

WICKED

A Spike/Buffy Romance



HOLLY DENISE



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PART of her had liked it.

A large, frightening part. It wasn't about the power, no...although she hadn't hated the rush of pure energy crackling between her fingers. It wasn't about youth or vitality, or anything she typically clumped together with the vamp wannabes she occasionally encountered in various nooks around Sunnydale. No, being a vampire, however briefly, hadn't been about anything other than freedom.

Ultimate freedom.

One couldn't fear death when one *was* death incarnate. For a while, for an hour or so, she'd been damn near invincible. The Powers had already made her a warrior, infused with strength none save a lonely line of girls ever touched. Combined with the ferocity of the underworld, she had felt something large and dangerous, something that frightened and enticed all in one pull. She'd been relieved when the nightmare ended, of course...very glad to return to her not-so-normal life where she could walk again in the daylight.

Becoming a vampire had ceased being a fear that night. Oh, Buffy didn't wish for it or anything so dramatic and stupid, but the nightmares hadn't come after that, and of everything Lucky Nineteen unlocked with his magical mystery coma, that particular fear

was the only one to be put to bed. There were still nights when she'd wake bathed in sweat and clawing furiously at the air, convinced the Master was shoveling dirt over her head to silence her forever. Those nightmares knew no rest. She supposed they never would.

Perhaps that dormant fear was the reason she kept eying the rows of plastic fangs dangling off the display case, accompanied by little tubes of fake blood and white face paint. It was cheap and well beyond lame, but on her limited budget probably one of the wiser choices she could make. And it'd be good for laughs. Was there really a better way of celebrating her one day off a year than emulating the very thing she was supposed to hunt?

Plus it'd probably annoy the crap out of Angel, and after seeing him fawning over Cordelia the other night, it seemed certainly justified.

"Any ideas, Buff?"

Buffy turned. She'd almost forgotten the after school trip to *Ethan's* had been a shared venture among friends.

"Still thinking," she replied, offering a half-shrug. Then her eyes dropped to the package tucked against Willow's side. "What'd you get?"

The redhead beamed. "A time-honored classic!" she proclaimed, holding up her selection. It was fairly predictable, all things considered. A very *Willow* choice.

"Okay...a little friendly advice?"

Her friend's smile faded. "Not spooky enough?"

"It's just...you're never going to get noticed if you keep hiding. You're missing the whole point of Halloween."

"Free candy?" Willow suggested hopefully.

"It's come as you *aren't* night. The perfect chance for a girl to get sexy and wild with no repercussions." She added a little hip-sway to illustrate the point, and if the sound of Xander tripping over himself in the back didn't seal the deal, nothing else would. "You can't tell me there's nothing else here that you looked at and *wished* you had the guts to try on?"

Willow's lower lip wibbled. It actually *wibbled*. "Well," she said uncertainly, dropping eyes to the Casper-package before braving

Buffy's gaze again. "That's really, umm, easier said than done. I'm not—"

"Whatever you're about to say is *exactly* the kinda thing you should get," Buffy observed. "Like I said, the point of the holiday is to have fun being something you *aren't*. I, for one, am going to totally slut it up."

Whatever Willow thought in response, she had the foresight not to put it into words.

"I'm also going as a vampire," Buffy added, shrugging a shoulder.

The redhead's frown deepened. "A vampire?" she replied, her nose wrinkling. "Really?"

"Why not?"

"Kinda morbid, right?"

"I thought it'd be funny," Buffy replied. It was definitely a good thing she'd never let it slip that being a vampire, however temporarily, had been one of the most empowering events of her life. "And, well, *fun*. I certainly know more about vamps than anyone else donning a pair of fangs."

"Unless they're actually vamps."

"Well, yeah, but that's not the point." Buffy nodded to the display shelf she'd been admiring. "It's cheap and effective, and I can get the slut-stuff from my own closet."

Again, Willow expressed no surprise. It was likely a good idea that she kept her opinion to herself. Not that Buffy thought her friend was actually judging her—quite the opposite. They had discussed at length the wisdom behind Buffy's notoriously short skirts and provocative tops, especially since she was something of a social pariah, but Buffy maintained she liked her wardrobe and she wanted to do her job while wearing what she liked. In the end, she suspected Willow just had a case of the envies.

More than once she'd offered to take her friend shopping. More than once, she'd been rejected.

"You think you can slut it up that much?" Willow asked instead. "Vamps are...well, not with the discreet."

"I went through a leather phase when I was fourteen. I think I can still squeeze into the pants."

“I think I kinda hate you right now.”

Buffy shrugged again. “I was as tall then as I am now. Sometimes there are perks to being short. And, well, patrols keep me pretty toned.”

“Guess the PTB had to repay you somehow.”

“Guess so.” She glanced again at the Casper package. “So...are you going for sexy and wild? Or should I prepare for the friendly ghost?”

Willow nibbled on her lip. “Wild on me equals spaz,” she said. “I don’t think...”

“I know you’ve got it in you.”

“Well, thanks for the optimism. You’re really going to be a vampire?”

Buffy waved a hand. “Just for one night. It’ll give Angel the wiggins.”

“I thought you’d want something Victorian.”

She offered an unladylike snort. “Eh. If Angel can’t appreciate tight leather, there’s something wrong with him. Let’s welcome him to the twentieth century. The girls from his time might’ve had pretty dresses, but I have curves...and I know how to use ‘em.”

There was more she could say about Angel—a lot more—but she decided to let it slide. After the other night, after seeing him so chummy with Cordelia, something had changed. She didn’t know what. It wasn’t like Angel had gone a long way in declaring what exactly he wanted from her. One second he was her secret confidant, the next he was kissing her, and then he faded into the mist. He only came around when she was in trouble, and that cup of coffee had never been his idea, anyway.

Creepy stalker guy.

Buffy was ready for Halloween in a big ole way. No more worrying about vampire men she shouldn’t date or the lengths they went to turn her head around. No more worrying about anything at all.

Halloween was supposed to be completely about The Fun.

And The Fun was something she fully intended to have.



THERE WERE MOMENTS, ALBEIT FEW AND FAR BETWEEN, WHEN SPIKE felt he hadn't been the desperate idiot he'd pegged himself as when he crashed through the Welcome to Sunnydale sign. This was quickly turning into one of them.

It had started innocently enough—or as innocently as it could—and after Prague there had really been no option. Either he stuck around and made an arse out of himself, moping and trailing after Dru, or he got out and fixed his attention on something else for a little while. She'd left him with little option given the way she carried on. Although why he snapped when he did—and not during one of the thousand other infidelities—was anyone's guess. In the end, he suspected he was just tired—tired of chasing her, tired of trying to please her, tired of being upstaged by a string of lovers, equally favored and played. He was just one in a line, he supposed, and through the past century he'd never realized it.

