

# THIS SIMPLE PHRASE

*A Spike and Buffy Romance*



BY HOLLY



“I’M LEAVIN’ you for just a minute. You think you can handle yourself?”

Buffy rolled her eyes, snatching the wooden ladle from her vampire’s hand. “You’re an ass.”

“Just sayin’, I don’t want you panicking and settin’ the kitchen on fire. ‘Cause you know who’d have to put that out.”

“Stop talking to me.”

“It might be two minutes, come to think of it.”

“Stop talking to me.”

“A hundred and twenty seconds alone in the kitchen...”

“You’re still talking to me.”

“I’m sure we have a ‘WARNING: Buffy Cooking’ alarm somewhere.”

“Stop talking to me.” Buffy turned without looking at him, casting a brief glance at the crockpot. “How long did you say we keep the wassail in there?”

Spike smiled and brushed a kiss across her cheek before he edged out of the kitchen. “Give it another five minutes or so, then turn it off. We wanna serve it hot, yeah?”

“Yeah. You know you’re gonna be the only one drinking it, right?”

“You youngsters have no taste.”

She seared him with a look. “Umm, excuse me? Does this sound familiar? ‘Come on, love. *What’s more festive than bearin’ Sid sing ‘Holidays in the Sun?’*”

“You’re just proving my point...though not with that accent.”

Buffy rolled her eyes. “Freak.”

“Whatever you say, kitten.” A pause. “Now, keep calm. I’m just steppin’ outta the kitchen now—”

“Stop talking to me.”

Spike grinned and pinched her ass, evading her playful, answering slap as he bounded to the door of their relatively small apartment. They had moved in just two weeks before, but he already couldn’t envision himself anywhere else. It was difficult enough attempting to reconcile what his life had been like before her. Granted, everything had happened fairly quickly—in just two days, he and Buffy had gone from friends to mated lovers. In just two days, his life had exploded with new meaning.

And surprisingly, everyone was fairly okay with it. Granted, the Watcher and Joyce hadn’t much room to criticize, considering their less than orthodox behavior at Thanksgiving. It had taken the Slayer’s mum three days to meet her eyes without blushing. Though she’d struck back with allegations of the raunchy sex she, Hank Summers, and Rupert had been forced to sit through after Spike and Buffy had given up on the holiday.

The Watcher had been less accepting of his Slayer’s decision, though not by much. He’d done a decent amount of glaring before admitting that he had seen it coming for quite some time.

On the same note, Willow had shrugged, cast a warm glance to Tara, and said, “If it makes you happy.” And Anya had effectively neutralized Xander by the time it was his turn at the plate. The revelation that he and Buffy loved each other had, it seemed, been long in the making. It was old news to everyone except the Slayer.

And here they were, hosting a Christmas Eve party for her friends at their apartment. The place where they lived together. He didn’t even mind Xander pounding on the door with absolutely no consideration for those with hypersensitive hearing. Well, not as much as he would have a month ago, anyway.

“Bloody hell, Harris,” Spike growled, yanking the front door open. “You lookin’ to bust my eardrum?”

Xander just grinned, shoving a bottle of wine—a red bow around the neck—into his hands. “Merry Christmas, Chip-Boy.”

Spike blinked. “Niebaum-Coppola Rubicon? Harris, I’m impressed. Where’d you get this?”

“Giles had a shopping list. I jotted down the first wine I saw.”

“Aren’t you too young to be buyin’ liquor?” he asked.

“Yes, but not when you know the right demons.”

Anya popped up behind him with a brilliant smile. “I have potato salad,” she announced, thrusting a plastic serving bowl wrapped in cellophane into Spike’s free hand. “Seasonal greetings.”

Spike nodded numbly, his eyes still glued to the wine bottle. “Thanks. Come in. Slayer’s... Oh, fuck, I gotta get back to the kitchen.”

Xander’s eyes went wide. “You left Buffy alone in the kitchen?”

“Do us a favor; let Willow and Glinda in when they ring.” Spike turned and hurried back to the kitchen. “Sweet?”

“You know, you think you’re funny with all that ‘Buffy Plus Kitchen Equals Natural Disaster,’ but you’re really just making an ass out of yourself.”

He smirked and placed the wine on the counter before wrapping his arms around his girl’s waist and hooking his chin over her shoulder. “Come on, love,” he murmured and pressed his lips to her throat. “Y’know I didn’t mean that.”

“Yes you did,” she replied, stirring the ladle and pretending she wasn’t trembling all over.

