

JW – Somewhere I Belong

Pairing: Buffy / Faith.

Rating: R I Guess

Spoilers: Season three

Disclaimer: Belongs to Joss and co.

Notes: Set in somewhere in Season Three. Faith never went bad 'cause that was just rude. I love Willow, but she's kinda mean in this story. We all know how she felt about Faith during this time line. Nice to know that killing a guy has humbled her some. Let's just pretend that she has a lot more confidence in Season three for the purpose of this story. This whole thing is filled with mistakes but frankly I can't be bothered to fix them.

Feedback: Tell me it's good, tell me it blows. Just tell me something.

Summary: To Follow

Prologue

Life is made up of several incredible moments. The ones that change you as a person. Moments that come and once you're there you know that you're not the same anymore. And you'll long to go back to the simplicity that was once your life, but you're lost and you're scared and nothing can ever be the same again. These are the moments that change your life. Sometimes for the better, often times for the worst. Pretty dramatic, but then again I always did have a flair for that.

My life has been made up of hundreds of crappy memories, wrong decisions and... her. She was my moment, my shining star and yet, if I had never met her I would have been a whole hell of a lot happier. Sucks to be me. The one that calls to me in my dreams. The one my heart yearns for. And, y'know I'm not big with yearning. Couldn't even have told you what it meant before that night in the club. The night that I met her.

Buffy Summers.

Is it even possible for someone who brings you so much happiness to be the same person who crushes you every time she comes near? Makes you want to laugh and cry at the absurdity of life. Makes you want to scream and roar and bleed and die. Makes everything still, so that the only thing you can hear is your heartbeat and her

heartbeat and everything is perfect with the world.

Except it's not.

But that's okay. Because she's here and I'm here and that's all that matters, right?

Wrong.

If I ever wanted anything in my pathetic existence, it's her. And I don't ask for much. Or anything at all, really. I figure I'm owed... big time. Crappy upbringing. Crappy, crappy job. Crappy life. And I give and I give and I give. Well, you get the picture. So, now I figure it's about time to take what's mine. And she is mine. Just like I'm hers. Except she doesn't know it, yet. But she will...'cause Faith has a plan.

Chapter One

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There comes a time in every person's life where they just have to say:

'Okay, that's it! This is what I want. And I'm taking it. Try and stop me, Suckers.'

'Cause obviously my subtle approach is lost on a certain blonde slayer. I'll just have to be more forthcoming. And they think I'm not that bright. I think if I had hired one of those planes with the sky writing stuff and written Marry Me Buffy Summers across the skyline, she would just smile and nod and everything would go back to normal. Not that I want to marry her or anything or even really love her. I think maybe I could or maybe I do, who knows? What is love, anyway? Butterflies in the stomach, stars in the eyes, the absolute knowledge that the person standing next to you is The One? Do I feel any of that stuff around her?

No.

Do I want her?

Yes.

Not even just as a get in her pants thing, either. Or those cute little skirts that she wears. I want to consume her. I want her to feel me in every pore in her hot little body. I want her to stay awake every night with my face etched upon her mind. Burnt right in there so that it can never be erased. I want her to see me in everything she does, every breath she takes, every beat of her heart. I want her to want me too. And is that so much to ask? No, right? That's what I thought, as well.

So, I'm standing outside the Sunnydale High library. I can see her in there with her little geek pals laughing about something I'm sure is absolutely fuckin' hilarious. Actually, her friends aren't so bad. Once you get past the extreme nerd factor that just screams: 'Please, beat me up.' They can be okay. You just gotta filter half of what they say to get to the point of what the hell they're talking about. Works for me considering I don't really listen to the conversation anyway. I got my priorities. My other slayer half is definitely numero uno. So, I mostly just spend all of my time watching her. Not even real subtle like either. Wonder what she thinks about that. 'Cause I'll be staring at her and sometimes she'll turn around and catch me. I just hold eye contact for a real long time and eventually she'll smile and go back to whatever she was doing in the first place.

She has a real nice smile. Pretty.

Sometimes, I gotta pay attention though. 'Cause demons, hellmouth: The whole point of why I'm even in this crappy town in the first place. Mostly they go on and on and on. Finally, they'll get to the How to kill portion of the segment and that's all I really gotta know. Takes them a long time to get there, though. A lot of big words from the Watchers, a lot of jokes from the Zeppo, a lot of babbling from the Witch and a whole hell of a lot of me staring at B. Plus the Prom Queen and the Wolf. We make a nifty little group of misfits.

I'm still standing outside the library, watching her. Makes you wonder when anyone can just wander around the school like that. Not that I'm complaining too much, makes my job easier. But, then again, I could easily pass for a student. Wes, on the other hand, he's a different story. This school is like a paedophile's dream.

Okay, quick appearance check. A lot of leather, a lot of skin. Lookin' good, feelin' good. All systems are go. I walk in and the smile she gives me takes my breath away. But, only for a moment, 'cause I'm not lame like that.

I got my cocky swagger down. You know the one that makes the guys tight in the pants. Just check Xander out.

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I still got it.

I jump into the seat next to B. Literally. 'Cause sitting normally is for losers. Plus, Buffy's still watching me, gotta make an impression. I flash a quick smile to the others. Don't wanna be rude or nothin'.

Xander's still kinda squirming in his seat. I used him as a cure once for my after slayage affliction. The boy thinks we're married now or something. He is kinda cute though. I mean no matter how hot I am I don't give it up to just anyone. I got my pride... mostly.

Red hates me, despises me. It's a 'choose a negative word and insert after my name' type of deal. I figure it all comes down to who has it and who doesn't. I got it and she... well, we can't all be lucky, right? Willow's the President of the Anti-Faith fan club. I think she's the only member though. Maybe Oz is there by association. He's not so bad. A little monosyllabic, but I think Red talks enough for the both of them. Definitely not a conversation-lacking relationship.

The Watchers' are standing in the corner. Probably experiencing orgasmic pleasure over the monster-of-the-week. Now, Giles, he isn't too bad. I got some respect for the guy. I'm even polite to him, most of the time. At least until he pisses me off. But, Wesley, you just gotta think Dude, where do they find people like you? Is there some kind of Losers 'R Us place where you all gather and hold weekly meetings about who has the biggest stick up their ass. Sometimes, I think B belongs there, too.

Cordelia is using her Prom Queen Death-glare. I heard it stops traffic. It's a toss up between Xander and I as to who's getting the brunt of it. I think he wins. Hey, I can't help it if guys like the package. It's not like I even try to be this hot. It's all natural, baby. A shame it doesn't work on the one person who it should work on.

Which brings me to Buffy Summers. Slayer extraordinaire. All blonde-haired perfection. If I was a guy... Well, let's just say things wouldn't be too comfortable down there right about now. I'd have to buy a huge notebook or something to cover my extreme arousal whenever she looks my way. People would be all 'Dude, what's with the notebook?' and I'd be all 'Buffy Summers looked at me. So, now I got a huge boner.' Then again, If I were a guy it would eliminate fifty percent of my problem.

The other fifty percent? One well-built broodmeister with an affinity for hair-care products. A two hundred and something year old vampire that makes my staking arm twitch every time he looks my way. I read in some magazine that being a pile of dust is in this year. I should help him out with that. It's the nice thing to do. And I am a Good Samaritan. I would have made a good-looking Girl Scout. Well, I would help him out, if not for the fact that I'd be dead seconds after he hit the ground. Who am I to stand in the way of true love? ... I'm Faith.

Buffy's still looking at me, head tilted slightly to the side, cute little half smile. Makes me hot. I give her an acknowledging nod and my own 'I'd fuck you ten ways from Sunday, if you'd let me' smile.

"Yo, What's up?" So, I'm not that deep. Sue me.

"Nothin'. What's up with you?" She bumps my shoulder with her own. What the hell is that? Now, if that wasn't an invitation I don't know what is. Seems Red feels the same way 'cause her glare has just upped it's way to Cordelia-esque.

"The usual." I give her my cheeky grin. Just so that we're all clear on exactly what I'm talking about. It's always good to get her thinking about me and sex. Preferably at the same time. Plant the idea in her mind. See where that takes us. Most of the time she either chooses to ignore it or she just plain doesn't get it. I haven't decided yet.

Then, while she's still considering me and sweaty nakedness I lean over slowly. Not that I have that far to go 'cause I made sure we were sitting real close in the first place. I trail my hand slowly down her neck, not even touching her skin and pick an imaginary piece of lint off of her shoulder. I brush it

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off real gentle like with my thumb. Rubbing in tiny circles and very slowly removing my hand. I barely stop myself from jumping her right then and there.

Barely.

What I can't stop is the 'I wanna take you hard and fast, now' look that comes over my face. I wear that look a lot when I'm around her. I don't think she knows what it means... yet. Now, that was meant to get her to start thinking about me in an other than platonic fashion. Instead it made me hot. I mean that was her shoulder. Should touching shoulders with hands be allowed to make people feel like this?

There's a 'thanks, Buddy' smile involved in there somewhere.

I am going to scream.

Looks like I'm not the only one. Red knows what I'm up to. Can see it in her eyes. As much as you can see her eyes when they're all narrowed like that. I swear some type of cartoon smoke is going to start pouring out of her ears any second. That green demon is one ugly mother fucker. Every time B starts with the 'Sorry, Wills. It's a Slayer thing. I gotta go, Faith's waiting.' Willow looks like she's about to burst a blood vessel. I get like that too, but only 'cause I'm trying not to laugh my ass off. Damn funny stuff.

Poor, poor deluded Buffy. She just doesn't get it. I get it. There's about a hundred silent conversations going on right now in this library. And she is oblivious to each and every one of them. I'm actually kinda glad that she's so lost means that I get away with a hell of a lot more. More than I would if she was on the ball. Not that she's retarded or anything. She's really smart and one hell of a fighter. She's innocent, pure, too good for the silent pettiness that is going on around her. Maybe that's why she can't see. She's too good for stuff like that. Red's not too good. She's the cause of half of the tension in this room. Can feel it rolling off her in waves. I love that I can get to people like this.

Xander's tension is of a completely different kind. Yeah, baby. I rocked your world. Hope you got a real good memory, 'cause that'll never happen again.

"Faith?" I love the way that she says my name. I wanna hear her scream it out, so that everyone knows who's making her feel good. And it won't be that Dust Bunny that's for sure. She's gotta be the world champion in getting herself off. All that after slayage energy has gotta go somewhere, right? And I know from personal experience that yoghurt is not the way to go. She made me come back to hers one night to try it. All it did was confirm what I already knew. And made me toss and turn all night. All worked up with no place to go.

"Faith?" Yeah, I could make you feel so good, baby. You're gonna give it all up to me. One way or another. I'll have you screaming and crying and begging me to stop. And then I'll take you over the edge again. Just a little bit more and you'll have trouble walking for the next week. But it'll be worth it. And when it's over you'll start shaking and won't be able to stop. You won't be able to form a coherent sentence, but it's okay because I'll understand what you mean. And I'll bring you down gently.

"Faith?!" And then in the morning you'll realise where you are and who you're with. And you'll regret it and feel guilty for letting me give you what no one else can. And you'll avoid me for a little while. Not too long, of course. When you can't sleep because thoughts of me are planted firmly in your mind. Sweaty, naked, dominating you, making you feel like no one else has ever...

"Faith!!"

"What!?!!" Decibel levels have just reached a new high. She's laughing now. Glad to see that she finds my busted eardrums so fucking funny. She waves a hand in front of my face, just to make sure that

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I'm paying attention. You know what? I changed my mind. I don't want her screaming out my name. 'Cause my poor ears just can't take it. That girl has some voice on her. Maybe I'll get her moaning my name into my ear. Yeah, I'd like that.

"Where'd you go?" She giggles. She's just too damn cute. Where did I go? I went to the place I'm gonna be taking you soon enough, B. And you're gonna love every second of it.

"Nowhere." I give her my 'so, not impressed' face. She's seen it before. She knows what it means. "Was there a reason that I'm suddenly deaf? 'Cause if I can't hear 'em coming it's gonna seriously screw up my slaying abilities. Then you'll have to slay all alone, sad and friendless and you'll regret screaming directly in my ear."

"Maybe if you paid more attention to me," She pouts and my heart starts doing double time. Damn her manipulative, conniving ways. "Then I wouldn't have to scream just to get you to look at me."

I sigh dramatically. "I apologise for my severe lack of attention, Ms Summers. You should know that you are the centre of my universe. Without you my world does not turn. I am simply kicking myself for not lavishing you with the attentiveness that you deserve."

You know what? The scary part of it is, despite the complete lameness of that and the even lamer English accent I tried for, my world really does revolve around her. And I hate myself for it. I even hate her for it. Just a little bit. But then she gives me that bright smile again. Okay, all is forgiven.

"I'm sorry for screaming at you." And she really does sound sorry.

"S ok." I mumble, looking away. There's only so much I can take of looking directly at her. Like the sun. Bright and beautiful, but stare at it too long and you're blinded. Most times I don't care. Sometimes, though, I just want to cry. Not that I would. I think the last time I cried was when I was six. I saw a car hit a stray dog. Don't even want to think about what happened when my step dad saw me crying. Although maybe I should thank the asshole, haven't cried since. She leans over to kiss my cheek.

Wow, that's new.

Red's glare power is working over time. Sneaking quick looks at us while pretending to be completely enamoured by Dog Boy. Even B looks surprised by what she just did. Me? I raise an eyebrow in my usual trademark fashion.

"What was that for?"

"Looked like you needed it." She shrugs.

"Oh... Thanks." And then I do something that surprises the both of us: I return the gesture. All the while wishing that I could move my lips just an inch to the left and down a little.

"What was that for?" She places her palm across her face, touching the place where my lips once were.

Yeah. I got plans for ya, B.

"Just felt like it, is all." I shrug.

"Oh." Now, she's got the hugest grin on her face. "So, anyway. I was going to ask you a question before when you were looking all spazzed out. Wanna go patrol tonight? Keep the big nasties of the world a dirty little secret."

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Spazzed out? My fist is just itching to meet her face. It's a good thing she's Buffy. Otherwise, she'd be on the floor crying, by now. Instead I just raise an eyebrow. I can overlook certain things when it comes to her. Not too many things, but she got a free pass with that one.

"Uh... yeah, actually. Since we already decided that last night. You know, you said 'Hey, Faith, wanna go patrol together tomorrow?' and I said 'Kay.' And then you said 'Cool.'" And she thinks I'm spazzed out?

"Oh...right." She blushes the cutest shade of red. "Just checking... Come over tonight for dinner at seven and we can go after?"

"Sounds great, B." And y'know I tried to hold it in. I really did. But my smirk came out in full force when Willow started fuming. "You okay over there, Red? You're looking a little flushed."

Which of course makes everyone in the library stop what they're doing and turn around to look at her. She glares at me for a moment. Just a split second. God forbid anyone thinks sweet 'lil Willow has a facial expression that isn't all pureness and light. Actually, she's okay. A bit uptight. I just love seeing her face when she's pissed off. It's all about Buffy. Buffy and who gets to spend the most time with her. A silent challenge that we set up amongst ourselves. Never openly addressed and the competition is wicked fierce. Try beating the best friend stakes. I'd put money on Red. But at the moment I'm winning... and I'm loving it. Can't say the same for Willow. What can I say? It's a Slayer thing.

"Fine, Faith. Thank you for your concern." Then, she turns back to her boyfriend. But she's still watching us. Keeping this in mind I rest my hand lightly on B's shoulder, never taking my eyes off the Witch.

"Training?"

"Thought you'd never ask." B jumps up, holding out her hand to help me. Who am I to refuse a little bodily contact? Even though I have actually mastered the skill of standing, all by myself and everything. Mom would be so proud.

We clear a space in the middle of the library. Everyone backs up, moving the table out of the way. Giles and Wesley stop their oh, so interesting talk to observe the show. Finally, we're ready, standing face to face. She grins at me in silent agreement. I throw a couple of easy punches her way. She blocks them, of course. Then we stare at each other for a few moments, sizing each other up. I give her a small nod, just to let her know I'm ready.

This is my favorite part of the day. Better than sex. Well... okay, let's not exaggerate. But it's still pretty fucking good. We've been spending most of our spare time training, lately. Okay, not my spare time, hers. 'Cause basically all of my time is spare. But I'll take what I can get. And if what I get is a more than willing sweaty blonde, then I'm all for that. We're getting better too. More in tune than we've ever been. I know exactly what move she's gonna make before she even knows and vice versa. I wonder if it'll be like that between the sheets. Maybe I should ask Giles to set up a little experiment, purely for scientific reasons, of course.

B tilts her head to the side, taking some deep breaths and shaking her hands out in front of her. Finally, she ends up in a fighting pose. I have to smirk; she's such a drama queen. A little nod in my direction and we're off.

I throw the first punch. Guess I'm wacky that way. It's kinda like when I'm dancing or slaying or even screwing. All rational thought just stops. Everything just stops. It becomes pure instinct. If you think about it too much you're gonna screw it up. Plus, it's the only time that I ever get to see B just let go. She does it for me, with me. Almost like our moves are choreographed, we match each other blow for

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blow. At almost exactly the same time we stop pulling our punches. Now any hit that lands is gonna really fucking hurt. Not that any are actually hitting. Either of us.

We're really fighting now. Pretending that the other is the enemy. It took us a while to get to this stage. Lots of late night training sessions. I don't think we've ever gone full strength in front of anyone before. I wonder who would win if it did come down to her and me. We're pretty evenly matched right about now. So, I don't know. When I first came to SunnyD Buffy could have probably kicked my ass. I'm not sure about now, though. She's been showing me some kick ass moves. I showed her how to let go. How to feel the raw power that's just below the surface. Together that power mixed with the control: I'm pretty damn sure we're unbeatable.

We go at it and I'm not even sure how much time has passed. A couple of minutes, a few hours? I'm vaguely aware of my surroundings. Just enough to let me know of any potential danger. Most of my energy is centered on B. Watching, waiting for an opening. Buffy's not being very co-operative, which is just rude as far as I'm concerned. The look of total concentration that she has is pretty hot though. I know it's turning me on.

I try for a leg sweep, but she jumps up onto the table, spinning around and kicking out at my head. I duck down just in time, which is lucky because the force behind that would have taken my head off. I roll to the side, pulling a pencil from a stunned Willow's hand. Rolling back as B aims for my head, again. I jump up a little knocking her from the table, to the floor. I pin her thigh to the ground with my knee and holding her head in place with a little forearm to throat action. Using my free hand I plunge the pencil down as hard as I can, stopping the point just above her heart.

"You're dead." I whisper with a smirk. I jump up; extending my hand to B. She takes it, brushing herself off. And I throw the pencil back to Red, who fumbles for a bit before finally getting a grip on it. We're both breathing heavily now and it takes a few moments to register the fact that everyone in the library is staring at us. B realises about the same time I do.

"What?"

"That... that was..." Red stutters.

I get it; they're still all tripped out about the fighting.

"That was hot." Xander interjects with an amazed ___expression, until Queen C's glare sends him scurrying from the room, with her hot on his heels.

Now, there's six left. Three are watching the two of us warily with unashamed appreciation and amazement. Oz has his usual 'I don't give a damn' face on.

"That was pretty impressive." He concedes with a slight nod of the head to let us know just how impressed he really is.

"Quite." Giles agrees, cleaning his glasses with a tissue. "I had no idea the two of you were so in 'sync.'"

Wesley clears his throat before speaking. "It was quite good. However I couldn't help but notice a few key mistakes that would leave you open in the field."

"Bite me, Wes. We kicked ass." B grins at me, after glaring at him.

"Actually, I kicked ass. You got yours well and truly kicked, Girlfriend."

"Oh, really." She smirks, sarcastically. "Ready for round two?"

"You betcha."

Chapter Two

Faith's P.O.V

I probably shouldn't have been so cocky the second time around. 'Cause let me tell you something, it wasn't B who ended up on the floor that time. And it certainly wasn't B who is now the proud owner of a brand spanking new black eye. That bought my ego down a notch. Not much, just enough to not go bragging about kicking her ass anymore. The attention she gave me afterwards was worth the pain though. It definitely wiped the smug look off Willow's face after she saw me get beaten down. So, like I said: worth it.

Now, I'm standing on the doorstep of the Summers' residence. B's mom invites me around a lot for dinner and stuff 'cause she knows the type of food that I'll eat if left to my own devices. Like I'm gonna say 'no' to a home cooked meal. I never even had one of those when I was actually living at home. So, it's all good.

I knock and wait for the inevitable scrambling that I know I'll hear in a second. Yep, there it is, like clockwork. I wonder if Buffy and her sister both run for the door every time someone knocks. Or maybe I'm just special. You gotta feel sorry for their mom. They're a handful when they both get together.

"Dawn, get off... Mom!" I can see them through the glass both pushing at each other. I sigh and lean against the doorway. Sometimes, this takes a while.

"Ow, Buffy! Move!!" I hear a dull thud. Finally, the door opens. Looks like Dawn won this round. B's rubbing her shin, while Dawn jumps into my arms. It's a good thing I've got Slayer strength 'cause I swear she gets bigger every time I see her. "Faith!"

"Hey, SunnyD. Pulling out the big guns, huh?" I grin, referring to her kicking B. I place her gently down onto the ground.

"Yeah. It was a stretch to get 'round her gigantic ass. But, somehow I managed." She sticks her tongue out at Buffy, who reaches out to grab her. Little Dawnie's quick, she takes off in the direction of the kitchen. Buffy's still rubbing at her leg.

"Hey, Faith. Come... Oh God." She looks up at my eye. I didn't even bother trying to cover the bruise, it's huge. She cringes a bit, reaching out gently to stroke my cheek, just below the damage. "I'm so sorry."

"Why? I think it looks cool. Battle wounds and all that." I try for a grin, but instead flinch when her thumb rubs over a sensitive spot.

"Ooh, Sorry." She looks at me sheepishly, dropping her hand and moving to the side so that I can come in. Man, if I lived in this house I'd never leave it. Maybe B will let me move in with her some day. Yeah, and maybe she'll let me stick my hand between her thighs. I've got wishful thinking down, all the way. It's a nice thought though.

"Hi, Faith." Ms Summers walks into the room, wiping her hands on a dishcloth.

"Hey, Ms Summers." Appropriate reply, check. Out of all the authority figures I know B's mom is definitely the coolest. She always buys extra food for me when she goes shopping. Stuff that I'll

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actually like as well. I think she must have asked B 'cause I never told her what kind of food I eat. She always asks me how I am and it's like she actually cares. I wish she were my mom. But, then B would be my sister and that's just kinda gross.

