly had to mean that some part of Willow's Will Be Done spell hadn't completely worn off, right?

"That's not Angel," she said in a voice that didn't shake too horribly much, but probably still enough for Spike to notice. "And it's not me."

He drew back with mock astonishment, then smirked again and took a long, exaggerated breath. "Not what it smells like to me, Slayer."

Oh god.

"Come on then." Spike spread his arms, the smirk fading into a mad kind of grin. Wild and untamed, his eyes now bright with challenge. "Wanna get started right here, love? Here's the first lesson. Fighting gets you hot. Gets vamps hot, too, and we can always tell. Always bloody know. The more you pound on us, the more we want it."

"That is disgusting and sick."

"And it's your world, pet. No sense hiding from it."

"It's not what I want! It's not—I asked you to help me not suck at sex. I am so not going to be beating up my next boyfriend."

"Never say never. Could turn out you can't turn it off. And that's been the problem, hasn't it? No matter who you're with, no matter what you do, you'll always be you. And even when you're not, you know it's what you want."

Another step. He was close now. Too damn close. All up in her space, her senses, and he'd be even closer if she went through with this. Closer than he was now, closer than he'd been during the spell, closer than anyone except Angel or Parker had ever been to her, and suddenly that thought was too much. Much too much. She didn't want him there or anywhere—she wanted out.

“Still don’t believe me?” Spike lowered his gaze to her lips, and her heart, her thoughts, her *everything* seemed to come to a screeching halt. “Let me show you.”

Then his hands had closed around her arms and his mouth was on her mouth, biting and nipping and tearing and doing all the things she remembered from the spell, except she’d forgotten how he smelled and tasted, how he seemed like a man starved, attacking her with lips and teeth and if he added tongue to the mix, she might just die. But this was not the time to die—this was the time to shove him back, away from her, grab the nearest pointy-ended piece of wood and eliminate all evidence that she’d ever been insane enough to come over here at all.

Buffy fisted his shirt, getting a good hold so she could toss him across the room, then he was pressing his thigh between her legs and suddenly *there*, against her sex which was—*oh my god*—on fire. A good kind of fire, the kind that licked and spread and warmed the places she’d at one point sworn would never be warm again. Not for anyone else, at least, as that path held badness and danger. Had she been like this the entire time or was it him? No, it couldn’t be him. That was impossible and gross and disgusting and why the hell wasn’t she throwing him across the room, already?

“Oh,” she managed to whisper against his lips. And he seized the advantage like the evil fiend he was, plunging his tongue into her mouth and feeding her a groan that seemed to originate from somewhere deep in his chest. And that was just so presumptuous of him, like she wanted his tongue in her mouth, that she immediately set to pushing it back with her own, which made him make that sound again. That deep, guttural, *oh god oh god* sound that had her skin so hot it seemed ready just to melt right off.

Instead of pushing him back, she realized, she’d pulled him to her. And the whimpers and grunts she heard weren’t just from him, but she was making them too. Rather, he was pulling them from her with each hard stroke of his mouth. He had an arm around her waist, holding her to him as he thrust his hips and rubbed against her, and *holy cannoli* that had to be Spike’s erection.

Spike had an erection. And he was thrusting it against her, grinding it into her, and she was letting him. Dear god, she was letting him.

At last, Spike tore his mouth from hers, breathing hard and nudging her brow with his. "Fuck," he growled in the space separating their lips. "Knew it. Bloody knew it."

Well, that was good. At least he knew something. Here Buffy was struggling to remember her name.

"So hot." He stole another kiss, this one somewhat gentler but no less intense. Then he was moving again and she was moving with him, back, back, until her shoulders hit the wall and she stopped needing to rely on her own stupid self to keep upright. Spike growled and took her mouth once more, and the whole melting process started over.

"When we shag, Slayer," Spike said against her lips a moment later, still panting like he'd run a marathon. Like running a marathon would make him *pant*. "Be a love and bring all this heat with you. Might be what does me in, but what a bloody way to go."

It came slowly—well, both slowly and much too fast. Reality. The reality that she was propped up against a wall and somehow her legs had wound themselves around Spike's waist, that he was hard and rubbing up against her, his mouth swollen from kisses she'd wrestled from it, his eyes wild and dangerous. That she'd crossed a line she couldn't uncross, because dammit, *Pretty Woman* had it right. Hell, *Spike* had it right. Sex could be business, but kissing was personal. Intimate. Way intimate. Kissing Spike before had felt like a violation because of it, even more so than what he'd done to her in the kitchen during that spell.

Something she should so totally not be thinking about right now.

"You get it, don't you?" Spike asked, smirking down at her. "Or should I demonstrate some more?"

That did it. The lusty haze he'd cast over her mind dissipated. Buffy lowered her legs to the floor, planted her hands on his chest and this time managed to shove him away. Far enough away that he wasn't clouding every one of her senses—that she could breathe without breathing him in.

"Don't do that again," she said in a tone that sounded way calmer than she felt.

“Do what? Be right?”

“Kiss me. We’re not doing that.”

If she didn’t know better, she would have sworn something like disappointment flickered across Spike’s face. But that couldn’t be right. If *she* understood how intimate kissing was—*she* with her near-virgin sensibilities—then he had to know. Right? And given that he hated her almost as much as she hated him, keeping his lips to himself would be a good thing.

“Not like I wanted to,” Spike barked. “Just trying to make a point.”

Yeah, she’d definitely imagined the disappointment there. Definitely. His voice was pure venom.

“And what was that point?”

“That what gets you hot is no different than what gets me hot.” He wagged his eyebrows and leaned in. “Only difference is I don’t have any trouble admitting it.”

Buffy shoved at him again, though she really didn’t need to. He stepped aside as though her every move had been telegraphed, and hell, maybe it had. From the beginning, it had certainly seemed that Spike had the choreography down in advance. Either she was easy to read or he was good at making improvisations look staged.

“I’m going on patrol,” she announced, finding her bag and fishing out a stake. “And you’re coming with me.”

“Sorry, I’m *what*?”

Buffy smirked and turned around. Finally, she’d thrown Spike off *his* game. That had taken long enough. “I have to watch you. I have to patrol. I can’t patrol from here, ergo you’re coming with me.”

“Yeah, you tried to woo me into doin’ that a couple hours ago. Answer hasn’t changed.”

“You act like I’m giving you a choice. News flash—so not.”

“Told you before, but apparently some things need repeatin’ before they stick in that bleeding head of yours. I can’t fight.”

“Not my problem.”

“So, what, you’re gonna protect me and the world at the same time?”

Buffy blinked. “Who said anything about protecting you?”

The lusty gleam had officially vacated his expression, thank god.

Now he was Spike again—Spike as she knew him, glaring daggers at her as though he could will her head to explode.

“Can’t help you shag better if I’m a pile of dust,” he growled.

“Yet somehow, someway, I think I’ll manage.” Buffy tapped her stake against her palm and nodded at the door. “I can dust you right here if you prefer, but out there you’ll at least have a sporting chance.”

He glared at her a moment longer before starting toward her, and no—*no*—electricity definitely did not *zing* through her skin or land anywhere near her clit. It did not. Whatever she felt had just been confused because of the impromptu and unwanted make-out session. Nothing more.

“Who knows?” he said at last. “Could be tonight’s the night.”

“For what?”

“The night some nasty gets a chunk of you. And yeah, now that you mention it, that’s the sorta thing I’d like to have a ringside seat for. So lead the bloody way.”

Buffy rolled her eyes, snickering. “You’re not that lucky.”

“Dunno about that, pet. Seems my luck is changing.” This he punctuated by running his hand down his chest in such a manner she had no choice but to follow the movement with her eyes. And when he cupped his erection through his jeans, the appropriate response was not to stand there and ogle him like a dummy, but punch him in the nose, rattle off a quip, and storm for the door.

But Buffy did not get that memo, so she ogled. A lot.

He was still hard? Talking about all this hadn’t made that go away?

“See,” Spike drawled in a low purr. “Luck’s changing.”

That much was enough to startle her right back into her skin. She aimed him her best if-looks-could-stake glare before making for the door in hard, hurried strides, doing her best to block out the sound of his low chuckle.

God, this was *such* a bad idea.

And she had yet to talk herself out of it.

SNOGGING HER HADN'T BEEN THE PLAN. WELL, NOT TONIGHT. NOT like that. Sure, he'd teased her about it—she could say what she wanted, but kissing was bloody intimate—but Spike didn't think he could keep from tasting her mouth if he'd tried. Not when he knew how passionate she was, even if she didn't.

But what had happened back at the Watcher's flat had been spontaneous. The more she'd talked, the more he'd ached to prove her wrong. Turn her world on its head the way she did his without effort. Get her to admit he had the right of something—or at least acknowledge the things about herself that she kept running from.

What he hadn't counted on was his own response. Yeah, the Slayer was a bloody knockout and yeah, he was more than a little excited at the prospect of finding out what she was like in bed. But kissing her hadn't been about his own want—well, okay, it had, but not entirely. Spike had also wanted to win, and he knew how to play the hands he was dealt.

Except now he couldn't stop thinking about it. How she'd clutched at him, tugged him closer, given back everything he'd fed her and then some. Buffy asking him to take her for a romp so she could suss out just what it was she was lacking was one thing—Buffy actually wanting

him was something else entirely. And she had wanted him—there was no getting around that. No denying it, much as she might try.

Just like there was no getting around the fact that watching her perform physical magic with that body of hers had all parts of his anatomy engaged. Spike was leaning against a mausoleum, cigarette dangling from between his lips, his gaze following Buffy's every artful curve and dip as she swung and kicked at the poor, albeit somewhat large, fledge who'd had the bad fortune to rise tonight.

"I take it back, Slayer," he called out just as the fledge managed to land a punch that sent her to the ground. "Wouldn't have missed this show for the world."

Buffy aimed a glare at him as she leaped back to her feet. "Poor Spikey," she shot back, spinning in a kick that had the fledge soaring across the graveyard the next second. "Gotta get his rocks off vicariously."

"Pretty sure I'll be getting my rocks off with you."

How the woman could proposition him for sex and then look offended when he reminded her of the fact was a mystery. "Can you not talk?"

"What? Am I distracting you, then?"

"Shut up."

"How thorough of an education are you wanting, pet?" he called, soaking in the sight of her flipping her way toward the vamp, who was snarling and climbing back to his feet. "How to move? What sounds to make? You *sure* you don't need pointers on how to best suck a bloke off? Can't say I don't fancy the image of you on your knees."

That knocked her off course. Buffy swung around, undoubtedly ready to feed him her stake, giving the fledge the opening every vampire craved. The next second, she was on the ground, the snarling thing straddling her hips. By some extreme bout of luck, he managed to twist her wrists in such a way that the stake fell limply to the ground. Then he was leering at her, closing the space between them with universal hunger blazing in his yellow eyes, chomping his fangs toward her throat.

Buffy looked so blessedly startled that he nearly laughed. "Uhh!"

Now here was a conundrum. Either Spike could watch as some

unworthy newbie took out the best slayer he'd ever come across and sip at the victory that was knowing he'd help make it happen, or he could step in, risk life, limb, and headache to come to the girl's rescue. The first option sounded the best, but fuck, if he missed the opportunity to sample her in bed, he'd likely spend the rest of his unlifetime kicking himself.

Of course, there was always the chance she'd just stake him when the deed was done, but he doubted it. The Slayer didn't play games like that. And even if she did, hell, it'd still be a brilliant way to go.

Apparently he *was* making decisions with his dick.