Bloody depressing thought, that. *Heart shattering* thought. It was thoughts like those which inspired more drunken nights than sober ones, and likely the reason he hadn't torn apart the bloody town in the manner he'd intended when he'd first breached the city limits.

Not that Spike hadn't had his share of fun. Oh, he'd had it...it just wasn't the same. Nothing was without Dru.

It won't always be this way.

Spike snorted. That very same voice, the one he'd eventually decided sounded like his mum, was the one that directed him away from his disastrous relationship and to the sodding Hellmouth in the first place. No, it wouldn't *always* be like this. *This* was just a temporary gig. An adjustment stage. He'd move on, feel better, the sun would come out tomorrow and all that twaddle. Until then he was fucking miserable and nothing in this equally miserable hellhole was looking to rectify the problem.

Still...*still*...it was better than the alternative. Christ, if he hadn't walked out when he had, chances were he never would have. He would have followed Dru until the end of the world, pretending her coos and pet names and demure smiles were his and his alone. Forget the fact that she loved anyone who paid her any mind. He was so fucking sick of being jerked around, and he'd let her get away with it far too long. If

it wasn't Angelus or the Immortal or some other clown getting her knickers wet, it was the false hope of what their future entailed. The belief that her whispers and rhymes were promises rather than what they truly were.

No more. No bloody more.

Except this was the first time in all his years he'd ever found himself alone, and he didn't like the feeling.

The Hellmouth was supposed to be the antidote, complete with clueless townspeople, loads of nasties going bump in the night, and a spicy little slayer all ripe for the tasting. Never mind she—like every other dimwitted chit—spent all her spare time drooling after Granddaddy Forehead. And wasn't *that* a pity. She was so fiery and bold...just the sort of girl whose cunt could make him forget entirely about Drusilla...before he snapped her neck, at the very least. And Spike would want the girl willing—warm, wet, and moaning for him. He didn't want a grudge fuck now. He wanted to be needed.

Or wanted to be *wanted*, at the very least.

It was the sort of plan he'd have to throw down the piss. From the mooneyes the Slayer aimed at Angel every time the sod was in sight, Spike's more pleasant alternative looked to remain a pipedream.

He supposed he could still snap her neck—and he would eventually—but it wouldn't be as much fun without the dance between the sheets.

Yes, there were definitely times the pay-off for coming to Sunnyhell wasn't as rich as the brochure had promised. However, Spike reflected again, enjoying the symphony of chaos erupting through the night sky, this wasn't any such time. Things had changed, and for the better.

This was different. Very different.

And well worth looking in to.



GOTTA GET TO BUFFY.

It was a mantra upon which Willow had relied faithfully for the past year. Something wiggly happened, she went to Buffy. She always went to Buffy. Even if Buffy hadn't the first clue what was going on—

which was often—she was, at least, the sort of person one would want to be around when the world started going crazy.

And given that Willow had lost her body and all her trick-or-treaters had turned into hobgoblins, the world was definitely sprinting toward crazy.

It landed on crazy the second she saw Xander.

With a big honking gun.

Shooting things.

“Oh my god, this is not happening,” Willow murmured. “Xander!”

He whirled around, all business; out of everything that had happened over the past year, having her best friend aim the unfriendly end of an M-16 in her face ranked Number One in Willow’s Book of Weird. It was probably in everyone’s best interest she hadn’t yet eaten dinner.

“It’s me, Willow!” she said uselessly.

“I don’t know any Willow.”

Something told her he wasn’t joking—at least she *hoped* he wasn’t joking. Xander joking around with M-16s was definitely of the bad. Still, something compelled her to say, “Xander, quit messing around. This is no time for jokes.”

“What the hell’s going on here?” he demanded in a very un-Xander voice.

Okay. So joking was out.

“You don’t know me?”

His stance relaxed as the gun relinquished its target and settled on his shoulder. At the very least, Bizarro Xander had enough sense about him to realize she wasn’t a threat. “Lady,” he all but snarled—and Willow unwittingly found herself pressing her thighs together. He took a step forward, very clearly intending to brush past her. “I suggest you find cover.”

“No, wait!”

He didn’t get very far—well, farther than either one of them expected. Apparently Bizarro Xander was wigged when he walked through people...which was fine. Willow was wigged being walked-through.

Though not as wigged as finding herself on the business end of an

M-16 once more...even if she was now convinced the bullets would just sail through her.

“What are you?” Xander demanded.

Oh, this was just a blast.

“Xander,” Willow began slowly, “listen to me. I’m on your side, I swear. Something crazy is happening. I was dressed as a ghost for Halloween, a-and now I am a ghost. And you were supposed to be a soldier, and now I...I guess you’re a real soldier.”

He arched a brow. “You expect me to believe that?”

A roar from behind stole her retort off her lips. In a blink, super soldier had whirled around and aimed his weapon at a midget-sized beastie.

Warning bells immediately sounded. “No!” Willow shrieked. “No guns! That’s still a little kid in there!”

He ignored her. “Step out of the way!”

“We just need to find...”

And then Willow’s surveying eyes landed on something beyond her understanding.

Beyond anything.

It was Buffy. She’d yelled at Buffy enough in the hallways to identify the back of her head—to recognize the shape of her body. So even before she screamed out her friend’s name in horror, even before Buffy tore herself away from the throat she was currently ravaging, even before a frightening thought became reality, she knew.

“Oh my god, I’m gonna be sick.”

Buffy licked her ruby red lips as the nameless man collapsed to the ground at her feet. Her black eyes positively sparkled.

“Hey, guys,” she drawled. “Ready to get this party started?”

“I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN you would react this way.”

Xander barely flinched before taking aim again. “The first one was a warning. Step away from the dead guy.”

Buffy made a face but obliged. “Fine,” she agreed. “Not like he’s good for much now, anyway.”

The look on the redhead’s face was a divide between tragic and priceless. She was wibbling again...though perhaps Willow never stopped. Willow the Wibbler.

The thought made her snicker, but she quickly wiped it away. Throw in the fangs and the smallest twitch seemed sinister. As though anything were so simple—as though the world was paned in black and white.

However, Buffy wasn’t an idiot. She knew why Willow was wibbling, though where Xander had managed the wherewithal to snag a shiny gun was a bit questionable. She also knew this wasn’t normal. Ten minutes ago, she’d been leading a bunch of pint-sized blood banks door to door in a tireless effort to wrangle as much candy as the human body could withstand, and now she was licking some poor sap’s blood off her fingers. The plastic fangs she’d purchased were now her own damn teeth. The body at her feet was there because she’d killed him...

and why not? She was hungry and he'd just been there. It wasn't like she was going out of her way or anything. Killing him was nothing personal—the guy was lower on the food chain, and that was simply the way it was.

“Hey,” Buffy drawled, spreading her hands. “It’s all right. I’m fine, Will. Really.”

Willow was shaking her head steadily, her feet carrying her backward. “You *killed* a man,” she whispered. “My god...”