“Kitten, I promise you...any disaster you make in here could be, in no way, natural.” Spike chuckled as she elbowed him, then nipped at the claim mark on her throat. “Just sayin’.”

“You, bub, are this close to not getting laid tonight.”

Spike smirked again and ran his hand down her arm. “Pity.”

“You think you’re real charming, don’t you?”

“Would you be here if I weren’t?” He snatched the ladle from her hand. “Go. See your friends.”

“Hey—”

“Lemme take care of this. You don’t like cookin’, anyway.”

Buffy sighed, though her eyes were dancing. “You really have absolutely no faith in me at all, do you?”

He grinned and dropped a kiss across her forehead. “Slayer, I have nothing but faith in you.”

“Liar.”

“Well, like I said, I don’t want the kitchen to burn down.”

She bristled. “Stop talking to me.”

“In all fairness, love, I have seen you cook before.”

“No, you haven’t! I didn’t cook at all on Thanksgiving...well, except the stuffing—”

“Which you made without butter,” Spike agreed with a nod. “Plus, you recruited me then so that you’d have a man slave to do all the work for you. I’m here so you can be out there. Go. Socialize. Make with the merry.”

Buffy grinned and kissed him. “‘Make with the merry’? You’ve been spending way too much time around me.”

“I assure you, that’s not possible.” Spike nodded at the bottle on the counter. “Look what Harris gave us. Good stuff.” He wagged his brows. “Stuff we’ll wanna pop tonight after the kids have run home.”

“You’re a naughty man.”

“You better believe it, baby.”

She giggled and kissed him again. “All right. Cook up a nummy, non-Buffy-sabotaged storm. Oh, and I turned the wassail off a couple minutes ago. It’s ready when you’re ready.”

He nodded. “Right. And supper should be ready here in a few.”

“I’ll go put on the Christmas music.”

“Finally got the right holiday, huh?”

Buffy made a face. “Stop talking to me,” she grumbled good-naturedly before turning to greet her friends in the living room.

Spike watched her saunter away with a sly smile before returning his attention to the potatoes.

Yes, it was safe to say that unlife simply didn’t get any better than this.



“YOU’RE BEING OBNOXIOUS. PUT THAT THING DOWN.”

Xander frowned from behind his camcorder. “You guys don’t want documentation of your first non-parental holiday?”

Buffy rolled her eyes. “You say that like you’re doing us a favor.”

“I am!”

“You are not. You’re playing with your new toy. Now put it away.”

He grumbled and lowered the camera completely, tossing Spike a pleading look as the vampire set the last of the Christmas dinner on the table. “Spike, your girlfriend’s a pain in the ass,” he whined.

“Hey!”

Spike quirked an eyebrow. “Well, yeah, mate. It’s part of her charm.”

Buffy scowled and whacked at him with her napkin. “You’re not supposed to agree, you know.”

“What can I say, love? The boy speaks the truth.”

“I’m just surprised to see Xander making with the male bonding,” Willow noted, casting Xander a smile as Tara took her seat next to her. “You’re really making an effort, aren’t you?”

“I am,” Xander agreed with a nod. “I am. Thank you for noticing.”

Anya nodded and rubbed his arm. “Xander and I have been going over the history of demons and vampires,” she said. “I reward him for eradicating prejudices with extra orgasms via fellatio.”

Everyone at the table froze and stared at her.

“And yet,” Buffy muttered, “still not as bad as my last dinner party.”

“Oh, love, I don’t think that party was bad,” Spike noted, winking. “Just didn’t go as you expected.”

Yeah, he wouldn’t think it was bad, considering they’d snuck off almost immediately for a little fellatio of their own.

“What is your mom doing for Christmas?” Tara asked, passing Willow the bread.

“She went to visit my aunt in Minneapolis. And Giles left this afternoon for England.”

“Leaving me in charge of the Magic Box,” Anya declared with a nod. “I wish Giles would visit his friend more often.”

Xander frowned. “Friend?”

“Olivia,” Willow replied. “You remember Olivia, right?”

“Oh, yeah. Yeah, I try to forget anything that associates Giles with sex.”

Buffy’s eyes widened. “And so say all of us,” she noted before taking a sip of her cola, fidgeting. The topic of her Watcher was slightly sensitive, as she knew as well as Spike did that his acceptance of their relationship, while heartfelt, hadn’t been easy to come by. The past month had contained as few meetings as possible to avoid any awkwardness, and while she would never admit it aloud, she was grateful that Giles had a reason to be in England.

Not that there was any real tension between them—just enough to make visits uncomfortable. It was the sort of thing that they would grow out of in time.