"Oi! You there." Spike pushed himself off the mausoleum and stalked forward. "I thought about it and I'm not through with her yet."

The fledge stopped snarling and looked up. "What?"

"That's my slayer you've got there."

And that was all the distraction Buffy needed to regain the upper hand. She smashed her brow to the fledge's in a hard headbutt that tossed him off her, then she was on her feet again, looking braced and beautiful.

"I am *not* your slayer!"

Spike smirked and blew her a kiss. "You're welcome."

The fledge shot back to his feet, snarling around his fangs. "Dude!" he shouted at Spike. "Not cool! I almost had her."

"Mighta looked that way, friend, but you didn't." And that was true enough, no matter what he'd thought before. Buffy was still a few months shy, at least, from realizing the death wish all slayers inevitably developed. She'd have made it out of that just fine, with or without him.

The fledge scrunched his face up and prowled toward him with a snarl. "Maybe I oughta just take you out."

Spike tossed his cigarette to the ground and stomped it out under his boot. "Go on then," he replied, spreading his arms wide. "Take your best bloody shot."

Buffy narrowed her eyes at him. "Aren't you forgetting something?" she snapped and mimed his head pain from behind the fledge's back.

"Don't tell me you care, Summers."

"In so many ways, I do not."

Yeah, she said that, but Spike didn't miss the way her hand tightened around her stake or how her eyes widened. She was ready to leap in at any moment. More or less what he'd expected, but he was still pleased to see it, because odds were high he'd need the assist once this pathetic excuse for a demon started throwing punches. But hell, Spike was never going to be the guy to not rise to the challenge, and he couldn't let it get out that the Slayer of Slayers was ducking his head.

"You got a big mouth," the fledge said before taking a wild swing at Spike's head. Thankfully, the bloke moved at a snail's pace. Spike ducked and darted, the crunch of a meaty fist pummeling into stone sounding behind him.

"Ow!"

"He's not wrong," Buffy chimed in, crossing her arms.

"Got something to say about my mouth, Slayer?" Spike arched an eyebrow and waggled his tongue at her, bouncing a bit as the fledge regrouped and swirled around to find him again. "Couldn't get enough of it before we left."

"You are disgusting."

"And you are the bint who begged me to shag her. What's that make you?"

As he'd expected, Buffy's eyes went saucer-sized and her jaw fell slack. A righteous, holier-than-thou speech was about to come tumbling off those regrettably kissable lips of hers any time now. But he'd also guaranteed she'd step in before the fledge could do any lasting damage—wouldn't want it getting out that the Slayer had a thing for the Big Bad.

"I'm going to kill you," she said matter-of-factly, taking hard strides toward him. "Right now."

"No..." The fledge twisted to face her, planted his hands on her, and gave a good shove. "*I'm* going to kill him. Then I'm going to kill you."

"That'll just piss her off, mate."

Well, the bloke couldn't say he hadn't been warned. The next second, Buffy had leaped onto his back, wrapped those lethal legs around his waist, and was swinging her stake down in a perfect arc for the heart. She would have hit pay-dirt had the fledge not demonstrated some heretofore unforeseen cunning and leveraged his weight to

smash her against the nearest tomb hard, knocking the wind out of her, or at least startling her enough that she fell to the grassy ground.

Then it seemed the poor vamp was through playing. The next snarl that tore through his lips was the meant-business kind, and when he moved this time, it wasn't with lumbering awkwardness, rather dedicated intent. Spike had just seconds to react and did so on instinct, landing a punch that sent the oversized sod tumbling over in a fit of surprise.

Then he flinched and made to grab his head—only the burst of pain never came, just the familiar rush that came with dealing a good, hearty blow.

Spike blinked. And he knew.

Whatever was in his head apparently discriminated against demons, which meant this night had just become even more interesting.

"Hold on." Spike grinned, shaking his fangs loose as the wanker stumbled forward once more, and raised his fists. "Try that again."

Turned out this vamp didn't have much going on upstairs, because he either didn't hear the gleeful challenge in Spike's voice or didn't take it for the warning it was. Either way, the result was the same. Spike caught the next flying fist that came his way and threw his weight behind twisting the fledge's wrist, and nearly howled in victory when his head remained pain-free.

And then there was no stopping him, He launched into an all-out assault, relishing every blow, every kick, every time his fist collided with something nice and solid. Every grunt or moan or cry of surprise—a symphony of pain and he was once again its conductor, and bloody hell, it was marvelous.

A flash, then the Slayer had joined him, her eyes full of questions but her mouth shut, by some miracle. She landed a punch against the fledge's jaw that sent the poor sod tumbling toward Spike, who was more than happy to kick him back. Hell, he reckoned he could do this all night—toss the bloke back and forth between blows before he'd approach tired.

But then another roar tore through the air, and Spike couldn't swallow his delighted grin.

This town wasn't good for much of anything, but it seemed tonight was his lucky night. The Hellmouth was going to live up to its name.

"Duck," he told Buffy after she kicked the fledge back to him, sure she wouldn't listen to him and somewhat awed when she did, just barely managing to avoid the lunging fangs of the newcomer that had decided to join in the fun. At another time, he might have wondered why he'd cared enough to warn her in the first place, but not now. Not with his fangs out and his demon roaring and everything going *right* for a bloody change—no, he wouldn't let anything spoil this.

Not even the fact that instead of killing the Slayer, he was fighting alongside her. Nodding at the unspoken questions she shot his way and firing off a few of his own. Left or right? A nod from her, and he went left. Backed against a wall? He abandoned his own fight to tackle the vamp that had her cornered so she could pull one of those fancy-dancy moves and roll to safety. Fists or stakes? She only had the one stake, so they'd have to share.

It ended as it was always going to, of course. Standing there side by side, panting and staring at the dust cloud the vamps had made. Spike tightened the grip he had on the stake, mind racing in a thousand directions and trying to pull him along for the ride.

I can hurt other demons. I can kill vampires. I can tear them all apart.

It was just demons, right? Whatever had been done to his head hadn't suddenly flipped a switch, had it? He turned to Buffy, who was still catching her breath, and backhanded her before he could talk himself out of it.

He had a second—a fraction of a second—to enjoy the surprise on her face, the indignation, the heat as she began to topple backward. But that was all, and then the pain came, as he'd known it would, blinding and terrible, making his vision explode and the inside of his head shake with fire.

Whoever had mucked with his noggin was a bloody sadist.

"I was really hoping you'd do that," Buffy said from a thousand miles away, the words a low growl.

Then came the other blow, the one he'd known he'd risked, but bloody hell, that didn't make it hurt any less. Why did the bitch always have to go for the nose? Spike stumbled back a step, dropping the

stake to assess the damage, and when the stars stopped winking in front of his eyes, he found a slightly bruised Slayer standing at the ready.

"Oil!" he sputtered, wiping away the blood now freely flowing out of one nostril. "Had to test it, didn't I? Case you didn't notice, the rules changed." He waved at the space where the two vamps had stood. "I can hit demons."

"Yeah, I caught that." Somehow, she didn't sound impressed. Fuck, didn't she know what this meant? He wasn't toothless after all—he could hold his own.

He could *kill*, and that was everything.

"Needed to make sure that was it—that whatever those soldier boys did to me hadn't shorted out completely."

"Uh huh. And if it had?"

"Wager I'd have already drained you about half to death and you wouldn't be asking bloody stupid questions."

"You'd be dust before you could touch me."

"Oh, is that a fact?" This little girl needed to remember who she was talking to—who she was dealing with. He might not be able to hurt her, but that didn't mean he couldn't get under her skin. He'd managed just fine back at the Watcher's flat, hadn't he, and all he'd had to do was steal a snog.

"That's a—what the hell are you doing?"

Spike smirked, flicked his gaze down to where he had her shoulders clasped in his hands. "Touching you," he replied, pushing her ever-so-slightly. He thought she'd resist but she didn't, either taken by surprise or foiled by her own curiosity. Either way, he managed to get her back pressed up nice and tight against that mausoleum he'd claimed earlier. "Touching you, and not dust yet, I see."

She just glared up at him with those brilliant eyes of hers, practically daring him.

Bloody chit ought to know better. He never backed down from a dare. Even when he should.

He leaned in, dragging in a lungful of air that tasted of her—all of her. Sweet and salty at the same time, her natural aroma teasing his fangs as it always did, making his head feel funny and full, his gut

clench and every part of him go rigid. Being turned on by Buffy wasn't a new sensation, but having her hot and under his hands absolutely was. And she was hot. If he slipped a hand between her legs, managed to palm her cunt properly, he imagined she'd soak him to the bone.

"You feel that?" he asked instead. "I can. Your heart's pounding. Blood's all hot. It's caged up inside of you, scratchin' at the walls, just aching to be let go. You wanna let it go, pet?"

"Back off."

"Make me."

He nearly cooed in delight when she planted her hands on his chest. It was the same move she'd pulled before when he'd kissed her. He'd felt the hesitation then and he felt it now, will racing against want. The part of her that craved the darkness simply begged him to take another taste, whether or not she knew it. But Spike knew it. Knew how easy it was to cross a line that had been crossed already. It was that first time, that first step, that seemed forbidden.

It was that first time, he realized, that would make her crave him. Part of her already did. Before, maybe, it had been easy to brush off. A spell gone wonky, nothing new there, no reason to dig too deep. Then coming to him for bloody shagging lessons—that had pushed her just far enough that he'd been able to snog her earlier. She was drawn to it now and she couldn't stop.

Bloody hell, neither could he. He didn't want to.

Buffy didn't push him away but also didn't pull him to her. She curled her lethal little fists into his shirt as she had earlier, her breaths coming quick, her eyes wide, the scents rolling off her equal parts fear and anger and arousal, and beyond intoxicating.

She was waiting for him to make a move, so he did.

He kissed her.

And god, it got better every time. Just because it hadn't been the plan didn't mean he wasn't taken in. Should have guessed as much, anyway, given how tits-up his plans tended to go. The last snog had been a surprise for both of them—seemed, to him, like the thing to do to get his point across, make sure she not only heard him but understood. That she felt what he was saying as much as anything else. Then he'd bloody lost himself in her—a danger that had been there from the

start, but also what made it a risk worth taking. One he'd come back to taste again and again.

Kissing her now was different, though, because it wasn't all just bluster. Part of it was he wanted to. All right, a lot of it was he wanted to. Wanted to see if what he'd felt back at the Watcher's flat had been sincere or a fluke, something he couldn't pin on either a spell gone wrong or the thrill of catching the girl off guard. And yeah, there was curiosity there too. Curiosity as to whether or not she was as hopeless as she thought she was—the answer, of course, was one he'd sooner cut off his tongue than voicing just yet—and just how he could stoke the fire he knew existed inside her until it raged and consumed.

He'd had the right of it before. Buffy had already crossed a line. No going back, and if you were already hellbound, why not enjoy the ride? She softened against him like melting wax, only ten times as hot, and parted her lips to feed him the sweetest little moan he'd ever heard.

It was pure, like the rest of her. A pure, feminine reaction, one she couldn't hold back. He'd gotten the Slayer to moan for him.

Fuck. Maybe this girl would spell his end after all.

Spike growled and hiked her into his arms, sinking deeper into the kiss. Sinking and sinking and tasting and she was sunshine, bright and deadly and so hot he could feel her in his chest. Against him, her heart thumping like mad as she fought him with her mouth. Fought and fought because that's what they were, what they did, what they were meant for. He hated her, sure, but it was a good hate. A hate that had him addicted. His favorite bloody drug and he'd found a new way to get his fix.