She perked a brow and gave Mr. Dead a disinterested kick. “Really? Is that what it was?”

“What happened to you?”

“I’m a vampire, Will. What do you *think* happened to me?”

“But...it was just your costume.”

Buffy blinked, her eyes turning back to Xander, who still had a gun trained on her. And suddenly everything clicked in a way it honestly should have immediately. Of course, *of course*. This was a spell—something out of an 80s horror flick. Halloween night turned into a night of real tricks.

Which meant she probably wasn’t really a vampire. This was a temporary thing.

And she shouldn’t rack up a significant body count if she wanted to avoid a massive guilt-trip when Giles and the Mystery Gang set things right again.

Booooring.

“Get back, Xander,” Willow said sharply. “Get away from her.”

Buffy rolled her eyes. “Get out. I’m not gonna hurt you.”

“Right. Heard that before.”

“I mean it! Not going to hurt you.” She licked her lips and eyed the gun warily. “Look, either shoot me or point that somewhere else. I have better things to do.”

“Don’t shoot her,” Willow whispered loudly.

“I can hear you, you know.” She flicked her earlobe. “Vamp hearing, much?”

“We’re gonna set things right, Buffy. But...” The girl’s eyes fell again on the dead guy. More wibbling. Honestly, any more and Buffy was

going to rip Willow's lips off...though something told her that wouldn't go far in the confidence-building department.

Instead, she batted a dismissive hand and turned her eyes to the war-torn streets. "All right," she said, a sigh rolling off her shoulders. "Well, I'm gonna go have fun."

"Don't!" Willow squealed. "You can't!"

"Yes!" Buffy replied in the same manner. "I can! And furthermore, I will. And if you guys are going to rain on my parade, fine. But I'm gonna enjoy it while it lasts."

And before her overly wibbly friend could offer another stunning retort, Buffy turned on her heel and bolted into a town unmade.

If this was a spell, if it was temporary, she didn't have a lot of time to enjoy herself—just enough to make the night memorable.

Or perhaps a willing pair of fangs to make her transition permanent.



WHATEVER HE'D EXPECTED TO FIND IN THE DOWNTOWN ALLEY, SHE was *not* it. But Christ, what a welcome sight.

She was glorious.

Spike stopped dead in his tracks, his jaw falling slack, his eyes absorbing every luscious inch. Every sway of her hips, every toss of her hair, every amused twitch of her mouth. *Every* move she made was poetry come to life, breathed into air and whispering words into his ears he would never commit to paper. He didn't write anymore—not if he could help it—but at that moment he wanted to. She was a vision—a fucking ray of light in a sea of darkness, and he couldn't do anything but stare.

"My god," he deadpanned, his eyes rolling over her body. Christ, the girl could render a monk a slobbering blue-balled mess. Her legs were wrapped in black leather, complete with crimson red shoes matched to the brassiere she'd tried to pass for a shirt. Her wrists were decorated with silver bracelets, a simple chain hung around her neck, and her lips were the most seductive red he'd ever seen. Gone was the naïve teen who wore skirts that ought to be deemed illegal by any civi-

lized society—at the very least for the cock-driven blokes who would do anything to get a taste of such a pretty pussy. No, the Slayer knew exactly how good she looked, and she knew what she did to him simply by *being*.

To him and every other git within eyesight.

“Spike,” she said slowly, letting his name roll off her lips. “Out for a stroll?”

His eyes eventually decided to land on her breasts. She was so plump and ripe...and he had to have a taste. Just one taste.

When his gaze found hers again, what he saw made his cock twitch. His nostrils flared. She was hot for him already—she’d come to him knowing what would happen. What he’d want the second he saw her, what he’d wanted all along. The Slayer was here to offer herself... and he would take. Again and again and again.

Although *why* she was suddenly trussed up for the plucking was beyond him. This wasn’t the girl he’d grown to know over the last few weeks. This was something completely different.

“What happened to you, ducks?” he asked, flexing his fingers.

She licked her lips. “What would you like to happen to me?”

Spike stared for a minute longer, a long smirk drawing over his lips. “Loaded question, that,” he replied, hooking his fingers through his belt loops and taking a slow, measured step forward. “What are my options?”

“The sky’s the limit as far as I’m concerned.”

“Brave words.”

Her grin widened. “Not the Slayer right now,” she replied, shaking her head. And then something miraculous happened—something he should have known the second his eyes landed on her, yet needed to see all the same. Even so, it took a few beats for what he saw to connect with reality. Her green eyes melted into the golden shade he knew so well, the bones in her face shifting until her forehead was ridged, her teeth elongated. The Slayer transformed into a vampire before his eyes—as though it was the most natural thing in the world. As though she’d been made for this all along.

In all his years he’d never seen anything more beautiful.

“What happened?” he demanded, his voice suddenly hoarse.

"Ah, ah, ah. Now we're getting repetitive."

"You're a vampire."

"By golly, so are you!" She smirked, the demon receding. Then she was just a girl again. Just a girl. A bloody vision, though, and she knew it. "Don't know how long it'll last."

Spike arched an eyebrow. "Sort of a permanent move, Slayer."

"Vampire," she corrected. "And I think this is a spell."

"A spell?"

"Well, one of my friends was wielding a gun I don't think fits well in his budget. And the other, I'm fairly sure, was no longer of the corporeal." She shrugged. "I dressed as a vamp for Halloween, and here I am."

"So this isn't permanent." Spike's eyes had found her tits again, his cock pressing hard against his zipper. Not permanent. Something he had for just a second. Something he could only touch in passing.

Says who?

"Not unless someone decides they like me like this," she suggested coyly. Another step and she'd be pressed against him, but her hand decided to leap ahead and cup him through his jeans. "Do *you* like me like this, Spike?"

He nodded blindly. There was nothing else he could do.

"Then maybe you should show me how much."

"Here?" he asked, voice hushed. Either end of the alley opened to downtown Sunnydale. They weren't cut off from the night's madness—they were players in it.

"Right here."

"Anyone could see."

Her eyes flickered as though challenged. "Does that bother you?"

"Fuck no." Spike licked his lips hungrily and palmed a breast, thumb stroking her nipple through her flimsy camisole. Her sweet responsive sigh was music to his ears. Fuck, the girl had reduced him to a tangle of raging hormones with nothing more than a smile. One taste would never be enough.

"You came to me," he murmured absently.

"You found me," she fired back.

Spike arched a brow, his fingers slipping beneath the hemline. "Any

complaints?”

“Wouldn’t dream of it,” she replied, and he believed her. Then, without prompting, she added, “It’s Buffy. You’ve never asked me, but my name is Buffy.”

He grinned. The name certainly suited her. “Mmm...why don’t you show me your pretty face again?”