"Oh my. What on Earth happened?" She tilts my chin up to look at the huge bruise on my face. She really does look concerned. I don't want her thinking I got into a fight or anything. So, I tell her the truth.

"Monkeys." Mostly.

"Monkeys?" She looks startled by that. No wonder Buffy could keep her mom in the dark about her night job for so long. Everyone in this town is so naïve. They'll believe whatever you tell them.

"No, I just got carried away when I was training. No big." She looks so relieved that there's not some crazy face-punching monkeys running around that I can't help laughing. Both Summers' women join in after a moment.

"What's so funny?" Dawn enters the room, eating some chicken. Her mother does not look impressed.

"Nothing, Dawn. Go wash up." She gives her a stern look, until Dawn rolls her eyes and runs upstairs. "Dinner will be ready in about ten minutes, girls."

She heads back to the kitchen. B drags me over to the couch by the hand, pulling me down next to her. I'm almost sitting on top of her, but she doesn't move, so I just stay where I am.

"Monkeys, huh?" She smiles at me.

"Yeah. Just one. You shoulda seen it, B. It was a mean one." She gives me her trademark Summers' glare. Is there like a school where they teach that? Along with the infamous pout? Or is it strictly a genetic thing? I smile at her. "Kinda cute, though."

"Oh, yeah?" She murmurs all sexy like. Does she even have any idea what she does to me? 'Cause if she does that's kinda cruel. "Well, I..."

She breaks off when Dawn jumps onto the couch next to me. I love B's sister to death, but I really wanted to hear what she had to say just then. I immediately stop the annoyed _expression that's threatening to break out on my face.

"Oh, my God. Could you guys sit any closer? And quit hogging Faith, Buffy."

"Faith is my friend." That's B's 'I'm warning you' voice. It doesn't really affect me. I guess it doesn't affect Dawn either.

"I'm very sorry for you, Faith." Dawn looks at me sympathetically. I can't help laughing. Buffy just glares at me until I stop.

"Dawn, go away. Faith is my friend and she came over to spend time with me."

"Yeah, but she likes me better." Uh-oh. I sigh and look up toward the ceiling.

"Does not."

"Does too."

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"Does not."

"Does too."

"Does... Faith?"

I cough, nervously. They're both staring at me now, expecting me to agree with them. I look at Dawn first. She's doing her little girly pout bit. Inwardly, I groan, before turning to B. She's pouting too. Damn it! B narrows her eyes after I hesitate for a moment.

"Uh... I think your mom needs some help in the kitchen." I smile weakly. Then I do the only thing I can do in that type of situation: I get my ass the hell out of there.

Buffy's P.O.V

Okay, it's official. My mother is in love with Faith. Then again, I don't think my mom has actually met Faith. Whenever she comes over it's always: 'Yes, Ms Summers. No, Ms Summers. I'll do that for you, Ms Summers.'

It's actually kind of cute. Considering I never get to see her like this any other time. And it's not just because my mom's an adult or anything. Faith has no problem telling anyone where to go, regardless of age. It's probably a good thing she wants to make a good impression. If she treated her the same way I've seen her treat other people, I doubt she'd be allowed into the house.

"Thanks, mom. I'm gonna go now." Dawn takes her plate into the kitchen. She makes a lot of noise in there just to get some attention. I can't believe she's actually my sister. Must be adopted, we don't even look anything alike. Maybe mom was too embarrassed to tell her, wanted to spare her feelings about the whole situation.

"Where's she going?" I try, but I just can't disguise my feelings for cute little Dawnie. Mom gives me a look off the tone in my voice.

"She's going to her friends house. I beg you to be nice to your sister, Buffy."

"What?" Why is everything always my fault? Mom sighs, deeply. Faith begins to take a great interest in her food. Well, more interest anyway.

"You're the older one. You're supposed to give in to your little sister, sometimes. Remember when you were that age?" She laughs a little bit, looking at Faith. "Oh, it was so funny when you..."

"Okay, mom. I get it. Buffy bad, Dawn good." I cut her off before she can start telling stories again. Faith knows more about my childhood than any of my other friends. And, damn has that girl got a good memory. She hasn't forgotten a single thing my mom tells her and finds countless ways to embarrass me afterwards.

"Will you girls be okay cleaning up? I have to go in to work for a while." Mom stands up.

"What? You worked last night."

Mom rolls her eyes, with a slight smile. "New girl that hasn't quite got the hang of inventory, yet. I shouldn't be too late. Be good. Faith, you'll make sure she gets home safely?"

"Will do, Ms Summers." Faith nods, solemnly. Mom kisses the top of my head. I wait until she's gone, before turning back around.

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"Will do, Ms Summers." I mimic her, rolling my eyes. She scowls at me for a moment. She's so easy. Dawn comes back into the dining room, carrying a bag.

"Okay, I'm going now. I just wanted to say goodbye to you, Faith." She looks at me, pointedly.

"Well, if you forget the way home. Don't worry about us. We'll be completely fine without you. Feel free to never come back."

"That was totally lame, Buffy." She shares a small smile with Faith. I'm seriously reconsidering my I don't kill humans policy. I'll be more than happy to begin with Dawn. I'll do it with a smile and everything.

"I'll see you later, squirt. Have fun tonight, huh?" Faith wiggles her eyebrows. I think Dawn's a bit young to be having that kind of fun.

"I will. I'm just sorry that you have to spend the whole night with Buffy." She shakes her head, sadly. Then runs out of the house before I have the opportunity to break the law.

"You're sister is a hoot and a half." Faith chuckles, piling more food onto her plate. I wonder where all that food goes. It's not a slayer thing that's for sure. If I ate as much as she does I'd have to spend all day, every day working it off.

"Yeah, she's great. Want her?" I ask sweetly. Faith thinks about it for a moment. I can almost see the wheels in her head turning.

"Can I choose any Summers' sister?"

"No." What was that supposed to mean?

"Motel's probably not the best environment for a teenager." She says after a while, looking down at her plate. Yeah, that place is pretty crappy. Hey! Wait a minute... Faith's a teenager too. It's sometimes easy to ignore that little fact. Especially considering if she's not acting like she's five years old, she's acting like she's 35. A complex character, indeed. That's why I like her though. Life never gets boring with Faith around.

"No, it's not." I agree, tilting my head to the side.

She must hate it there. I feel bad that I never really thought about it before. I wonder what mom would say if I casually bought up Faith moving in with us. Mom hates the idea of that motel, too. We don't have any spare rooms, but I'm sure if someone accidentally murdered Dawn then that would free up some space. Or we could just lock Dawn in the attic, feed her bread and water, and make her sleep in her own filth. She does that last part anyway. Not literally, of course, but you should see her room. I saw mould growing on the walls the other day.

Faith clears her throat. "So, you wanna clean this up and get going?"

"Actually, I was thinking we could blow it off tonight. Watch a movie here or something?" She looks really surprised by the suggestion. Now, there are a million reasons why that would surprise her and none of them good. Does she only want to do slaying related activities with me? 'Cause apart from her spending quality eating time at my house that's all we ever do. "Uh... you know... if you wanted... or we could do a sweep. That's cool too."

"No. Movie's good. Sorry, you just surprised me is all." Duh. "So, yeah. We'll clean up and... we'll hang."

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"Great." I can't help the huge spazzy grin that breaks out on my face. "Hey, wait a second. Why were you surprised?"

She immediately jumps up and begins clearing the table. "Surprised? No... no reason."

"Faith."

She sighs, sitting back down. "It's just, y'know... You're Buffy I'm-so-gung-ho-about-slaying Summers. So when you said 'blow it off' I thought I fell asleep or something."

Oh, come on. I'm not that bad. Am I?

"I'm gung-ho about slaying?"

She grins, sheepishly. "Well, you know... I meant the duty part of slaying. Not the actual slaying itself. 'Cause we both know I'm all for that."

"I am entirely capable of blowing off responsibility if and when the need arises." I fold my arms across my chest, giving her my superior 'so, there' look.

"I can see that." Faith grins "You, rebel, you."

"Fine, mock me." I slump back in my chair, pouting. I think Faith's immune to it though 'cause she has the hugest grin on her face.

"Okay, thanks."

"No! I didn't mean that. I meant you're not allowed to mock me. At any time or for any reason."

"Damn. It's a good thing you made that clear. Now I won't ever make fun of you, B." She widens her eyes, with an exaggerated innocent look.

"Good. Just so you know." I give a slow, deliberate nod. I wait for the smart-ass comment, but it never comes. She's just kinda looking at me for a long time. Like how she was in the library today. I would sell my sister to know what she's thinking right now. Actually, I would sell my sister for a quarter. It's a little bit unsettling, really intense. I look down at myself, just to make sure I haven't spilled anything. "What?"

She shakes her head slightly. "Nothing. So... what movie are we gonna watch?"

Chapter Three

Faith's P.O.V

Buffy didn't actually have any good movies and neither of us could be bothered to go to the video store so we stayed in to talk and stuff. Which basically means that I'm currently flipping through the channels of the television while B goes on about Angel and I pretend to listen. 'Oh, Faith. He's so big, strong and handsome. He simply makes me swoon.'

Makes me wanna yak.

I should just carry around a bucket so that when she starts up with that shit I have an easy way to empty the contents of my stomach. If there's anything worse than having to see her together with the

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big ape, it's having to listen to stories about him. I can kill demons too. So what? What's he got that I don't have?

Oh, right.

Still. Doesn't mean that I want to hear about him all night. Can think of better things to do. Not that the boy's not hot as hell or anything. I'd take him for a ride. If I wouldn't get beat down for it. I like my limbs where they are, thankyou. And that's still, firmly attached to my body.

"And then I found out I was pregnant and the father of the baby was Bill Clinton."

What the hell?

"Huh?"

"Faith, you're not even listening to a word I say, are you?"

Ya think?

"No, I am." I switch off the television and turn to face her, trying to look as attentive as possible. "You know me, short attention span and all. Think I've got ADD. They're looking into it. What were we talking about?"

"I said..." She looks at me pointedly, partly trying to determine if she has my full attention and partly reprimanding me for not listening in the first place. Probably gonna go on some more about Angel. 'I love him so much. He's just so cute with that huge forehead. If it wasn't for that pesky curse - I'd fuck his brains out.' Yadda, yadda, yadda. "That maybe we should do something non-slayage related on the weekend. You know, if you wanted... and if I wanted. Which I do. So, really only if you wanted... Do you? You did hear me this time, right?"

Huh?

Oh, I get it.

"What, you mean like Bronzin' it with the Scoobs?"

"No, I mean like something elsing it... with Faith." She grins.

I can think of something else to do with you, B. Or to you. I haven't started with my plan yet. Not that I really had a plan. But I would have eventually gotten around to making one up. Maybe. Actually it probably would have ended up with me basically attacking her one night after patrol. In which case she either (A responds or (B runs away screaming into the night. If I'm honest with myself option B is the more likely of the two. Not to be confused with option C which leaves me broken and bleeding on the floor.

"Well... what would be the something else?"

"Oh, I'm sure we can figure something out." She smiles at me.

You read my mind, B.

Imagine the possibilities.

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"Sure, then we could bring a couple of studs back to mine and have an orgy. Wear them out with our Slayer stamina. Fuck 'em all night long... That's what I call 'Slayer bonding' time."

I love the little shocked faces she makes when I come up with these things, probably why I do it so often.

"Gross, Faith. One of these days I'm going to wash your mouth out with soap."

"And when you finish with my mouth?"

"Huh?"

"Wouldn't want the rest of my body to get lonely. You could soap me up real nice. I'd let you and everything."

"I'm sure you would."

"Yeah." I nod enthusiastically. "And then I could do you. Fair trade."

"I think not."

"Come on, B. What's some soapy nakedness between friends?"

"Okay, this conversation has gone way past my comfort level. In fact I would have preferred if we stopped all the way back at 'gross, Faith.' I need a time machine around you. So, I can go back every ten seconds to not give you material."

"You'd probably use it to have your way with me. Then you could go back and I'd be none the wiser. Buffy, you sick pervert." I shake my head, sadly.

She places her one index finger on each side of her temple and begins massaging her head.

"Currently wiping memory banks for the last two minutes. There. Now, I don't remember any disturbing conversations involving soaping up friends or having... my way with friends and before you say anything I am not above placing my fingers in my ears and singing Britney Spears songs."

"Are you offering to give me a lap dance, B?"

"What? ... Okay, I'll bite. How the hell did you end up there?"

"Britney Spears is classic lap dance material. You sing. You gotta do the dance. I'll sit here and enjoy."

"Britney Spears isn't lap dancing! You made that up. It's teeny-bopper pop crap and I have decided that I am above singing it."

"No lap dance?"

"No lap dance, no soaping each other up, no naked and no more talking. It's quiet time now."

I let it be 'quiet time' for all of two seconds.

"Change your mind yet?"

"No!"

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"How 'bout now?"

"Faith!"

I'm just about to respond with some sexual innuendo or other - 'cause hey, I'm Faith, it's what I do - when someone knocks at the door destroying my fun. Buffy frowns at me, confused before standing up to answer it.

I can't see who it is from my position on the couch, but I hope they go away soon. I have to prepare Buffy for the weekend. Open her mind up a bit to some alternative thoughts. Short version? I'm gonna make her see me as fuckable. Which is not as easy as it sounds. I mean, I can't get any hotter. Believe me, I tried.

Buffy comes back and looks at me with a little frown. It's gone real fast though. So, I could have imagined it. I imagine lots of things when it comes to B. Like for instance the fact that she desperately wants me. I just don't get her. Everyone else wants it. And I'm more than willing to give it up to her. All she's gotta do is ask nicely.

"Who was it?"

Great.

Before I even finish that question Willow steps out from behind B.

Just. Fucking. Great.

"Rosenburg." I nod at her with my most intimidating I hate you expression.

"Faith." She nods back with the same look. So, it's all good.

Buffy comes back to the couch to sit next to me... on top of me. It's actually kind of hard to tell. Willow pauses for a moment after seeing that, but then continues to make her way over to the couch across from us. What the fuck is she doing here? Seems Buffy wants to know the same thing. She words it a bit differently though.

"Are you okay, Will?" She looks at her friend, concerned. "Nothing happened, did it?"

"Huh? No. Everything's fine." She shifts around on the couch, making herself comfortable. I swear to God I am two seconds away from staking her ass.

"Oh." Buffy looks at me again with an unreadable expression.

Oh?

I would have gone with 'Well, what the fuck do you want then!?!' I almost say it too. Then I remember that Buffy likes it when I'm nice to her friends. I decide to stick to death stares and silent threats. Willow gets the gist of it.

"Buffy, can I talk to you for a moment?" She says it to B, but she looks at me while she's saying it. I know what she wants. Fuck that! I'm not going anywhere. Buffy either doesn't get it or she chooses to ignore the silent request... demand, whatever because she moves around a bit, leaning her elbow on my shoulder. Maybe she's forgotten that I'm even here.

"Sure, Will. You know that you can talk to me about anything." She leans forward, giving Rosenburg her full attention. I resist the urge to roll my eyes.

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There's silence for a moment while everyone waits for Red to start speaking. Well, Buffy and I wait for Red to start speaking. Red's waiting for me to take the hint and leave the room. I place my feet on the coffee table as an indication that I'm not leaving anytime soon.

"Alone, Faith. If you don't mind." She finally says after a while.

Actually, I do mind. But I stand up when Buffy smiles at me.

"I'll be in the kitchen." I tell her. There's no way that I am leaving this house until Buffy kicks me out. Or, you know... asks me.

She smiles again and nods before I begin walking to where the food lives. I open the refrigerator and pull out the orange juice and a glass from the cupboard. It takes me a full thirty seconds to realize that I can still hear the conversation going on in the other room. Gotta love Slayer hearing. I tune in to the voices, jumping up onto the counter. She's just talking about a minor glitch in the system with Dog Boy.

Now I wish I was deaf.

I sit there, drink the OJ and desperately trying not to hear Rosenberg going on about the love of her life. Kinda hard to do with super powers.

"... He's my best friend, Buffy... After you. He's my best friend after you 'cause you're my best friend. He's my guy best friend... No, wait. I guess that would be Xander. He's my guy best friend that's my boyfriend. That should mean something, right. I mean he should listen to me."

Maybe he would if you'd shut up every now and again.

This conversation couldn't have waited until tomorrow? Honestly, who gives a flying fuck about Rosenberg's love life? Maybe she's only here 'cause she knew I would be. Wouldn't put it past her.

"Did you tell him that?" Okay, now even I can hear the slightly bored tone that Buffy's using.

There's a long pause and I start to think that maybe I really have gone deaf because I can't hear anything anymore. "...No." She finally says, quietly.

No? What the fuck? Go annoy your boy and leave Buffy to me.

"Well... Maybe you should tell him. I mean if you're not..."

Okay, that's it! I can't take anymore. I would gladly go back to hearing about Angel if it meant that Rosenberg would leave.

I jump down off the counter and wash my glass out before going outside. I lean against the side of the house, checking to see if this is a safe enough distance for my super hearing. I can hear mumbling but I can't make out the actual words anymore. Thank God.

I sit down, pulling out a cigarette and lighting it up. I like smoking. It's something to do if I'm bored or wired or if I want something to do with my hands. Plus there's the whole actually being addicted factor.

Buffy's always telling me I should quit. Apparently, it's bad for you or something. I'm so glad she told me because I don't know what I would have done without that handy little piece of information. Probably died of lung cancer. Oh wait... No I wouldn't. I'll be dead before I'm twenty five. B gets it, but she doesn't. I mean she hears the words - short lifespan - and she understands what it means,

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but she doesn't understand it in relation to us. If she did it wouldn't be so hard for me to get her to let go every now and again.

Rosenburg's still yammering on about her Boy Toy. How does that work, when the girl's taller than the guy? I've never had a problem with it before. It would be weird leaning down to kiss someone or, you know, other stuff. Actually, Buffy's shorter than I am; maybe she'll help me figure it out.

I have come to the conclusion that Willow is only here to monitor my time with Buffy. Every time I get a minute alone with her when we're not on patrol she manages to appear out of nowhere - like a virus. A couple of times could be coincidence, but almost every day? I think she might have some kind of sensor telling her when I'm going to be around. Like maybe I give off some kind of bad ass vibe so that all the nerds know when to vacate the immediate area and Rosenburg just ignores her basic instincts.

Maybe it's time to eliminate some of the competition. Up the stakes of our little contest. I know that if she wasn't around my chances with B would immediately double.

Oh, shut the fuck up, Faith! You don't have any chances with B and you know it. Double nothing and what do you get? I know you didn't finish high school, but I'm sure that even you can figure that one out. It has absolutely nothing to do with the geek factor.

But I just wanna...

No! You have no chances with Buffy. For fuck sake leave the poor girl alone. You're probably reducing her life expectancy to way below twenty-five. She'll die of a heart attack 'cause of something you said and then where will we be?

But it's fun.

Yeah, it is kinda fun.

Glad we're in agreement there.

Yeah. Like those cute faces she makes when... so not the point. The only way that girl is seeing the inside of your bed is if you knock her out caveman-style and drag her to it.

Hmmm...

Don't even think about it!

Hey! When did I grow a conscience, anyway? I thought those things were for losers and nuns.

Oh, don't worry. I won't hold you back when we're doing the really cool stuff.

Good to know. Now shut up. I've gotta think about some things.

Okay. Hey, we should go get blasted tonight, have some wicked-type fun.

Yeah, sounds good. You know, you're pretty cool for a conscience.

Thanks.

Now fuck off.

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No need to be rude.

Great, in the space of five minutes my plan to 'seduce Buffy' has turn into my plan to 'forget Buffy'. Hope you're happy Rosenberg. Whatever you were hoping to achieve with your little stunt tonight worked.

I wish I was dead.

Buffy's P.O.V

"... And boy, you should have seen Cordy's face when she caught Xander looking at one of the cheerleaders. Not sure which one it was they all kind of look the same to me. Not that being a cheerleader is bad!" She looks at me, worried about my reaction to her negative cheerleader comments. "Cheerleading is good and very therapeutic if that's your thing. It's not my thing, but if that was your thing and some people liked cheerleading then Hey! It's a good thing. Cordy's face was pretty funny though. I'd pay a million dollars to see it again. If I had a million dollars, which I don't. So, I guess I can't pay a million dollars. But if I had it I would, definitely. Now, I'm wishing that I had a million dollars... You shoulda been there, Buff." She laughs.

Sounds like fun... I don't want to leave Faith alone for too long. If she gets antsy she might just leave.

"Yeah, I see that look on her face every day, Will. I saw it in the library today when he was looking at Faith... again." Her face darkens for a moment. What's that about? "So, you can keep your money because I'm sure that it will be there again tomorrow. Anyway, about Oz... Maybe you should go talk to him now. Get it all out in the open. Like a bandaid... or something."

I'm not really too sure why she's so upset about Oz talking to one of the guys in his band. I never realized that Willow was so possessive. Angel should appreciate the space that I let him have. In fact he should tell me more often how lucky he is. I'll have to remember to remind him tomorrow.

"Nah, he can wait." She waves her hand, dismissively. "Can I stay here with you for a while? It's just that I really don't want to go home right now." She gives me the puppy dog eyes.

Hey! I know that look! I invented that look. No wonder I get my own way a lot of the time. I should start using that more often. But I really wanted some Slayer-time with Faith tonight. Now, If I can just think of something polite to say...

Anything at all...

Work brain!

...

Damn it!

"Sure, Will. Let me just go and get Faith."

Chapter Four

Buffy's P.O.V

I panic for a moment when I can't find Faith in the kitchen, but then I see that the back door is open. She's outside sitting against the wall. I lean against the doorway, watching her for a moment. She looks so sad. Like someone just told her that she can't have sex for a month.

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"What are you doing out here?" I smile when she jumps about a foot in the air.

"Thinking."

"Bout what?" I don't really expect an answer and she doesn't disappoint, but I move to sit next to her anyway.

"Nothing much." She looks at the door, probably hoping to escape an interrogation. "So, listen. I'm gonna take off now."

"What? Why? We haven't even done anything yet!" My voice comes out a lot louder than it was supposed to and I force myself to calm down.

"Yeah, I know, but I'll see you tomorrow anyway." She looks at the door again.