She was killing him by inches, and fuck, he loved the dying.

Spike broke away from her lips when he realized the daft girl had forgotten she needed to breathe, and he breathed with her, inhaling her scent, swimming in it. The knowledge there, clawing at the corners of his mind, that she was burning hot. Wet and wanting, wiggling and thrusting her hips against his, welcoming him when he began grinding against her to ease the ache she'd created. God, he was hard. Harder than he could remember being, even the first time he'd shot off with an actual woman. Something about knowing she could make it hurt if she wanted just made him hotter.

"Feel it, Slayer?" he asked, nudging her brow with his.

"I feel something," she replied, her voice husky, nearly knocking him off his feet when she smiled. She rolled her hips, rubbing against his cock like the saucy bitch he knew lurked inside her. Then she fluttered her eyes open and looked right at him, and he was drowning. "It hasn't felt like this before."

"What? A man's dick?" He thrust hard, enjoying the hell out of it when she moaned again, her head rolling back. "Tellin' me—"

"All of it." The words came out on a moan, and hell, with her milky throat on display like that, there was nothing a self-respecting blood-sucker could do but give in a good nibble. He felt her tense because she was a smart cookie—despite whatever he'd told her to the contrary—and she knew a dangerous predator when it was running its teeth along her skin. Even still, she didn't push him away. If anything, the scent of her arousal intensified so much he might have choked on it, and the knowledge had other parts of him bursting in victory.

Whatever she told herself, whatever she'd been told, the Slayer had a hankering for this. For danger. The thrill of knowing he could snap at any second, chip be damned, and do more than favor her pretty pink flesh with delicate love bites.

The prats who'd had her in bed before hadn't known what to do with her. That was their mistake.

"All of it." She rocked her hips harder, dropped one leg to the ground for balance, then hooked her other knee around his waist and rubbed against him in earnest. "Not like this. I can't... Oh my god."

A growl tickled the back of his throat, and before he could stop himself, he was prying at the button of her jeans. "You tellin' me neither Angelus or that Porkins bloke got you off properly?"

"What?" The word wasn't asked so much as it was gasped.

Spike tugged on her earlobe with his teeth. "They make you come, pet?"

She went a bit stiff in his arms. A bit but not much. "Yes?"

"That a question or an answer?"

"It's..."

And without warning, Spike found himself shoved back, ejected from all that wonderful warmth and back into the unforgiving cold

where he belonged. He shouldn't have been surprised, but somehow he was—the shock of going from one extreme to the next. He stumbled a bit, anger and resentment bubbling up where lust had been before. Only lust was still there, still burning, just flavored now with something more familiar.

"It's none of your business," Buffy said in her I'm-in-charge voice. Might have been a bit more convincing had she not been trembling like a leaf. "And if you do that again, I'm going to dust you."

Spike arched an eyebrow. "What? Ask a question?"

"Kiss me! We said there would be no kissing, and you've kissed me *twice*."

Oh, this was rich. So much so he couldn't keep from laughing. "What, the Slayer's afraid of a little snog? Worry you liked it too much?"

"I did *not* like it."

"Oh Spike, it hasn't felt like this before!" he retorted in a shrilly falsetto.

Buffy's cheeks went darker, her eyes screaming murder. "One, I don't sound like that. Two, I didn't *say* that—"

"Oh, yes you bloody well did—"

"And *even* if I did, that doesn't mean anything. Doesn't mean I liked it. I could've meant it in a bad way."

Spike just laughed harder. "But you didn't. Been around a long time—do you really think I don't know the difference?"

"I think you're delusional."

"Right. So, if I stuck my hand down your trousers, I wouldn't find you soaked and ready for me?" He tapped his nose before her pretty face could contort into more masks of faux outrage. "Pull the wool over your eyes as much as you like, Slayer, I see just fine. You were about to shag me right bloody here and that scares you, doesn't it? Scares you that you could lose control like that."

"You're disgusting."

"Yeah. You too." Spike slid his hands into his pockets, smirking still and giving the surrounding cemetery a good look. "So, where to?"

That took the wind right out of her sails. "What?"

"Like we sussed out, I can hurt demons. Got me a lot of pent-up

energy to get out.” He slid his gaze back to her. “Unless you have something else in mind, that is. Lots of ways to get my jollies tonight.”

The punch to the nose—that was expected. It was Buffy’s signature move, especially when he’d said something that had gotten under her skin. And yeah, it smarted, but it was more than worth the blush on her cheeks.

What was more telling was the fact that, wounded pride aside, Buffy didn’t so much as hint that she wanted to call off their little arrangement. Instead, she gathered her stake and took off at a brisk pace, not looking at him, but not telling him to go home either.

The girl was really pent up.

He couldn’t wait to help her uncork.



SOMEHOW, BUFFY MANAGED TO GET THROUGH THE NIGHT WITHOUT killing him, though it had been a close call. Every time he'd opened his mouth, she'd reflexively tighten her grip on her stake, half-dreading, half-hoping whatever he'd say would be more than enough to justify putting an end to this insanity once and for all.

But such was the brain of Buffy. When her mind was made up, it took an apocalyptic event to change it. And anytime she came close, she'd remember the way Riley had looked at her and told her with such calm assuredness that she was the one who would teach him all things about women. Then she'd think about Parker and the humiliation that had followed, how she'd moped and pined and been so certain she'd done something wrong—and he'd been so nice, too. So attentive and sweet with those soulful puppy-dog eyes of his, the conversations they'd had that had so clearly been the groundwork toward something special.

Riley wasn't Parker. Obviously. But he was older, more experienced—in theory, at least—and if she turned out to be a major disappointment in bed, then... Well, maybe there was a nunnery around here taking applications.

Men expected certain things. Hell, sex had been a big enough

factor in her chances of finding future happiness that Angel had gone and taken off to LA just so she could get some.

So, despite every rational bone in her body, Buffy didn't change her mind. Sex could be perfectly transactional, dammit, and this would get Spike out of her hair—not to mention her town—for good. And sometimes bad ideas turned out to be really good ones. She'd stopped the Ascension with a perfectly bad plan, hadn't she?

Renting a room for the night took what little money she had left in her bank account after tuition, books, and cost of campus living, but she maintained neutral territory was better than any place she might have reason to visit in the future. So, the night after she and Spike had made the deal from hell, she forced open the door to the room where she would learn how to have sex, tossed a cautious glance over her shoulder, then stepped over the threshold.

It felt momentous, that action alone. Like the chance to back out had officially expired.

"Do I need to—err, invite you in?" Buffy asked in a voice that was *so not* trembling.

Spike crowded in behind her, making the tinglies on the back of her neck go haywire. *Danger, Will Robinson! Serious predator at your back.*

"Public accommodation." In contrast, Spike sounded almost sultry. "No invite needed."

"Oh. Well. Okay then." She shot forward and tossed the key onto the dresser that housed the rather small television. "Then...here we are, I guess."

"Right. Caught that much."

She seemed to feel the sound of the door closing down into her soul. Like he'd somehow shut out the entire world, even though she could clearly hear the roar of the television in the next room and the distant rumble of traffic on the highway. The door was closed, which meant this was happening. She'd paid and everything.

Oh god, she was going to get naked with Spike. *With Spike.* There wasn't a way to do this without being naked, was there? Well, there probably was, but how awkward would that be?

How awkward was it going to be regardless?

"Slayer, your heart keeps poundin' like that, the only bed action you're gettin' is gonna be courtesy of the hospital."

If he thought that would calm her down, he was sorely mistaken. Buffy's breaths came harder, faster. The room seemed to tilt sideways and start to spin, taking her along for the ride. She curled and uncurled her fingers, her palms slick with sweat.

Then he was against her, his hands around her shoulders, his eyes—so blue, his eyes—fixed on hers. If she squinted, she might be able to convince herself that he was regarding her with something like concern, but that couldn't be right. Spike hated her. Just like she hated him. He was here to fulfill his end of a bargain that no one would ever know about. That was all.

It would've been nicer if she could have pretended he cared a little. That he was someone other than Spike, the vampire who had tried to kill her and her friends numerous times, who had—just recently—relished her humiliation following the bad one-nighter with Parker.

"Look, you want out, there's the bleeding door," he said, his voice firm and his grip on her firmer. "Not gonna bully you into shagging me. But you call it quits, you still owe me, Slayer. Not my fault if you lose your nerve. Came here to fulfill my part of the deal, so you're gonna undo whatever those wankers did to me, you understand?"

Something inside her sank. So Spike was concerned after all—about himself. Silly of her to think it could be anything else.

"Only issue on the table is whether you get what you paid for," he continued. "That's all on you."

God, she hated him so much.

"Believe me," Buffy answered through her teeth. "Message received, loud and clear."

"So what's it gonna be then?"

That was the question. Should she stay or should she make a run for it? Pretend this whole thing had been a bout of insanity brought on by a not-so-stellar start to her college career, the weight of Angel walking away from her, the humiliation that had been Parker Abrams, and...and...

"Bugger this."

Buffy frowned and looked up just in time for Spike's mouth to

come crashing onto hers, and in a flash, everything else faded away. The second-guesses, the self-recriminations, the doubt and the fear and, well, all of it. The weight of all that crap disappeared, leaving her feather-light and almost giddy with relief. Hell, she didn't even have it in her to be angry that he'd again broken the no-kissing rule, because he was performing some sort of magic with his lips and tongue that calmed the screaming in her head.

"That's it," he growled between kisses, releasing her arms to grip her hips. "Give it to me, Slayer. Give all of it to me."

There was a challenge she knew she could meet. This was a fight like any other, just on a different playing field, and she knew how to handle herself in a fight. The only time Spike had ever beaten her had been the night at the school—when he'd knocked her to the ground and likely would have kept the promise he'd made to her the previous Tuesday if her mother and an ax hadn't been nearby.

So Buffy pulled back, panting slightly, and glared at him. "Take your coat off."

Spike growled and shucked it without argument. The flutter of leather falling to the floor whispered over her skin, but she didn't have time to appreciate the sensation before he was on her again, pulling hard, demanding kisses from her mouth and pushing her toward the bed.

"Your turn, I think," he said, tugging at her top before she could protest.

It was over her head and gone the next second, the cool motel room air caressing her skin and somehow making her blood pump hotter. Then his hands were on her, cool where she was burning, exploring flesh that had never been on display for Spike. Her arms, her neck, her stomach, and then, god, he was touching her breasts. Teasing, stroking, plucking at her nipples through her thin bra. He was more forceful than Parker had been, almost to the point of pain, but when he pinched her just a little too hard, the sound that tore through her throat was closer to a moan than anything else.

Spike wrenched his mouth from hers, doing that forehead nudge thing he seemed to favor, and dragging in gulps of air like he was anything but a vampire. It wigged her out when he did that, when he

pretended to be something other than dead, because in those stolen moments she could almost believe he was.

"Fuck, you're hot," he rasped against her lips. "So hot. Gonna burn me up good, you are."

"I-I am?"

He nodded, dragging her brow along for the ride, his eyes still pressed closed. "Take my shirt off."

Buffy swallowed. The instinct was there to fight him, kick him across the room, do anything but what she was told, but the debate was entirely in her head. Her hands had no problem obeying the command, just as they'd had no problem tugging him closer as he'd stolen those kisses before.

Dammit, why did he have to be such a good kisser? Why couldn't that have been an invention of Willow's stupid spell? And why was she letting him tease her with his mouth when they'd agreed—multiple times by this count—that kissing was a line they wouldn't cross tonight?