The Slayer grinned madly and let the demon out, throwing her arms around his neck and biting his lips in a wild, bloody kiss. It was unlike anything he’d ever experienced, unlike anything he’d ever hoped to touch. A hundred years and change into his life and this was the first time he’d ever felt anything remotely worth fighting for. In a blink, everything around them vanished—everything but her—her tongue, her lips, her teeth, as she scratched and tore and loved all in the same stroke, and he was a man undone.

Mine. She’s fucking mine.

The thought was terrifying but he didn’t object as he imagined. Rather, Spike tore away from her lips and smiled. “Gonna go for a ride, little girl.”

Her eyebrows flickered with challenge...then her mouth was on his again and nothing else mattered.

She was his—she *was*. He knew it, and he was about to show her.



IN MANY WAYS SHE DIDN'T FEEL DIFFERENT AT ALL. NOTHING LIKE her nightmares—back when she had nightmares—would have suggested. The blood thirst was there, yes, and in full force. The part she'd feared, the part that had kept her up nights, had no voice. She'd wondered briefly when confronted with her friends earlier—she *would* have killed to save herself, but there was no point in offing Xander or Willow. She liked them. They were amusing, and strange as it was, they were still part of her. So was her mother. So was Giles. The part of her she'd assumed would change the most, the part of her that was *Buffy*, seemed steadily present, even if overshadowed.

Giles hadn't given her any such indication that *any* of the person remained once turned. The soul vacated the body and all that

remained was the demon. And yes, while she was fairly sure her soul had exited the building, there wasn't that much that felt different.

It was like living with her eyes open for the first time. She'd smelled, heard, touched, and tasted the world without seeing it.

Now she saw, and it was wonderful. The smallest things she'd ever noticed, the slightest fantasies she'd ever entertained, every little observation or desire was suddenly tangible—suddenly real, suddenly *hers*. She felt what she'd long admired under her fingers. And Spike, her mind's dirty little fixation, her imagination's favorite play-thing, was really pressed against her. His mouth tore at hers with ferocity beyond anything she'd experienced, the furious passion behind every kiss unlike anything she'd been allowed to touch. It was wild and untamed, brutal and fevered, and it was *hers*.

It had been wrong before. When she saw him the first night, stepping out of the shadows with eyes that stripped her bare and a mouth the devil had painted, she'd shivered and pressed her thighs together, had the girl-sees-boy reaction, but shoved his sinful sexiness aside in lieu of what had seemed important. Sacred duty and all that jazz. But Spike had always remained lodged in her fantasies/

And now she had him.

She had him.

Her back was against a wall with her legs hiked around Spike's waist. His mouth was at her throat, his fly was open and his jeans were shoved down his thighs, and she had her fingers curled around his steely erection. It was surreal—a page out of someone else's life. Something that would have been vile and wrong just an hour ago had suddenly turned right.

"Fuck yeah," he purred, his hips jerking. "Do me like that, Slayer."

"Buffy."

He drew his head up, smirking. "Still the Slayer, you know. That part doesn't go away. It's in you, in your blood and bones. Can't undo mojo like that."

"Guess there could be worse things," she ventured. "It does make me awesomely strong and stuff. But you're missing the point, *Spike*." Her legs tightened around his waist, earning a sharp gasp

which balanced nicely with the comic widening of his eyes. "My name. I want you to say it."

He stared at her for a long beat before again breaking into a smug grin. "Do you, now?" he replied. "I'm thinkin' you should *earn* it."

She squeezed his cock. "Think I have."

"Gotta do more than touch, pet." Spike buried his face between her breasts, nipping at her camisole with a combination of blunt teeth and fang. In easy seconds, the satiny material had been reduced to shreds, leaving her all but bare from the waist up. All that was left was a bra—the only somewhat sexy bra she owned, and likewise one that made her look much fuller than she was in reality.

"Wanna be inside you," he purred, tugging on her lower lip with his teeth. "Wanna feel you cream around me. You want it too, don't you, kitten?"

Buffy nodded numbly, her legs sliding back to the ground. Her hands battled his for the right to undo the clasp to her pants; together, they had her stripped to her panties in seconds. Then his fingers were against her pussy, rubbing her lips through the fabric, and she about came apart. The slightest touch wasn't enough—it couldn't be enough. Sparks ignited across her cold skin, shooting through dead veins and making her feel *alive*...and even though barely an hour had passed since her last heartbeat, the sensation was no less powerful. She *felt* the difference.

"More," Buffy pleaded. She hated her voice but didn't apologize.

"More?"

"Touch me. God, please touch me."

"As my lady commands..." His fingers brushed her clit through the fabric, softly at first, as though by accident, then again with intention. Her legs turned to jelly.

"Do you have any idea how good you smell?" Spike demanded. "Wanna gobble you up. Spread you out for me. Wanna see those hands framing that pretty cunt, offerin' it to me before I get my taste. Think you'll taste as good as you smell? I'm gonna find out. Gonna lick you up inside and out. Before we're done, I'm gonna know *exactly* how you taste."

. . .

"OH GOD..." VAMPIRES WEREN'T SUPPOSED TO SWOON, WERE THEY? She didn't think so—though at the moment she didn't think a lot of things. A small noise in the back of her head reminded her there was something important she should tell him before they went any further, but the rest of her didn't care enough to interrupt. It felt too good to stop over trivial things.

"You're so slick," Spike murmured, bunching the crotch of her panties aside. He aligned a finger with her opening and pushed. It wasn't much, but it created enough pressure to alight what had only been fantasy with rich detail. A new realm of *can't have's* was open to her now, and she intended to explore them all. "Bet you're tight, too, aren't you, Slayer?"

"It's...Buffy..."

"Mmm." He inched a finger inside her. They both shuddered. "Oh, *yeah*. Nice and tight. Can't wait to feel you squeeze my prick..."

"No need to wait." She tossed him a wicked grin. "I'm yours."

Something stirred in his eyes with that statement, something unpredictable, something that held connotations beyond the tangible, something he understood on a level she couldn't—something she hadn't intended but wanted badly once it reared its head. It was dark and primal...and it made her cold skin burn. "Yes," he snarled. "You are mine, Slayer. All. Mine."

Her legs wrapped around his waist once more, his cock pressing against her opening. It happened quickly—one second a virgin, the next her barrier was torn, and a delicious rush of ecstasy-wrapped pain raced through her body. She gasped and shuddered, clutched and squeezed, all while entering a brave new world. It wasn't awful—it wasn't the aching hurt she'd dreaded or any of the horror stories she'd heard about losing one's virginity. It was different. Pain was...different. Pain was good. Pain was pleasure. Pain was life.

"Fuck," he gasped, his shoulders tense, his cock pushing further inside her almost involuntarily. When he was seated fully within her they both had to take a breath. As though a threshold had been breached for them both, not just for her. "You're..." He blinked rapidly as though he didn't understand. "I didn't know."

“Does it matter?” she replied, tugging him closer. *Yes*. God, yes. That was wonderful. “Fuck me, Spike.”