"I was kinda thinking that maybe you should just stay here tonight. I promise much fun and laughter. We could talk about boys and paint each others toenails and a whole bunch of other cool stuff." I laugh at her horrified expression. "Not enough incentive? Okay, we can play dress up with my Mom's clothes and make pasta art."

"Oh, you were joking." She says, relieved. "I don't know, B."

"You have somewhere better to be?" I ask curiously.

"Actually... no." She was so going to lie for a minute there. It's a good thing she decided to tell the truth because she really sucks at lying. Maybe one day I'll tell her, but then she might figure out how to do it better.

"Great! Then you're staying." I punch her on the shoulder lightly.

"I don't... Fun?" She looks at me skeptically.

"Much fun." I correct.

"And does this 'fun' involve alcohol of any kind?"

"I guess, if you wanted. There could be alcoholic fun, yeah. But then you have to take care of me when I get sick."

"Sick, huh? That would be kind of funny." She smiles.

"Is that right?"

"Uh-huh."

"Does that mean you'll stay?"

"Do I have to clean up ejected stomach matter?"

"Oh no." I shake my head quickly. "You can have the alcoholic type fun. I'll stick with the sober kind, it's worked well for me so far."

"Then I guess I'm sober by association. Wouldn't want to have all the fun without you, B."

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"You're just worried that there will be photographs."

"I don't want proof that I'm not perfect one hundred percent of the time. What will the children think?" She widens her eyes, melodramatically.

"Probably that it's a weekday." I smirk.

"What are you saying?" She feigns mock hurt, clutching her chest.

"At least you have the weekends." I try to console her, playing along.

"You think I'm perfect on the weekends, huh?" She grins, widely.

"No, I just forget my camera on the weekends. So, there's no proof of your imperfection."

"Imperfection? What are you talking about, B? I'm perfect all the time. Just like..." She breaks off abruptly, looking away. "...George Clooney."

"George Clooney?" I scrunch up my nose. "Faith, the amount of things I don't know about you could fill the Grand Canyon."

"Buffy, the amount of things you don't know could fill the Grand Canyon... and every other major hole in America, including ditches... and pot holes... and those tiny little cracks in the sidewalk that you see sometimes."

"Maybe, but at least now I know about George Clooney." I nod my head, knowingly. She stares at me blankly for a moment, but then bursts out laughing.

"Buffy, although nice looking, I don't have a hard on for George Clooney." She shakes her head, still chuckling at my expense.

"But you said..."

"I know what I said. That's what too much television time will do to you. It's the first name that came to mind. Sorry to take away the only piece of information that you actually know. Now, you're on empty again, Blondie."

"Okay, that's twice in the space of thirty seconds that you have insulted my intellect and now your wittiness levels have dropped to include hair color? If that was wit at all."

"What're you gonna do?" She smirks. "You know you can't take me. Unless you tried real hard and then I might let... you." She trails off, looking sad again. If I asked her about it she would probably bolt for the door. I decide to stick to the teasing which seems to get much better results.

"I could take you."

"Could not."

"Last time I checked I wasn't the Slayer with visible bruising."

"You only got me 'cause I got distracted!"

"Yeah, by George Clooney."

"Something like that." She looks away.

"Thinking about your next conquest?"

"I know what you're doing, you know. You're trying to get information out of me. An insight to the mind of Faith." She pulls her knees up to her chest, protectively, resting her arms on them and staring straight ahead.

"Is it working?"

"Maybe... Why though?"

"Cause we're friends. Friends know stuff about each other. It's almost like they care or something. Crazy, I know, but it appears to be a custom. What can I say? I'm a slave to society."

"Friends? I guess I can live with that." She frowns, contemplating the thought. "But I'm not one of your damn Scoobies that sits and begs and rolls over when you say jump."

I stare at her for a moment, until I realize that she's completely serious. "Faith, did I ask for any of that stuff? Ever? It's not a dictatorship, we're a team and you're a part of said team. A crucial part. A partner part even."

"Yeah, I know... Sorry." She rests her chin on the back of her hands. I get the feeling that Faith doesn't apologize for much. Somewhere in there, behind all those smart-ass comments is the person that I want to get to know. If I can ever get her to lower her defences. The chances of that currently are slim-to-none, but give me time. I'll break her eventually. I'm actually getting there, I think this is the most serious conversation we've ever had.

"I know you know, but do you feel it?" I ask gently, turning my head to study her face.

"Yeah." She sighs, but then sits up straight, looking panicked. "What? Feel what?"

I smile a little. "You're kinda strange sometimes." She smirks again, but continues staring straight ahead. "Feel how much we all need you. How much I do. Who else is gonna watch my back all the time?"

"The other Slayer you have stashed in the basement?" She finally turns to look at me with a slight smile and I know that she appreciates what I said. Even if she won't ever say it.

"Besides, I really need to get myself a better trained Slayer if you're gonna roll over when I say 'jump'."

She starts to retort to my comment, but stops when we hear someone calling my name. Both of our heads turn toward the doorway.

Willow?

I almost forgot that she was even here.

"Out here, Will!" I call out. She emerges a moment later wearing a frown.

"What are you guys doing out here?"

"We were just talking." I turn my attention back to Faith. "You wanna go in, now?"

"Actually, I think I'm just going to go." She says still looking at Willow.

"No way! You promised to stay and you're staying. Willow's staying for a while too."

"I thought you said it would be fun." She mutters under her breath, loud enough for me to hear, but not Willow.

"I never said that." I stand up holding out my hand for her to take. I pull her to her feet and she seems torn between leaving and staying. I really do want her to stay, even if it means letting myself in for more sexually charged conversation. I'm running out of ways to deflect that type of discussion. Next time I think I'm just going to make a run for it.

"Yes, you did." She says, once she's standing. "You said fun and what do I get?"

"You get a Dawnless house filled with a Buffy and a Willow." I take her hand again.

"Yay... fun." She murmurs flatly as I pull her back inside the house with Willow trailing behind.

I push Faith onto the couch and run upstairs to shower, but only after extracting a promise from her that she will still be there when I get back. When I'm done I walk down the stairs with a couple of blankets and throw one to Willow. They're sitting on opposite sides of the room, staring directly at the television and not speaking. Come to think of it I don't think I've seen them speak at all lately unless it's absolutely necessary.

I pass the other blanket to Faith who takes it before picking up the remote and flicking through the channels. I sit next to her, pulling the blanket around both of us.

"Were you staying too, Will?" I look over at her, but she was already staring at me, tilting her head to the side.

Maybe she was expecting fun too, but I really only said that as an incentive for Faith to stay. I hope they don't expect me to entertain them or anything. Faith pauses in her vigorous channel surfing to hear the answer.

"Yeah, if that's okay?"

"Sure." I nod, adjusting my position so that my head is resting on Faith's shoulder. She begins flicking through the channels even faster than before. She's going to break the remote if she keeps that up.

I yawn sleepily and Faith's steady breathing and lack of patience in finding something to watch soon sends me to sleep.

"Faith?" I sit up straight, squinting into the darkness. I lie back down when I feel the comforting warmth of fingers running gently through my hair.

"Shh, B. Go back to sleep." She whispers, brushing some hair back from my face.

"Kay." I mumble, closing my eyes and I can't help but smile just a little bit. She stands up, getting off the bed. Which is exactly when I realize where I am. In bed, in my room. Didn't I fall asleep on the couch?

"Faith?" She stops at the door, turning around to sit back on the bed. I sit up a bit, mostly awake now and rub at my eyes, trying to focus. "Did you carry me up the stairs?"

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"Uh... yeah. You know, couch wasn't too comfortable. Figured you'd appreciate it in the morning when you have full limb usage." I can just make out her smile in the darkness.

"Thanks. I will appreciate it in the morning. I'll appreciate it now, even." I smile back, starting to climb out of bed. "I'll get you something to wear."

She pushes me back down. "I'll get it." I tell her where everything is and she heads toward the bathroom to get changed.

"Faith?"

"Yeah, B?" She stops once more, turning around.

"Come back when you're finished?" I ask and she pauses for a moment before answering.

"Yeah, sure." She says before leaving the room.

Faith's right. The couch isn't that comfortable and my bed is more than big enough for the two of us. So, it's purely for her comfort level that she should stay here with me tonight. I mean, she did carry me all the way up the stairs when she didn't have to. And Slayer-strength notwithstanding there's a whole bunch of stairs there. That was sweet. So, I'm just being a good friend by offering for her to stay here tonight. See I can be a good friend. Besides, this way Willow has the whole living room to herself. She doesn't have to sleep on that small couch anymore. Everyone wins.

I use the time to change clothes and have just climbed back into bed when I sense movement outside of my room. It sounds like Faith's pacing just in front of the door. What is she doing out there? I listen to it for a few minutes before becoming impatient.

"Faith, come in already." The door slowly opens. And by 'slowly' I mean snail-pace slowly or maybe turtle-pace slowly or even Cordy-pace when it's time to pull out the books for research type slowly. Whichever one is the slowest that's how long it takes for the door to open. Finally, she's inside and I can sense the nervousness even from across the room. Now, what could Faith, Miss Bad-ass-nothing-scares-me-'cause-I'm-invincible-and-I'm-wicked-cool-in-my-leathe\ rs-check-me-out-everyone-1999 possibly have to be nervous about? "What were you doing out there?"

She stops all movement. "Uh... there was... I mean... I..." She pauses, running a hand through her hair. Finally she looks up and all traces of nervousness are gone. If it was even there in the first place. But I don't think I've ever seen her lost for words before. Maybe quiet because she's thinking about sex or something. But never stumbling over words. "I was looking at the carpet."

"Carpet?" Did I miss something?

"Sure." She nods, closing the door so that it's dark again. She walks over to me to sit on the edge of the bed. "It's nice. Remind me to tell your mom later."

"Oh, thanks... I think." Faith notices carpet? Weird.

"Very clean. Good texture." She states in all seriousness with a slight nod of the head.

"Happy you approve." I smile, leaning back onto one elbow.

"I do. So..." She pauses again. "You wanted to talk... or something?"

"Actually, I'm kinda tired."

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"Oh, yeah. That's cool." She stands up. "It's just that you said... and I... never mind. I'll see you in the morning, B."

"Wait. Where are you going?"

"Bed-slash-couch." She shrugs.

"Oh. Well, how about bed-slash-bed?" I try to explain when her confusion deepens. "I meant that I didn't want to talk 'cause I really am tired, but you don't have to leave. You can just, you know, stay here tonight." I pat the space next to me.

Faith's P.O.V

Here?

Here in her bed here?

Here in her bed here with her here?

Crap.

How do I get myself into these situations?

No, really.

The reason why I bought her up here in the first place was because I was very aware of our close proximity when she was using me for a pillow. I can't stay here I was meant to be getting over her. Remember the plan, Faith? The 'forget Buffy' plan that hasn't actually been implemented yet. Remember not being sucked in by the cute little faces she makes anymore? Remember the getting over her part? And the bunch of other stuff which definitely does not involve sleeping in her bed.

Oh, for fuck sake she just wants to sleep with you. Not with you.

With me?

Is it getting hot in here or is it just inside of my shorts?

Just me then? Okay good, 'cause for a minute there I thought that I was completely over Buffy Summers. Now, how the hell do I get out of this one?

Maybe you should tell her you want to look at the carpet some more, dumbass.

"Faith?" She's still watching me closely and I realize that I've been standing here like a... like more of a moron than I was before.

Damn.

"Uh, yeah B. Okay." I walk over to the bed and climb in. Taking excessive effort to make sure that no part of my body comes in contact with her. Even though every inch of me is screaming out 'Take her! Take her now!' Never let it be said that Faith has no self-control. In your face Mom! And my first Watcher... and Giles and Wes and Buffy and... You know what? Screw you all. I'm rolling in self-control. See, check me out.

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I stare up at the ceiling for a good fifteen minutes, trying not to fall off the bed because I'm that close to the edge. I would have preferred sleeping on the couch near Rosenberg to this... torture. I start to think that Buffy's sleeping, but there's no way in hell I will be. Every muscle in my body is tensing, trying to force me to do it's bidding. I won't let it though because I'm Faith. My body can't rule my mind. Well, actually that's a big fat lie and if childhood nursery rhymes are anything to go by, my pants would be on fire right about now.

Wait a second... Okay just figuratively then. My body and mind are in complete agreement over this one anyway. Why aren't I doing anything again? Oh right, the severe ass whooping that I am so not in the mood for.

"Faith, you're so stiff." She murmurs, startling me.

No, but I would be if there was an increase in my testosterone levels.

"Just relax." She says, taking my hand and placing it on her stomach.

Oh, my God.

Self control. Self control. Self-

I squeeze my eyes shut tight and try not to think about the warmth of her very tight little stomach. When all I really want to do is lick every inch of her. How the fuck does Mr Gordo survive every night? Maybe he tries to get some action once she's asleep.

Maybe that's what I should do...

Nah, not even I'm that far gone. That's a sick little pig if you ask me.

"Faith, relax. You're making it hard for me to go to sleep."

Ditto.

"Sorry." I'll try to be quieter in my extreme lust for you. She squeezes my hand tight trying to get me to calm down from whatever problems she believes my world-weary self is so tense from. Hot stomach that has a noticeable lack of my tongue on it aside it's actually nice. In a friendly, comforting kind of way. I force myself to relax and eventually I fall asleep.

With my hand still resting on her stomach.

Chapter Five

Faith's P.O.V

"Buffy?"

I wake up the next morning to a light knocking on the door. It takes me a few moments to get my bearings, but when I do I realize that I have somehow wrapped myself firmly around B. I guess my body doesn't listen to my subconscious mind either - or maybe it does and that's why we're like this.

She's so beautiful. Perfect... Asleep.

Nah, I'll leave that territory to Mr Gordo. I hold her a little bit tighter, just watching. Until I realize

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What the hell am I doing?

The door opens and I finally look up to see Willow staring at us in shock.

Now, it's a toss up between holding Buffy or the look on Red's face as to which is giving me the most pleasure. I'm sticking with B on this one. The look on her face is priceless though. And you know, I try to hold it in. I really do. But my smirk comes out in full force at this point in time.

"Hey Red."

"Faith." She frowns. "I thought you left."

You mean you wish I left.

"Nah, B and I were just doing the Slayer-bondage thing last night. " I say dead-pan. I know how much she hates the idea of Buffy finding anything to bond with me about. Which, come to think of it, isn't actually a lot. So, I milk whatever I can. Her eye kind of twitches which is fun, too.

"I just came to tell Buffy that I was going home to get changed for school, but now I'm thinking that I'll just borrow something of hers." She leans against the doorway.

"No, it's cool. You go. I'll make sure that she gets the message." I rub Buffy's back lightly, but suggestively, never taking my eyes off Willow. Her eye twitches again. I think this is the most fun I've had in a long time.

"I don't think so, Faith." She folds her arms, looking at me like I'm a crazy person for even suggesting that she leaves Buffy alone in the house with me.

She's standing in the doorway watching us, obviously with no intention of leaving anytime soon. I'd do the same thing if our positions were reversed. Actually, if our positions were reversed I'd probably drag her out of the bed and beat on her ass. Then again our positions wouldn't ever be reversed because Willow's just not the type. A shame for her, means eventually I'll win... Not that there's anything to win anymore. This is all about pissing Red off. It's not like I'm still hung up on B or anything - 'cause I'm over her. Way over. It's not like I'm turned on with her tight little body pressed up against mine...

And if I was, it doesn't mean I'm still into her...

Do I have to justify these types of things to myself?

"Okay, then." I take my hand off B's back and wave it dismissively. "Bye."

"I'm not going anywhere."

"Suit yourself." I shrug, making my self comfortable. I watch her with a smirk as she clearly contemplates what to do. Leave Buffy asleep in the arms of a psycho slut? Wake her up and have her freak out on me, run and get Joyce or stand there waiting for her to wake on her own? Decisions, decisions.

The choice is taken from her and I freeze when I feel Buffy stirring in my arms. My smug moment with Willow really only works with an asleep Buffy. One that is blissfully unaware of our current position. I take a deep breath when her eyes open.

"Mmmm, hey." She smiles at me and I visibly relax, exhaling the breath I had been holding. Buffy freakout averted. Shouldn't I be on my ass halfway across the room by now? Oh well, gift horse and

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all that. Whatever that means. What is a gift horse anyway? And why would anybody want to look in its mouth? Maybe Giles knows.

"Hey." I smile, brushing some hair back from her forehead. I figure while I'm at it I may as well push my luck. "Thanks... you know, for last night and all." I deliberately avoid looking over at Red 'cause I know exactly how that seemingly innocent statement sounded to her. Also Buffy hasn't even noticed she's there yet... or moved at all. I don't know what I was so scared of - she doesn't seem to even care that we're like this. Something to think about anyway. It's probably because she's used to being held all the time. I'm still a virgin when it comes to this type of stuff; the close friendships with associated touchy-feely type touching. B seems happy enough 'cause her smile widens.

"Anytime."

Red immediately breaks into my happy moment by coughing loudly. B looks over her shoulder toward the door, rolling out of my grasp. She doesn't go far though.

"Hey Will." She smiles at her friend. "Sleep well?"

"Not as well as you apparently." She remarks, arms still folded across her chest.

"Yeah, Faith makes a good pillow." B pokes my side with a sleepy grin. I smile innocently at Willow, placing my hands behind my head.

Did I mention that this is the best day ever?

"I can see that."

"Yeah. You should move in Faith. You can be my human pillow." She turns to face me with a smile. "I promise to feed you and everything."

I pretend to consider it. "Well... do I get bathroom breaks?"

"I'll even let you use the shower occasionally." She pokes me again. "Come on, what do you say?"

"I say, I'll be you're pillow anytime you let me, B." I answer seriously.

"It's settled then."

"Ha! Yeah. Pillow Faith. That's funny." Red says without a hint of humor. "We're going to be late for school, Buffy."

"Yeah, remind me why I care again?" She sits up straight, rubbing at her eyes. "Are you going home, now?"

"Um... Could I maybe borrow something of yours? I really don't want to be late." She adds by way of explanation. I roll my eyes, but no one is paying any attention.

"Sure." B turns to poke me again. I rub my side. That's getting really annoying. "And you, my friend, are also coming to school with me."

"Huh? What for?" I swear I spend more time at that school than the actual students.

"You have to be there for moral support when I explain to Giles why I blew off patrol last night."

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"What? No way. That was your idea. I just went along for the ride. Innocent party here... for once."

"Come on, Faith. You really don't want to see me beg." Actually I do, but not over this. "It's not pretty."

"I don't know, B. I said I'd be your pillow, not your slave."

"You don't wanna be my slave?" She pouts. She's armed and loaded and ready to go to the extreme over this one it seems.

"Well... What would I get for it?" I smirk.

"The opportunity to please me any way you can." God, you're killing me over here. Her eyes widen a bit, right along with my own. "That sounded really bad, didn't it?"

"Uh-huh." A decidedly pissed off Willow answers from the doorway, still glaring at me. Taking note of this I move my mouth up to Buffy's ear.

"I'll have to get right on that then." I murmur in my huskiest tone. I make sure that it's just loud enough for Red to hear.

"We're gonna be late for school, Buffy." Willow repeats impatiently. Unfortunately for her, B is still staring at me wide-eyed. She blinks a couple of times, coming out of the haze that I momentarily put her in. Go me! That's victory dance material, right there.

"You know where everything is, Will." B glances over at her quickly before turning her attention back to me. Red looks like she's about to stamp her foot on the ground, but goes to choose some clothes from the wardrobe instead.

"So, after school activities?" Anything beats sitting around in that motel room all day. "Or during school activities? Since you're such the little rebel and all."

Rosenburg pauses in her clothes hunt. "No way. You're not skipping school. Right, Buffy?"

"Uh... I don't know." She looks back and forth between the two of us trying to reach a decision.

Willow is not pleased. "Buffy!"

B sighs, looking apologetically at me. "I really should go. I need to talk to Giles about some stuff. Will you hang around and we'll do something later?"

"Sure." Damn Willow. She's always ruining my fun with B. I should take her out on patrol one night, put her in mortal danger and accidentally forget to save her. B so would have skipped out today if she wasn't here with all of her 'morals' and 'responsibility'. She's like that annoying cricket from Pinocchio that's always telling him not to do the fun stuff. It's a shame she doesn't only show up when you whistle for her 'cause that would have been cool.

"Weren't you going to come over to study for that English test later today?"

Now that was just sneaky.

"Oh... right." I swear to God, if Rosenburg talks her out of spending time with me one more time I'm going to do something bad and very Faith-like. Scenarios involving an apprentice Wicca, a knife and lots of blood come to mind. Maybe some virginal sacrifice to the 'Damn Willow Rosenburg to hell' Gods. "Rain check?"

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Good girl.

"The test is in two days!" She says desperately. I clench my fists.

Shut the fuck up, Red.

"Breathe, Will." B laughs. "It'll be okay. I got the basics down anyway. We can skip it, thanks though."

"Fine." Willow picks up the clothes she's chosen and storms out of the room.

This is fun.

"What's her problem?" I gesture to the now empty doorway.

"She's just a little sensitive about all things academic." Buffy explains seriously.

No, she's just a little sensitive about being left out of the inner-Slayer circle. B doesn't get that though and I don't bother explaining it to her.

"So, you'll come to school?" She asks, getting out of the bed.

"I guess. Just remember that it was all your idea."

"You'd really let me take the fall for it, wouldn't you?"

"Well, it was your idea! Besides you got the cool Watcher. Giles won't care. Meanwhile, I get stuck with the runt. I swear, if I catch him checking out Cordelia one more time I'm gonna call the cops on his ass."

"Jealous?" She grins slyly. She picks up a shirt and holds it against herself, silently asking for my approval. I shake my head and point to a much tighter one that's currently hanging over a chair. I remember that one. Lots of skin. It's got my vote.

"Hardly. A bit too 'Prom Queen' for me." I watch as she shrugs and picks up the shirt that I pointed to and holds that one against herself. Hell yeah. I nod my approval. Not that I care anymore or anything.

"Yeah. He is, isn't he?" She giggles.

Uh, yeah. Him.

"Right. Anyway, I'll meet you there later. I wanna shower and stuff. Get presentable." I say, not actually moving from the bed. Maybe she'll forget that I'm even here and start changing.

"Okay, but don't be too late. It's an unwritten Slayer rule that we gotta stick together on this type of stuff."

"They won't even care, B. Trust me. I skip out on patrol all the time." She gives me a look. "Which of course you already know so we should just forget I ever mentioned it."