“What are you doing for Christmas, Will?” she asked.

Willow shrugged. “We’re just staying in, I think,” she said quietly.

“Family get-togethers are hard,” Tara said. “Even with the nicer members of my family. But Willow was great. She didn’t even mind the craziness.”

“How could I?” Willow replied. “That craziness, believe it or not, was a much-needed breath of fresh air from hellmouthy craziness.”

“What are your parents like, Tara?” Xander asked, taking a bite of his turkey before making an approving sound. “And, might I add, compliments to the chef.”

Spike smirked. “Thanks, mate.”

“You mean Buffy didn’t cook?”

Buffy took a minute to glower at them. “I hate you all.”

“My dad doesn’t approve of...well, anything,” Tara explained slowly, shifting.

“Is he opposed to lesbian sex?” Anya asked.

Xander scoffed. “And if so, does he actually breathe?”

Spike snickered into his napkin but declined to say anything—which was both good and uncharacteristic. From the mischief in his eyes, though, Buffy could tell he was making an effort to hold his tongue.

Tara and Willow exchanged a glance, the former’s face turning a bright rouge. “Ummm...and there was that time that he wanted me to



think that I was a demon,” she said. “But we’re trying...to get through that.”

“Yeah, that had to be weird.”

“Are we still doing the thing tomorrow at your mom’s, Buffy?” Willow asked, visibly desperate to change the topic.

She nodded. “Sure. She has the better tree.”

“It does seem to be the most economic location,” Anya agreed.

Xander arched a brow. “And she won’t mind us barging in even if she’s not there to keep us crazy kids under her watch?”

“She’s probably just thrilled with the fact that I’ll have to clean it up.”

“Slayer’s mum can’t believe that she keeps up her own place,” Spike observed before tearing into a piece of toast. “I’m surprised she hasn’t started weekly inspections.”

“Well, it is just the second week, sweetie,” Buffy reminded him. “And hey, I kept up my dorm room.”

Willow coughed and glanced down.

“Will!”

“I didn’t say anything!” she protested. “Didn’t say a thing. Not a thing. And I certainly didn’t say that you never made your bed unless I asked you to...or you thought you might have a boy over.”

“I don’t understand this holiday,” Anya said wistfully, stirring her spoon in the wassail that only Spike seemed to be enjoying. “Unsolicited acts of purchasing for others when I am much better served applying my hard-earned money to much-needed goods and services for Xander and myself.”

There was an awkward pause.

“Honey,” Xander said cautiously. “We talked about this last year...remember?”

“That doesn’t mean it makes sense,” she argued. “It’s just another year of pointless ritual.”

Buffy and Spike exchanged a dry glance and tacitly agreed to say nothing.

Willow had no such tact. “Some people are kind to their friends out of the generosity in their hearts, and receive rewards in buying things for others.”

“Cash rewards?” Anya asked with interest.

Tara smothered a grin.

“And here you could’ve had this whole sordid affair on tape,” Xander said, tscking and shaking his head.

“For what? America’s Most Inappropriate Home Videos?” Willow demanded.

Spike smirked. “That was the last holiday, Red.”

At that, Willow snickered. “Yes, so I’ve heard.”

Buffy smiled and glanced down at her plate.

*Perv.*

Once they were alone, she was so going to let him have it.



WILLOW STARED ENVIOSLY AT THE PIANO THAT BUFFY AND SPIKE had eventually decided to shove against the front wall in the living room, delicately running her fingers across the woodwork. “You know you’re outrageously spoiled, right?”

Buffy grinned as she took a seat on the arm of the nearest couch, sipping at her wine. “Yes.”

“I don’t even want to know how much he paid for this,” she continued. “And you don’t even play.”

“He does...on occasion.”

“But it’s your piano.”

“It’s my piece of furniture. It’s our piano.”

Actually, if Buffy related just how much she adored the piano, her friend would likely look at her as though she’d grown another head. She hadn’t known Spike intended to buy it for her when she’d stopped to gawk at the window of a downtown antique store before explaining, feeling rather foolish, that her grandmother had owned a duplicate model. After her grandmother’s death—years ago, before she’d moved to Sunnydale—her father had auctioned off most of her grandmother’s prized belongings to fund putting her widowed grandfather into a nursing home.

She remembered the day of the auction so clearly. Remembered tears stinging her eyes, her heart breaking just a bit more every time

something had sold. Watched her grandmother's legacy stripped away by people who would never understand why the blue dishes were so important to her, or why that old mirror had hung in her bedroom since her honeymoon.