His eyes were wide with a sense of awe she didn’t deserve. “Buffy...”

It took a second for his voice to break through her mind’s wall, and a second longer to realize he’d said her name. But then it didn’t matter anymore so she didn’t respond. All she said was, “Just fuck me.”

And he did.



HE’D FORGOTTEN WHAT THIS FELT LIKE. THE BEAUTY OF discovering someone for the first time—feeling them, gauging their responses to certain touches and strokes, learning their body, exploring...he’d forgotten this. And unearthing the woman inside Buffy was wonderful. Every sway of her hips claimed more confidence, every time her hands clenched his skin, her slick pussy welcoming him back inside. She danced with him as though she’d known the dance all along, and he was the lucky bloke who got to learn with her.

He wanted to commit her to memory.

“You like that?” he whispered hotly, and she moaned. The rhythm he kept was steady, not too harsh—though there was a very vocal part of him which wanted to pound her until they were both dust—and not too soft. She didn’t need soft, his slayer. She didn’t want it, either. The girl might be inexperienced but she wasn’t a wilting flower, and she didn’t want it slow.

“Different,” she sighed, perhaps too honestly, her hips surging forward to reclaim his cock as he slipped from her body. “But good...”

Spike grinned, his mouth dropping to her collarbone. “You’ll learn to love this, kitten,” he promised, peppering her skin with soft kisses. “You’re so tight.”

“Uh huh.”

“Feel so good. Pullin’ me back in. Can’t get enough of your Spike, can you?” His head drew back again, hands falling to her hips to anchor her to his thrusts. It amazed him that a creature of darkness could appear so innocent—innocent in ways Dru always tried to appear but never succeeded. Buffy wasn’t coy, she was honest. The way her jaw fell

slack and the small, wondrous whimpers scratching at her throat—none of it was for show. Everything was his.

“Harder,” she whispered, hissing. “Do me harder.”

The beast in his chest had no trouble complying. She felt so good, so damn good, wrapped deliciously around his prick, and he wanted more. A cadence of *more*. He needed to memorize her, learn every sound and sensation in case he didn’t get to taste this again. She drenched him with every plunge, the wild sounds she made escalating, her back rocking hard against the wall. She grappled and clung, tugged on his ears with her teeth and squeezed him hard between her thighs. She drove him wild without lifting a finger, and he couldn’t get enough.

Gorgeous.

“Like this?” Spike demanded, tearing a kiss off her lips. The wet smack of their bodies colliding drifted in the air above them. If there was a street, it had vanished. The cries and screams of a night gone mad were gone as well. All there was in the world was Buffy. “You want it like this?”

“Uh huh.”

“Love the way you feel around me,” he murmured, pulling back just far enough to meet her eyes. The air between them mingled with strange tenderness which offset the harsh collision of flesh hitting flesh. “Love this.”

“Love this,” she echoed, though in reaction or in repetition, he didn’t know.

“Not too hard?”

“No. *No*. More.”

He wasn’t surprised. She’d come to him as no ordinary virgin, and though he should have sensed as much from the beginning, there was time enough to make up for it now...in whatever way she liked. Her inexperience was barely noticeable except for in the sounds she made and the looks she gave him; but all things aside—once his lust-addled mind stopped racing, once he pieced together what he knew about her—everything fell into place. He just hadn’t stopped to think before breaking into her body, and while she hadn’t protested, while she begged for more, the inner gentleman he never quite succeeded in silencing reared in concern. So while she panted and moaned,

scratched his back and clenched her pussy muscles around his aching cock, he found a small, small bit of restraint.

He had to make sure.

"You all right, pet?"

"Mhmm."

"Want more?"

She nodded but said, "Want *you*. Inside. So good. Splitting me. You've split me down the middle."

"And you like it."

"I love it." Her teeth latched onto his lips and tugged, her heels digging into his skin to draw him deeper into her body. "This is mine."

He didn't even think to protest. "Oh yes."

"You...I couldn't have..." Her thought rode away on a moan. "Need...I need..."

"You can have me."

"I...need..."

Spike's hand slipped between their warring bodies, fingers pressing against the apex of her sex. His lungs warred with his body, needlessly reminding him they served no function. He wanted to pause and gasp, but speaking was more important. Her first time, he ought to do something right. "Feel that burn, baby?" he asked softly. "Starts nice and slow, doesn't it? In your belly...and spreads..."

Buffy's head crashed back against the wall. "That..."

His fingertip brushed her clitoris, and the surprised gasp that exploded from her lips held more firepower than she ought to bear. Spike's eyes traveled between them, transfixed on the sight of his engorged cock pumping inside between her sleek lips. It was something he'd seen a thousand times in the past, something he enjoyed watching, but never had the visual stunned him so thoroughly—grounded him to a point where sensation was transcended by reality. As though he'd expected himself to awaken alone with nothing more than the memory of a sweet dream and a monster hard-on. But this was real—her pussy stretched and welcomed, suctioning him in tighter with every plunge, constricting sweetly around him as he gently massaged her clit. The sounds she made, the shades of emotion coloring her face, the way her cold skin fevered against him...there

would never be enough of this. Never. He needed more. He could have her for eternity and still need more.

"I'm hot," she said, her eyes still squeezed shut. "So hot, Spike..."

He could have played with her, but decided against it. No, he was too eager to feel her tremble into orgasm, too in need of his own release to delay. There would be time enough for that later. Not now. "Let it go," he urged, stroking her unhurriedly. She didn't need speed—she just needed this. "Buffy...let it go."

At her name, her eyes popped open, trapping him under a yellow gaze. And before he could blink, before he could react at all, her fangs were in his throat, tearing into his skin, and her body shuddered and tightened around him.

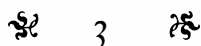
"Oh...*fuck*..."

"Mine, mine, mine, *mine!*" Buffy hissed victoriously. "This is *mine!*"

What prompted his response wasn't thought or instinct or the scorching burn of pleasure melting his body. His hips jerked, the demon roared, and the words, "Oh Christ, yes," were out of his lips.

It wouldn't occur to him until a good three minutes later what had just taken place.

Until then, the world stood still.



SPIKE DIDN'T KNOW EXACTLY where he was going until he shoved open the warehouse door and jerked Buffy inside. His mind raced, a thousand different realizations spiraling but ultimately returning to the same undeniable conclusion. The Slayer had just placed a claim on him—the permanent sort—the kind he'd always wanted to place on Dru. The kind Dru had likewise always warned him against. If that wasn't disturbing enough, he'd accepted the bloody thing. No hesitation, no mulling it over, not a sodding thing between the words she'd spoken and his acceptance. As if the last century with his maker had meant zilch.

He didn't know whether to laugh or cry, and suspected by the time all was over he'd do his fair share of both.