"Actually, you raise a good point. You should tell him." She makes the universal hand signal for 'turn around'. I sigh and do as she asks.

"Fine. I'll tell him you had a bowel disorder and had to spend the entire night in the bathroom."

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"I'll tell him." She says quickly.

"Thought so."

"Hey, are we nearly... Holy God!" Willow squeaks from the door. "Sorry, Buffy. I thought you were ready."

I quickly turn around. My logic being that if Rosenberg sees, I should too.

"I am ready!" Buffy looks down at herself, frowning.

"You're wearing that?" Red slowly lowers her hands from her eyes.

"Yeah. What's wrong with it?"

"Nothing. I think you look very nice, B." And tight and sexy and hot and Oh, baby I think I just got hard.

"Uh, yeah. What she said." Red blushes, looking anywhere but at the tightly clad B. Meanwhile, I can't keep my eyes off her.

"Thankyou. Faith chose it." B smiles. Willow glares at me for a moment before walking back out of the door muttering something about Buffy's shirt 'being illegal in at least eight different states.' "Faith, you gotta get out of bed now."

"Huh?" I look up toward her face, which is also nice.

"Watcher inquisition, remember?"

"Oh, right." The only thing better than a naked Buffy is a clothed Buffy. I should remember to bring a camera to the library. Not that I actually own one. I should buy one for this very special occasion. "So, I guess I'll see you later then."

"Uh-huh. Although, leaving would imply movement."

"What?" I tear my gaze away from her chest once more. "Oh, movement. As in moving... of me. Out of the bed. So... I should do that now."

"Would help." She chuckles.

"What?"

"Faith, get up!"

Buffy's P.O.V

"Buffy, you have to focus." Willow holds the English text up in front of me, waving it in my face.

"I'm focused! Completely focused. You can't get anymore focused than me." I point to myself to emphasize the point. "In fifty years people will still be talking about how focused I am. Saying stuff like 'Gee, that Buffy Summers sure was focused.' And their parents will say 'Well, if you're good and eat all of your vegetables you can grow up to be that focused as well.' Dispute my claims if you will, but..."

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"I dispute." She smiles, interrupting. "And also you're a very strange person."

"So, I've been told. Sorry, I'm just..."

"Unfocused?" She cuts in again.

"No! Slightly... distracted."

"By what?"

"I don't know. I just have all this energy." I bounce up and down in my chair a few times.

"Ooh." She perks up, interested. "Bronzing type energy?"

"Has potential." I agree with a smile.

"Great! Then you, me and Xander can hit the club tonight, along with our significant others."

"Yeah. And I'll ask Faith."

"Faith's not your significant other..." She looks at me strangely. "Is she?"

"Not to the best of my knowledge." I reply slowly.

"Good." She sighs, relieved. "Uh, I mean Faith doesn't have a significant other. She might feel kind of... left out."

"Please." I snort. "Like that ever stopped her before. Besides, leave her alone for two minutes and she'll have a signif... she'll have an other."

"Yeah. About that..."

Faith's P.O.V

"Faith!" I turn around when I hear Xander calling my name. We get along okay now. Ever since I made it perfectly clear that he would never be taking me to the ballpark again. He said its cool 'cause he's got Cordy now anyway. "Hey, my buxom bud."

"Hey, boyfriend," I shake my head. "Nah, just doesn't sound the same."

"Holy crap! What happened to your face?"

"Yeah, 'cause girls love it when you point out their incredibly obvious flaws." I start walking toward the school again.

"Sorry." He smiles sheepishly. "Where is my favorite Slayer off to today?"

"To the classes that I don't have in the school that I don't go to." I roll my eyes. "Where do you think I'm going?"

"Oh, right... It is the library, isn't it?"

"With your intellect you'll be head Janitor in no time."

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"Wanna see what I made in wood shop yesterday?"

"Not really, no."

"Sure ya do." He pulls something out of his back pocket, ignoring me. "Guess what it is."

"I don't care."

"Come on, guess."

"Xander, I really don't care."

"Well, you're no fun." He frowns, then quickly changes his expression to a triumphant grin; holding up his prize.

"It's a stake." I say, unimpressed.

"Yeah, I made it. Isn't it cool?"

"It's a stake." I shrug.

"You wanna touch it?"

"I'm good, thanks."

"Oh, come on! You know you wanna." He waves it in front of my face.

"I know what a stake feels like, Xander." I push his arm away from me.

"Well, yeah. But you don't know what this stake feels like."

"I'll take your word for it." He wiggles it in front of my face again with a pleading expression and I stop walking. "If I touch it will you shut the hell up?"

"Uh-huh."

"Fine." I touch the end with my index finger. "Happy?"

"No." He pulls it back, frowning at it. "You didn't feel the texture. I thought you as a Slayer should know these types of things. You didn't even savor it."

"Mostly I just kill things with it." He holds it up to my face again and I snatch it from him. "Savor it, huh?" I hold it for a moment, running my hand slowly up and down the length of it. Then I remember who I'm making obscene gestures to and stop, throwing it back to him. "Yeah, it's cool. Good... texture."

"Thanks." He beams, putting it away. We begin walking again. Well, I begin walking. He's almost skipping a few steps in front of me. "I'm thinking of taking this baby out for a test run tonight."

"I'll bet you are." I can't even decide if I want to smile or beat him up for being so annoying. I go for the former. There's silence for a moment, which is surprising since both of us like to hear ourselves speak. So, I decide to fill it with my type of conversation. "You score with CC yet?"

"What?" He chokes.

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"I'll take it by the look on your face that that's a 'no'." I grin. "But I bet it's not for lack of trying right? Marks for effort?"

"A." He answers with a smirk.

"Thought so. You want some help with that?"

"Pass." He pauses, looking thoughtful. "What kind of help?"

"Help getting you laid, what else?" I hurry to correct myself after a wistful look comes across his features. "And now we're firmly in the 'not by me' zone."

"I can get myself laid, thank you very much, and by myself I mean with other people. I can get myself laid with other people by myself."

"Suit yourself. Just offering." I shrug.

"Besides, Cordy's not like that. I want it to be special, you know?" His eyes widen when he realizes what he just said. "Not that it's not special with other people 'cause it's a special act filled with specialness and I would never..."

"Relax, Repeat-o Boy. I get it. Don't make it something that it wasn't. We had straight up hot, nasty sex. Best seven minutes of my life."

"Really?" He asks hopefully. "Oh... that was an insult wasn't it?"

"Can't put anything past you, can I?"

"You didn't like it?" He frowns.

"Got the job done." I shrug.

"Oh."

I decide to toss him a bone.

"I think it's nice that you wanna make it special with Cordy."

"Yeah, me too." He nods, happily. "She's..."

"Special Ed. I dig. And you're gonna what? Candle lit dinner, gaze at the stars from the rooftop balcony with two glasses of finely chilled champagne?"

He blushes. "Too cheesy?"

Ha! I knew it.

"She'll probably like that shit though. You're gonna split a hole in your wallet in your quest to get laid."

"There wasn't much there to begin with."

"I hear the bank gives you money nowadays if you promise to give it back. Although you'll probably be paying it off for the rest of your young life. Maybe you should find a cheap...er girlfriend."

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"Cheap like you, you mean." Cordelia says from behind me, having caught the end of the conversation. "Or cheap like your current living arrangements?"

Ouch. I slowly turn around with a smirk.

"Cheap like someone who doesn't have to be paid to give it up to their boyfriend. Oh, wait a second, I think there's another name for what you're doing. The word 'hooker' comes to mind."

"You told her!" She spins to face Xander in all her hellish virginal fury.

"No, he didn't tell me." I cut in, turning the attention back my way. I don't want to get the poor guy in trouble. "I can spot an unsatisfied male from a mile away."

"I find that hard to believe especially considering that there are no unsatisfied males in a ten mile radius to you."

"Ladies, ladies." Xander laughs nervously, stepping between us and placing a hand firmly on my chest. He quickly snatches it back when I raise an eyebrow at him. "This is a violence free school... mostly. And although a cat fight would be pleasurable to watch, I'm supposed to be in class right now. Let's not call unwanted attention to the truant, shall we."

"Yeah, whatever." I shrug. "Just keep your bitch on a leash, huh?"

"You skanky, trailer-park, white-trash, fashion faux pas!" She tries to rush at me, but Xander holds her firmly. "Stay away from my boyfriend!"

"I don't want your boyfriend. But maybe if you gave the boy some lovin' every now and again, he wouldn't have to go to outside sources."

"Xander, let me go!" She struggles in his grip.

"Hey, just 'cause he'll never have it better than me, that's no reason to go get all violent." I turn my back on her with a smirk, continuing my short walk to the library and leaving the Prom Queen to Xander. Not the nicest thing I could have done because he's still begging for her forgiveness when he didn't even do anything wrong. I'll apologize to him later - maybe.

I walk inside the library to see Red and Buffy sitting at the counter, talking and surrounded by books.

"Yeah. About that..." Rosenberg says, but Buffy quickly cuts in.

"Hey, Faith!" She says a bit too pointedly. I'm guessing they were talking about me.

"Hey." I smirk at Willow's death glare. I'm beginning to think that maybe I went the wrong way with the females of this group. And all this time I thought it was them. "What were we doing?"

"We were actually discussing club plans for tonight." B jumps off the counter to come stand next to me.

"Plans of club? Count us in." Xander enters the library, dragging Cordelia behind him. She doesn't look happy, but whatever he said to her obviously made her rethink taking a Slayer on. She stalks past me to take a seat.

I'm only mildly paying attention to everyone else because Buffy looks damn fine today. I don't even really need to use my imagination too much.

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"Here, Buffy. You can borrow my jacket." Willow says, shrugging out of it and placing it over Buffy's shoulders. B hands it back to her, looking confused.

"What for?"

"It's cold."

"Are you joking? It's like a gazillion degrees in here! If hell were surrounded with books then that's where we'd be. Minus Satan, of course."

"We have a Satan." She mutters, looking directly at me. "But you should wear it anyway."

"Thanks, Will. But I really don't need..."

"You should listen to your friend, Buffy." Cordelia says. "Put the jacket on. And what exactly happened to the rest of your shirt? Are there monsters in the school again? I really need to get myself some new friends."

"This is the way it came!"

"You tried and that's what counts." She looks at Buffy sympathetically before turning her attention to a fashion magazine that's lying on the table.

"Just ignore them, B. I think you look great." And she does. She smiles at the compliment.

"Oh, please. Miss Fashion-Tragedy-Of-The-Year would walk around naked if she wouldn't get arrested for it." Cordy says, not even looking up from the magazine.

Hey!

Maybe.

"So, The Bonze was it? Tonight? With food and manly beer overflowing?" Xander puts in quickly, trying to avoid a repeat of what happened in the hallway.

"The Bronze sucks like Cordy on a first date." I jump up onto the counter behind B. This is a much better angle for looking down her shirt. Willow notices and shoves the jacket back toward Buffy. She waves it away, looking annoyed.

"Sleep with anyone on the way here?" Cordelia retorts.

"Hey, I'm just repeating information from my source."

"Your pimp is not the most knowledgeable of characters. Although, I'm sure you've made him a rich, rich man."

"I don't know." I shrug. "I just heard about you and some dude named Kevin."

"Kevin!" Xander glares at Cordelia, probably wondering how he can get some of the same.

"Xander." She laughs, nervously. "You're not actually going to listen to that poor excuse for a female, are you?"

"Kevin?!"

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"She was joking! Tell him, Faith."

"I think the words 'better than a Hoover' were used." I say with a straight face. Buffy giggles, elbowing my knee. "Don't worry, Cor. I'm sure you were the best he ever had."

Xander pulls Cordelia out of the library by the arm. We can still hear him a few moments later. His vocabulary seems to have decreased to one word, which he repeats over and over.

"Who's Kevin?" I ask.

"Cordy, huh?" B looks toward the empty doorway with mock surprise. "Who woulda thunk it?"

"That girl was way to uptight to not have some kind of extra-curricular activity."

"So, you are coming tonight, right?" Buffy looks up at me, changing the subject.

"Nah, got some stuff to do."

"Oh." She looks almost disappointed while Willow looks shocked.

What?

It's not like I'm desperate to spend every second with her...

Mostly.

Maybe like every second minute.

"But you're still coming on the weekend?" She asks hopefully.

"Wouldn't miss it." If I didn't know better I would say that Buffy actually wanted to spend time with me. Maybe I can get her to wear something just as tight. For some reason she seems to listen to my fashion advice. Maybe I can talk her into wearing nothing.

"Great!"

"What's the weekend?" Willow looks at her friend, curiously.

"We haven't actually decided yet." B looks like she wants to say something else, but Giles comes out of the office, holding a book. Doesn't that guy do anything else? I mean books are great and all, I even own one. It's got all these cool pictures of different sexual positions. But Giles really needs a different hobby.

"Ah, good. You're both here. How was patrol last night?"

Buffy looks at me pleadingly until I roll my eyes. "We didn't go."

"Oh, why not?"

"Found better stuff to do." I shrug, looking down at B. "Enough moral support for ya?"

"It's always good to take a night off every now and again. Just don't make it a habit." He walks back into the office, his nose firmly in the book.

JW – Somewhere I Belong

"What just happened?" B asks, confused.

"I told you he wouldn't care." I roll my eyes. "I do it all the... I mean, he's right, a night off is a good thing."

"Yeah." She nods with a sly smile and I start to think that maybe she's beginning to loosen up a bit after all. "So, I guess that means you won't mind patrolling while I take another night off?"

What?

I'm all for nights off.

But, only if I'm involved somehow.

This sucks.

Chapter Six

Faith's P.O.V

Bored. Bored. Bored. Bored. Bored.

This bites.

I kick the heels of my docs against the gravestone I'm currently sitting on.

Bored. Kick. Bored. Kick. Bored. Kick. Bored...

Where the hell did all the evil run away to?

Maybe they heard I was patrolling tonight...

'Cause they know I'm no pastel-wearing Princess.

I'll fuck 'em up!

But, they have to come to me if they want to die.

What?

I said I'd patrol.

I didn't say actively.

This is about the principle of the matter.

Saying I'd patrol... What's that all about? Don't get me wrong; I love kicking the crap out of things. Especially if there's a little blonde hottie by my side. Still... passive patrolling is kind of a 'Fuck you, B.' Who does she think she is, anyway? Making me agree to whatever she wants before I even have time to process the words coming out of my mouth.

But, she sure did look hot today. Shoulda thrown her over the counter and fucked her nice and hard. My fingers inside her while all of her friends stand around watching. Bet she'd like that shit.

JW – Somewhere I Belong

No, I'd like that shit.

I've officially resigned myself to my fate...

Can't get over B.

Can't have B.

Just gotta keep it all in perspective.

I think I ran out of juice. I wonder what's still open this time of night.

And where the FUCK is all the evil?!

Buffy's P.O.V

"Hey, boys and girls. Ready to par-tay like it's 1999?" Xander asks, doing his impression of dancing. Looks more like a retarded monkey.

"Yeah, or like every other day that we're here." I mumble.

"Somebody is not a happy little camper." He puts on his sympathy-face. "That time of month?"

"No, it's not." Angel and Willow both say at the same time.

Does everybody know my cycle? I think I'm kind of disturbed. Especially by how Angel knows.

"What? No! And like I'd tell you, anyway."

"That's okay because I really didn't want to know."

"Good because I wasn't going to tell you."

"Good because I didn't want to know."

"Good."

"Good."

"You're good, I'm good. Everybody's good and Buffy's not menstruating." Cordelia throws her hands up in the air. "Can we go inside now, Bert and Ernie?"

"Okay." Xander takes Cordelia's arm. "But, Buffy's Bert."

"Am not."

"Are too." He sticks his tongue out at me.

"I was always partial to Bert, myself," Oz cuts in. "All those bottle caps. Got to appreciate someone who knows what they like."

"I didn't like the rubber duckie." Willow smiles at her boyfriend. "They were grown men. Kinda creepy."

JW – Somewhere I Belong

"I liked the Cookie Monster," Angel says, while I take his hand. He's too cute sometimes.

"That's sweet, honey."

"And thus begins the great Sesame street debate. Can we continue this fascinating conversation somewhere a little less public? There are shadows and dark corners inside. That way people won't actually see me associating with you all." I'm beginning to regret the amount of times I've saved Cordelia's life.

"Fine," I throw in. "Cordelia can be Big Bird."

"What makes you say that, Buff?" Xander asks before Cordy even has a chance to open her mouth.

"I don't know. The guy just always bugged me." I walk past them into the Bronze, pulling Angel along behind me.

"You know you're under-age, don't you?" Angel says. I take a long, exaggerated drink of the beer I made him buy for me.

"You've got more than enough age for the both of us." For some reason he doesn't seem reassured by that statement. "Don't worry, I have minty fresh mints. Besides, Faith's always saying that I should loosen up."

"Not too loose I hope," Xander says.

"You wish," I snort.

"Yeah, but it just never happens," he sighs, shaking his head. "I even prayed to the Easter Bunny. Not quite a Slayer of my very own, but the chocolate was acceptable."

"Don't you have a Cordy-place to be?" I roll my eyes, shifting myself onto Angel's lap.

"She doesn't like it when I talk to her in public," he shrugs.

"At least she acknowledges your relationship... its progress."

"Yes because the repulsion was such a turn on."

"She wasn't repulsed. She was embarrassed." Why do I get the feeling that I'm not really helping?

"Ahh, repulsively embarrassed." He says with mock - enthusiasm. "My favorite of all negative feelings directed toward me by women."

"Beats homicidal," I shrug.

"True. Lack of bloody violence is definitely a necessity in a relationship." He looks at us with a smart-ass smirk. "But, I guess you guys wouldn't know anything about that, would you?"

"Yeah, but Angel's not repulsed by me." I smile, leaning back to kiss him.

"She's not repulsed!" he says defensively. "She's..."

JW – Somewhere I Belong

"Embarrassed?" Angel asks innocently.

"Yes! I mean... No! You know what? You don't get to make comments, evil Creature-Of-The-Night."

"Xand, he was joking... He does that sometimes."

"It's true." Angel agrees.

"The People Eating Comedian, everybody!" He throws his hands up. "Bet you'd bring in a lot of money at The Bite and Joke."

"Wow, you are angry because that wasn't even funny." I turn to look at Angel. "No more jokes. It's not good for his banter-age."

"Sorry."

"So, I know why Cordy's not here. But, where's Willow and Oz?" I ask.

"Bathroom and backstage, respectively." Xander points in the general direction of both.

"Ooh, bathroom. Sounds good." I stand up.

"It's not an appetizer. It's a public bathroom. Complete with disease and germs and a whole bunch of other icky stuff. Also, you're not leaving me here with him, are you?" Xander looks horrified by the thought.

"I'll be quick." I promise before turning back to Angel. "And when I come back we're dancing."

"I don't dance," he says flatly.

"Do we have to go through this every time? You know you're going up there. Why do you insist on making life difficult?"

"Cause he's not alive?"

"I don't dance." Angel repeats, looking serious.

"I think Mr Pointy has something to say about that." I place my hands on my hips.

"Oh, so that's how you get him to do things for you." Xander starts laughing, but soon turns thoughtful. "I wonder if that would work on Cordy."

"You could always drop a house on her. It worked in that movie."

"Sounds kind of heavy. Think I'll stick with being mocked and abused. Less work that way."

"As long as it's easy." I smile, turning away.

"She's really not." He mumbles under his breath.

I'm not really sure what makes Xander feel the need to tell everyone Cordelia's sexual status. What I do know is this is exactly what got Faith into trouble earlier today. I'm not half as good at defending myself against verbal insults as she is. Also, there's certain things that I never need to know.

JW – Somewhere I Belong

"Not really my area of expertise." I turn back around with a smirk. He's smiling though. I know that he wants her for more than a sexual relationship. The 'why' of that is a very good question. "But, you should talk to Faith."

"Already did. She offered to help."

"She what?!" I yell. The people closest to us all turn around to stare.

Both of them look at me strangely. "She offered to help me get Cordy."

"Oh." Breathe, Buffy, Breathe. "That was very nice of her... So... bathroom... was where I was going. I'll just... go there... now."

What the hell was that?

Clearly it's because - Faith is a friend. Xander is a friend. Two friends together is not good for my digestion. It equals badness. The visual place that I was in momentarily will give me nightmares for at least a week. No, a month! A month or longer... Then I'll need a psychiatrist with the couch and all. The bills for that will cripple me financially. I'll be fifty years old and living on the streets with a shopping trolley full of cans and all because of distasteful mental images. Ooh, and there's cats. I don't need that. I had plans for my life. They do not involve sleeping with Faith... XANDER!!

No, that's not right either.

Whatever.

My life plans don't involve Faith and Xander together that's for sure.

And if I'm not doing it then nobody should be doing it.

Especially Faith... and Xander. Together. There's a wiggins that just won't stop.

"Buffy."

"Hey, Will." Thank God! Take me from the insaneness that is my brain. She looks at me questioningly and I try to explain. "Bathroom-bound."

"Oh." She frowns. "I just came from there. If you use your super speed I'm sure you can make it out without actually touching anything."

"I just wanted to wash my hands."

"It'd probably be more hygienic if you didn't," she grins.

"I'll take my chances." I pull her in the direction of the bathroom. "I see Oz found his band-playing friends."

I watch her carefully for a reaction.

"Yeah. Practice leads to playing well - or so I'm told."

"So... you're not upset?"

"About what?" She looks at me confused.

JW – Somewhere I Belong

About what?

Wasn't this the main topic of conversation last night?

"About him spending time with the not-you section of society."

"No, why would I... Oh! Upset... yeah." She nods enthusiastically. "But... uh, he explained everything and I understand, now. Band stuff, you know."

I open the door to let her inside first. It's only the two of us in here. Maybe everyone else already learned to stay away. "I get it. Boys need some alone time occasionally. Like Oz with his band, Angel and his unsavoury drinking habits..."

"Xander and his hand," she grins, while I walk to the sink.

"Willow!"

"What? Too much information?" She looks so innocent. They grow up so fast, these days.

I use some paper towel to turn the tap on. My life plans don't include dying from germ infection either. "As long as it's not Faith."

"Faith's hand?" She scrunches up her nose. "Well, that certainly tips the 'eww' scales."

"My sentiments exactly."

"On that note... and the accompanying disturbing mental image." Ooh, I had one of those. "I kinda wanted to talk to you about Faith."

I turn the tap off and lean against the sink, drying my hands. "Did she ask to soap you up, too? I'm definitely running out of ways to deflect that line of questioning."