Hence, seeing the piano had made her trip a bit. Spike had nodded and comforted her with a tender kiss but hadn't said a word. Not until that night when she came home from a movie with Willow and Tara, only to find her vampire seated at the piano, playing for her when she opened the door.

"What is this?" she'd whispered, stunned.

"Your mating present, sweet," he'd replied, smiling as his fingers began stroking the notes to an old Beatles tune. "You like?"

Buffy had burst into a brilliant grin, moved beyond belief. Just when she thought it was impossible to love him more, he went and pulled a stunt like this. "You're turning all Lestat on me with that."

"Bugger that. Wanker didn't know how to play."

"And you do?"

Spike had smiled a little smile and motioned for her to join him. "Why don't I let you be the judge, pet?"

Willow stood over the keys, beating out the chorus of Heart and Soul with one finger. "Three years of piano lessons and this is all I've retained," she said with a half-smile. "Tara plays beautifully, though."

"Tara plays?" Buffy repeated, glancing over her shoulder. "Tara, you play?"

"Not well."

"Yes you do," Willow insisted, frowning.

Buffy waved a dismissive hand. "Oh, well, if she doesn't wanna play, we won't make her." She shot a glance at Spike and grinned. "Besides..."

"Don't even think about it, kitten."

Xander stopped by his side, still a little dazed by the plethora of video consuls that Spike had just shown him in the rec room. As a suitable mating gift, and tacit thanks for the piano, Buffy had purchased her mate a PlayStation II. She'd found it rather ridiculous at first, but had eventually succumbed to the joy that was kicking his virtual ass across the screen. Their banter during such matches usually led to poking, which led to fondling, which led to calling the game so

they could work out their frustrations in a much more pleasurable manner.

But her friend didn't need to know that. She knew that Spike had been looking forward to bragging over the console ever since she'd given it to him.

"What?" Xander asked, a little dazed.

"Buffy's been bragging about Spike's musical talent," Anya answered from where she sat, entranced with the *Rudolf the Red-Nosed Reindeer* special on the Family Channel. "I don't understand this. How is an abnormal animal that brings deformed presents to children supposed to instill American values? Why doesn't he charge them?"

Willow rolled her eyes. "And that would instill American values?"

"Yes. Capitalism is an American value. This reindeer is teaching children to be un-American."

"I always figured the bloody deer had a tumor," Spike reasoned, shrugging. "Why else would his nose glow?"

Buffy stifled a laugh and shook her head. "You kill the Christmas spirit, sweetie."

"Me? Bloody Anyanka just suggested that kiddies should pay for their Christmas presents!"

"I simply don't understand philanthropy. It's not natural."

Xander cleared his throat loudly and clapped his hands together. "Okay," he said. "Okay. So Spike can tickle the ivories. Are we gonna get a demo?"

Spike blinked. "Are you completely carrot-top?"

"Come on, Spike," Willow goaded. "It's the holidays."

"Why do people say that as though it excuses irrational behavior?" he retorted, casting a hand through his platinum locks. "All right. All bloody right, fine. Just...Harris has to put his bloody camcorder away. No usin' this for blackmail later, yeah?"

"Blackmail against who?" Buffy asked, arching an eyebrow. "Everyone you know is in this room."

"He means the demon community," Anya provided. "Though I don't understand why he thinks displaying his musical attributes would do any more harm to his reputation. He has mated the Slayer and is living with her. His reputation is pretty much shot."

Spike seared Buffy with a look. "You're gonna get it later."

"Hey! She said it, not me!"

His glare melted into a teasing smile, and he favored her with a wink. "Right," he said, sliding onto the piano bench, those magical fingers of his playing a quick scale. "All right. Let's get this over with. Any requests?"

"Do you need sheet music?" Willow asked.

"Nope."

Buffy patted his shoulder and pressed a kiss to the top of his head. "When Dru was sick, he learned to play by ear so that he could appease whatever loony request she made."

"Oftentimes to mimic how it sounded on the bloody radio," he added. "Crazy bint."

"Well, then how about White Christmas?" Tara asked. "It's the quintessential Christmas song, right? And, since we live in Sunnydale, dreaming of a white Christmas is the closest we'll get."

Spike shrugged and began the prelude. "Good enough for me."

"Wow." Xander blinked. "You weren't kidding, huh?"

Buffy frowned. "What?"

"He really can play by ear. Man, the crazy shit you did to make Dru happy."

Spike huffed. "You can say that again, mate." He tossed his mate a small smile as she took her seat beside him. "m a lucky bloke," he murmured to her as the group around them began singing at the musical cues that, by now, seemed ingrained. "And you've been very good."