"Don't be afraid to touch," Spike murmured against her lips, and she could hear the grin in his voice. "Can't speak for all blokes, but I like it when the bird does a bit of the work herself."

Buffy forced down the immediate retort. This was what she'd wanted—what she'd signed up for. And if she was going to do it, she was *really* going to do it. So she let her hands start to wander, roaming the contours of his well-muscled arms and shoulders and—holy cow, Spike was *built*. Something that should have occurred to her well before now because she'd been up close and personal before—granted only when kicking his ass and there wasn't a ton of time to admire evil's inherent sexiness when fighting for one's life. But hot damn, he was firm and smooth all over. She'd always wondered how he managed to manhandle her without effort, and the proof was right before her. Spike's strength was deceptive.

"Hands are like fire." Spike pulled back enough that she could see his face—more specifically, the heat in his eyes as she dragged her fingers down that work of art he called a chest. On a whim, she whispered her nails over one flat nipple and relished the shudder that commanded his body.

That one shudder told her more than Angel or Parker ever had. Still, a girl had to know.

“Good?”

“Mmm, could be better.” He smirked down at her. “You bring everything to this, you hear? No holding back. Any bloke who’s with you wants all of it. Shy virgin act’s all well and good—adorable, if I’m bein’ honest—but you’re not shy and you’re not a virgin. You’re a bloody warrior.”

“I don’t want to be a warrior in bed.”

He looked genuinely startled at this, the playfulness in his gaze evaporating in an instant. “What? Why not?”

Yeah, there was no way she could explain herself in such a way Spike would understand. “I just don’t.”

“Bollocks.”

“No, it’s not—whatever that means.” The lusty thoughts that had clouded her mind began to fade, making way for frustration. “I don’t want to be the Slayer all the time. Not when I’m with someone I like. I just want to be Buffy.”

“Well, there’s your trouble, *Slayer*.”

The next thing she knew, she was flat on her back, pinned to the mattress under a vampire. A vampire who was glaring at her with his predator eyes, a snarl on his lips.

“Being *Buffy* means bein’ all of it,” he said in a low growl. “You don’t bloody well stop being a warrior when the sun goes up. It’s who you are, in your blood. That passion I told you about last night. Fire and fight. That’s in you all the time. Not doing anyone any sodding favors by holding back.”

It was impossible to ignore the effect his words had on her, but that damn well didn’t mean she wouldn’t try. Buffy huffed a laugh, hoping to distract from how hard she was trembling—because dear god, she *was* trembling—and seized hold of the trademark Summers sarcasm. “So you’re saying I should beat up my boyfriends. Guess this is what I get for coming to a *vampire* for advice.”

“Do you work at it or are you naturally this infuriating?”

“Funny, I was going to ask you that.”

Spike stared at her fiercely a moment longer, then dipped his head

and—keeping his gaze trained on her face—snapped his teeth at her nipple through her bra.

A thrill of pain shot through her, followed by a rush of heat. Buffy arched her neck, her hips charging off the mattress to slam into his, and there was no holding back her moan, no matter what it cost her pride.

“You want what we want. That’s why fighting us gets you hot.” He tugged the cup over her breast before biting her again, harder this time. Again, a spark of pain took hold and again, that spark went straight to her clit. Spike growled his approval, favored her nipple with a long lap of his tongue, then nibbled his way to her other breast. “You know what I could do to you with my teeth,” he murmured. “What I’ve done to others.”

“This is not—”

“Feel all that knotted inside. You’re a creature of passion. Anyone who doesn’t touch that part of you is gonna know you’re holding back.”

Buffy lifted her head so he wouldn’t miss her glare. “Well, then we’re in trouble. Because I so am not *passionate* about you and if you—”

“Slayer, all you’ve ever been with me is passionate.”

“That’s so—”

He cut her off with his lips before she could get out anymore, and that pissed her off so much she had no choice but to vent her frustration on his mouth. Biting and scraping and tugging, determined to get her point across. Pain was not passion—not for her. The one time she’d tried it on for size, it had nearly killed her, and she was not about to go there again with anyone. That wasn’t what a nice normal guy would want. It certainly wasn’t what *she* wanted.

And that was why being here with Spike was so beyond ridiculous. How could she trust him to teach her anything when he was so fundamentally *not* the thing she wanted?

A growl tore through the room, followed by a loud snap and a tug. Buffy opened her eyes just in time to see Spike pitch her bra over the side of the bed. Or whatever was left of her bra.

“Bastard, those aren’t cheap.”

“Sorry, love. Let me give you my condolences.” He closed his mouth over one breast, doing decidedly *evil* things with his teeth and

tongue as he let his hand wander over her stomach. His fingers were cool but brought fire along with them, a slow, intoxicating burn that more than knocked her off her foundation. Then they were under the waistband of the pants and heading farther south, and he was going to touch her. Feel for himself just what her body thought of all this, and she wasn't sure she could stand it.

"Wh-what are you doing?"

Spike favored her with that arched eyebrow look of his. "What do you think?"

"I-I think we're off-topic."

"Mmm, are we?" Undeterred, he eased his hand into her pants and lower, lower, and then they were both groaning. "Fuck, Slayer, you're bloody drenched."

"I—I am not."

Spike chuckled, running a finger up and down her slit over the cotton of her underwear. "Yeah, I'm just imagining this. Smelled how hot you were but there's nothin' quite like feeling it." He pressed down against her clit and grinned when she whimpered. "Somebody's a naughty slayer."

"Off-topic," she said again. "Stop that."

"What sorta sense is that supposed to make?"

"You're...teaching *me* how not to be bad at sex. No...touching of me is required." Granted, that didn't stop her legs from spreading open wider, but the damn things were traitors anyway.

"You really are naïve, aren't you?"

"Hey!"

"You think I'm touching you for *you*, pet?" He chuckled, tapped her clit again, then slipped his fingers under the scrap of fabric and *god*, she remembered this. Remembered way more than she'd been willing to admit—how it had felt when he'd stroked her before. That time in the kitchen during the spell when he'd stripped her down and hooked one of her legs over his shoulder. The things he'd done with his tongue...

She'd been convinced, on some level, that Spike had been pushed along by the spell, too. That since he'd believed he loved her, he'd been moved to use his mouth on her in ways that no guy would without expecting the favor to be returned.

That Spike—*evil* Spike, definitely *not*-in-love-with-her Spike—was grinning like the cat-stuffed canary made absolutely zero sense.

“Always figured Angel was the selfish sort,” Spike continued conversationally, like he *wasn’t* rubbing a line up and down the seam of her pussy. “And college boy... Well, expect he has a way to go before he learns anythin’. Seemed a selfish sort, anyway.”

“And you’re not?”

Spike gave her a look and slipped a finger inside her. “What do you think?” he asked as he began to pump. “This selfish?”

“I... Why... Why are you—”

“Actually, come to think of it, it is.” He lowered his head to her breasts and drew a tight circle around one of her nipples with his tongue. “See, some blokes are in it for the finish. Long as they come, they don’t much care how it is for you. That the kinda fella you’re aimin’ to reel in, pet? Or do you think you’ll fancy havin’ someone who makes sure you get off, too?”

In all honesty, Buffy hadn’t thought about it much. Sex and pleasure had never been synonymous with her. Even that night with Angel, which had seemed so romantic at the time—she’d been too nervous to really catalog how she felt. If she’d liked what he’d done to her at all. It had all been nerves and newness and thinking about the things she’d learned about sex and the other things she’d heard about sex and wondering if she was doing it right. Angel had been all patience and smiles, but that hadn’t meant anything because he’d never been the easiest guy to read, and she’d been so caught up in trying to determine how it was for him that she hadn’t paid herself much attention.

And then Parker...

Well, the less thought about him, the better.

She wasn’t surprised to see the tease in Spike’s eyes had hardened into irritation—more surprised it hadn’t happened before this, because, well, not the most patient guy, Spike. Except the look he was giving her wasn’t the garden variety I’m-thinking-about-draining-you look to which she was accustomed. All the signs were there—the tightened jaw, the narrowed eyes, the flared nostrils, but the fire she usually saw, the fire usually aimed at her, was weirdly absent.

“What?” Buffy asked before she could help herself.

“Nothing.” The word wasn’t spoken so much as spat. “Just brasses me off.”

“What does?”

“Nothing!” He chose that moment to add another finger to the mix, effectively stealing any opportunity she might have had to send him a return glare. Instead, Buffy rolled her head back, her hips rolling of their own volition to drag him deeper inside her. It shouldn’t feel good—nothing Spike did to her should feel good—but tell that to her damn traitor body. Especially when he twisted his wrist and pressed—

“Oh god!”

“Shouldn’t care, anyway,” Spike growled before scraping his teeth along her nipple again. “Gonna bleeding kill you—shouldn’t matter if you get your share of jollies between now and that happy moment.”

As if to punctuate the thought, he pulled his fingers free of her without ceremony. And Buffy mewled, aching and hot and in sudden desperation for something she couldn’t name. She might have done something stupid like cry out or protest if Spike hadn’t been tugging her slacks and panties down her legs, pausing only to rip off her footwear. Then he was between her thighs, staring at her exposed flesh like a man starved.

“Shouldn’t care. Should just shag you and have it over with.” To her horror, he leaned as close as he could possibly get to her pussy and inhaled a deep, indulgent breath. “But you’re driving me outta my bloody mind and you gotta know, Slayer. Gotta know what you’re capable of.”

And without awaiting a response, he sucked her clit between his lips and tugged. Whatever arguments had been floating around her head vanished on the tail of a gasp and didn’t return. Instead, Buffy arched her back and closed her thighs around his face, weaving her fingers through his surprisingly soft hair. Spike just growled at the contact, now tapping his tongue against her as his fingers slipped back inside of her. Then it was a push and pull, the thrusts of his hand in time with the sucks he stole with his mouth, and she wasn’t just on fire, she *was* fire. She was flame itself, burning from somewhere deep inside, somewhere within range of a line of gunpowder, because she

was fairly certain an explosion was on the horizon. The heat just kept coming and she was chasing it.

"Thatta girl," Spike murmured against her soaked flesh. "Fuck my face."

"Ooh, my god."

He left her clit with an almost chaste parting kiss, dragged his tongue down her slit, and then it was inside of her too. Thrusting along with his fingers at first, and then by itself, licking and lapping and maybe that heat was embarrassment. It should be because this had so not been the plan for tonight but it felt so good and she couldn't bring herself to stop him.

Spike growled into her, and *god*, that felt good too. Knee-weakening good. "That's it, baby," he murmured, nuzzling her in a way that was almost affectionate. "Tell me what you want."

"Huh...what?"

"You like it when I fuck you with my tongue?" As if to demonstrate, he plunged his tongue back inside her, thrust a few times and flashed her the most lascivious grin when she answered with a mewl. "Or..." He drew back, lapped at her once, twice, then dragged his lips up until they were hovering above her clit. "You fancy this?" He kissed it before sucking it into his mouth. "You tell me."

"Uhh...Spike, that's not..."

"Bugger what it's not. Decide what you like, pet. Your life's a short one so you might as well know what you want." He licked her clit again and edged two fingers back into her pussy. "Any berk you take to bed oughta know how to give as good as he gets."

That made sense, one she hadn't really thought too important because, well, she felt like she needed to be good at sex before she became all with the demand-y. And it bothered her that Spike would make such an observation, that he would care enough what her future sex life would be like to tell her to find out what did it for her. Like he gave a damn.