"She asked to soap you up?" She shakes her head. "So not the point. No, wait. That's exactly my point."

"What is?"

"The you... and the her. Preferably no soap." She walks to stand in front of me. "She's nice, right?"

"If by 'nice' you mean 'leather-wearing smart-ass' then, yeah. Nice." I throw the paper towel into the wastebasket. Two points! Go Buffy.

"But, you like her?" She presses, watching me carefully.

"Sure, but you'll always have first place in my heart," I grin.

"Sarcasm isn't very becoming, Buffy." She folds her arms, looking the exact part of a parental figure.

"Thanks mom. What's this about, Will?"

"Faith."

Way to be specific.

"Yeah?"

"I... I think she... likes you," she says quietly.

"Okay."

Color me confused.

"She... you know... likes you," she repeats.

Yeah, 'cause saying it twice makes it more understandable.

"That's a good thing, Willow. We have to spend all that time together... Although, I'd really hate to see the types of things she says to people she doesn't like."

"Not much. It's mostly an intimidating thing."

"What?"

"Nothing, but you're missing the point." She says, frustrated.

"No. I'm pretty sure I got it. Faith likes me. Faith's nice. That was the message in its entirety, right?"

"Yes... no. You're hearing the words, but you're not listening to me."

"I'm listening." I lean against the sink, looking as attentive as possible.

"Faith likes you."

Yes, and I also heard it the other two times.

"Okay, then."

Is that it?

"BUFFY!" She grabs me by the shoulders, shaking me roughly. "Faith likes you! She like likes you!! She like likes you in an other than platonic I-want-your-body-because-you're-wicked-hot-B-and-I-want-to-do-all-kinds-of-nasty-things-to-you-all-night-long-'cause-we're-Slayers-girlfriend-and-I-like-th\ e-thought-of-your-mom-having-a-heart-attack and I'm not really sure what five-by-five means, but I'm sure she wants to do that to you, as well!"

What?

"What?"

"Aaarrrrggghhh!!" she screams, throwing her hands up. She covers her face with her hands and begins pacing around the bathroom, muttering to herself. Finally, she stops, looking across at me. "Buffy, you know you're my best friend. But, you can be very frustrating sometimes."

"I'm sorry... Wait, what did you say?"

"You're frustrating! And not the brightest girl ever." Gee, thanks. "You..."

"No, before that." I cut her off before she can list all of my flaws.

JW – Somewhere I Belong

"You're my best friend?"

"That's nice, Will. Before that."

"Well, there was the frustration, then the friendship, screaming and the Faith part, of course." She ticks each thing off on her fingers as she speaks, waiting for a reaction on each one.

And we have a winner.

"Okay, stop right there... Faith doesn't like girls."

"Oh, yes she does," Willow nods her head with complete certainty.

"Did she tell you that?"

"...Not in so many words," she says slowly.

"Any words?"

"No," she admits. "But..."

I smile a bit. "Trust me, Will. Many mucho men for us Slayer types. Well, only one man... vampire for me. But, many for Faith. You don't even wanna hear about some of her nocturnal activities - all of which include those of the masculine persuasion. She is not ... you know."

"Ooh, what about this morning?" She snaps her fingers at me, proud of herself.

"What about this morning?" Now, I'm starting to get angry and I'm not even sure why. It's probably because of the absurdity of this entire situation. Of all the things there are to say about Faith... Well, that was the last thing I expected, anyway.

"All the snuggly-wuggling of two not-so-quick-to-jump-apart Slayers." She folds her arms, looking smug.

Oh, that.

That certainly had potential for being the most uncomfortable moment ever.

"Yeah, I'm just glad that she didn't freak out about the whole thing."

That woulda sucked. Kinda like a morning after without all the good bits that come first.

"Well, why would she?" She tilts her head to the side, frowning. "Probably just upset that her hands were outside of certain clothing items."

Okay, like I haven't had enough images of naked Faith in my head for one day...

You know, 'cause of the one earlier with Xander.

It's not like I'm constantly thinking of naked Faith...

Or have ever thought about... Then add hands into the mix...

Oh, God.

JW – Somewhere I Belong

"You have spent way too much time thinking about this."

"You're telling me!"

I'm starting to think that maybe Willow has a crush on Faith.

"Well, knock it off! I can't believe we're even having this conversation!" The basin that I'm leaning against cracks under the pressure of my hands, a chunk of it falling to the ground. I jump a bit from the sound. Willow continues speaking as though nothing happened.

"But, it's Faith. She's all... skanky."

"I thought you said she was nice," I say absently, picking up the broken piece and putting it neatly back in place. Good as new... kinda. I back away from the sink, my hands firmly in my pockets.

"Yeah," she snorts. "Nice like a flesh-devouring demon. One of the ones that eat helpless, little babies... Ooh, and puppies."

"Okay, I'm sensing some animosity, but I'm pretty sure that the baby population of Sunnydale is safe. Anyway, so what if she did like me? Does it bother you?"

Or more importantly - Does it bother me?

"Emphatically, YES!"

Wow, that was emphatic. I rub at my ear, momentarily deaf.

"Why because she's a girl?"

I'm almost certain that it doesn't bother me... If it were true... which it's not. What other people want to do with their lives is their business. Besides, I can always tell when Faith's lying. There is no way that she made up all those... encounters, that she seems to experience at least... Well, a whole bunch of encounters, anyway. A whole bunch of encounters that I have been subjected to in great detail. Great, great detail. Great, great, great detail. I didn't even know you could do some of the stuff she talks about, and I used to be so innocent. At least once during the course of every conversation the phrase, 'You put what, where?' comes up. I'm pretty sure that she waits for it, now. That girl thrives on shock value.

"No, again the skankiness factor comes into play."

"Stop saying that. It's not true."

I mean, sure, she can be a little over-bearing. And she does like the leather... and the boys. Unless you listen to Willow, of course. There's no need for name calling, though.

And when did I turn into Faith's mother?

"But, Buffy..."

"Willow, no!" What the hell is going on? "Not gay, not skanky, not liking girls, certainly not liking me and this is the last time we're ever talking about this!"

"But..." She stops when I hold my hand up. "Okay, let me just say this one thing and then I'm done."

JW – Somewhere I Belong

"Okay." I rub at my temple. I'm almost sure that I didn't have a headache a few minutes ago.

"If I'm right... and I am." I give her a look, but she keeps talking. "You owe me an apology."

I sigh, rolling my eyes. "Fine."

"Okay, I'm right. Apology please." She looks at me expectantly, holding out her hand.

"I'm sorry that you have so much time to think about stuff like this," I say, massaging my head.

"Buffy, look, I'm sorry. It's your life. You can do what you want with it."

"Thank you." I exhale loudly. "Now, all I have to do is pick out the ring for my Slayer wedding and I'm set. Be my bridesmaid?"

"And Faith's not bad, exactly," she continues, ignoring my sarcasm. "But, she's not good either. I was just worried 'cause you're my best friend."

"And I thank you for your concern. However unnecessary it may be."

This has to be the strangest conversation I've ever had the pleasure of participating in.

"Okay." She still looks skeptical. "But, I'm keeping an eye on her."

"You do that." I start walking toward the door.

"I will."

"Alright, and the first time Faith puts the moves on me, you'll be the first to know." I throw over my shoulder, chuckling, as I step out of the room.

"All I ask," she says, completely serious.

Oh. My. God.

Faith's not like that...

She's not.

Faith's P.O.V

... and then just when she's screaming for me to stop 'cause she can't take anymore, I push her over the edge... hard. She starts crying 'cause I'm so fucking amazing. Much better than her living dead eunuch.

Oh, and then there's the one where we're patrolling and she gets all hot and bothered. I'll be all 'Want some help taking care of that itch, B?' and she'd be like 'Faith, you are so damn hot. It must have been all the peroxide from the hair dye that I drink that made me miss it before. That un-dead bastard could never satisfy me the way you can. Plus, he has way too much hair care products. There's something creepy about really old guys that stalk young girls. But, let's not talk about him anymore. Can you ever forgive me?' I'll say, 'Sure, baby. It's all good,' just before shoving her up against a crypt. Then she's naked, just like she should be. I'm not sure where the clothes go, but...

"Slayer."

JW – Somewhere I Belong

Aw, fuck. I was just getting to the good bit.

I swing up and off the tombstone, casually, landing a few feet away from... one vampire? Are these guys even trying anymore? He's all scrawny, too.

"Dude, I was in the middle of something very important." I stalk closer, circling him. "You better have a pretty damn good reason for interrupting my internal musings."

Internal musings?

What the fuck?

"You're the second one," he smirks, tilting his head to the side. "Thought you'd be less hot."

"Well, I'm glad somebody appreciates... Second one?"

"Yeah, second. As in less-than-first." He walks closer to me, chuckling. Not the best idea a vamp ever had.

"Oh, you are so fucking dead." I tighten my grip on the stake.

"Somebody has a complex." He pretends to look concerned. "The better and first slayer getting you down?"

"Actually, yes. Not that it's any of your business." There's less than a foot between us now. He relaxes his stance a bit, folding his arms.

"Really?" He tilts his head to the side.

"Uh, yeah." I shrug.

"Chicks, huh?" He shakes his head, looking for me to agree with him. I don't answer. This is the first bit of action that I've had all night and this guy wants to talk? "My girlfriend was a real bitch. Hope she has nightmares for the rest of her life about some of the things she said to me before I died. Not that she'll live long, me being a vampire now and all."

What the hell is this guy on?

"Words can hurt like a fist," I agree, clutching my chest, melodramatically. "And if it were up to me I'd say 'go for it'. There's this whole responsible thing I'm trying, though. I kinda gotta kill ya now. Plus there was that 'second slayer' crack. Why is it that the thought of you as a pile of dust fills me with such warmth?"

"No, I get it," he shrugs. "I'll be draining your blood in a few seconds, anyway."

"You know, you all say that. So, how come I'm always the one left standing at the end?"

Why am I still talking to this clown?

"'Cause it'd be a damn shame to kill someone as fine as you." He looks me up and down slowly.

"Contrary to popular belief not all Slayers run around sleeping with random vampires."

"Why not?" He looks at me expectantly with a small smirk.

JW – Somewhere I Belong

Well, I did get myself all worked up a few moments ago...

Nah, that's wicked gross.

"A number of reasons. First and foremost being that you're dead. Big turn off... Unless you're short and blonde and like non-existent sex. Second, I'm way outta your league. You're all... geeky."

"Can't blame a guy for trying," he shrugs.

"Well, I am pretty hot," I agree.

"So, tell me about this other slayer of yours." He takes a few steps back, shifting back to his human face. I think it looked better the other way.

"Why?"

"Cause after I kill you, I'm gonna want to meet her."

Instead of answering I deliver a hard kick directly to his face. He staggers back holding his nose.

"Strikes a nerve, huh?" He looks back up with a smirk, wiping at his face with the back of his hand. "Tell ya what, you don't have to talk, but just give me a few moments to rest. Climbing outta that grave was a bitch. Gotta get in the zone, y'know?" He shakes his hands out in front of his body, jumping up and down a few times.

"And I'm doing favors for vampires, why?" I fold my arms, raising an eyebrow.

"Because you're a nice person?"

"Not likely," I snort. "Try again."

"Because I can help get the Slayer for you?"

"What?" My arms fall to my sides, loosely clutching the stake.

"That's what you want, isn't it? The other Slayer? I can help."

"How?"

"I got my ways. Interested?"

Chapter Seven

Buffy's P.O.V

Willow keeps sneaking glances at me. It's starting to become really annoying. The ideas that girl gets in her head sometimes. I glare at her for a moment before turning to Angel and pulling him forcefully to his feet.

"We're dancing," I announce, silently daring him to argue. He stares at me for a moment, weighing his chances of escape. Whatever he sees convinces him that this is one of those times where he better humor me or else. I start pulling him toward the dance floor.

"Are you sure it's not that time of month?" Xander whispers quietly to Willow.

JW – Somewhere I Belong

"Maybe we should ask Faith," she says loudly, just for me.

Okay! That's it!

"I'm going home." I drop Angel's hand, walking toward the exit.

"Buffy?"

Oh, right... my boyfriend.

"Sorry." I turn back around to hug him quickly. "Annoying, obsessive friends are getting on my nerves."

"I'll walk you." He seems more than relieved to get out of the whole dancing situation.

"No, I'm good. Fresh air... with the freshness. Does a body good." I lean up to kiss his cheek. "I'll come by and see you later, okay?"

"Yeah, sure."

I'll go and see if Faith needs any help. Faith doesn't bug me about Faith stuff.

Faith's P.O.V

"Dude, you're like six years old. How can you possibly help me?"

"For the record, I'm twenty," he says, obviously offended.

"What record? The loser-geeks-of-eternal-virginity record? Not a member myself, but whatever floats your boat."

"I've had sex! Lots of sex! Lots and lots."

"Yeah, you're a stud," I smirk. "But, at least now you have a legitimate reason for not impregnating the female community."

This is almost as fun as teasing Buffy. Almost.

"I don't think I like you anymore," he scowls.

I respond with a swift punch to the face.

He actually growls at me. I think it was supposed to intimidate. Instead I start laughing. Here's this skinny, geek kid with wicked bad acne, growling like a loser. "It's not funny!"

Like hell it isn't.

"Hey, I know a cute little red-head who would be just perfect for you. Dungeon-master-boy and In-desperate-need-of-a-personality-girl. Has a nice ring to it, don't you think?"

"It's Bobby," he says, still glaring at me.

Bobby the Vampire?

JW – Somewhere I Belong

There's just no standards anymore.

Okay, time to finish this up.

"Bobby, right. That was rude of me. You're way too good for Rosenberg, anyway. It's not your fault that you're part of the zero-sperm-count-club. You actually seem like an alright guy, so here's what I'm gonna do..." I pause to make sure he's listening. He nods for me to continue. "In about ten seconds I'm going to hold my stake out and you're going to run into it as fast as you can."

"Is that right?" he says with a mischievous glint in his eyes. "Or the alternative, which is I share you with my..."

He stops speaking.

Mostly because my stake is buried in the chest of the vampire that was sneaking up behind me. I never turned around or took my eyes off Billy the entire time.

Second Slayer, my ass.

I fucking rule!

I pull the stake back, smirking. "You were saying?"

He stares at me for a few moments.

Then he turns around and runs away.

"Hey!"

Not in the mood for this shit.

For a little guy he runs pretty fast. He darts in and out of the gravestones with me chasing him. I feel like I'm in one of those Three Stooges sketches. It takes me all of thirty seconds to catch up to him... And it only takes that long because there was a definite few seconds of stunned non-movement after that courageous exit. All the pimp daddy talk and none of the... well, anything. I use one headstone for leverage, jumping off it and knocking us both to the ground.

"Fuck, Bobby! You got me all dirty." I haul him to his feet.

"I'm sorry." He covers his face with his arms. That wasn't where I was planning on sticking my stake into him. It's not like I'm gonna mess up his delicate facial features or anything.

"Yeah, well, 'sorry' doesn't excuse the fact that you're a loser."

He tries to regain some semblance of dignity by struggling weakly, but I hold tight to his collar.

Not so tough now, are ya?

I'm going to need at least two showers after this shit.

"And you made me run. I was being non-active for a reason, Bobby. What do you have to say for yourself?"

"I'm sorry!" He keeps trying to get out of my grasp.

JW – Somewhere I Belong

"It'll have to do, I guess," I sigh. He stops moving, looking surprised, but then smiles widely. See, I can be a nice guy when I want. "Oh, and one more thing?"

"What?" He looks at me warily.

"I'm thinking that I'm not going to take you up on your offer." I slam the stake into his chest.

Probably should have just skipped straight to the big finish. Funny while it lasted though.

If Buffy was gettable don't you think I would have gotten her by now?

Damn newbies and their plans of world domination. Get the slayer, kill the slayer. I'll hand you the slayer on a silver platter even though I can't tell my fangs from my ass.

Moron.

And what would he possibly have to gain by handing one slayer over to another slayer? Do they even think these things through anymore?

One lousy vampire and I didn't even work up a sweat. No more nights off for B. Doing what she says without a second thought. What's that about? It's all about Faith now. I do what I want and I go where I want. I patrol when I want and I get laid when I want...

And when I want is now.

DAMN IT!

Out of nowhere this fucker tackles me to the ground. Where's all the amazing slayer senses when you need them? Probably doesn't help when you're thinking about getting some. Kinda lowers concentration levels.

I reach behind me, pulling... him... her... it off, and scramble on top, shoving them face first into the ground. Definitely a her. I place one hand on the back of her head, keeping her there, as I straddle her waist from behind.

She kinda looks like...

Oh, this is too funny.

I lean down to whisper in her ear. "Scream for me."

"Faith! It's me, Buffy!" she mumbles into the grass, struggling underneath me. Just like I always wanted her to.

"I know." She immediately stops all movement. I stay there for a second before climbing off and dusting myself off. She rolls onto her back, breathing heavily.

"Well, that was... interesting." She finally looks up at me.

"What were you doing?" I ask, amused.

"Thought it would be funny," she shrugs, sitting up.

"Having fun?"

JW – Somewhere I Belong

"Not so much. Dirt in the mouth is never a good time." She wipes at her lips with the back of hand. I am so tempted to go over there and lick it off, dirt and all.

"As long as you got it all out of your system," I murmur, still watching her pay special attention to her mouth.

"Really did." She smiles up at me. "Note to self - don't ever do that again."

"Thought you were having a little vamp lovin' time." I sit on the ground next to her. "Checking up on me?"

"Actually," she pauses for a second. "I was going to ask you something, but I just realized how completely stupid it sounded."

"And that's unusual, how?" I chuckle.

I wait for her to keep going. We stare at each other for a few seconds until she catches on. "Oh, I'm not asking the question if that's what you're thinking."

"Okay," I shrug, standing up again. "I was just going home, anyway. So, I guess I'll see you around."

Replace 'home' with 'to get some' and you're all set.

"Faith, wait..." I look down at her. She has dirt on her face and I messed up her hair big time... You've gotta be pretty screwed up when you think that makes someone look even better than before. It's not right for someone to be so perfect. "Nothing."

"B, if it's that important just spit it out already."

"Um, no. It's nothing. Stupid." She shakes her head.

"Okay." I'm not gonna push. She'll tell me if she wants to. "You coming?"

"Sure." I pull her to her feet and we start walking. She's quiet tonight, just staring straight ahead as she walks. I glance over at her a couple of times, but she's lost in whatever little world she likes to go to. I have my own world like that. Much better than this one. So close and yet so far. Longing and burning and a whole bunch of other stuff... Maybe I should buy a thesaurus.

This silence is driving me crazy... A quiet Buffy makes me kind of nervous... and I'm this close to acting out on my cemetery fantasy.

"Should have given you a matching bruise to go with my own. We could be bruise buddies."

What? Is it wrong to like the sound of your own voice?

"Don't be such a baby, Faith. It's already healed. There's nothing there anymore," she says, not looking over at me. There's a slight smile on her face though.

"Really? Damn, I didn't even get to cash in on it. You damage my face and what do I get? A lousy apology."

"Yes, but it was heartfelt." I love making her smile. I can usually do it pretty easily. I can also make her blush, frown and get mad with ease. What can I say? It's a talent.

"Would have preferred money."

"You want me to pay for accidentally hitting you?" She stops walking, finally looking at me.

"No, I want you to pay me for all the hot, sweaty action that I missed out on," I grin.

"You had it for less than twenty-four hours!" She shakes her head, smiling.

"What a waste of a day," I sigh, wistfully.

"Also, you were with me last night, so big 'no' on the action side of things." Wow, I didn't even mean to make her blush that time. She starts walking again, this time staring at her feet. I jump in front of her, walking backwards.

"See? I knew it! You completely would have ravished my body if you didn't screw up my face."

Okay, that time I did mean to make her blush.

And she does.

"First of all, there was a tiny bruise for about half a day. Second, again the word 'no' comes to mind."

"Oh, so you wanted me anyway? That's kinda sweet, B. I always knew you weren't the superficial type."

"Uh, no... I meant... never mind."

"Well, since I'm all sexy again you wanna go somewhere and make out?"

"What? NO!"

"You're so easy, B," I chuckle.

Not as easy as I'd like though.

"Ha! Yeah, you got me. I have to go now."

"Okay," I say to her already retreating back.

Was it something I said?

Chapter Eight

Buffy's P.O.V

"Buffy, I want you," she whispers into my neck, holding me tight around the waist.

"What are you doing?" I try to push her back, but she hangs on tight.

"B, I want you so bad," she murmurs, inhaling deeply from my neck. I can feel her lips moving against my skin as she speaks; the heat of her breath sending shivers down my spine.

Oh, God.

JW – Somewhere I Belong

I stop breathing for a second.

"Faith... Faith, no," I barely whisper. She ignores me, moving up a bit to smell my hair. It would be kinda creepy if it wasn't so damn sexy. Wait, what am I saying? "Faith, stop it."

Her hands slip under my shirt from behind. I can feel the warmth of her palms against my back as she pulls me closer.

Or don't stop it... Whatever works for you.

"Buffy, can you feel it?" And now her hands are tracing light patterns on my skin. I close my eyes, resting my forehead against her shoulder.

Can you feel it? Can you... One hand moves out from underneath my shirt to play with waistband at the front of my pants. I feel the last of my defiance slowly slipping away into oblivion.

"Faith." God, did that sound like begging? That sounded like begging. She smiles against the top of my head.

"Tell me you want me." Her voice comes out deep, low and husky. I feel it in every pore in my body. "Tell me."

Am I on fire? No? Okay, just checking. She's so warm... I can feel her everywhere.

"Faith," I moan, my breath coming out in quick gasps. I feel like I'm going to explode if she's not touching me soon.

"Say it."

"I... I want you." I lift my head up and reach an arm out. But she pulls back slightly, shaking her head.

"Tell me you need me."

"Shut up, Faith," I crush my lips against hers.

Sparkage! And softness.

And suddenly her hands are everywhere... but it's not enough. She's touching, caressing, feeling every part of me, and I want to give in. Only I'm not sure how. I need more.

Desperate, clawing, sinking. Trying to find... something.

I've never felt so alive as I do in this moment. I only know one thing - and it's her.

She slams me against the wall. Was there a wall there a second ago? Her face hovering so close, yet not moving. Just... looking, a hand on either side of my head. I need those hands on me, in me.

It's not enough.