At any rate, it was infinitely more helpful blaming the brainless nit who'd gone and gotten them all claimed rather than himself at the moment. And since Spike hadn't the first real idea how he felt about what had just happened, he decided his default *anger* was the most appropriate reaction. "Do you have any idea what you just did?" he demanded, dragging her around until their eyes clashed. There wasn't much in the warehouse aside from a few random tools and work tables;

nothing wooden, from the looks of it, which was good news for both of them in case their discussion became violent.

Buffy made a face and jerked her hand free. “Ummm, lost my virginity?”

Mmm. Yeah. And she had that ripe, *just been fucked* look about her, too. Her hair was a mess, her lips swollen from his kisses, her eyes glazed over. She was also naked, her skin a map of bite marks and bruises, her nipples erect and waiting for a mouth to pay them proper worship. God, what a vision. The air hung thick with the scent of their coupling and her lingering arousal. She was hot again, ready for another go. And fuck all, so was he. He wanted her again—wanted her bent over and spread before him, her plump pussy welcoming his cock over and over and...

Spike blinked and shook his head. Damn girl was bloody distracting.

“Not that,” he snarled. “You fucking *bit* me, Slayer!”

She stared at him incredulously. “Did you forget the whole ‘I’m a vampire’ thing? Biting’s kinda what we do.”

“But you—”

“And you loved it. You can’t fake a reaction like that.”

More blinking. Words came and went, parting with observations he needed to voice but couldn’t focus on. Every time he thought he had a sentence shaped it left him in favor of silence. He had no idea where to begin. “You...I...you can’t...”

“Wow. Stellar argument.”

“You can’t just go around biting whoever the bloody hell you want!”

“And here I thought vampires didn’t have rules.”

Spike frowned. “We don’t. But you *claimed* me, Slayer. Do you have any idea what that means? What just happened? Blood’s a powerful thing. You form lines and what-all, and you sank your fangs in me and declared I was yours.”

Now she was frowning, too. About fucking time. “So...what?” she asked softly. “I didn’t know what the hell I was doing. It just...I dunno, it felt right. Didn’t it feel right to you?”

Yes, it had. Too right, but he wasn’t about to give her that kind of

ammo...not when he still had a point to make. "We're linked now," he explained.

"Linked how?"

"By blood, you dizzy bint. You *claimed* my blood. You *claimed* me."

"You keep saying that like I'm supposed to know what it means!" Buffy's arms flailed. "Hell-o! I've been a vampire for less than two hours."

"Yeah, well, you've been the Slayer a lot longer than that. Doesn't your watcher tell you *anything*?"

She shrugged. "About vampire mating rituals? Why would it matter?"

Spike rolled his eyes. "Oh, gee, I dunno. Maybe some sort of understanding of your bloody prey *would* be a bit much to ask from the girl whose duty it is to stop evil blokes like me. Claims might not happen very often anymore but there are mated vamps around. I know of at least one couple, and since they used to be chummy with Angelus, you'd think a decent watcher would keep his girl updated."

"Well," Buffy replied shortly, "he didn't."

"And it shows."

"What the hell are claims, Spike? Spill."

He stared at her a minute longer before sighing hard, his shoulders sinking. "Christ, I can't believe I'm about to have this conversation with *you*, of all people."

Her nose wrinkled. He tried and failed to not find it adorable. "Hey!"

Spike ignored her, though he had to smother a grin. "And I can't tell you how much I hate using this analogy because it bloody degrades what claiming is, but there's no other way to explain it." He sighed. "It's like marriage."

Her eyes widened. "What?"

"That's right, *Slayer*: You popped the question outside. And I, being the *bloody* idiot I am, accepted."

"You accepted?"

He aimed his gaze downward, his voice shrinking. "Didn't mean to."

An odd silence settled between them. Spike had no idea how long it lasted, only it likely wasn't as long as it felt.

Finally, Buffy licked her lips, shook her head and shrugged. "Okay." His head snapped up. "What?"

"So we're claimed. Not seeing a problem." A slow grin tickled her face. "All the more reason to stay like this."

"Like what?" he asked hoarsely, still not understanding. But he was still very aware of the pulse between them. His cock had made its decision the second he'd slipped out of her body. Never did he want to be without her perfection. Never. Not after trawling the world for it.

But that was beside the point.

"The spell's going to be over soon," Buffy reasoned softly. "And I don't want it to be. Do you have any idea what this feels like?"

"Well, actually..."

"For the first time, I'm free. Completely free. No more teachers, no more books, yadda yadda yadda. And *especially* no more demons, no more vampires, no more worrying over prophecies or looking around the corner for the next apocalypse." Her eyes sparkled brilliantly. "I want this, Spike. And I want you, too."

He balked, but not as hard as he should have. Her words were a sodding aphrodisiac. "You barely know me."

Another casual shrug. "I know I was looking for you when you found me."

"You were, were you?"

Buffy nodded again, an aroused shiver racing through her delectable body. "And you don't exactly hate me, do you, Spike?"

He decided not to answer that question. Not yet. The danger of falling for the girl had already been defied. Love was fast for him—always had been. And he could definitely fall for Buffy. Fuck if he hadn't already started. She was too perfect in her perfectly flawed way. A novice in a universe of possibility, and she wanted him.

Too good to be true. There was always a catch. No one ever wanted him without getting someone else.

"What about Angel?" Spike asked slowly.

She made a face and shrugged again. "Pfft. What about him?"

“Can’t tell me the thought didn’t cross your mind tonight, pet.”

“Oh, it crossed. Suddenly I’m all creature of the nighty like my personal stalker? Yeah, it crossed my mind aplenty. But I didn’t come out to find him. I came out to find *you*.” Buffy’s frown deepened. “He’d just get in the way, crash the party, and then tell me about some imminent danger that I *know* I’m already in. Let’s face it, Angel’s boring as fuck.”

Spike couldn’t help himself; he cracked. Long, harsh cackles rumbled through his chest, bursting through his lips in a thunderous boom of laughter. Never in all his years had he heard sweeter or more unexpected sentiment.

“Oh, Buffy...”

Her lips twitched. “What?”

“I think I love you.”

The space between them was too great. He wanted her again. Now. *His* slayer. His hot little Buffy.

His for always.

Oh, yeah. Spike could definitely get used to this.



BUFFY COULD DEFINITELY GET USED TO THIS.

“Oh...oh, my god...”

A rich chuckle served as her reply, sending little shockwaves of vibration across her sensitive flesh. “I could answer to that, if you like,” came the muffled reply. She was splayed on a work table, legs spread, Spike’s hands bracing her thighs, his mouth feasting on her pussy. How he’d gotten her on her back so quickly was still a little fuzzy, but as long as he kept licking her clit with that magical tongue of his, she wasn’t going to complain.

“Uh huh,” she moaned, thrusting her hips upward.

More chuckling. “Y’know,” Spike mused, easing a finger inside her. “You are quite possibly the most adorable vampire I’ve ever met.”

Buffy tried to growl but it came off as a long whimper. “I am...*not* adorable,” she insisted, threading her fingers through his hair. “Take it back.”