"What?"

"Kitty keepin' her claws in order, even with the mention of the ex."

"*Where the treetops glisten,*" the others sang around them. "*And children listen...*"

"I'm learning that throwing things isn't productive. All that repressed jealousy will come out later tonight when I can inflict bodily damage."

Spike grinned. "I fancy bodily damage, sweetheart. Bruise me, use me, abuse me. Can't get enough."

There was an agitated huff from the sofa. "Could you two please

desist alluding to your planned post-party orgasms while your friends singing Christmas carols?” Anya demanded. “It’s rather distracting.”

*“With every Christmas card I...write...”*

“Hey, we’re whispering!” Buffy retorted.

“Yes. Loudly,” Anya shot back.

Spike rolled his eyes and began another carol. The others, not missing a beat, began right the off-key accompaniment.

*“City sidewalks, busy sidewalks, dressed in holiday style...”*

“Willow, I thought you were Jewish,” Anya observed. “Why are you singing Christmas songs?”

“There aren’t any good Jewish songs that everyone knows,” Willow retorted. “Besides the dreidel thing, and I don’t think anyone wants to sing about it, there’s—”

“Adam Sandler’s Hanukkah Song,” Xander ventured. When he received a sea of blank stares in reply, he smiled awkwardly. “You know. *Put on your yarmulka, here comes Hanukkah* ...okay, was I the only person watching SNL?”

Spike smirked and shook his head, finding the melody without struggle. “Very underrated cast,” he agreed. “Came up with some bloody brilliant stuff.”

Xander nudged the redhead. “Come on, Will. You have to know the Hanukkah Song.”

“I do,” she grumbled. “You burned it into my brain. That and the ‘It’s Hard To Be A Jew On Christmas’ song from South Park.”

Not catching the sarcasm, Xander’s eyes lit up. “Yeah, yeah! Man, that’s great.”

Willow shook her head, not amused. “No. If we’re singing inappropriate Hanukkah songs, let’s stick to the Hanukkah Song, okay?”

Spike perked his perked. “You sure, Red?”

She shrugged. “Adam Sandler’s better than South Park. And...I kinda like the Hanukkah Song.”

“Right then...” Spike turned back to the piano and played another intro. “Everyone who knows this bloody thing, get ready...”

In the end, it was only Xander and Willow, their arms wound around each other as they loudly listed off Hollywood’s Jewish population, leaving the room in stitches—though at the song itself or the

musical talent was anyone's guess. Spike forfeited his spot on the piano bench and followed Buffy into the kitchen at Anya's suggestion that they conclude the evening by watching a seasonally-appropriate movie.

Granted, a seasonally appropriate movie was not complete without popcorn, even though the meal itself had been so extensive that no one felt the need to eat again.

"It's going well," Buffy remarked as she poured the drinks, watching the carbonated liquid fizz as it climbed over ice and threatened to topple the glass. "Though I must admit, I'm a little jealous."

Spike tossed her a skeptical look as he battled with popcorn packaging. "Sweet, you know that I love you more than—"

"This isn't about Dru."

"Oh?"

She smirked, snatching the pre-popped bag from his grasp and opening it without struggle.

"Cheat," he pouted.

"Yes. It's my super strength. Oh, wait...vampires have super strength too, right?"

"You think you're funny, love."

Buffy simply grinned at him. "I was jealous that you let my friends listen to you play. Really, I thought you only did that for me."

"After you practically forced me to—"

She slammed the popcorn into the microwave and activated the instant-pop. "I didn't force you to do anything."

"You keep tellin' yourself that." He neared her, his voice dropping. "Honestly, pet, you oughta know just from experience how to tell the difference between things that we share with everyone and things that we keep to ourselves..."

"Maybe I need a demonstration?"

"Oh, and you'll get one."

"Now?"

"In front of your chums?"

"Well, they're not in here now..."

A note of warning edged into his voice. "Buffy..."

"What's the matter?" She dropped her gaze to his crotch. "Can't *rise* to the challenge?"

Passion stormed his eyes. "You're askin' for it, missy."

She cocked her head. "Am I?"

"You better make the popcorn, love, before I give you what you're beggin' for." He paused, a slow smirk playing across his lips. "Think you can handle it? Popcorn, that is. You've burned three bags this week."

Buffy stopped and glared at him. "Stop talking to me."

Spike nodded, pleased with himself as he collected the drinks. "Works every time."

"Irritating pig," she muttered.

"Whom you happen to adore."