I'm close to crying now, and she smiles. Victorious. I guess it's a game, but I no longer care.

I need this.

JW – Somewhere I Belong

My hand moves of its own accord. Reaching up to cup her face. I gasp when she moves suddenly, gripping my wrist tightly. Closing my eyes, I let go. I let myself feel... and it's not wrong.

I'm ready.

She moves her mouth down to my ear. Her breath against my skin tickles. In an entirely too pleasant way. It's too much - all of it. I can't... I just need...

"Faith, please," I murmur desperately.

She runs a hand down my chest and over my stomach. I arch up into it, needing more than that. She presses me harder into the wall and I cry out, my head falling back and hitting something solid. I don't feel pain though; only the incredible heat that's coursing through my entire body.

Then it stops.

And I'm lost and scared and alone. I slowly open my eyes, but she's still there. Still watching. Still breathing heavily into my ear.

It makes me crazy.

"Faith?" I try to pull her closer, but she draws back, shaking her head.

"You're going to be late."

"What?"

"Buffy, you're going to be late."

"No, don't stop." I reach out again.

"Buffy?" She shakes me.

I open my eyes.

To see my mother's face leaning over me.

"Gah!" I jump back, hitting my head firmly against the bedpost. "What the...? And ow!"

"Bad dream?" she asks sympathetically.

Bad dream? Dream? Did I...

Oh God, no.

"Are you okay, honey?" I can almost feel the blood draining from my face. "Buffy?"

"Uh, yeah. Fine, mom." I sit up a little bit. "Bad dream, yeah."

Bad, bad dream.

"Okay, well, hurry up if you want me to drive you. I have to be at the gallery early this morning and you don't want to be late either."

JW – Somewhere I Belong

"Yeah," I mumble absently as she leaves the room.

Okay, deep breaths. Just a dream. Dreams don't mean anything, right? Oh, God! I had a dream about Faith. A dream about Faith and... doing stuff. A dream about Faith and doing stuff and cheesy romance novel dialouge.

But it felt...

And I wanted...

No. No, no, no.

Just calm down and count to te-

Oh, screw this!

This is all Willow's fault. I'm going to kill her!

"Thanks mom." I jump out of the car.

"I might be a bit late tonight, so come straight home from school to watch Dawn."

"What? Can't we just dump her somewhere? The world will a lot better off. I know a nice vampire nest that would just love some fresh new blood." I smile innocently at the brat in the back seat and she sticks her tongue out at me.

"No. No feeding your sister to vampires and no fighting." Mom checks the rear vision mirror before she drives off. "I love you."

"Would have appreciated that love a lot more if you didn't ruin my life with unwanted siblings." I mutter to myself as I jog up the stairs to the school.

"A family isn't such a bad thing to have." A sudden voice startles me and I trip on the last stair, falling directly onto the ground. I manage to take the brunt of the fall with my hands and look around to see just how many people witnessed that particular display. Faith's sitting on the edge of the stairs watching me. There's a slight smile on her face and a cigarette in her hand. She flicks it away as she walks over.

"Well, that's just great. This is the best day ever." I bang my head against the ground.

Ow, that hurts.

"Are you okay?" Faith comes to my aid, trying to keep the laughter out of her voice.

"Faith, don't you knock?" I ask angrily, pushing myself up from the floor and dusting myself off. I'm more embarrassed than anything else and it takes me a moment to realize just how much sense that sentence actually made. I'm irrationally angry and she hasn't even done anything yet. But then I remember the dream that started off this oh so wonderful day, I feel myself blush.

"Not usually when I'm outside..." She looks at me confused. "And on public property."

JW – Somewhere I Belong

"Oh, yeah, sorry." I walk up the last few steps carefully, making sure that I avoid the floor this time around. I also avoid any type of eye contact. "Uh, what were you doing here again?"

"I'm not allowed to go to school anymore?" Faith follows me toward the building.

"Not when you don't actually go here, no." Would it be rude of me to just run away, like, really quickly?

"I was thinking of signing up," she says casually. All discomfort due to weird dreams and embarrassment over falling on my ass disappear.

I stop walking. "That's great! Really?"

"No," she admits sheepishly.

"I see..." There's a long pause in which neither of us make a move. Her eyes are so pretty, I don't think I ever noticed before. Except I must have because they have exactly the same intensity as when she was pushing me up against the wa... uh, in the non-real, I-must-have-accidentally-inhaled-some-weed dream I had. There you are awkwardness! For a minute there I thought you abandoned me. "So, I'm going to say something really interesting right about now..."

Except I don't, and we continue to stand there.

"Why is everything weird?" she asks with her usual Cordelia-esque type tact. It's such an innocent question too. Just general curiosity, really. Only it's a question that I don't have an answer to.

"I don't know."

"Did I do something to make you mad? 'Cause I wasn't even trying this time, I swear," Faith grins.

"Uh... no. It's not you, it's me."

"Are you breaking up with me?" Ever the smart-ass, she places her hand over her heart feigning shock.

"You're funny."

"I try," she shrugs.

Think of something to say, Buffy.

"So..."

Something better would be nice.

"So..." she agrees, acknowledging that we have absolutely nothing to say to each other. First. Time. Ever.

Oh, thank God.

"Look, it's Willow and Xander! My friends Willow and Xander are here." My friends, my rescuers, my salvation. I will bear their children and build alters for sacrificing lambs to them for getting me out of this extremely uncomfortable situation. I can almost forgive Willow for planting stupid ideas in my head. Almost.

JW – Somewhere I Belong

"Willow and Xander, yay," Faith says flatly, but follows a short distance behind anyway.

"Hey guys!" I say happily.

"Red," Faith nods, not quite as enthusiastic as I am. "Loser boy."

"I resent that!" Xander folds his arms across his chest. "And also, you're not getting the present I got for you."

"Present?" She immediately perks up. "I want a present."

"Take back that extremely rude remark, that was completely uncalled for, and then we'll talk business," he smirks. I close my eyes; he probably shouldn't have said that. Yup, there it is. Xander somehow finds himself pressed face first against a locker, his arm twisted behind his back. It looks painful, but he's probably more surprised than anything else.

"Don't make me hurt you, Xander."

"There's gotta be a law against using slayer strength on innocent people," he mumbles. His face is all smooshed up. Faith presses him just a little bit harder into the locker. I remember how that feels... I mean, this has gone on long enough. There's a small crowd gathering and most of the guys look like they wish their name was Alexander Harris.

"Faith, that's enough."

She looks over at me, trying to decide whether to listen or not. Finally, she lets go and he rubs his arm.

"Ow!"

"Hey, what are you looking at?" I glare at a couple of the gawking guys. They quickly scurry off until it's only the four of us again.

"And violence is always a good incentive," Xander concedes, still rubbing his arm.

"Faith, you could have hurt him," I turn to her angrily.

"I didn't." She shrugs, not really caring. "We were just playin' around."

"Buffy, calm down. She didn't hurt me," he snorts "Like she could." Then he darts out of the way before she can grab him again. They run off together, looking just like two little kids without a care in the world.

He pulls something out of his back pocket. I can't see what it is because they're already half-way down the hall, talking like best buds, while I stare after them in amazement. At some point Faith slaps Xander on the back, laughing. He cringes under the force that is unknowingly placed behind it, but immediately straightens up.

They disappear around the corner.

Willow chose to remain quiet throughout the whole exchange, but I turn to her now to see if she's as confused as I am.

"No idea," she shrugs before I can voice my confusion.

JW – Somewhere I Belong

Wordlessly, I follow my strange friends down the hallway with Willow just as lost as I am.

Chapter Nine

BUFFY'S P.O.V

"What did he give her?" I ask curiously.

"Comic books," Willow replies with a shrug. "Apparently Faith likes the pretty pictures."

I stare ahead thoughtfully, even though I can no longer see them.

I knew that Faith liked comic books, too. So what? Why is Xander giving Faith things? His girlfriend would not be too happy by these revelations.

"Why?" I fold my arms across my chest. Willow watches me with great curiosity, and I quickly unfold them from what could potentially be seen as a defensive position. They come to rest by my sides.

"Buffy, are you jealous?" Willow asks with a raised eyebrow.

"No! I don't even like comics." I keep my face forward and walk a bit faster because I know exactly what she meant. And I can only pray that we're not going down this road again.

"You know what I mean." I knew she was gonna say that. "'Cause you're so used to the undivided attention. It's gone for, like, two seconds and now you're all grumpy Buffy."

"I'm not grumpy... and I don't know what you're even talking about."

"Sure ya do." She nods her head knowingly. Then she starts making crazy gestures with her hands. I don't do that when I talk! "'Faith, look at me! Pay attention to me. Love me, love me! No, don't run off with Xander 'cause I'm right here!'"

"This whole slayer fixation really isn't funny anymore." I stop walking and rub at my forehead. Willow Rosenberg: Bringer of headaches, pain and bad dreams that... uh... make me need cold showers afterward. "And I don't need everyone to always be paying attention to me."

"Didn't say everyone." She shrugs.

Stay calm. Count to ten. Stop, drop and roll... or something.

I take a deep breath. "Look, Willow-

"Aw, don't get mad, Buffy. I was teasing you. 'Cause it was fun... with the teasing. But I'm done now, really. All finished. No more words will be passing my mouth on the subject. No sir." She shakes her head vigorously.

"Finished?" I ask suspiciously.

"All finished, done, stopping, no more. Quiet Willow, that's me." She tilts her head to the side. "Do you think Faith likes it on top?"

Ugh! When did Willow develop an obsessive type personality? I stare at her for a moment; she's standing there, all innocence, but I know the truth. This is usually the part where I storm off.

JW – Somewhere I Belong

So I do.

"Hey, what about class?" she calls out after me.

She is joking, right? "Goodbye, Willow."

"Buffy, come on! It was a joke. Funny with the ha-ha's. Double your daily intake of ha's. You do remember jokes, don't you?"

Apparently not.

Slowly, I walk into the library. Faith and Xander are already huddled in the corner, discussing their picture books. I honestly don't see what the big deal is. Cartoons of guys in spandex flipping all over the place? Strange thing to get all excited about. I walk further into the room, but neither of them look up. So I wait...

And wait...

Then I get mad.

Of course no one notices my presence! I mean, it's not like I've saved the world time and time again or anything. It's not like I've saved both of their asses at one point or another. Well, maybe kicked Faith's a little more than saved. Still... I'm not asking for a ticker tape parade here, but a little "Hey, Buffy, how's it going? Pull up a chair and enjoy our Spandex Men," wouldn't go astray. It's only polite. It's etiquette! Forget about the fact that less than five minutes ago I was looking to ditch Faith. My sudden anger knows no logic. They are rude, rude people.

I lift the bag that I'm holding a little higher up, and drop it onto the floor. It makes a loud thumping sound as it hits the ground. Xander turns around, but Faith doesn't move. I guess she already knew that I was there. That makes me even madder for some reason.

"Hey B," she says without looking up. "Thought you had a class now."

Oh no! No, she doesn't get to do that! This is my library! I mean, Giles' library... This is the school people's library that I use for my slayer stuff, and I'm not leaving this room!

Unless I get tired of being in here, then I'll probably go. But until then, I'm staying right here.

"So what? So does Xander." I point out.

"Who needs an education?" He shrugs. "I've got my health."

"You said it, buddy," Faith chuckles.

This tag-team, comic-loving, gang-up-against Buffy crap is really starting to pis-

"Ah, Buffy, there you are." Giles walks in from the office. He stops walking suddenly and frowns. "Don't you have a class now?"

Can't. Hit. Giles.

He's all old and stuff.

JW – Somewhere I Belong

Faith's not though. I walk over and slap the back of her head so that she stops laughing.

"Hey!"

"Yes, yes, we've all felt like doing that at one time or another, but this is important, Buffy." Giles really looks serious, and even Faith stops preparing her attack to hear what he has to say. "Listen, there are-

"Demons." Wesley interrupts, entering the room with his usual drama-queen flair. Giles rolls his eyes, but sits down to let Wes have his fifteen minutes of people actually paying attention to him.

"Specifically of the Krakslar variety; they kill for the sake of killing and anything with a heart beat will do. Luring their victims to the nest by any means necessary, their main habitat would be-

"Somewhere really gross, and they enjoy bowling, but it's just so hard to find the right shoe size nowadays," Faith cuts in. "Get to the part where I care."

"Crawford Street, close to the mansion. Three of them," Giles says.

"Thank you, Giles." I look at Wesley. "See what he did there? Sometimes less is more, Wes."

"Try it sometime, ya big pansy." Faith smiles at me, but I'm still mad at her. Not really sure why... Oh yeah, the... uh...

She...

She's just so damn annoying.

"Yes, well," Wesley continues to pretend that we aren't already finished with this conversation. "You shall go tonight and -"

"Giles?" I give him a look. Sometimes he can get Wes to shut up. Not always, but I like to be optimistic about these types of things.

"Tonight would be best," Giles concedes.

"Fine," I sigh. "I'll go tonight and I'll..."

"*We'll* go tonight." Faith frowns.

"I got it. You went yesterday." I pick up my bag from the ground.

"Uh, yeah." She nods once, slowly. "And I met two lousy vamps. Had to play with 'em some to get any type of fun outta the whole sitch."

"Buffy?" Giles waits for me to turn back to him. "All the texts that we have say that these demons are impossible to kill. I don't want the two of you trying to kill them until we know more. Just observe, and if it looks like you're in the slightest bit danger - run. But Faith goes, too."

"Yes." Wesley nods with all of his 'worldy experience'. "Do not, I repeat do not, try to engage-"

Faith rolls her eyes. "We already said we'd go, so keep your pants on, Wes."

"You know, a modicum of respect wouldn't go astray." He pulls himself up to his full height, all self-importance.

JW – Somewhere I Belong

"Respect this." Faith flips him off with an innocent smile.

"I am your watcher, and like me or not, you will do as I say." Gee, thanks Faith. It's the speech again. She smirks, but I have to actually listen to this crap when he gets into these pompous moods. Most of the time it's her fault, too. "You will go out tonight and slay these three demons. When you are done, you will report back to me for a full outline of the evening's events. Tomorrow morning - we begin a new training regime. You will be here promptly at six am; tardiness is unacceptable and it is compulsory. Any questions? Good." He spins on his heels and walks out of the library.

Faith raises an eyebrow at me and I shrug.

"That guy needs a girlfriend," Xander turns back around in his chair. "Can't have mine though. Don't think I didn't see him staring at her. He can just keep his peeping peepers to himself."

"Uh-huh." I don't think anyone but Xander actually wants Cordelia. Plus, I always thought that Wesley was kinda gay. I start walking toward the doors. "Coming?"

"Nah." He holds up one of his stupid comic thingies. "Gonna stay and enjoy super hero goodness."

Whatever.

He better not be talking about Faith though.

Just... because.

I look at her one last time before walking out of the room. I can feel her eyes on me all the way to the door. Guess I got tired of being in there after all.

I'm halfway down the hall when it happens. I can't say that I wasn't expecting it.

"Hey, B! Wait up."

I can't help but smiling a little before turning around. Willow's wrong, though. I don't need everyone to always be paying attention to me. Just as long as they're not focusing on anyone else.

"Faith, I really gotta..." get to a class that I missed half of anyway.

"Yeah, I know." She catches up to me, but then just stands there. "So... tonight, huh?"

"If you want." I shrug. "Don't bother if it's going to cut into your sex life or something."

"Oh, yeah." She grins and leans against the wall. "Since when were you interested in my sex life?"

Since last night.

"Since you never shut up about it. Look, I have to go," and figure out something to do until the next class starts... and just not be here. "If you want you can come over at seven. Mom wanted to know why you weren't at dinner last night, anyway."

There. That was a nice, normal addition to the conversation.

"Hey, I'm not there that often. But sounds good; I'll even wear my best dress." I roll my eyes at her. "And maybe we could do something after?" she asks casually.

JW – Somewhere I Belong

After? After what? After Slaying? When it's all late at night, and there's beds?

"No, I don't think... and Wes wanted us to do that thing." That sounded desperate even to my ears.

"You're not gonna actually listen to the guy, are you?" she asks incredulously. "I thought that we talked about this."

I wasn't planning on listening, but now she's left me no choice. "We should humor him, you know... He's got low self-esteem, and... there's other reasons that I can't think of right now."

"But they'll be dead in, like, two seconds. Chosen two, packin' heat and unstoppable." She's a moment away from doing that grunting, hip-thrust thing that makes me... uncomfortable.

I shake my head. "Faith, these guys sound bad. Even Giles twitched. I'm pretty sure that I saw a twitch there somewhere. We have to be completely focused when we do this and if that means listening to Wesley," I trail off. Mostly because I can't believe half of the crap that comes out of my mouth sometimes.

"Yeah, I get it. They're bad, whatever. I know I was scared," she says sarcastically.

"Yeah," I sigh. Why does she always have to be so difficult?

We need to take this seriously.

Impossible to kill? How the hell are we going to manage that?

FAITH'S P.O.V

"One, two, three dead demons." Hell yeah! I flop down on the ground next to the dead... dude. "And you said I should get an education."

"At least you've upgraded to pre-school level." She kneels down next to me, breathing heavily. "Okay, so we check in with Wes and-

"Buffy, don't make me say it." I know exactly what she's feeling. A little bit tired, a little bit turned on - One hundred percent fired up and ready to do some damage. Self-control? Can't ever say that Buffy Summers doesn't possess it, and I should know. "We did it! We won! We kicked some major ass and we're now surrounded by carcasses. Rejoice and be merry." She takes a second to look at the bodies. "You've got all this extra energy just flowin' and you wanna waste it on tea and crumpets? I don't get you."

"B, you're so uptight and boring." She mimics me. "Blah, blah, blah. Doing the right thing is bad. Yadda, yadda, yadda."

"B, come on." She is in so much denial right now, I can't even believe it. When everything feels this good, you don't start thinking about responsibility. That's stupid. "The guy bores you as much as he does me."

"True." She finally smiles.

"They also said that we shouldn't do anything without their 'permission'. So..." I prompt.

"So... we don't go?" She tilts her head to the side slightly.

Yeah, I can corrupt with the best of them.

"And instead we..." I motion for her to finish the rest of that sentence.

"Get coffee?" she asks.

What the hell?

"Coffee? Oh, fine." The entire world at our feet and she wants a caffeine fix. There's something wrong with this girl. Sucks that I don't really care. "Coffee. Babysteps, B, but you're on your way."

"And you're on your way to counting to five," she retorts, standing up and pulling me to my feet.

"Well, look at that. We both made progress."

Chapter Ten

FAITH'S P.O.V

"Where'd you go running off to last night?" I ask. Mainly because it's been bugging me all day. I watch her pour more sugar into whatever cute little foamy crap she decided on this time.

"What?"

"You. Legs. Big with the running."

Probably to that jerk off, Angel. Ah, the wonders of the modern stake. What problems can't it fix?

"Thought I heard my mom calling me." She shrugs.

"Oh, your mom!" I roll my eyes. "From all the way across town, right. And here I thought I had pretty good hearing. Turns out my ears are broken 'cause they don't work as good as yours."

"My old friend, sarcasm. Missed you, love you, can't get enough of you." She smiles sweetly.

"No, for real, where'd you go?"

"Home."

Fine. If she doesn't want to say...

"Whatever." I lean back in my chair and look up at the ceiling. Someone should do something about that huge black spot. What the hell is that, anyway?

"Faith." She rests her hand on top of mine. It's warm from the coffee she was holding a second ago. "I went home."

I look down at our hands. After a moment she does too. Then...

Well, then she pretty much jerks her hand back so fast that she goes flying backwards. Right along with the chair she was sitting in.

The man at the table next to us starts clapping real loudly.

JW – Somewhere I Belong

I jump out of my seat and kneel down next to her. Too bad she's wearing pants 'cause she's in a pretty cool position right now. "God, Buffy. Are you okay?"

"Well, that was embarrassing." She covers her face with her arm. "How many times have I ended up on my ass in front of you today?"

"Twice, but the night's still young." I grin.

"Help now, make fun later." She holds out her arm.

I pull her to her feet. "Damn, B. That was wicked. You gotta show me how you got so much distance."

She gives me a fake smile. The kind that says, "One more joke and no sex for you tonight." You know, THAT kind of smile. I wasn't getting sex either way, so I open my mouth to make fun of her again, but she's not even looking at me anymore.

"You can stop clapping now," she says to the guy that hasn't stopped laughing yet. His only response is to laugh harder. Well, at least he stopped clapping. Buffy doesn't see the bright side to all of this, though, because she takes a step forward, looking severely pissed.

I quickly grab her arm. "Woah, what're you doing?"

"Let me go, Faith," she says calmly.

"No, you let me choose, and you could've beaten up all the morons that you wanted. You choose and we're in a coffee type place." She jerks her arm away from me.

"Listen to your girlfriend, sweet cheeks." The guy chuckles.

Ooh, I like this guy.

"Oh, that is it!" B starts pushing up the sleeves of her jacket. Somebody has seen one too many bar fight movies and it isn't me. "You're on my black list, pal!" She shoves her finger in his face, slamming her other hand onto the table.

Oh, brother.

"What is wrong with you today?" I grab her arm tightly and pull it behind her back, dragging her toward the exit. She kicks me in the knee, but I ignore it. Feisty, I'll give her that. "You really wanna start a fight with that loser?"

"I'll kick his ass, and then I'm starting on yours."

Did she just threaten me?

I pull some money out of my pocket, which is not as easy as it sounds with her struggling like that, and throw it onto the table. The guy behind the counter raises an eyebrow at me. Grinning, I make a drinking motion with my free hand. He shakes his head sadly.

"Hey, I saw that! I'm not drunk. Let me go, Faith!" She kicks me in the leg again. This time, it really fucking hurts.

JW – Somewhere I Belong

I fight back the urge to throw her on the ground and kick the shit out of her. Then jump on her for good measure. And then kick her again. Then maybe have mind-blowing sex with her.

The second we're outside, she jerks her elbow directly into my ribs, and I let go. She's really pissed, and I'm not that far behind.

"Fuck!" I look down at my chest. Probably bleeding internally. "You wanna tell me what the hell that was all about!"

"I wasn't going to hurt him," she mutters, walking away.

"Buffy, come on." I start to follow. "Why'd you get so mad? Guy was a jerk. Man, if I had a dollar for every time I fell off a chair and someone laughed at me... I'd have no dollars." She gives me a look and I sigh. "I'm probably not helping. Come on, I'll walk you home."