Her vampire's deep blue eyes met hers and the protestations fell away. For whatever reason, meeting his gaze, watching him watch her as his tongue massaged her clitoris and his fingers fucked her hole affected her more than any other threshold they had yet breached. It made everything they were doing more intimate, more intense. Spike was with *her*, and for the first time she truly understood.

He was with *her*.

"Not a bloody chance," he mused, curling his fingers inside her. "Christ, Slayer, do you have any idea how good you taste?"

Buffy inhaled sharply and shook her head.

"Mmm." Spike grinned. "You're so sweet. So rich. Could drink you for hours, love." He slowly dragged his fingers from her opening, dipping them into his mouth. "And you're so responsive. Drive me bloody wild, you do."

She hissed and thrust her pussy against his mouth again. He chuckled and obliged her, wrapping his lips around her clit and pulling on her slippery flesh.

"Gotta say, though," he continued when he released her, rising to his feet and ignoring her whimper of complaint. "As much as I love you on my tongue...think I like you better when you're wrapped around me." He was gone half a second, then the head of his cock was against her, rubbing along her aching slit. "What do you say, Slayer?"

The thick fog permeating her mind separated desire from logic, making it impossible to piece together words. What did she think? Hell, what were thoughts? One second he had been licking her up, the next he was tormenting her with quick, shallow thrusts of his hips, his erection pushing against her but withholding the pressure she truly needed. He gave her just enough to keep the fire raging. It was sweet torture, but torture nonetheless.

She needed more.

"Christ, what a pretty sight," Spike mused, his thumb finding her clit and caressing it lazily as his cock began inching inside her again. "You swallow me whole. Could watch this for hours, too, and not tire."

"Oh, yes," she agreed, lifting herself off the table to welcome him in deeper. The strokes to her clit intensified. It was amazing but not enough—she needed more. She needed intimacy.

She needed his skin against hers.

But she would never tell him that.

Buffy licked her lips and raised herself on her elbows, her eyes fastening on the wet plunges he took. He was right; it *was* pretty. She'd never thought of her body as anything other than a vessel for carnage... and occasionally junk food. Even in skin that didn't belong to her, in time she'd stolen with the haphazard selection of fangs for a Halloween outfit, she couldn't see herself in the light he'd given her. As a sexual being—as anything other than Buffy. But she wanted to learn. Oh, *boy* how she wanted to learn.

And she wanted to watch.

Spike must have caught her staring, for when she met his eyes he wore a nasty grin. "Like that, don't you?" he demanded roughly, his thrusts becoming more pronounced. Every drive of his hips made the table shake. "Like watching me disappear inside your sweet pussy? Mmm...yeah. See your juice on me, Slayer? That's how hot you are. You're melting on my dick."

Buffy stared at him a minute longer before breaking into a wide grin. They were so alike, in so many different ways. The big bad veneer, the reason he kept smirking...that had to be a façade, or a part of him masking a larger part. A part not many got to see. She had no reason to believe it other than instinct—in the few glimpses of the awed man buried within the egocentric badass. He might be fucking her with his body, but his hands and eyes told a different story. His hands and eyes made her feel worshipped, even loved.

He kept so much of himself in shadow. She wanted to touch him, explore him, wanted to find the man who could caress her like a lover while bruising her with his body.

She didn't know if it was the change talking or something that simply *was*, for she didn't feel different enough to credit her observation entirely to having become a vampire. Perhaps this was just one of those things she knew without needing evidence. Spike did everything with all of himself, be it smirking or fighting or kissing or fucking. He didn't hold anything back.

Anything.

Buffy sighed, sitting up completely and wrapping her arms around his neck. She had him trapped in a soft kiss before she could analyze the look in his eyes and immediately his hard thrusts stalled, a long moan scratching at his throat. He poured everything into his kiss, teasing her, making love to her tongue with his. He licked and devoured, drank and consumed, drew her in and kept her.

She loved kissing him. She could kiss him forever. It was one of her new favorite things.

"Ahhh," Spike sighed, pulling away, his hips resuming their thrusts... slowly now. He took his time, absorbing her every expression. "Glad to hear that, love."

Had she spoken aloud? She didn't remember saying anything.

He slipped his thumb over her clit before she could analyze his words too deeply.

"Cause I'm about to make it official."

Fangs skimmed her throat.

And then it happened—the moment she'd dreaded, the moment where everything turned back on its feet. It took half a second in reality but she felt it coming for what felt like hours. She felt it—felt a strange warmth flood her skin, felt her chest ache with the kick-start of her heart, felt her lungs clamor hard for a gasp of air. It happened quickly but lasted forever. That was it. The spell was over.

Oh god.

Spike tightened his grip around her, his thrusts intensifying. He'd noticed.

"Spike..."

"Not so fast, Buffy," he warned softly as he stroked her clit. "We made a deal, you and me."

"I... Oh god..." She scratched at him wildly. "Please...I need..."

"I know what you need."

Then his fangs sliced into her throat and her body exploded in climax. Ecstasy split through her veins, fusing her cells with white-hot pleasure that burned so sweet she was certain she would go up in flames. It lasted forever, tearing through her body, wave after wave, whirling her through the rabbit hole only to lead her again to the light.

And he drank—drank well beyond pleasure, drank until her body screamed its warning, drank until light faded to dark and the dark became dizzy. Buffy knew what was happening. It was what she'd asked for, what she'd wanted, and she was too lightheaded to wonder if she wanted it still. She managed to maintain consciousness long enough to drink when a bloodied wrist pressed against her lips—but sensory fell aside. Her nerves numbed and her skin went cold, and everything fell away.

It felt right. Everything felt right.

“See you on the other side, pet.”

The words might have been imagined—she didn't know. At that moment, she didn't know anything.

The world dissolved.



“DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING YET?”

If she asked one more time he was going to do something he'd undoubtedly regret. Willow was merely concerned for her friend, but honestly, repeating herself wasn't going to help anyone and she was hardly the only worried one among them. The thought of Buffy wandering the streets with a pair of fangs and a missing soul was enough to make the most jaded of demons shiver.

“Not yet,” Angel said for the tenth time. “I'll let you know.”

“Are you actually looking for her or are we just wandering around like idiots?” Xander asked. He still had his plastic toy gun in hand.

It was a perfectly fair question, but one that made Angel want to pop the kid good in the nose. His sense of smell notwithstanding, Buffy's fragrance was *everywhere*. She'd been all over town tonight, looking, searching...for him, maybe? Perhaps she'd been terrified and alone, perhaps the blood-hunger had taken over before she knew how to rein it under control. He didn't know and he didn't want to think about it. All he knew at the moment was that she was alone, probably terrified, probably shaking with guilt of the man whose life she'd claimed.

The redhead shivered and crossed her arms. “She killed that guy

right in front of us. I can't believe she killed that guy *right* in front of us."