That thought must have been broadcasted, for Spike rolled his eyes and lifted his head. "Here's the thing—some blokes get off on gettin' the girl off, see. Told you, not touching you for you—and not sayin' I'm not gonna enjoy getting this juicy cunt around my cock, but getting the

bleeding Slayer to moan for me? To bloody beg? Think I'm not gonna love it? You're off your bird."

It took a second for that thought to land home; when it did, she craned her head off the bed to level a glare at him. "You think you're gonna get me to beg? I thought you said I wasn't the begging kind."

That grin was back, his eyes shining with challenge. "Makes it even sweeter when I break you."

"Never happen."

"I was so hoping you'd say that." Spike pulled his fingers free again, stretched, then resettled himself between her legs to begin the assault. Because that's what it would be—an assault. He wasn't doing these things for her, by his own admission. He was doing it for him, likely part of his sick slayer fascination. After all, he'd already killed two slayers—how much would his ego swell if he got what he wanted now?

A lot. The answer was a lot.

So she wouldn't. No matter what he did to her—she would not give him what he wanted.

"That's it," Spike said in a soft voice that so did *not* have her shivering all over. "Always better when you fight me, love."

Buffy squeezed her eyes shut and tensed. She would not allow Spike to win this. No way.

There was nothing for a long moment, then the fingers came back, spreading her open and slipping back inside. Then he began to pump. Slowly, so slowly she thought she might scream. Like he was taking a part of her with him when he pulled away before giving it back to her in the best way possible.

And god, it felt good.

"That's it, love." His voice whispered over her like a caress. "That's it."

No. Not good. Not just good. Buffy had felt good before, wrapped herself in good. This was something else, something out of a dream. And in spite of herself, in spite of the promise she'd sworn—the one she still intended to keep—she couldn't stop from sneaking a peek at him, wondering how he looked while he touched her. While he was inside of her. Part of her needed to see, needed because whatever was

happening to her wasn't happening to him. All Spike cared about was winning.

She wouldn't give him that.

Still, she had to look. So she did.

Spike was between her spread legs, his gaze fixed on the sight of his fingers pumping in and out of her. It had to be the light—or lack thereof—but his eyes seemed darker, closer to navy than the bright blue she had grown used to. And he was breathing. No, scratch that. He was *panting*. She felt it now, the crash of his breath against her inner thighs, ragged, long breaths that seemed to shake more every time he pushed back inside. Like he was mesmerized.

Then Spike slid his gaze back to hers and the air between them seemed to crackle. Her breaths came harder, the cool motel-room air almost a blister against her sweat-laced skin. She watched him watching her for what felt like forever, the thrusts of his fingers coming a bit faster, the withdrawal happening too quickly. And her body did whatever it did when it wanted something—fought to keep it.

"Bloody hell," Spike all but moaned. "That's it, Slayer. Squeeze me just like that."

"Just like what?"

"Like that." He lowered his mouth to her pussy again, keeping his eyes locked on hers. "And get ready to beg."

"Never."

Spike just grinned and closed his lips around her clit again, swirling his tongue against her with such effortless mastery she thought she might actually just melt into the mattress. The sucks he took were slow and steady, nothing like that night in the kitchen. Then, he'd been all about the quick finish—take the edge off, he'd said, until they were alone and he could do her proper. And there had been something about that, about the way he touched her while racing the clock and her own daring, trying to send her over the rainbow before her better senses could kick in and remind her that they were in Giles's kitchen, that her watcher was just a few feet away, and they had a Scooby mystery on their hands.

Hell, the peak she'd reached then had been half what Spike was doing to her, half exhilaration. Something that existed in a vacuum,

never to be experienced again—the byproduct of a spell gone super wrong.

At least that's what she'd thought. Now, with Spike's tongue performing figure eights against her clit, his fingers slipping in and out of her pussy as that fire she'd felt inside her began to roar again, her world had been thrown into question once more.

Yet when he released her clit to speak, she thought she might just scream.

"You're trembling," Spike whispered, his lips dancing over her flesh. "Shaking, love. Anything wrong?"

"Nothing," Buffy managed, squeezing him between her thighs. "Nothing."

"Wanna beg me now?"

"For what?"

"Mmm. I think you know." He swirled his tongue around her again as he pulled his fingers out. "I can feel how badly you need it, love. How much you want me to get you there. Bloody intoxicating, you are. Could spend all night here."

That sent a jolt through her. "Wh-what? You could?"

"Happily."

"To win?"

"Well, sweetens the pot a bit, I won't lie." Spike smirked and licked her slit, those enigmatic eyes of his dancing now. "But tasting you is its own reward."

"Why?"

"Why? 'Cause, Slayer, you're delicious."

That thought shook her to her core, that Spike could touch her the way he was, work his mouth on her the way he was, and enjoy it. Yeah, he'd said as much a few minutes ago and she'd believed him—believed that it was selfish, that he wanted to see her squirm for him for reasons that were less about her and more about conquering.

"Always fancied the way a woman tastes here," Spike continued as though he hadn't just reshaped her worldview. "Sweeter than honey. Almost better than blood." His voice dropped, becoming gruffer. "Some lucky prat's gonna get the best of both worlds with you one day.

If he's smart enough to know how to do a woman right, that is. So yeah, I could stay here all night. You sayin' you might let me?"

"N-no."

"Pity. Guess I'll have to settle for fucking you senseless." He brushed a kiss across her clit. "After I make you beg."

"Never—"

But the word died on her tongue when Spike plunged his inside of her again, launching Buffy into a genuine out-of-body experience. Somehow, one of her hands found itself wrapped around his hair, holding him to her as the rest of her gasped and writhed. And then he was growling into her with wordless encouragement before pulling his drenched face away from her opening to start sucking on her clit again.

And it was everything, that feeling, had her practically bursting at the seams of her own body. But it wasn't enough. She needed something else. Something more. She needed...

"Oh—*oh*..." Buffy arched her hips off the bed, a gasp clawing at her throat. "I... Inside."

"What's that, Slayer?" he asked between licks. "Didn't quite catch what you said."

"Need it."

"Need what?"

"Empty."

"You're empty?"

Buffy nodded hard. "Spike..."

"Gonna be a good girl and beg me now?"

The words should have infuriated her, but they didn't. At the moment, it was hard to remember why.

She felt she was on the edge of something truly spectacular—a place beyond anything she'd experienced in the past or would ever experience again because Spike was licking and sucking and loving her pussy like he thought she was something special. From the way Spike lapped at her, he *needed* to feel her come on his tongue. He was starved for it.

And she was too.

"Spike—"

"Beg me, Buffy. Beg me and I'll give it to you."

"Please."

There was another growl, then he was plunging his fingers into her again, and that emptiness disappeared. She clenched around his fingers, the hand she still had buried in his hair now in a death grip, but if he cared he didn't show it.

And she had nothing left to fight with, so she gave in, bucking and crying out as white-hot pleasure lit her up, her pussy spasming around his fingers.

It seemed to go on for hours, and maybe it did, because when she convinced her eyes to open, she found she was fully on the bed. The room's cool air teased her sweat-soaked skin. Spike stood to her right, completely naked now, watching her with a small smile, his hand wrapped around his very erect cock.

"Now then," he murmured, "was that so hard?"

IT HAD ALWAYS BEEN THERE IN THE BACK OF HIS MIND, THAT THE only thing better than killing a slayer would be fucking one. Granted, all the fun in fucking a slayer would come from her willing surrender, something that simply hadn't been in the books for either of the slayers he'd snuffed out before hearing the name Buffy Summers. Something he'd wanted with this slayer from the moment he'd first seen her shaking that pert little arse of hers on the dance floor at the Bronze. She'd been the first he'd actually truly lusted over—the first to put a face to the otherwise anonymous fantasies of *what if* that involved the Chosen One. But even in his wildest, his wildest *wildest*, he'd never imagined he'd be here—staring at the Slayer, the taste of her honey on his tongue, and ready to give her the bloody shag of a lifetime. Or several.

The way she was looking at him now was enough to make a fella forget he hated the bird. Or that the only reason he'd said yes to this entire thing was to guarantee whatever those soldier boys had done to him would be undone. All right, well, not the *only* reason, but the better one. The one he could admit to others if word of their little rendezvous ever got out.

“Sure you don’t fancy learnin’ how to properly suck a man off?”

Spike asked, dragging his fingers up the length of his cock. "Think I mighta earned that just now."

And that was enough to kill whatever spell had come over her. The light in Buffy's eyes went out and he was left with the Slayer again. "You're disgusting."

"Mmm, yeah." He grinned and sucked the fingers that had so recently been inside her into his mouth. "Still warm."

"I swear—"

"Swear nothin'. You had a right good time just now and that's what really rubs you wrong, isn't it? Fair bargain that Angel never helped you hit those high notes, yeah?" The next second, Spike was on her, on top of her, caging her against the mattress with an arm at either side of her head. He glared down into her narrowed emerald eyes, daring her to lie to him. "Now, don't be shy. No shame in admitting it."

"Admitting what?" Buffy snapped, her jaw clenched.

"That he didn't get you off."

"That is so not true."

"Yeah? You trembled just then like you were surprised. Tell me, Slayer, had you *ever* had an orgasm before me? Didn't reckon that night at Rupert's was your first, but I've been wrong before."

"You think I had an orgasm?"

"When?"

"Then—or now? Ever? With you?"

Spike barked a laugh and nipped at her lips, relishing the sensation of her trembling beneath him. He knew she knew he could feel it, that she had no secrets from him, but the girl was bound and determined to fight him tooth and bloody nail. And fuck, he wouldn't have it any other way.

"Do you want me to answer that," Spike murmured, skating his mouth over her cheek, "or should I just make you beg me again?"

"I hate you."

"There's that passion I was talking about."

"It's not—"

Spike seized her upper arms and rolled them over so she was astride him, those vivid eyes of hers going so wide he thought he might

just fall into them. There was nothing sweeter in this world than catching the Slayer off-guard.

"What..." Buffy looked down, her throat working. "What just happened?"

"Gotta sample the goods if I'm gonna tell you how to improve." Spike rubbed his lips together, smirking. "That whole routine from when I had my face between your buttery thighs—top marks all around. Granted, not much for you to do except enjoy being devoured, but you give any bloke that kinda reception and he'll be eating outta the palm of your..." He let that trail off, a thrill racing through him when her creamy skin flushed pink. "Well, he'll be eating, anyway."

He could tell she really wanted to let him have it—argue with him, hit him, maybe kiss his lips off as she'd tried earlier—but she didn't. Instead, she just released another trembling breath, the sort that made her breasts quiver in just the right way, those dewdrop nipples of hers pebbled and practically begging for his mouth.

"Do...do many guys...do that?"

"What? Enjoy it when a bird comes all over his face? Can't speak for others, myself, but—"

"No. The... What you did. With your tongue." She burned brighter still, now looking anywhere but at him. It was rare, a moment like this with her, when she was being open and vulnerable rather than brassy and bitchy. He didn't much know how to react when she went all blushing schoolgirl on him, except that gushy spot he'd discovered he had for her seemed to swell.

"If he has sense enough to know what he's missing if he doesn't," Spike replied. "If he fancies treating his woman right."

"You said it was selfish. For you."

"It is. Doesn't mean I didn't want you to enjoy it." Wait, that sounded wrong. Spike inhaled and shifted. "Got what I wanted out of it."

"Which was to make me beg."

"That's right."

"And...other guys will do that because *they* want to?"

His mind dragged him down a dark path to an unspecified room, one occupied by the Slayer and some faceless prat who had her

writhing against his tongue, and something within him gave a loud, territorial snarl. Which made fuck-all sense because, why the hell should he care again?