I hope she appreciates my forgiving nature 'cause it'll never happen again.

"No." She shakes her head, folding her arms across her chest. "I'll walk YOU home."

I roll my eyes. Check me out, acting all responsible. Meanwhile Buffy's acting like... well, kinda like me, actually. If I was... you know, two years old.

"Fine. You walk me home."

She doesn't talk all the way back to the motel. I'm kind of happy about that 'cause my leg still hurts, and I still have the overwhelming urge to punch her in the face.

"You wanna come in or something?" I ask once we get to the door. I'm hoping that it's a 'no'. Ice pack and bed is sounding good right about now.

She looks like she wants to stay mad at me, but it's obvious when she decides that she's over it. "Nah. I have to be up early to meet Wesley at six."

"Tell me you're joking." I just don't have the energy to go through this again. It's hard work trying to influence people all the time.

"I'm joking." She grins. "He is not going to be a very happy little man."

"Good thing we don't care, right?"

"Right." She nods. "So... I guess I'll see you later. Sorry about the kicking you thing."

"That's okay. I'll beat you down later."

"Bye." She looks at me for a moment and then turns around and walks away. I watch her until she's gone before turning back to place the key into the lock.

I don't know how much more of this I can take.

So much for all of your 'planning'. You fucking loser.

My ribs hurt.

BUFFY'S P.O.V

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I don't know how much more of this I can take.

Plus, my arm hurts! That girl has one tight grip, I'll give her that.

Stupid man. Laugh at me, will you? I should go back there and kick his ass... hard. Like I don't have enough Faith problems as it is. She has to be there to witness me falling over... again.

And it's only been a day since I found... since Willow made up those lies...

Since Willow made up those lies that seem to be completely true.

What should I do?

I should just ask her... No, that's stupid:

"Hey, Faith. Do you like me?"

"Why, yes, Buffy. Yes I do. Let us go now and live in the jungle. There we can raise a family of monkey babies, and live in complete harmony. Wicked. Five by five. Wicked..."

No, wait. I already said that.

Anyway, I can't raise monkey babies! I have important world-saving stuff to do. I have to take care of Giles and put him in a retirement home when he gets too old, and doesn't know demony things anymore. I have to rid the planet of evil... And I still have to find a way to discreetly dispose of Dawn.

Dawn can raise the monkey babies. Not me. No way.

... Or what if Faith laughs at me.

That's worse.

No, Better! That's better. We can all sit around and laugh and laugh... and laugh. Laughter means it's not true, right? Laughter is good. Yay for laughter...

I don't want to be laughed at though.

I really should go back and ask her. Do it right now and get it over with. All I gotta do is turn around and go back there... and ask... and laugh. Right now.

Tomorrow.

I'll ask her tomorrow.

"Hey, guys." I take a seat next to Willow. "Whatcha got there?"

She quickly places the notebook she was writing in underneath the table. "What? Where? Nothing."

"Okay, secret gal. Don't hyperventilate."

"She won't tell me either, Buff," Xander says. "Maybe you should beat it out of her."

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"I'm just trying to make it through the day without seeing..."

"Where were you this morning?" Wesley demands.

"...Wesley. If I can do that, everything will just be peachy." I finish with a sigh.

And Faith. I could really do without seeing Faith. Tomorrow's here, and it sucks.

"No." Faith walks in through the library doors before I even have a chance to reply... or pretend to ignore. I think she's here more than I am. Or at least the same amount. She shoves her finger in his face until he takes a step backward. "I think the real question is: Where were you?"

Damn it! What's up with that?

If only I can get through the day without seeing a cute guy with lots and lots of money.

Nothing? Of course. The universe hates me. And after all I've done for you...

Ungrateful universe.

"Well... I was right here." Wesley looks over at Giles, who shrugs.

"Is that right?" She raises an eyebrow.

"Yes... What are you suggesting?"

He's all confused, the poor little guy. I almost feel sorry for him. Wish I had some popcorn.

"You tell me." She shrugs, all business.

"You... You're trying to confuse me and it won't work!"

"Hey, if you don't even know where you were, how're WE supposed to know where you were? You gotta think, Wes." She leans forward and taps on his forehead.

"I told you, I..." He looks at all of the serious faces staring back at him, and apparently decides that no help is forthcoming. "Excuse me."

He exits the library quickly, probably wondering what just happened. I look over at Faith, who winks at me.

"That was amazing." Xander says, with no small amount of awe. I glare at him.

"Thank you, thank you." Faith gives a little bow. "I have a talent, it is true."

Yeah, and it's called "How to dominate the male specimen in twelve easy steps."

"So, what did you think, B?" She jumps up to sit on the table in front of me.

"Could use a little work." I shrug. "End result was the same, so kudos."

"Awww, you always know just what to say." She grins. "By the way, I think you broke one of my ribs last night."

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I know that I didn't. Probably hurt a whole hell of a lot though. What? I have my bad days.

"Yeah, 'cause you're such a delicate, little flower."

"Exactly! You gotta be gentle with me, is all I'm sayin'." She leaps off the table. "I'm gonna get a drink. Anyone want?"

"While your generosity astounds me, you can't just wander around the..." And she's gone. "Hey!"

Can't she just listen to me for once?

"I should go too. I've gotta meet Cordy." Xander stands up. "Wish me luck, guys."

"You better run then." Willow chuckles, but doesn't look up from her 'secret' notebook that she started writing in again.

"See ya." I turn back to Willow once he's gone. She's just writing away. Not concerned about other peoples curiosity. Rude. "Come on, Will. What're you doing?"

"Nothing." I raise an eye brow. "...Something."

"Uh-huh. And...?"

She looks around the library, but Giles must have gone back to the office already. "Okay, I'll tell you." She pulls her chair closer to mine, and lowers her voice. "I'm making a list in an observational journal. Title still undecided. When it's finished, I'm gonna frame it, and smack you over the head with it."

Smack me in the head?

"What?"

"She winked at you. I wrote it down, see?" She holds the book out to me and I take it.

I need a translator around Willow lately.

What is she doing now?

I open the notebook up to the last page:

THURSDAY - 8:55am

THE SUBJECT...

"Subject?" I look at her and she nods for me to continue.

...USED WINKING IN A SUGGESTIVE MANNER. THIS DID NOT GO UNNOTICED BY THE RECIPIENT, BUT DID NOT APPEAR TO AROUSE ANY TYPE OF RESPONSE.

"Subject? Recipient?" I don't get it. "Who are you... Willow, you're not. Tell me that you're not."

"Okay." She nods. "I'm not making notes about you and Faith."

"You're studying me?!" Willow takes the notebook back. Good thing, too. It's a second away from being scrap paper.

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"No!" She shakes her head quickly. "No, of course not. I'm OBSERVING you."

"Oh, observing!" I slap myself on the forehead. "Well, that's much better then. Give me that." I snatch the book back and scan down the page. "'8:58am: Reference was made to broken ribs. This may or may not have come about due to violent sexual intercourse.' Willow!"

"What?" she asks innocently.

"No intercourse! No nothing! No broken ribs. Faith grabbed me and I..." I trail off when I see the look on her face at that little revelation.

"Can I have the book back, please?" She holds out her hand.

"No! You're gonna write about grabbing and sex stuff. It was innocent grabbing! She was... there was a man."

"A man, too? Oh, Buffy." Willow shakes her head sadly.

"No! Not like that! He was all old and gross."

She gives me a pitying look. "Do you wanna talk about it?"

I'm not explaining this very well.

"Talk about what?" Faith asks from behind me.

"Faith!" I toss the notebook back to Willow without thinking. "I... She was... It... Will?"

Oh God.

Somebody help me.

"Buffy, you don't have to do what she says, you know." Willow places her hand on my arm gently.

I know that! What does she think I am? Some kind of helpless non-slayer type person?

"Willow... You've got it all wrong. There wasn't... she didn't... We..."

I seem to have lost the ability to complete sentences.

"What's goin' on?" Faith asks carefully.

"Nothing," I say desperately. "Nothing is going on. Faith, tell her what we did last night."

"Oh! You mean when you attacked me? And there I was, being all reasonable..."

"I don't need the details, thank you." Willow starts packing away her things. "Buffy, call me later, 'kay? We'll talk."

Wouldn't she WANT details for her little examination of my life? Wait, what am I saying?

It only takes a few seconds and another angry glare at Faith before she's gone. Maybe I should go after her and set her straight. I mean, she thinks I'm some kind of sex-crazed, threesome-having, whip-wielding maniac.

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"What the hell?" Faith asks once Willow's gone... along with a certain notebook.

"She thinks we're..." having crazy, naked, slayer sex. "Nothing."

"She thinks that we're nothing? Damn." Faith turns back to look at the library doors. "I always knew that she felt that way about me, but you..."

"Am I speaking in another language?! Why can no one understand what I'm saying?" I wave my hand in front of her face. "Is it so hard? I can go somewhere that there's other people like me. Deeply misunderstood people! People that also don't have sex with old men or girls! Just. Like. Me."

"Well, that's too bad." She grins. "You'd be missing out."

"I'm sure I would." I shake my head with a reluctant smile. "You're headed straight for another broken rib. You do realize this, right?"

"If I can get you to see the advantages of sleeping with... old men, then I'm sure it would be worth it."

That was entirely not subtle. You should ask now, Buffy. Then you can laugh and joke, and laugh some more... Or maybe you'll be stuck with monkey babies for the rest of your life...

OR I could always kill two birds with the one stone...

If Willow wants something to put in her 'observational journal,' I'll give her something to put in there.

And it won't have anything to do with old men.

Chapter Eleven

FAITH'S P.O.V

"What're we doing?" I ask, throwing Mr Gordo up in the air and catching him again.

We've just been lying on her bed for the past hour, making small talk. Well, actually, I've been lying on her bed for the past hour making small talk. Buffy's been jumping up and down, running to the window, telling me to shut up... y'know... the usual stuff. But now I'm getting kind of bored.

"Waiting," Buffy says, standing and walking over to the window. Again.

"Waiting?"

"Yeah, be quiet, I'm trying to think."

Not sure what there is to think about, but it sounds boring too. "Okay, well, wake me up when it happens." I roll over on my side, and Buffy immediately jumps onto the bed.

I knew that would get her attention. She's so easy.

"No! Faith, you can't go to sleep." She shakes me. "You have to wait too."

"So let me get this straight. You want me to sit here... not talking... 'waiting' if you want to be specific, for fuck knows what, and just be happy about the whole thing?"

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"Yeah, pretty much." She nods.

"Care to enlighten me then?"

"No. Now shut up."

I slump back on the bed.

"I know a way to pass the time." I say after a few seconds of 'silence'. Not really silence 'cause I was humming at the time.

It annoys her; I know about these things.

"No, you keep your pants on, Faith." She walks back over to the window.

Well, I was planning on doing just that. But now that I think about it, that's a really good idea. Maybe one day when she's not expecting it.

"They are on, see?" I thrust my hips up in the air when she looks over. "That's not what I meant, anyway. I was thinking that we could play a game."

"No..." She pauses for a moment, still staring out of the window. "What kind of game?"

Hell yeah.

"Well-" Crap. What kind of game? I didn't really think this far ahead. "It's a wicked game, B. But you gotta be over here for it to work."

I don't understand why she listens to me. Even after all these months, she never REALLY learns her lesson. I mean, yeah okay, she's a little wary. But she's still doin' it. Crazy shit.

"Here?" She comes to a stop by the bed.

"A little to the left." I motion her with my hand.

"Now what?" she asks.

That's a pretty fucking good question 'cause I'm tapped.

"Now... I need your hand." Might as well run with it, right?

"What? What for?" She hides it behind her back. "I'm kind of using it right now. Check back later."

"Come on, B. You wanna play or not?"

"Right now, I'm thinking not." She says, doing it anyway.

Slowly, she reaches her arm out toward me, palm facing up. She leans back a bit.

Cringing already and I didn't even do anything yet.

I take her hand with a grin. Sitting up slightly, I stick my tongue out and lick her palm slowly and deliberately. Then I let go.

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Buffy stares down at her hand in shock. "I can't believe you just did that!"

Me either.

"Faith... I..." She continues staring at her outstretched palm. "That's disgusting. I can't even believe... There's something wrong with you, seriously."

Probably.

"Probably," I agree.

"Buffy?" Someone knocks quietly. I sigh when I realize who the owner of the voice is.

Buffy freezes, while I look over at the closed door.

She's still got her hand stretched out in front of her.

"Willow?" I turn back to B with a raised eyebrow. "You made me wait here for Willow? I was being all quiet and everything, too."

Buffy pauses for a moment and then looks down at her hand. When she finally looks back up at me again, there's a slight smile on her face.

She jumps onto my lap, making me grunt loudly. I think I just lost all of the air in my lungs. And if I didn't then, I do when she straddles my waist. "Just give me two seconds, Will." She calls out.

"Jesus, B. Lose some pou..." With a sly smile Buffy Summers pulls off her shirt, until all that's left is a black bra and a whole lotta skin. "...ounds." I finish weakly, staring at her chest. Her chest which is inches from my face. Her chest which is inches from my face and covered only by a flimsy piece of material. "Whoa."

"Buffy?" Willow says again.

"What the fuck?" I somehow manage.

"Oh, shut up, Faith." She shoots me an annoyed glance. "They're only breasts."

"Uh... okay."

Whatever.

She puts her hands in her hair and starts messing it up... A lot. And while she's doing it she's squirming and wriggling, and basically just moving around a whole bunch, until I can't even think straight. I may or may not have, somehow, made my way onto a porn set. Some kind of strange vowel sound makes its way out of my mouth... then a slight whimper.

Eventually she stops moving, dropping her hands to her sides. I barely start breathing again. "Okay, what do you think?"

What do I think?

I think that all those late nights finally caught up to me. I think that I'm probably suffering a concussion from when she nearly broke my ribs. I'm damaged now. She finally broke me. I must have

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major head trauma! ... Major head trauma from the ribs. Uh-huh, it's all connected. I think that it's too hot and I can't breathe. I think that I'm seconds away from exploding all over the room.

"I think you should ditch the pants?" I say hopefully.

She looks at me strangely for a moment, but then appears to actually contemplate it. Finally, she shakes her head. "Nah, I think this'll do."

WHAT will do?

What the hell is going on?!

Ah, who cares?

"Maybe you should mess up your hair a little more then." And do that squirming thing while you're at it.

She does and disappointingly, doesn't.

"Okay, Willow. You can come in now." She lowers her voice after that. "Faith, play along for, like, half an hour. Please." She does the puppy dog eye thing that everyone but me is so good at.

"B, I don't even now what the hell is-"

"Shhh." Buffy cuts me off. She glances over her shoulder, toward her friend. My hands make their way up to her very tight, flat stomach. Not actually touching, just kind of hovering. When she turns around again, I let them fall back onto the bed.

"Hey, Will." Buffy rolls over slowly, pushing back against me, and sliding down my body. Nudging my thighs apart, she positions herself between them, leaning back and wrapping my arms around herself..

This is the best game, ever. I don't even care that Willow is standing in the corner gawking at us 'cause I'm pretty much right there with her. I've come to the conclusion that it's not me with the head trauma. It's Buffy. She's obviously been sniffing glue or some shit. Maybe she got into her mom's alcohol cabinet.

Whatever it is, this day just kicks ass!

"Uh..." Willow blushes, staring at the ground. Unlike me, she seems to have a problem with Buffy's breasts. "You said come over and... and what am I doing here again? I mean you're busy. You look busy... obviously. I should go... home now. To bed. To sleep! Yup, look at that, it's way past my bedtime. Way, way past. I should go."

It's, like, five o'clock in the afternoon, but whatever.

"Yeah, see ya." I wave one hand dismissively, pulling Buffy against me a little bit tighter with the other.

"Faith!" Buffy says, glaring at me. Then she changes her tone, but not by much and when she speaks again it's through clenched teeth. "Baby, that was rude. Don't you think?"

Baby?

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Cool.

"Sorry, B." I run my hand slowly down her thigh, and she slaps it away.

Oh well. Worth a shot.

So I do it again.

The results aren't much better this time around. She pinches my arm, hard, until I yelp.

Turning her head toward me with the fakest smile I've ever seen; she leans in close. It kind of scares me, to be perfectly honest.

"No. Touching." She says quietly, still with that same smile. Still with my skin in her finger death grip. She twists it a little bit harder.

"Okay, okay!" She lets go and I rub my arm. "Jesus, B."

This game just got un-fun.

Red doesn't seem to have noticed much of anything. Surprise, surprise. Buffy makes a hand gesture and Willow sits on the floor, pressing back into the wall as if that will protect her delicate eyes from anything fun.

Should have gone for the breasts while I had a chance. Damn it! Stupid hands. Don't even think before you go wandering, do you?

Buffy and a still blushing Willow start up a conversation. Mainly monosyllabic answers from Red, who seems to be looking anywhere but the bed. I tune them out. Not even a shirt-less Buffy is enough to stop me from... yeah okay, I'm sulking. Whatever. I don't care, I can admit it. I'll just sit here being mad, with my arm stinging. They probably won't even notice.

And if Buffy didn't know before that I wanted her, well, she certainly does now. For some reason she wants Red to think that we were doin' it before she came in. I could have added a little realism to the situation if she had told me beforehand. But no, can't tell Faith anything. Let's just jump her and get her all worked up and then pinch her. Ha! It'll be fun. Come on Willow, everybody can join in. Lots of laughs for all.

"Don't you think, Faith?" Buffy asks, after about ten minutes.

"No." I say sullenly, not even knowing what they were talking about.

"Fine." Buffy sighs. "Be like that."

"Fine, I will."

"You're like a little baby, I swear."

Yeah, mock me. I'll get you back, Buffy Summers.

I'll get you back right now, in fact.

Yeah, now works perfectly for me.

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Besides, when will I ever have a half-naked Buffy sitting between my legs again?

Never, that's right.

I think it's about time we turned this game back into my favor.

Plus, I got myself my very own audience.

You just wait until I'm through with you, B. You'll never be the same again.

I can't help the smile that breaks out onto my face. Buffy notices and relaxes back into me, resting her head on my shoulder. My guess would be that she thinks the tension has passed, when in reality it's just beginning.

"I'm sorry for being a jerk." I whisper, insincerely.

Buffy pats my arm with what I can only assume to be 'understanding', before turning back to listen to Red. Yeah, she got over her whole 'Buffy's only half-clothed' deal and now she's talking about a mile a minute. How anyone can keep up is beyond me. I only catch about every second or third word.

"So..." I interrupt what I'm sure was a very interesting conversation. "How long have we been together for now, B?"

"About a week." She glares at me. Then tries to change the subject. "Willow was talking, Faith. Don't be rude."

"A week, huh?" I grin. "Must have been a pretty interesting week; It's all a blur to me. Did you tell Willow about the first time I saw you naked 'cause I'd like to hear that story again."

"You haven't seen me naked yet, Faith." She subtly digs her elbow into my leg, hard.

"Well, that's a damn shame." I pull both of her arms back across her body before she can cause me any more unnecessary pain. "How about the first time you let me feel you up?"

"I'm sure that Willow doesn't want to hear any of your sordid fantasies, Faith."

And the way she keeps saying my name sounds like more of a threat than anything else she could possibly come up with. She turns her head up to face me. Yeah, she's pissed. Big time. Too bad for her that I never actually figured out where that line is. I like to push my luck.

I'm still holding onto both of her arms for obvious reasons.

"Maybe we should show her then." I let go of her and move my hands down between us, gripping her ass. She quickly grabs my wrists tightly, digging her nails into my skin. Yeah, it hurts, but the feeling of her all tensed against me is so much better. I ignore the pain.

"That hurts, Buffy." I murmur softly, nuzzling her ear.

"Well then knock it off, Faith." She says just as quietly, digging her fingernails in a little deeper.

"Now why would I go and do a thing like that?"

"Because I will hurt you very, very, very much."

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"Aw, baby, you know that it just turns me on when you talk violence." I look over at Willow, huddled in the corner. "Is it because of Willow? She knows about us now. She doesn't care. Do you, Red?"

"No, no sir. I completely accept it as a valid lifestyle choice." She says with her eyes pressed shut tightly.

"There, see? We can celebrate our love freely now, Buffy. We don't have to hide it anymore." I give her ass a tight squeeze.

That's the last straw for B, because she spins around fully with her fist raised high in the air. I quickly point to Red before she can do something that I know I'll regret, even if she won't. Willow, along with her eyes shut tight, now has her hands pressed to her ears too. I guess she's a little disturbed by the thought of me groping Buffy.

I guess Buffy's disturbed by the thought of me groping her too, but she lowers her hand anyway.

I'm not sure what makes me do it. Maybe it's because I've gone so far already, or the fact that even if Buffy decides to speak to me again after today, she'll never let me get this close to her again. Maybe it's because I still have no idea what's going on or why she's doing this, but the fact that a relationship with me, even a pretend one, doesn't repulse her completely, gives me hope. Maybe it's because I've wanted it for so long and I can't help myself, or that this has occupied my every waking thought since I first stepped foot in this crappy town. Maybe it's because she's so damn beautiful and I have next to no self control.

Or maybe it's because I love her... Just a little.

Whatever the reason, I don't even wait until she's fully facing me again before grabbing her by the arms and pulling her in closer.

I kiss her.

I kiss Buffy Summers.

And it's amazing and beautiful.

Until she knees me in the groin.

That part kinda sucks.

But she was totally into it for that whole second, I know it.

"That's it! Get out!" She jumps off the bed.

Does this mean that the game's over already?

Damn.

"B, come on. Don't be like that."

"I have put up with so much crap from you, I don't even know where to start. And you!" She spins around to point at Red. But she's making some "la, la, la" sounds, that resemble no song I've ever heard of. Buffy throws her hands up and turns back to me. "I would be yelling right about now, but I have no idea what to say. Just go, Faith."

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"Why does she get to stay?" I point to Red.

"She doesn't." Buffy nudges Willow with her foot, and she stops making noises. "Everybody out!"

"Bye, Buffy. Drink some water." Willow jumps up, leaving the room more enthusiastically than I ever thought possible.

I ignore her. "B, I really think that we should talk about this."

"We'll talk later."

"No, later you'll be all weirded out." I stand up and walk over to her, but she takes a step backward. I try not to look hurt. "I think that we should talk now."

"There's nothing to talk about. I have a boyfriend!" Realizing that I'm not going to jump her, she moves closer, pushing me toward the door.

"Then why did you kiss me?" I stop walking.

"I did not! You kissed ME."