"I still don't understand why you didn't stop her," Angel muttered.

"Stop her?" Xander echoed. "I had amnesia and Willow was a ghost-thing!"

Angel rolled his eyes. "Didn't you have a gun? I'd think any soldier who saw a civilian murder an innocent wouldn't just stand by and let it happen."

"I stopped him from shooting," Willow offered meekly. "She's... she's Buffy."

"She was a vampire. Bullets hurt like a bitch, but they don't kill."

She scowled. "And when the spell turned her human and she suddenly had this gunshot wound?"

"She's the Slayer!" Angel countered. "Mixed with vampire strength and healing, and she would have been patched up in thirty minutes. It takes a lot more to kill people like her—like us. Come on, Willow, you should know I'd never suggest *anything* that would hurt her, but by letting her go...we have no idea what else she's done, who else she's hurt, and I don't even want to think of what she must be going through now. We have to get to her before anything else can get to..."

He didn't realize his voice had trailed off until the air fell still but by then it didn't matter. The scent flirting with his nostrils was unmistakable. Oh god, it was worse—it was so much worse than Angel had feared. He'd thought it possible, however unlikely, something else would have found her first. The night's creatures were supposed to be on holiday, for crying out loud.

But then...Spike wasn't exactly known for following the rules.

And if he'd found Buffy like that there was no telling what he might have done.

"Oh, god." Angel took off. "Oh, *god*."

"I *so* do not like the sound of that," Xander muttered, taking off after him.

He knew he would be too late well before he reached the warehouse. He knew exactly what he would find when he opened the door. Still, knowledge didn't make it hurt any less. Knowledge did nothing to keep his heart from shattering.

There was blood, and the air was thick with sex.
Buffy and Spike were long gone.



THE FIRST DAY OF NOVEMBER.

He'd driven as far as he could before the fingers of dawn began creeping over the horizon. Remaining in Sunnydale simply hadn't been an option—the second Buffy fell limp in his arms, the second he understood the finality of what he'd done, Spike had likewise known his time at the Hellmouth was over. While he and his mate might find reason to return in the future he was determined to make the first few months of Buffy's new life as smooth as possible. For everything she'd given him—for the rebirth she'd delivered to him—he owed her the beginning he'd been denied. Staying at the Hellmouth added obstacles they didn't need. Angel, her mum, her friends, her watcher...reminders of the life she'd shed would only get in the way.

Spike glanced over his shoulder. Dusk was now an hour past; all that was left was the wait. He'd stopped at a Sacramento hotel with just seconds to spare, offed the bellhop and carted the Slayer into the nearest luxury suite. There was no telling how long it would take her to wake up—he'd never had a hand in making a vampire before, and even though he was impatient as fuck, he would wait...and then the true fun would begin. A whole new world of possibility lay at his feet.

The girl was his equal in life and in death. Their paths were so similar—the change wasn't something either of them had sought, but the promise of freedom was intoxicating, and neither had been able to turn it down. She'd had the chance to off her friends and she hadn't. Buffy was the first vampire he'd ever met not to actively seek out and eliminate those faces that appealed to her humanity...the first vampire aside from himself. While Spike had made merry with the gits who ripped his poetry to shreds, his mother's fate had been an accident—a massive bloody backfire. He hadn't gone after anyone for whom he had a soft spot. Not even Cecily Sodding Underwood.

Buffy cared enough about those she loved to still care when caring lacked reason. Spike had never met anyone who shared that with him,

who connected with him so intimately on things well below the surface.

He couldn't wait to explore their life together.

There was no telling how much time actually passed before he felt her move. He wanted to be at her side when she opened her eyes—he wanted her to awaken the way he should have, with a hand to hold and a face to understand. The first few minutes as a vampire were more terrifying than death itself. The disorientation, the confusion, the blur. Everything that could ache did, and he wanted to be with her for whatever she needed.

The gasp that clawed through her throat slashed at him in ways he hadn't expected, but Spike fought back a wince. Her eyes popped open the next second, darting frantically from one end of the room to the next before finally focusing on him. She panted and reached for him, her fingers digging into his shoulders, anchoring herself at his side. There was fear, there, but fear he expected.

There was also life.

"Where," she demanded. "Where...am I?"

"You're safe," Spike said softly.

"Did you..." Buffy frowned, her eyes falling to examine her bedding. "You did it."

"You wanted me to."

"I didn't think you would." She licked her lips and sat up on her elbows. "I thought... I dunno."

For as confident as she'd been before, watching uncertainty flicker across her face struck him on a level closer to home than he thought possible. She'd been behind a front, too. There was a wounded girl behind the mask she wore.

A wounded girl he would worship until the world was no more.

"You thought I didn't want you?" Spike asked softly, tucking a lock of hair behind her ear. "I've wanted you since the moment I saw you. You're mine, Buffy."

She looked at him for a few long seconds before breaking into a smile. "I'm yours."

"Mmm." His lips skimmed her throat. "Very definitely."

"Oh." More deafening seconds ticked between them before her

eyes met his, and what he saw there made his heart soar. "I don't have to give this up, do I? We're..."

Spike relaxed, allowing himself a smile. He hadn't realized how nervous he'd been until the tension in his shoulders fell away. There was no need for anxiety here. "I told you, sweetheart," he murmured and brushed a kiss over her lips. "You made me yours, and I intend to hold you to it."

"Oh, thank god."

"Yeah?" He nuzzled her throat tenderly and dropped another kiss over the bite mark there. His body stirred and he felt hers respond. They needed to get her out and fed as soon as possible, but maybe they could steal a few minutes. Just a few...

"Yeah," Buffy replied, her hands shooting to his belt buckle. They were of a one-track mind, it seemed. Thank Christ. He needed to feel her wrapped around him, needed the solace of her body, needed to feel her gasp and claw and squeeze him into oblivion, all the while knowing she belonged to him.

"I'm naked," she observed, dragging his cock out of his jeans.

Spike grinned and licked one of her nipples. "Yes, you are."

"Why aren't you?"

"Didn't want to assume anything, love."

"That's dumb. Get inside me."

He barked a laugh, nipping her breast with blunt teeth as they shoved his jeans down his hips. "You're bloody adorable."

She made a face. "Stop saying that."

He cupped her pussy, his fingers slipping between her wet folds and rubbing her softly until the protest on her face faded on a moan. He could have said anything he liked and she wouldn't have blinked—a creature of passion, his slayer. She was so like him—in so many ways, she was so like him.

He only hoped she crashed into love the way he did—because he was gone.

Gone.

"You're perfect," Spike whispered, removing his hand from her center just long enough to align his cock with her opening. "My little Slayer..."

Buffy hissed and threw her head back, curling a leg around his waist. "Yes..."

"My *Buffy*."

Her eyes found his again and shone. There had never been a more perfect moment. "I think I love you, too."

It was in that instant Spike knew he had come home.