Right. He didn't.

"Can't speak for all men," he continued in what he hoped was an even, measured tone, "but I reckon so, yeah." He paused as something occurred to him and arched an eyebrow. "Too bloody bad Angel's a right selfish ponce, yeah?"

"What?"

"He never stuck his tongue up your cunny, did he?"

Buffy's skin turned a deeper shade of red, her nostrils flaring. And fuck, did she ever look hot. Sitting astride him, her luscious tits rising and falling as her breaths came faster, just seconds away from slipping onto his cock and giving him what he just knew would be the ride of his life. All because some tossers had convinced her that she was the problem and she'd been twisted enough to believe it.

"You're disgusting," she spat, then made as though she intended to dismount.

Spike seized her by the hips. "Ah, ah, ah. Temper."

"Let me go!"

"What's the hurt? That I'm right?"

She slapped at his hands, and when he didn't budge, started smacking his chest. "You have no idea what you're talking about. Angel is not up for discussion."

"So, you're not at all curious why he didn't see that you got yours if he couldn't get his? Pretty bloody clear it wasn't *you* gettin' off that did it for him, considering the wanker never even gave you an orgasm."

Buffy stilled, her lower lip trembling and her eyes taking on a shine that made him feel like a git. "Stop," she said hoarsely, then swallowed. "I... I can't..."

Fuck.

Him and his big bloody mouth.

Spike heaved a sigh, loosening his hold on her hips. This was a familiar feeling—one he resented more than he resented whatever those soldier boys had done to him, and one he reckoned he'd never outrun. Watching a woman, any woman, cry over that tosser would

never not smart. Especially since he knew there was bugger all he could say that would get through. Whether it was Dru or the Slayer, Angel could do no wrong.

Still, knowing this didn't mean he wouldn't try. He'd never stop trying.

"It's on him, love," he said, scaling one hand up her side, over the swell of her breast, and higher still until he had her cheek cradled against his palm. "All on him. Shoulda known how to take care of you."

"He—"

"No. Listen to me." Spike waited until her eyes were on his again. "You asked me if other blokes will fancy eating your cunt. Answer is I can't bloody well imagine anyone turnin' down a chance to take a taste of you. The fact that your ex had you at his beck and bloody call for over a year and never thought to give that to you is downright criminal. He always was a selfish prat—not givin' unless he was getting, and that he left you not knowin' just how good it could be is on him. All on him."

Buffy was trembling now, trembling hard, but she didn't look away, nor did she try to pull free from his grip.

Well now. That was something.

Emboldened, Spike ran his thumb over her cheek, the beast in his chest starting to purr rather than rage. This was the furthest he'd ever gotten with a woman when not singing Angel's praises. It felt momentous and he didn't want to lose it.

"Know you love him, pet," he said carefully, trying hard not to wince, "but he did you wrong. Can't think of why else you'd be here with me."

Her breathing was coming harder again, and he wasn't sure whether to expect a punch in the nose or a snog. In the end, he got neither.

"What should I do?" she asked instead.

Spike blinked. "What's that?"

"You..." Buffy glanced down, fixing her gaze on his semi-hard cock. Bleeding difficult to keep a stiffy when discussing Captain Forehead, but her tits still being on full display had kept him from deflating completely. Now, under her scrutiny, he swelled back up to full mast and enjoyed the way her eyes widened.

Then the question came again. "What should I do?"

"What do you want to do?"

He watched her throat work, biting back a groan. Though she'd made it clear it would never happen, he couldn't help but wonder what it would feel like to come down that throat, feel her mouth around him, her lips, her tongue, even the hint of teeth. He was willing to gamble all of it would be magnificent, just like the rest of her.

"I wanna touch." Buffy flicked her gaze back to his and shifted as though self-conscious. All she succeeded in doing was drenching his skin where she had him straddled and sending teasing whiffs of her scent to his nostrils. "I haven't...touched all that much."

This time, he had no hope of swallowing his groan, so he didn't bother trying. Instead, he lowered the hand that had still been at her face, seized hold of her wrist, and guided her to his prick, which jumped to convey its enthusiasm.

"Touch away," he said, pressing her palm against his shaft.

Buffy pursed her lips, then closed her fingers around him. "So hard," she said almost absently.

"Bloody right."

"Is...is this okay?" She tightened her grip on him and stroked up, those sweet, innocent eyes of hers widening as she watched his foreskin surround the head. "Oh."

"More than okay." Spike released a ragged breath of his own. "Can be tighter."

"Tighter?"

"Grip me tighter."

"Won't it hurt?"

Her concern touched him. "I'll tell you if it does."

She nodded, looking uncertain but resolved, and perhaps more human than he'd ever seen her. The Slayer didn't wear weakness well. She couldn't afford to. Even when she was out of her element, she threw on that sass of hers and got to the other side with her head held high. That she could be this unsure, this ignorant of her own allure, stripped her of everything that made her a warrior.

And she didn't know how much she was revealing about herself. How a bloke like him could use this to his advantage, handicap or no.

Everything she revealed about herself could be shaped into a weapon. He could cut her without making her bleed one ruby-red drop.

But he didn't want to.

This part, the pure Buffy part, he wanted to protect.

Spike hissed out a moan when she started pumping him again, still tentative at first, adding just a hair more pressure on each stroke. At first, she flicked her gaze to his face every few seconds, as though waiting for him to cry uncle, but after a minute she seemed to become mesmerized by what she was doing. Her breath quickened and her skin took on a rosy hue, and soon the air was thick with the scent of her renewed arousal, and fuck if that wasn't a revelation. That touching him, stroking him, had this effect on her.

"Fuck, Slayer."

She glanced up again, her eyes somewhat glassy. "Good?"

"Bloody brilliant." Spike gripped her hips, digging his fingers into her firm flesh. "Let's make it better though, yeah?"

"How?"

"Put me against your clit."

She flushed even further. "What?"

"Here. Like this." He wrapped one hand around the base of his cock and urged her forward with the other, then dragged himself along her drenched slit until he was where he wanted to be. And fuck, his eyes about rolled out of his head at how hot she was. Just the thought of all that tight heat wrapped around him was almost enough to make him pop.

None more so than when he felt her tremble. "Oh god." Buffy pressed her eyes shut. "Oh..."

"That's it, pet." He seized her hand and wrapped it around his shaft. She squeezed without needing instruction and began pumping him again in time with the rolls of her hips.

Sodding natural, this girl was. The only thing getting in her way was her own insecurity.

"This...is good?" Buffy asked a few seconds later, her brow dotted with perspiration. "You're...getting something from this?"

He would have laughed had she not been so bloody earnest.

"Fuck yes." Spike gripped her hips again, urging her faster, wanting

to chase away the doubt still burning in her eyes. Wanting to know if he could get her off just like this, and how it'd feel to slide into that heavenly pussy as she trembled and spasmed around him. "You're so hot. Liquid fire. Gonna bloody burn me up when I'm finally in that sweet cunt of yours."

Her heart thumped harder and a fresh gush of wetness coated his cock. Seemed the girl liked dirty talk.

"And you like it too, don't you?" he rasped.

Buffy's eyes widened but she didn't deny it. Instead, she began moving faster, so the head of his cock was circling her swollen clit. The tremors wracking through her tiny body intensified, her breaths coming faster. And then he didn't think he wanted to wait—didn't think he could stand it. All that wet heat burning against him and he needed to be inside. Inside her. Wanted to watch her tremble and come all over his cock, squeeze him until the stars blinked out because he knew she could.

"Buffy..." Spike ran his fingers over the hand she had gripped around him and groaned when she squeezed him on reflex. "Fuck me."

"Wh-what?"

"Fuck me."

She looked down, breathing hard. "Like this? With me on top?"

"Trust me, Slayer, you know what to do."

"What if I don't?"

God, the chit was insufferable. Even more so now when he knew she wasn't trying to be, when he knew her questions were coming from that place she'd brought him here to help eradicate. This girl was all fire and power and strength and she was so bleeding scared of herself it damn near broke his heart. Only it didn't because this was the Slayer and Big Bads did not get all weepy about slayers.

He shook his head to refocus and grinned up at her. "You will."

Her eyes darkened and she seemed to return to herself—remember who she was and who she was with—for her expression closed off, the vulnerability disappearing in favor of cool detachment. But she did as he'd instructed, slid his cock from her clit so that he was notched at her opening, and even if he had been annoyed by her sudden coolness,

the thought would have melted away the second she started lowering herself onto him.

Spike had seen some right grand things in his time, but nothing compared to the sight of the Slayer's pretty pink pussy swallowing his cock inch by inch. And fuck, she was tight. Tight and slick and so hot he thought for a second he might just dust for real, but it felt so good he couldn't bring himself to give a damn.

"Oh," Buffy breathed, her last bout of bitchiness apparently having been chased away. She was trembling again, her hands on his chest now, fingers curled and nails digging into his skin. "Oh...*god*." She lifted herself back up, and Spike watched his cock, now slick with her juices, slide back out by increments. "So...like this?" she asked, and pushed back down, this time not stopping until he bottomed out.

"Fuck yes," he replied. "Just like that."

"Any...pointers?"

"Move before I dust."

Buffy grinned at that—fucking *grinned*—and that was it. The thing that could make this better—the only thing, he realized with a jolt.

The Slayer smiling at him as she rode his dick.

Because he was, if nothing else, a sodding romantic who always wanted the impossible.

It took maybe thirty seconds for Buffy to find her confidence, thirty seconds of watching her face as she worked herself up and down his cock, first with a look of steadfast determination before—*oh yes*—she let go completely. When she stopped being so focused on doing it just so and more on how it felt. When she ceased treating this like a bloody homework assignment and started to enjoy herself. He watched the change come over her, saw the instant she crossed that line, and it was marvelous. Just like the rest of her.

"That's it, pet," he rasped, unable to help himself. Up until now, he reckoned he'd been a bloody saint, but there was only so much a bloke could take when tucked inside the hottest cunt he'd ever touched. "Ride me."

Buffy released a little gasp and met his gaze, digging her fingers into his chest to steady herself. "I like this," she said in a rush, rolling her hips and drawing him in deeper.

No reason for that to make his dead heart lurch, but there it went. “Me too,” Spike said and bit back a moan when she grinned at him again. “Fuck yes.”

“So...good?”

“Buffy...more.”

“More what?”

“All of it.”

The grin broadened, and he couldn’t help it—he smiled back.

“More like this?” she asked, picking up the pace, experimenting with different strokes until she found the rhythm she liked. The air filled with the sound of wet flesh smacking together, punctuated by the timely whines of the cheap bedsprings, which somehow made this real in ways it hadn’t been before. And he was swimming in it—in her. In the way she looked and moved, those breathy little moans that tumbled off her lips each time she swallowed his dick, the beads of sweat that made her breasts glisten, the bounce of her hair. He was swimming in the Slayer and he couldn’t get enough.

“So tight...” Spike hauled himself off the mattress, whimpering when she whimpered. He wasn’t even sure what he was doing until his fingers tunneled through her hair and he had her in his mouth. Bouncing in his lap still, squeezing his cock in ways he’d never been squeezed, her hot pressed to his cold as she scraped at his lips with her teeth and chased his tongue and kissed him like he was the source of life and not the other way around.

For a girl who hadn’t wanted to snog throughout this entire exchange, she seemed parched for him. Or maybe that was just his imagination, wishful thinking.

Wishful?

Where the sodding hell had that thought come from?