"Do not."

"Do too."

"I adore you a lot more when you don't make fun of my cooking."

"Oh, but there's so much there to make fun of."

"Stop talking to me."

Then he was right behind her, the drinks evidently forgotten as he wrapped his arms around her middle and pressed his lips to her neck. "You adore me," he murmured.

"You wish."

"Don't have to wish. You tell me every night."

She bristled. "Stop talking to me."

"Sure, love. Whatever you say."



XANDER'S CHRISTMAS PICK WAS *DIE HARD*, AND BEING THAT BUFFY wasn't in the mood for anything too sentimental, it was the winner among the rest. Plus, she had never seen it, which was apparently a grave sin. Though by the end of the evening, Xander might have regretted his choice, given that she spent a good bulk of the movie detailing what she would have done to expedite the demise of Hans Gruber.

"Buff, you already kick demon ass. Leave terrorist bank robbers to John McClane."

Spike had snickered, Buffy had elbowed him, and life was good.



As much fun as it was playing hostess, though, she was glad when the night was over, and she was saying goodbye to her friends as Spike began the clean-up. To her delight, Xander made a point to thank her mate for the dinner and the company. For one crazy moment, she could pretend all was well and normal, and hope that things didn't return to the state of forced tolerance once the time of peace on earth was at an end.

She glanced at their Christmas tree, adorned with multi-color lights because she had always enjoyed them as a child. The floor around the base was littered with badly-wrapped presents, as she and Spike had evidently declared a tacit war to see who could bestow the other with the most gifts. She suspected it was a blessing that they couldn't have children.

"That was fun," Buffy said as she plopped onto the sofa. "But let's never have them over again. I thought they'd never leave."

Spike grinned and sat down at the piano. "What? Didn't like showing the place off?"

"I did, but...blarg."

"Come up here and sit with me."

Buffy quirked her head. "Huh?"

"You wanted a private demo, Slayer. You'll notice I played for your mates—I didn't sing. That, among a great many other things, is somethin' for you and you alone." He smiled. "Come up here and sit."

It was true. She remembered, not too long ago, blushing as he sang some Thanksgiving song in an effort to prove that Thanksgiving songs did indeed exist. It had taken some coaxing, but he'd caved, unable to deny her anything. And ever since he'd seen the reaction his singing voice earned him, he'd kept finding reasons to serenade her.

He kissed her when she took her seat beside him. "I love you," he murmured, and every cell in her body exploded with euphoria. He told her often, of course, but she never tired of the words. Never.

"I love you, too."

He beamed at her, kissed her again, then began to tickle the keys to one of her favorite Christmas classics. "*Chestnuts roasting on an open fire... Jack Frost nipping at your nose. Yuletide carols being sung by a choir, and folks*

*dressed up like Eskimos. Everybody knows...a turkey and some mistletoe...help to make the season bright."*

"Unless I thaw it," Buffy muttered, earning a snort.

Spike played the song through to completion, his low voice doing all the things it typically did to her—things she was certain Mel Tormé hadn't intended when he'd penned the lyrics. And after, as the last chords faded to the silence around them, Buffy let her head drop against her vampire's shoulder and released a long sigh, then another when he wrapped his arm around her. They sat like that for a few minutes, comfortable with the quiet, as long as it provided good company.

"When I was little, my mom used to let me open a Christmas Eve present," she said after a moment. "I have a couple of Christmas Eve prezzies for you."

Spike chuckled. "Just can't wait, huh?"

"Nope. Not at all."

She grinned and kissed him before scurrying off for the bedroom. She found her presents to Spike under the bed, where she had left them, untouched and seemingly untampered with. Though that didn't really mean anything. He was, after all, an evil villain.

When she returned, she found him standing in the middle of the living room with a small, wrapped box in his hand.

"Christmas Eve present," he said with a slight smile. "Joyce told me about this, love."

"She did?"

He nodded. "And she told me to have two ready, 'cause you would."

"Been conspiring with my mother, have you?"

"Yes."

"Okay then." Buffy dropped her gaze to the packages she held, and opted for the larger gift first. "I swear, if you already have this, my head's gonna spin around and explode. I searched through all of your things to make sure you didn't have it."

"All my things, eh?"

"Yes."

"Okay then." He winked, setting her present down on the coffee table. "Should I go first?"

*No! Gimmie*, the spoiled child within her cried. “Yes,” she, the adult, answered.

Spike smirked, picked up the package and handed it to her. “Merry Christmas, love.”