"If you say so." I shrug.

I don't mean to do it. I really don't. But she's still only wearing a bra! Can I help it if my eyes wander? Worst possible time, granted, but still...

Any chance that I was going stay in the room evaporates.

"Good bye, Faith." She pushes me out, slamming the door in my face.

When I turn around Willow's staring at me curiously.

"What?" I ask, annoyed.

"She kicked you out."

"And?"

"And aren't you two all... you know?"

"Oh, that." I run a hand through my hair. "Yeah, I don't know. The girl has issues."

"So you're not?"

"No."

"You didn't...?"

I don't know why she's finding it so difficult to believe.

"Come on, Red." I sling my arm over her shoulders. "Let's go and get drunk."

"I don't think so, Faith." She pushes my arm off of her.

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"Man, I'm getting rejected all over the place." I look back at the closed doorway. "What's up with that?"

Willow hesitates. "You're not going to do anything stupid, are you?"

"Aw, you know me." I shrug.

"Yeah, I do." She frowns. "Let's go... But you just keep your breasts to yourself, Mister."

"Deal."

"She hates me." I slam my head against the bar.

"I'm sure that's not true." Willow pats my back half-heartedly.

I lift my head up and she shrugs. I guess she didn't mean to be sympathetic.

"She does." I sit up again and drown the rest of my drink. "She hates me. I'm surprised that I'm still breathing... I AM still breathing, aren't I?"

She studies me for a moment. "You do appear to be breathing, yes."

"That's nice." I say sadly.

"Faith, I'm sure that she doesn't hate you."

"No, you're right. She wishes that I was dead! Dead and rotting in a forest somewhere, covered in maggots. Little white maggots. And there's birds pecking at my decayed and mutilated flesh. I only have one eyeball 'cause the other one got all eaten up. Buffy's going to stand over my remains and laugh and point, and say: "I hope that your other eyeball gets eaten too!" And I won't be able to do anything because I'm dead. Dead from a broken heart."

"Ookay. I think some people have had enough to drink for one night." She tries to take my new drink away, but I'm too quick for her. I clutch it to my chest protectively and she backs off. "Nice imagery, by the way, with the maggots and the decay."

"Yeah?"

"Oh yeah, I was totally grossed out."

"I didn't even get to the smell part yet." I sniff. "You wanna hear?"

"Clearly, you've had a lot of time to think about the deterioration of your body... Which is just disturbing on a whole bunch of levels. Please stop."

"Whatever." I throw my glass against the wall. Willow jumps when it shatters. "I hate her!"

"You hate her? Wow, where's this coming from?"

"Look what she did to me!" I look down at myself in disgust. "I'm a loser."

"Faith, you're not a loser."

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"Not as bad as you, but I'm still a loser. And it's all her fault."

"Well, thank you very..." She stops speaking and starts tugging on my arm. "Faith, let's go."

"No." I shake my head. "I'm staying here until I die of alcohol poisoning. They'll drag my lifeless body from this place and pry an empty bottle from my cold, dead hands."

"Enough with the death, already! You're freaking me out." She looks over my shoulder nervously. "But that may be sooner than expected, what with the two huge bouncers headed over here and all."

"What?" I turn around to see them coming straight for us. "Shit."

"My thoughts exactly."

"Stay back, Willow. I'll protect you." I stand up unsteadily.

Uh... maybe I had more to drink than I thought I did.

Yeah, pretty much, 'cause Willow just barely stops me from falling on my ass.

"That's very gallant of you, Faith, but I really think we should just leave."

"Nah, I got it." I shake off her arm and pick up the bar stool I was sitting on. I have to blink a couple of times before I can focus enough to throw it.

Willow ducks quickly as I swing it back, and when I let it fly, it lands on the other side of the room. The other side of the room that's nowhere near the jerks coming closer with every passing second. It misses them completely. In fact, all it does is make them come at us faster.

Maybe this wasn't such a good idea.

"Can we go now?" Willow asks with more than a hint of panic in her voice.

"Well, if you had listened to me in the first place we would have been gone by now." I say, grabbing her arm and pulling her toward the exit. They follow us out and onto the street.

We run for three blocks until I finally stop, looking back at the direction that we came from. I don't see them anymore. I can't help it; I start laughing, bracing myself against the nearest wall.

Willow comes to a stop too, breathing heavily. "You think this is funny?"

"I left my drink in there." I slide back against the wall until I'm sitting on the ground, still chuckling, and oh so very close to crying.

"You left your drink in there?" She says incredulously. "You threw your drink against the wall causing two humongous men to chase us. That's now one hundred and thirty seven times I've been chased in the past year due to slayer misconduct."

"I could have taken them."

"You? You can barely stand up. You're like one big trouble magnet! Where's Faith, you ask?" She throws her hands up in the air. "Just look for the trouble and there she is. And now, there I am, too! Surrounded by trouble. Oh, and that means YOU, just so that we're all clear on where I'm going with this."

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"I don't hate Buffy." I say suddenly, looking up at her.

She sighs, coming to sit down next to me. "I know you don't, Faith."

"I tried to get her to like me... you know?"

"Well, it did all seem kinda cosy from where I was sitting." She offers.

"Yeah." I perk up a bit. "It did, didn't it?"

"I saw her kissing you." Willow says embarrassed.

"See? That's what I said!"

Best second of my life!

"Yeah." She starts getting into it. "And she's ALWAYS flirting with you."

"You think?"

"Oh, absolutely. I have it all written down somewhere. She likes you."

"Thanks, Red!" I say happily.

"So... What are you going to do now?"

"I should go have sex with her, right?"

"Uh... maybe you should wait until you're thinking a little more clearly." Willow says uncertainly.

"No, it'll be perfect." I start getting excited. "I'll climb up her tree and into her room and surprise her with sex!"

"How very Romeo and Juliet of you."

"Yeah. It's all romantic and shit. Maybe I should bring some flowers."

"Faith... I'm just going to be completely honest with you right now." She pauses for a moment. "That's the crappiest plan I've ever heard in my entire life. And I've heard some whoppers. Besides, she's probably patrolling right now, and you're... um... you're not exactly looking your best."

What's wrong with the way I look?

"So you're saying that I should shower first?"

"I'm saying..." She takes a deep breath. "I'm saying that you should sleep it off, think up a MUCH better declaration of love, get cleaned up a little, and only then go and see her. Maybe propositioning her for sex isn't the best way to go about it either... Just a thought."

"It always worked for me before." I frown.

"Or here's an idea!" She claps her hands together. "How 'bout no? How about we never mention sex with Buffy again? Sounds like a plan to me! And now that we're in total agreement... Buffy's not like... uh, some other people. You have to treat her nice, you know?"

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"I KNOW that. I was going to bring her flowers." I say defensively.

"No." Willow shakes her head.

"No?"

"No." She pats my arm. "We'll talk tomorrow."

I lean my head back against the wall and close my eyes. Mainly because this conversation is making my head hurt and it's hard to concentrate on Willow's face. I take a deep breath. "Why are you being so nice to me?"

"You remind me of my little sister?"

"But you don't HAVE a sister." I glance over at her.

"Noticed that, huh?" She grins. "Well, if I had a sister I'd want her to be just like you."

"No you wouldn't."

"I don't know why, Faith." She looks at me exasperatedly. "Just accept help when someone offers it to you, 'kay?"

"Yeah... okay."

"Come on. Let's get you home." She starts to help me up.

"Wait." I pull my arm back. "You really think she doesn't hate me?"

"I'd bet my imaginary sister on it." She assures me.

Oh.

Okay, then...

I think.

Chapter 12

Faith's P.O.V

So... Willow said not to go and see her. But since when the hell did I ever listen to Willow? Since never the hell, that's when. Which is why I decided to go see her. Kicked Willow's ass right the hell out, showered, and now I'm standing underneath the tree outside of B's window. Which is really a metaphor for sex, probably.

And also, why am I missing a sock, but still have both boots on? It's a mystery, that's for fucking sure. A chilling, mind-boggling, thriller of a mystery. A conundrum.

What the hell is a conundrum?

Is it like a chilling, mind-boggling conundrum of a Willow? Which is kind of like a regular Willow, but nicer and she runs funny. Yeah, that was good. She's a running maniac! Which is kind of like a regular

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maniac, but she... runs. Although, I guess that regular maniacs can run. They're not fun like running maniacs though.

Running maniacs are a conundrum.

I miss my sock.

I think that I'll start up my own sock-hunting agency, so that other people don't find themselves in the same situation. Just need a cool-sounding name, something like, "Conundrum-Faith's Sock-hunting Agency!" Wicked. Now I need my own crew.

I'll be president and Buffy can be my bitch. Willow and Xander and Cordy can be the special elite, sock-hunting detectives who work for Poptarts. Angel's the pussy janitor. Giles can be the librarian still. Oh, and Oz can just be his werewolf-self. Werewolves have good senses, Oz can smell out the socks... I don't think he'd appreciate that very much, but who cares? He's my bitch. No wait, Buffy's my bitch. Oh well, they can all be my bitches. Fun for everyone.

Except Angel.

One sunny day, he'll accidentally impale himself on the mop handle, while he's busy having sex with it, then no more Mr But-I'm-the-boyfriend-of-the-girl-whose-vocabulary-only-seems-to-consist-of "But-I-have-boyfriend" and-therefore-the-specialest-of-special. He'll be dead and I'll even teach Buffy some new words to say. Something like, "Fuck yeah, Faith. Nobody gets me hot like you do, you sexy beast" etcetera, etcetera.

We'll see who's laughing then, you big dopey mop-fucker.

So I suppose that I should actually climb this tree if I want to see Buffy. I wonder just how pissed she is... Like, "I'd rather be mauled to death by a thousand rabid giraffes in a vat of acid, while making love to ten geese simultaneously, than ever think of you again, so drop dead," pissed, or, "Get the hell out of my house, I never want to see you again," pissed... Because I'm thinking that we can work on that second one.

Grabbing onto the first branch, I haul myself up, placing one leg on either side of it. I wonder if I can see...

"Ooh, I so wouldn't do that if I were you." A voice says from right under me.

"Dawn!" Startled, I jump back down to the ground. 'Cause I'm all innocent like that. "Uh... do what?"

"She told me to tell you that she's not home. Of course, that was assuming you were a normal person and would come to the front door.

I'm a normal person. I'm even the president of my own detective firm now. Angel's not the president. Angel gets to climb up the tree all the damn time and I bet no-one gives him crap for it. And how did Dawn escape my super-special detective powers so easily? But more importantly...

"She's not home?"

I walked all the way here, semi-sockless, and now she's not even home? If she's with Angel re-establishing their fragile, little "relationship" then I will seriously stake his ass.

"No, she is," Dawn says, walking back to the open doorway. "I said that she told me to tell you she wasn't home. Which is why it gives me endless amounts of pleasure to tell you that she's very much

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at home. Probably up in her room lamenting the hardships of being a teenage vampire slayer." Dawn pauses just long enough to roll her eyes. "She does that a lot."

"It's a conundrum," I agree, following her inside and closing the door behind us.

Dawn gives me a strange look, but then shakes it off, leaning against the side of the couch. "So spill, what'd you do to her this time?"

What did I do? That's a real good question, seeing as how I didn't really do anything and all. I just played the game that she set up. So really... I'm blame-free, and Buffy has some serious mental problems. Maybe even syphilis too.

"Nothing."

"Faith," Dawn says with a small amount of skepticism. "Remember the last time Buffy said that you couldn't come inside the house for, like, a week? I mean, the girl's not all that bright, but she doesn't just get mad for no reason at all."

"Okay, first of all, you're meant to be on my side. Second of all, the time that you're talking about was funny, and definitely doesn't deserve banishment from the house. She wanted to be in that dumpster. Third of all... there is no third of all, but I'm right. Clearly."

"That was pretty neat," Dawn concedes.

"Thank you."

"Yeah, she smelled funky for, like, two whole days. You probably got the better end of the deal, not having to be here and everything." She slides down onto the couch. "So...?"

"So." I shrug.

"Come on, Faith. Your talent for tormenting my sister is unparalleled. It's brilliance incarnate. If there's a story, I need to know. Blackmail purposes... You understand."

"There's no story," I say, and for all my efforts at denial I receive a look in return. "Dawn, seriously, what do you want me to say?"

"Okay, just finish this sentence: Buffy is moping around in her room and yelling way more than usual because..."

She's severely, sexually frustrated is the first thing that comes to mind. Now that I'm inside the house it's obvious she regrets kicking me out this time. Yeah well, there's a whole lot of begging that needs to be done before she worms her way back into my good graces... Do I have graces? Are they good? I guess that I do. And Buffy is going to come crawling back to me and my graces, crying like a little baby and pleading for forgiveness. "Please forgive me, Faith," she will plead. And I will yell, "Never!" While pointing at her with my pointer of doom, which is really just my finger, but I'm a pirate as well, for some reason. "You have crossed me for the last time, Summers. Now prepare to die." And then we both fight to the death and die, also...

No wait, that's not good.

Never mind. The point here, is that, for once, I am the innocent wounded party. A victim of sexy, half-naked women. A wronged victim! Again. I always seem to be the victim, but that's because I'm the perfect target for lust, greed and deception... Is that--? Whatever. She so wants me. It's really kind of cute how desperate she is to maintain this façade of indifference.

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"Faith? Sentence?" Dawn asks impatiently.

"Oh, right. What was it again, again?"

"Buffy is super, seriously pissed at you because...?"

"Oh, that. Yeah, I kissed her."

And I'd do it again, too. Except maybe next time I'd dodge her limbs before they have an opportunity to crush. B's really, very violent when you think about it. Way more than me. I mean, I don't beat her up every chance that I get, do I?

Dawn coughs. "You what now?"

I shrug again in response.

I'm thinking that maybe I should have stuck with my 'Shut the hell up, Faith' policy. I always forget that policy just when I need it the most. And now I don't know whether to laugh at how disgusted she looks, or try to explain... Can't really explain because then she'll know just how bad her sister wants me, what with the obvious lust on Buffy's side and everything. "Get out of my house, right now" is totally code for "You are my new God, who I now worship and stuff." Buffy's a tricky person to analyze, she really just needs to say what she thinks. Took me a few hours, but I finally deciphered the meaning.

"Wow. You're really, really sick, Faith, you know that? Sorry." She shakes her head slightly. "I mean, all this time I thought you were just humoring her, but now it turns out that you actually like her. The world makes no sense." Dawn looks at me sadly. "You're dead to me now."

"Sorry to hear that, kid."

"You... and Buffy. You really kissed her? With lips. With your lips, you kissed her?"

"Well, I didn't really kiss her because if I really kissed her, then she would have all 'Ugh, fu—' Never mind. Look, the point is that you, both of you, get all worked up over nothing. 'Oh no, Faith accidentally threw me in the dumpster.' 'Faith made fun of my friends, however will I go on living my life?' 'Oh my God! Faith kissed me that one time for all of one second, I might as well just die right now!' What's with the melodrama? I mean, for real, it's just not right."

"Oh man." Dawn lifts her head up, rubbing at her eyes. "You used to be so cool, too."

"I'm still cool." She gives me another look. "What? I am."

"Actually, no. No, you're not. Minus a gazillion points for nightmare images that will no doubt haunt my every waking hour for the next millennia."

"Oh, we have a point system now, do we? Well, what about the leather. Doesn't that count for anything anymore?"

"A little," she agrees, but soon goes back to looking incredibly disillusioned. "I mean, Jesus, Faith, you're lucky to escape with your life! Don't you know that Buffy has these metal-melting mucus glands under her tongue? They're, like, totally hazardous to your health. Not to mention all that time she spent living in the bus station. Unsanitary."

B didn't really live at the bus station, but Dawn has all these stories that she makes up. Some of them are pretty funny. Like once, she claimed that Buffy came as a free gift with her mom's thigh master.

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And, another time, that a group of renegade aliens ditched her in a locker at the airport until someone dumped her on their front porch. Dawn's weird. Just like B. That's why I like her, though. And also why I'm not kicking her ass right now, because I am, too, cool, damn it.

Way cooler than Angel.

And I have better hair.

"I suppose that I should go check in on your unsanitary sister, then," I say, looking at the stairs nervously. "Just to make sure that she didn't, you know, really die from complete disgust."

"Oh please." Dawn throws her hand up dismissively. "She's lucky that people even bother to look at her, let alone come crawling back every time she gets angry. What's so special about Buffy, anyway? I mean, she's semi-retarded, for one thing. Plus, there's that weird smell coming from her bedroom. And I think that she might be a communist."

"Hey! Hey, she's the crawler. I'm the crawl-ee. I'm the begged and she's the beggar. See the difference?"

"No. What I do see is that it's almost one o'clock in the morning and here you are, all ready to drop to your knees and ask for forgiveness. What's wrong with this scenario? Well, I will tell you. Everything."

"Aww..." I ruffle her hair slightly. "I know that you really love B. You don't have to pretend on my account."

She shoves my hand away, looking extremely offended. "I'm not pretending, Faith. She really, truly sucks. And now, so do you."

"Fine, be that way." I stand up. "But you know what? One of these days you'll be sucked into some kind of huge mega-vortex and all the people that you claim suck so bad won't be there to save you. No, they'll be off having tea somewhere, thinking, 'Oh, well Dawn said that I suck, so I hope that she has fun living in a vortex for the rest of her life.'" She rolls her eyes at that. "Yeah, that's right. You just think about it."

"Scenario likelihood is slim-to-none. So to that, I say, bite me." She smiles sweetly.

God, I love this kid. Seriously.

Parenting is hard work. But I think I'm doing a decent job. Now I just need to get her to slip "ass-fucker" into a conversation with one of her teachers, and my life will be complete. All of my wisdom will have been passed on to the next generation, and I can retire. She's a good student.

But right now, I should probably do that thing that I came here for. What exactly did I come here for? A beating? An apology? To apologize? One of those, anyway. I figure that it's one of those things that you can't really know what you're going to do until you're staring the person in the face. Like that time when Willow flew a pencil straight into my ass, and then acted all innocent. She was all 'Oh sorry, must have been that other person who can fly pencils around in the air like a moron.' I really thought that I was going to knock her out. But then it was kind of funny, so I laughed instead. That's okay though, I made sure to trip her over the next time she got in my way. But at the time, I laughed, and I didn't think I was going to. So, my point is, maybe Buffy will think that this is kind of funny, too. Or I could always deny that it happened, scream about hallucinations, and then knock her out and tie her up. Lock her in a cave somewhere. Feed her berries... Do unspeakable things to her body, the usual.

I'm half-way up the stairs before I remember something. "Hey, Dawn?"

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"Yeah?" She leans forward from her position on the couch so that I can just see her.

"Your mom's not here, right?"

"Why?" She looks at me suspiciously.

"Because I was thinking about telling her what a little punk her daughter is. Why the hell do you think?"

"Gee, I don't know, Faith. So you can make all kinds of weird, disgusting noises with my sister and not get busted?"

I didn't even think about that. Good one. "Just answer the question."

"No," she says shortly, disappearing from view again.

Damn. I lost the respect of a thirteen year old. That takes talent.

Oh well, she'll get over it. It's not like there's anything to get over, anyway, so it'll take even less time.

When I get to Buffy's door, I think about knocking, but then, what if she hears? Which is kind of the point of knocking on someone's door... for them to hear. But what if she hears, opens the door, and slams her fist into my face? Maybe I should have bought some face-protection. And really, it's also kind of late to be just showing up at people's houses all random. She's probably sleeping. What if I wake her up, and again with the fists of rage? Or what if she's already awake, and she makes with the face-slamming, except this time it's worse because she's all fully-conscious.

I should probably just go home. To my home. Where my face is safe from acts of violence. And what would I say? 'Oh, hey Buff. Sorry to wake you, but I really just wanted to say that I kinda like ya. 'Kay, goodnight'? That's stupid. How do I get myself into these crazy conundrums?

Besides, it's not like she doesn't know. I haven't exactly been the super subtle-girl of subtle-town. Might as well start carrying around a sign – Will have sex with Buffy for food. Or something. I'll make it later. Maybe Xander will think it's funny.

Slowly, I push the door open. It's kind of dark in here, but I didn't see the light on from outside either. I guess that she's sleeping.

This is one of those moments that you can't think about too much. 'Cause if you do, you might just run away. Which makes me wonder, is sneaking into someone's room all creepy-stalker better than just waiting like a normal person? It doesn't really seem like the smart thing to do... Maybe that's why I'm doing it, though. 'Cause I'm rebellious like that. Besides, does anything that I ever do make sense?

Buffy's room mocks me. All warm and inviting and full of nice things. It says, Ha! This is everything that you'll never have, sucker. And even through the darkness, I can make out pictures, the clothes that she was wearing earlier today, thrown carelessly over the end of her bed. And then, a little further up, Buffy's sleeping form. All of it, harsh and mocking.

Edging my way in closer, I stop by her bed.

She really is beautiful.

It's so easy to think, "Hell yeah! I'd fuck Buffy up against a wall anytime of the week. Just give me a wall." But that's not really how I'd do it. I don't know how I'd do it. Funny, right? All the time that I

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spend thinking about what I'd do to her, given half a chance, and I still got nothing. Maybe if I just had a little bit of sex with her while she's sleeping, she wouldn't notice...

Nah, she should probably be awake for that.

Maybe this is some kind of sign, her sleeping. Maybe this doesn't need to happen at all. And maybe we just need some time away from each other. Me, to stop thinking about her every second of the day, and her, to wrap her head around the fact that I never wanted to be friends with her at all. Then we'll be okay again. And I won't need her anymore. And she might even let me back inside the house one day.

I'd leave, leave this town, but I honestly don't think that I can anymore.

I kind of want to touch her, one last time. Brush that strand of hair, that's not even in the way, out of her face. Or just... I don't know. Something.

But I don't.

Instead, I back out of the room slowly, turn, and pause at the doorway.

"Bye Buffy," I mouth quietly, because I can be just as full of drama as any of those Summers girls.

Then I'm walking down the stairs. I can hear Dawn in the kitchen, but I don't really feel like fending her off this time. So I let myself out of the house, and walk back to my room, more depressed than ever. The ability to go from one extreme to the other in seconds is one that takes years to master.

Everything's still the same, nothing's changed. The only thing that I accomplished by going there was... well, nothing, really. Maybe some newfound resolve that will change the next time something happens.

And then I'm at my door, opening it, crawling into bed without getting changed, and falling asleep.

Maybe tomorrow none of this will even matter.

TBC