Spike tore away from her mouth, trailing a series of biting kisses down her throat, not sure what to think when he didn’t feel her pulse kick up. When she just gasped and bucked and fucked him harder. And then thinking seemed a wasted effort because, Christ, did she ever feel amazing. Hot and silky and slick, and wrapped so tight around him—so tight, and so bleeding unfair because how dare she? How dare she have a pussy this perfect? How dare she feel so fucking

good? How dare she make his chest hurt, make all the thoughts he'd ever had about her blink out in exchange for *more more more* and *never stop*?

The Slayer shouldn't feel this good, this hot. A fun tumble, yeah, a decent grudge fuck, but not anything life-changing.

Perhaps she had the same revelation, for the next second, her hands were on his chest and she had shoved him back to the mattress.

"No kissing. We said."

Yeah, and that had gone swimmingly, hadn't it? No reason for this to brass him off, especially with the mess of thoughts currently making muck with his head, but it did. A snarl tumbled through his throat and he flipped her over, relishing the surprise that flashed across her face almost as much as the way she clenched her cunt around him as though trying to keep him lodged inside her.

"What—"

"Shut your gob," Spike spat, then smashed his lips to hers, driving into her with hard, brutal thrusts. He wanted her to fight him and she did, biting and clawing and nipping at his tongue so that the taste of his own blood filled his mouth and he didn't care.

"I wanna snog you, Slayer," he rasped against her lips a second later, voice barely audible over the hard smacks of their bodies, "I bloody well will snog you."

Her eyes burned. "I hate you."

"Mutual." Spike snaked a hand under one of her knees and jerked it up so it was draped over his shoulder, smirking when the animosity on her face melted away in favor of a long moan. "Remember that, pet," he said, repeating the gesture with the other leg. And Christ, she was even tighter now. So tight he had to bite back a whimper, being that he was trying to make a point. "Remember how much you hate me. I want you thinkin' about that when I make you scream."

Then he was kissing her again, angry and desperate, and she tasted so good. All fire and salt and woman, so unlike the sweet kisses they'd stolen while under that wonky spell. She tore at his lips as though she loved what she tasted, but hated that she loved it, and that was something Spike understood all too bloody well. He hated it too—it and this and her and how phenomenal she felt and his own bloody rotten

luck that she was who she was and he was who he was and this was all they could ever be.

It wasn't fair—wasn't fair that he'd find anything like this in Buffy Summers when she was the one person he could never have again.

"Not screaming," she sputtered against his lips when he pulled back to allow her breath. "Not. Happening."

Spike wasn't unfamiliar with the concept of mercy. Hell, he'd even been known to grant it a time or two when he was in the giving mood. That was not now. He was pissed and she was glaring up at him like she could still pretend to be better than him when he was fucking her so hard the walls rattled. When her pussy was gripping him so tight and she'd started squeezing muscles he hadn't known existed, muscles he was sure other girls didn't have, around his cock every time he drove into her. The bitch wanted to pretend, and he wouldn't let her.

"Touch yourself," he snapped. He'd get her to scream.

Buffy just glared at him—or tried to—so he pounded harder. So hard she'd be limping for a few days, restorative slayer healing or not. He wanted her walking around with the reminder of just how thoroughly he'd wrecked her. So that she couldn't do this ever again with anyone else without remembering how good it had been with him.

"Touch your fucking clit."

"Fuck you."

He offered a wild grin and tore another kiss off her lips. "If the lady insists..."

There were times when it was very, very good to be a vampire. With the Slayer's legs draped over either shoulder, trusting his balance to just one arm was a bit bold, but Spike was nothing if not a lot bold. He kept his dominant left arm planted on the mattress by her head, held her gaze as he sucked his right index finger into his mouth, then smirked and scaled that finger down her hot, trembling body to toy with her clit.

"Now, Buffy," he snarled between thrusts. "Now. You'll. Scream."

He pressed down, rubbing tight little circles against her clit. And Buffy arched her back, raking her fingers down his back like a desperate kitty, trying and trying to keep it bottled inside but she couldn't. He'd won and she knew it.

So, he did what any self-respecting vamp would do—he took a victory lap and sank his blunt teeth into her shoulder. And that was it. Buffy threw her head back and screamed, her pussy spasming hard—all of her spasming hard. Clenching and clutching and pulling and dragging and it was so good. So good, so good, so *bloody* good, and then he was coming too, bucking and gasping and muttering her name like a prayer as his cock jerked and he emptied himself into her in unrelenting jets of pure ecstasy. Her muscles sucking him in deeper, harder, because she was still coming too. Coming like she couldn't stop.

And the thought came again, unbidden and unwanted but no less true even though she'd fought him every step of the way. *Perfect*. She was perfect. This was perfect. Perfect like nothing had ever been before. All those past encounters, those long, decadent evenings with Dru, wiped away as though they never were because perfection hadn't existed before now. Before feeling the Slayer's molten cunt squeeze his cock so good it hurt, before knocking those little grunts out of her mouth, watching as her eyes widened and she tried and tried to fight but couldn't because it was just as good for her. Because she loved his cock and she loved this and she was thinking the same thing he was, even if she wouldn't admit it—that tonight had been a right daft idea no matter what her motives seeing as neither one of them were going to walk away from this intact. Unchanged.

It took a moment for him to gather himself, realize that the proper thing to do now would be to roll off her, put some distance between them. Redraw the lines of their relationship as they had to be in the world outside of this shitty motel room. But moving would mean it was over, and he didn't want it to be over. He'd never feel a cunt this silky and tight again, he was certain, and given that he had a long stretch of forever to look forward to, the thought was downright depressing.

"Spike..." She was panting, her heart pounding so hard it echoed against his chest. He focused on the steady thump, the heady rush of her pulse, her breaths, and the warm scent of her that flooded his nostrils. All sweet woman, sweet Slayer, and for a second at least entirely his.

"Spike. You can get off me now."

He grunted, shifting his head against her shoulder. "Give us a moment, pet."

"I think... I think you should get off me."

"Don't wanna. You're all comfy and gooey now, aren't you?"

She shoved at him—not enough to knock him off her, but enough for him to feel that she meant it. Spike lifted himself onto his elbows, taking great pains to nudge her with every move, and stared down into her eyes. "Tell me one thing, then."

Buffy blinked up at him. If he hadn't caught the way her lower lip wobbled, she might have been able to make a dumber man believe she was entirely unaffected. But he was not a dumber man, at least not where she was concerned. Whatever else she might have been, Buffy Summers had always been an open book to him.

"You think you'll ever be able to fuck another bloke without feeling me inside you?"

Instantly, her expression hardened. "You're disgusting."

"That's a no if I ever heard one." Spike grinned and bit at her lips. "Didn't know it could be like that, did you, Slayer?"

"Shut up."

When she shoved at him this time, there was enough muscle behind it that he knew she meant it—or she at least meant it more than she had a second earlier. At either rate, Spike took the hint and pushed away from her heat, unable to keep a moan from scratching at the back of his throat as his hardening cock slipped free of her pussy.

"Didn't know what to expect. Should have, probably, but I didn't."

"What are you talking about?"

"Just what I said. It's never been like this," he muttered. "Not once."

At that, Buffy looked stricken. "You're wrong," she said. "You couldn't be more wrong."

Lying little bitch. "Was talkin' about myself."

"What? Why?"

"Well, why the hell else are we here, then? You wanna know, right? How good a fuck you are? Or how rotten." Spike aimed her a glare. Just like her to do this—get him all wound up, twisted in the head, then act like it hadn't happened at all. Like he was here for any reason beyond

their barmy bargain. Didn't matter that she was shaken too—none of this had been *his* idea, after all, but hell if he wasn't going to hold up to his end.

Except he'd do things his way.

Spike seized her by the hips and, before she could protest, slid down the length of her body so he was staring at her wet, swollen cunt. He drew in a deep breath that tasted of her and him together, of her excitement and arousal and his own spunk and more besides. Though the thought rankled, he wagered he'd be visiting this night a lot in the future, and he wanted to have as many details committed to memory as possible. "You want a sodding verdict, right?" he growled. "Wanted to know what it was like, getting the full Summers treatment?"

Buffy sat up—or tried to. He pushed her back down the second she came off the mattress, and this time when he looked at her, she was an open book again. An open, trembling book, wound so tight she'd shake her pages loose if she didn't watch herself. The thumps of her heart kicked up again, as did her pulse, but it was a different rush from before. A rush his demon knew intimately, chased down whenever it could—the sort that accompanied the anticipation of pain, and lots of it.

"Could tell you anything I want, you know," Spike continued matter-of-factly before parting the folds of her pussy and spreading her open. He waited for a second to see if she'd kick him in the head, but she didn't, so he edged a finger inside and back again, a pearly white strand of cum clinging to the tip. "Could give you the runaround and go on about how terrible you are. How hopeless. See if I can score me a few more sessions to help teach you the things you need to know to keep a fella interested. Confirm all your worst fears. Everything that sod told you and more than that." He dragged the strand of semen up her swollen flesh, not missing her gasp or the accompanying hip roll. "That's what a proper demon would do. Tear you down. Make you cry. Make it so you'd fuck me again and again until I got tired of easy pussy."

The cum-stained finger landed against her clit and began drawing sloppy circles. "Instead," he whispered as she trembled, "I'll give it to you straight. Vamp of my word, and all that. And the fact of the matter

is I'm gonna walk away from this wanting another taste. You're not the sorta bird a man can have just once."

Buffy arched her hips, gasping. "I...I'm not? Then why—"

"Because you picked the wrong blokes, that's why."

"And what? You're the right one?"

He scoffed, though something in the suggestion struck harder than it should. "Hardly," he replied, doing his best to shrug it off. "But I'm not gonna turn down another go."

"You're not getting one."

"Oh no?" Spike pressed down on her clit hard enough that he felt her slip over the edge again. "Way I see it, you just got the shag of your lifetime. Deed's already done, Slayer, so no sense playin' shy now. We got the room, we got the bed, so if it's all the same to you, I think I'll have me another helping. You have a problem with that, kick me into the wall. Otherwise, shut your gob and let me show you what you'll spend every sodding day after today missing."

He gave her a second, two seconds, three seconds to do just that, but she didn't. At the moment, like it or not, Buffy was his, and something in her seemed to recognize it too. And while he wasn't thick enough to think it meant anything of consequence, he also wasn't going to wait around for her to gather the wits to change her mind.

It wouldn't last beyond the night and definitely not beyond the walls of this room, but while they were here, he'd take what he could get.

So he prowled over her, kissed her hard, slid his cock into her still-spasming cunt, and let himself get lost all over again.

IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE, SHE'D THOUGHT AS SHE'D TURNED IN THE motel room key. Impossible to pretend what had happened hadn't happened. Impossible to return to life as she knew it, because life as she knew it had changed irrevocably, and she'd been an idiot to think it could go any other way. That she could let Spike as close as she had and treat it like a business transaction—a favor swap, one that involved bodily fluids and the promise to help a dangerous killer get his blood-shed on again, but nothing personal. Nothing she couldn't handle because, well, she was the Slayer. She'd handled the Master, an evil mayor, and Principal Snyder all with aplomb. One night with Spike had to be a cakewalk.

Yeah, she'd been an idiot.

Something made worse by the fact that Spike himself seemed completely unaffected. The second he'd stepped outside of the motel room, all evidence of the guy who had buried his face between her thighs and licked and sucked on her until she couldn't feel her legs had evaporated. All that was left was the other guy—the one who sneered and jeered and rooted for her death. The guy who still shouted, "Tell any vamps you meet to kick your arse for me, yeah?" every time she left Giles's place for patrol. He ignored her when she came in, except

to pluck an insult out of the air—whether it be her dress, her intelligence, or whatever he smelled she'd had for lunch that day—and scoffed whenever she spoke.