Buffy grinned and set the other present down, attempting to be delicate and patient with his rather clumsy wrapping job. It didn’t last. Her need to dig into get the good stuff was too empowering.

It was a jewelry box. Her heart swelled.

“Without wantin’ to appear predictable, love,” he said softly, watching her with a small smile as she opened the lid. “But you know what they say...”

“Oh Spike...”

“They are a girl’s best friend.”

Inside the box was a glittering necklace with two dangling pendants unlike anything she’d seen before. Buffy frowned and brought the box closer, then gave a little gasp when she realized what she was looking at. The design had to be custom because she couldn’t see any jeweler just having these on hand. One pendant was clearly a stake; the other...

“A railroad spike?”

Spike shuffled a bit in that cute way of his whenever he was nervous. “Couldn’t think of anything else. Know it’s not exactly what you wanna think about when you think of me, but—”

“Spike, it’s perfect.” And it was. Yes, there was a part of her that would always recoil at knowing what his life had been like before, but she couldn’t afford to forget it. If she did, she risked losing the knowledge of just how much he’d changed, how far he’d come, for her. To appreciate what she had now was to know what had been before.

She glanced up, her eyes stinging. “This must have cost you a fortune.”

“You’re worth it.” He stepped forward and took the necklace from her hands, encouraging her to turn. “Lift your hair, baby.”

“Spike, this is amazing.” She threw her arms around his neck when she turned again. “Thank you.”

“Didn’t know if you’d fancy it. Not much one for frills—”

“Every girl likes diamonds.” Buffy took a step back, glancing down at the sparkly resting against her chest. “And...it’s us. I love it.”

He cupped her cheek and kissed her softly. "Can I open a prezzie now?"

"Well yeah, now that you've raised the bar."

Spike grinned. "I gotta be a handful, what can I say?" He selected the larger gift that she had indicated earlier, and blew her a kiss as he tore into her equally crappy wrapping job.

Buffy watched closely, fingering her necklace as her heart pounded.

The expression that colored his face was unlike anything she'd ever seen before. He ran his hand over the cover once, as though verifying its authenticity, then looked up, eyes gaze wide and imploring. "Buffy... this is a first edition."

"Yes."

"How the bleeding hell did you get a first edition?"

"Well...Giles helped me find it."

"Slayer, you don't just find books like these. I don't care how much help you have."

"Okay, okay, so I bought it from him. He said a bunch of stuff about it being a family heirloom and...but you've always told me that Milton was one of your favorites, so I thought... You don't already have it, do you?"

His eyes widened. "Are you kiddin' me? This is amazin'. Rupert seriously just sold this to you?"

"It took some persuading...and haggling. He didn't give me the 'like a daughter' discount. Which honestly, if it was a family thing, I'm the closest thing he has to a child so you'd think he'd be of the generous."

Spike smiled wryly. "He knew it was comin' to me, pet. Bet you anythin'."

"What? I couldn't have wanted an old book?"

He arched an eyebrow.

"Well, fine, when you put it that way," she conceded. She paused then and glanced down. "So you like it?"

"I love it." He carefully set the book aside to draw her into his arms. "Thank you."

"You're not the easiest person to shop for, you know."

"What?"

"Well, I wanted to give you something special. These..." She

gestured to the book and to the unwrapped present. "These are special. Everything else was just... I didn't hunt for them like I did these. Speaking of which..." Buffy indicated his other package. "Open your prezzie."

He frowned. "I just did."

"The other one."

"Yeah...it's your turn, pet."

"I don't care. Open!"

For a second more, Spike looked like he was about to object, but then gave her a long look and his eyes softened. With a small nod, he grabbed the remaining present.

"I think next year, I'm gonna have the clerks gift wrap for me," Buffy observed, her nose wrinkling as he tore into the Christmas paper. "It just felt cold and impersonal."

Spike grinned. "Know what you mean," he said, popping off the lid of a small, department-store box. And for the second time in five minutes, he froze. "Buffy..."

"I never gave it back to you."

He nodded numbly. "I remember."

"I...I didn't want to." She blushed when he lifted the silver chain from its confines, a familiar ringing dangling at the bottom. "I remember...I still remember when I went home that night, you know, all with the grossed out and...Willow offered to do a forgetting spell a couple times, but I'd already had enough of her plus magic."

"I heard the part 'bout the memory spell, pet," Spike said softly. "I was sittin' there, you know."

"Yeah, well, that was more for your benefit than mine. I wanted you to think I wanted to forget it. But really? No. God, no. I wasn't about to let her wonky magic mess with my brain...again. I might've ended up with amnesia. Which I had to delicately explain to Will after we left Giles's and she offered." Buffy cleared her throat. "And though it took, well, falling for you to admit it, there was another reason a forgetting spell was out of the question."