For his part, it was like nothing had happened at all.

Spike could do that. Go back and act like none of it had happened. They hadn't had amazing sex—and yes, to herself, Buffy could admit that her world had been well and thoroughly rocked—and he hadn't told her that there was nothing wrong with her at all. That Angel had been going for the hurt and not smart enough to realize the entirety of the damage he'd left behind when he'd popped back into existence. And even if that weren't true, Angel had been her first, which, according to Spike, made it Angel's job to make sure she enjoyed herself and he hadn't because he was a *right selfish wanker* and some things never changed.

In the days that followed, Buffy found herself thinking about that night with Angel more than she had in nearly two years. That, she supposed, wasn't all that strange, considering part of the reason she'd come up with this idiotic plan had been to figure out what truths her ex-boyfriend's less soulful side had lobbed at her. What was strange was that the pain associated with that night, the pain she'd spent every day outrunning ever since, wasn't so much with the painful anymore. It was there, yeah, in a, "This is where I live," sort of way, but not anything deeper or unmanageable.

She'd thought of that night, how she'd gone from kissing Angel to being beneath him, his bulky frame above her, his touch so tentative but sweet. He might have asked her if he could go down on her, but she didn't remember. Hell, she might not have known what he'd meant if he had, as naïve as she'd been. She remembered him exploring her with his fingers, how strange it had felt to be touched by someone else, then the pain of being invaded. How it had consumed her and fulfilled her all at the same time. How it had seemed sweet and romantic, so romantic, but not necessarily sexy. The *wild* she'd experienced with Spike hadn't been there. Angel had treated her like she'd break.

Then he'd come in the next morning and made sure she did.

The night with Angel, before all the bad, had been nice. Well, life-changing, because it had been a huge deal for her, but in terms of the

actual sex, what she remembered? *Nice* summed it up pretty well. And it had created a level of expectation, one she'd taken with her to Parker's bed. That had been nice too. Nice-ish, at least, except now she wondered if the things Spike had initially taunted her with had been true, that she had hurt Parker and he'd been too proud to admit it.

"No bloody way a human bloke's gonna take you at full strength," Spike had murmured into her hair that night, running a hand down her arm. Somehow, they'd ended up spooning. She and Spike, spooning, when one or both of them should be dressing in a hurry to put as much distance between each other as possible. But at the moment, Buffy hadn't had the energy to roll over, much less make a mad dash for the door, and being there with him had felt...

She didn't want to think about how it had felt.

"The way those muscles of yours gripped me... Good kinda hurt, you know?" He'd chuckled, his breath teasing the hairs at the back of her neck. "Think you mighta broken me if I'd been anything but a vampire."

"So I need to be careful about that. With anyone I'm..."

But she hadn't said it. For whatever reason, lying there, sore in places she'd never been sore, the thought of doing this with someone else had seemed wrong. Or at the very least, *talking* about the next man she'd be intimate with when she was still in bed with Spike—that said something not-so-nice about her, didn't it?

But then, this whole thing did.

It hadn't been her intention, but they'd ended up staying the full night. The excuses had been easy at first—her legs were wobbly, she looked like a mess, anyone who caught a glimpse of her would know what they'd been up to, Spike's scent was all over her and she needed to clean up before she faced anyone. But the night had grown longer, and her legs had stopped wobbling and she'd been perfectly capable of dragging herself into the shower to wash off the entire experience. Except her eyes had been heavy and the bed seemed to become more comfortable by the second. Not to mention Spike had had an arm around her middle and moving would mean making him move, and she wasn't rude.

Maybe she'd wanted to see what would happen the next morning.

Because that was when things went to hell, wasn't it? The during was fine but the after—the *after* was when her bedmates turned into monsters. And since she'd gone to bed with an actual monster, whatever he threw at her was bound to be a million times worse than Angel and Parker combined.

Instead, she'd awakened to the sensation of cool kisses feathering across her skin, Spike's hand between her legs, playing with her clit and rubbing her in ways that brought her body to life well ahead of her brain.

"Once more, pet?" Spike had murmured, lifting her leg and nudging her sex with his cock. "Before one of us turns into a pumpkin?"

The faint light of morning had pushed against the curtains, but it had been easy enough to pretend it was still dark outside. Easier still to pretend that she'd been with someone else since Spike had been pressed to her back—at least, that was what she'd told herself. So Buffy had curled her leg around his, rolled her hips back, and sighed as he'd slipped his cock inside of her, but despite her best efforts, there had been no pretending.

That morning had been unlike anything that had come the previous night. Rather than hard and brutal, he'd pumped into her with long, indulgent strokes, lazily stroking her clit and laving her throat with his tongue. And as she'd whimpered and sighed, he'd brought his mouth to her ear and started muttering things that, well, she still couldn't think about without wanting to melt.

Love the way you feel, Slayer. So fucking tight. You squeeze me so good. So good. Never had it like this. Never had it so hot. You make it hurt in all the right ways. Fuck, Buffy. Gonna miss this.

It had been that last thing that stuck. He'd had no reason to say it—no reason to say any of the things he'd said, actually. And now that the experience was behind her, that she was firmly on the other side, Buffy couldn't help but wonder why he'd said *any* of the things he'd said. Hell, why she'd trusted him enough to tell her the truth to go through with this in the first place. In the end, she hadn't learned all that much, except that some men apparently loved putting their mouths south of the border and that her two previous lovers hadn't been as attentive as they should have

been. Though the verdict was still out as to whether or not Angel was to blame for that or if it would've been that awkward with anyone just by virtue of the fact that she hadn't known what she was doing.

Regardless, Spike had been... Well, supremely not Spike-like. And despite all the grandstanding she'd done when she'd first suggested the insanity that was *let an evil vamp bone her to see if she was a lousy lay*, Buffy had never expected Spike to keep his yap shut once they returned to the real world. He'd been nothing but a walking innuendo since the second he'd barreled into her life, so it only stood to reason that he'd become even more insufferable now that they'd done the horizontal tango.

Only he wasn't. More insufferable, that was. Insufferable, yes, but the regular amount. The Spike amount.

It was wiggling her out.

On the plus side, things with Riley seemed to be progressing and that was great. *Riley* was great. Riley was six-feet some-odd inches of Iowa-grown greatness with his awesome normalness and having-of-a-pulse thing. Sooner or later they might even progress beyond the awkward post-class flirtage to some actual dating. And that was, as she'd established, *great*, because it was the point. The reason she'd gotten groiny with her archenemy. Riley was *the* guy—the normaliest normal guy ever, and the answer to how to solve a problem like Buffy's love life.

And the fact that the belly-tinglies she'd felt for Riley, oh say, a week ago were suddenly of the absent meant nothing at all. That said belly-tinglies seemed primed to do the Macarena anytime she knew she was going to see Spike was similarly of no interest to anyone, least of all her.

The sooner she could get Spike's problem dealt with and him out of her town, the better.

The back of her neck was already issuing its vamp-shiver warning well before Giles's door was in view. Buffy paused on the other side, mentally rehearsed her cover story one more time, then let herself in as per usual with a loud bellow of her Watcher's name.

"Oil!" Spike bolted to his feet from his place on the couch, slapping

the side of his head and scowling at her. "Show a bit of care for those with sensitive hearing, eh?"

Buffy rolled her eyes because that was the sort of reaction Spike warranted. Eye rolls. Not beaded nipples or heart palpitations, and definitely nothing belly or tingly-related. "Don't tell me he left you here alone *again*."

"Made a run to the butcher's. Doesn't trust me to go out on my lonesome." Spike made a show of looking her up and down. "What's got your knickers all twisted?"

"My knickers are not twisted."

He smirked, ran his tongue over his teeth in that infuriatingly sexy way of his. "Pity."

"I actually came by to see you."

Well, damn. She hadn't meant to just blurt that. Buffy crossed her arms and flushed, ignoring the heavy weight of his incredulous stare when he fixed it on her.

"That a fact?"

The reply was annoyingly neutral for Spike. He couldn't even aggravate her the right way these days.

"I haven't forgotten my end of our agreement," she said, forcing herself to meet his gaze. "No commando guys on patrol the last few nights. At least none that I've seen. But I'm keeping an eye out and once we find out who they are and what they want, your..." She gestured at him vaguely. "I'll make sure it's fixed."

A long stretch of nothing, then he was grinning again. "Never had any doubt. Not the type to leave a bloke high and dry, are you?"

Her cheeks burned hotter. "I just wanted you to know."

"Well, that was right thoughtful of you, Slayer." Again, he let his gaze roam from her face to her breasts then over the swell of her hips, and all the way back again. And though she'd deny it, she could have sworn she could feel it like a caress. It was different now—she knew the promise in his eyes was something he could live up to. That he could likely have her blissed out of her mind at least three times before Giles returned. What was worse, he knew it too—knew what she was thinking, because her body was a damn traitor, one he could read, see, and scent from more than half a room away.

“So,” Spike said, crossing his arms and tilting his head, “how goes it with your human playmate? Doin’ the slow seduction this time ’round?”

“That’s none of your business.”

He shrugged. “Just curious, is all. Went to all that effort and you don’t seem to be havin’ any fun just yet. At least none since last week.”

Buffy didn’t know what pissed her off more—that he’d finally referenced the motel or the suggestion that she’d enjoyed herself. “Mention that again and you’re dust,” she said, managing to sound like she believed it, stalking forward on legs that were so *not* wobbly. “And for the record? Not my idea of fun.”

He smiled like she was funny. Like she wouldn’t stomp over there and stake him just for the hell of it. “You ever want your horizons broadened again, love, you know where to find me. Not above givin’ out extra credit.”

Buffy stopped on the other side of the couch. “You’re disgusting.”

“And you’re outta insults.”

“I guess I’ll just have to settle for this, then.”

She was just close enough that the punch she threw connected with his nose, knocking him against the far wall and to the ground. The echoing smack of her fist hitting his flesh almost startled her, and she didn’t know why. Nor could she explain the way her stomach twisted or the sinking sensation in her chest, or why she suddenly felt like crying.

Get out while you can.

“Bloody hell!” Spike snapped, leaping to his feet and dabbing his bloodied nose. “You’d think—”

“Shut up, Spike.”

The frustration on his face faded almost instantly, and she knew he hadn’t missed the tremble in her voice. For a long moment, they just stood there, staring at each other, Buffy knowing she needed to move—to flee—but unable to command her feet to do anything. Spike panting, the blue of his eyes sharper than she’d ever seen it, and looking at her like he had in flashes during their night together—open and vulnerable, searching.

It was then it cemented, the knowledge that no matter how much distance or how many men she put between her and that night with

Spike, something inside of her had changed for good. These last few days hadn't just been a hangover from what had surely been the worst idea of all possible ideas, but the new normal she lived inside. One where Spike, crass and crude as he was, built her up rather than tore her down, where he murmured small praises into her hair and assured her that the only thing wrong with her had been the men she'd chosen before.

Even if Spike did as he'd sworn and took off the second he could bite humans again, he'd take a part of her with him.

Everything was different. *Everything*.

Spike drew in a ragged breath and made to circle the couch. "Buff—"

And she was in motion before she could stop herself—not toward him, the way her body urged, but toward the door, where her brain told her she would be safe. In the sunshine where he could not follow, or call her by her name, or make her think things that were impossible.

Because that was where she belonged, in the daylight. Angel had said so.

So that's where she would stay.