"Cause you wanted my sexy bod?"

"Yes."

Spike grinned. "Bloody knew it."

“Yeah. Well, that’s well and good now, but I kept it.” She nodded at the ring. “And then we became friends, and it was... Well, I wanted you to know, now, that I never wanted to forget it. Not even when I thought I hated you.”

His eyes twinkled at her as he slipped the chain over his head, the horrible, gaudy ring he’d presented her with during their faux engagement rocking lightly against his chest. Then he stepped forward and cupped her cheeks, bringing her mouth to his. She swore his kisses were poetry.

“You’re amazing,” he murmured.

“Mmmm...”

“And I wanna cart you off to bed and do things to that delicious body of yours that would make the devil blush.”

Buffy’s heart leaped. “No one’s stopping you,” she whispered against his lips.

“One thing.”

“What?”

Spike pulled back and grinned, pointing at the entry closet door. “Two things, your mum said,” he replied. “Didn’t think I was gonna let you outdo me, did you?”

She smirked, dropping her hand to cup his erection through his jeans, enjoying the sharp gasp that hissed through his teeth at contact. It amazed her how much he’d liberated her, both emotionally and sexually. In the past, she had never felt brave enough to shamelessly grope her boyfriends. Well, all right, so there was just the one before him. He Who Shall Not Be Named Because He Is a Mood-Killer. Even her emotionless but hopeful one-night stand with Parker had seen her a fidgety, nervous wreck, and she’d only touched him when prompted.

Since she’d already decided that the former men in her life had been warm-up acts to get to the good stuff—a big test-drive on love to make sure her heart was ready for the real thing when it slammed into her—she supposed it should reflect little surprise that being open with Spike was as natural as breathing. He made her feel comfortable, and more so, powerful in her sexuality. For all his cocksure boasting, he was determined that she know they were equals. Equals in every fashion.

It did wonders for making her seize what she wanted.

“Oh, I dunno. I kinda thought this was my prezzie.” Buffy grinned and squeezed him. “The gift that keeps on giving.”

He favored her with a long look. “You’re gonna get it.”

“That’s the idea.”

“Right after you see what’s behind door number one.”

She kissed him before finally complying, rather proud of herself for the restraint she’d shown. When there was a present on the line, she typically became tunnel-visioned.

What she found inside the closet stormed past expectation.

“Spike—”

She felt him smiling without needing to turn around.

“You got me...weapons!”

“Not just any weapons, mind you,” he said proudly, stalking forward. “Authentic and about as old as I am.” He wrapped his fingers around one of the staves and drew it out. “It’s for us, really. Both of us. So we can spar each other.”

Suddenly, Buffy was overwhelmed. She was wearing a diamond necklace and staring at the two long staves he had purchased for them so they could fight each other. There was something unspeakably moving in his gifts, and it occurred to her, all over again, just how lucky she was. He’d given something to her that appealed to the woman, and something that appealed to the warrior. Not with anyone else, family or friends, did she feel so comfortable in being herself. Spike was her saving grace from chaos, and there were times, like now, when she felt so full of love she thought she’d burst.

There were also times, like now, when she did.

“Oh, god, I love you!”

Before he knew what hit him, Buffy had completely leaped into his arms, winding her legs around his waist and attacking his lips with hers. It didn’t take much coaxing; he rumbled into her with a passionate growl, sliding his hands under her thighs as his mouth devoured her. And god, she loved kissing him. She loved doing everything, but kissing him was out-of-this-world phenomenal. How he tugged and growled and tasted and murmured her name and all the other things unique to Spike.

At last, he broke away. Good thing, too. Breathing was a thing she needed, not him.

"If I'd known buyin' you lethal weapons would have that sort've reaction," Spike murmured as he nibbled on her throat, "I'd've tried it long ago."

"Wish you had."

"You're just unpredictable."

"You like it."

"I like everythin' about you," he said, slipping his wandering hands under her shirt, caressing the skin he discovered. "Even the not-so-pleasant things."

"Hey!"

"What? I still like 'em." He grinned rakishly, his fingers coming to rest just beneath one of her breasts. "Wanna go sin rampantly?"

Boy, did she. "Uh huh."

Spike smiled and brushed a kiss across her brow. "And let's bring it."

Buffy paused and blinked at that. "What? The weapons? Spike, I'm all about trying new things, but—"

He snorted a laugh, his eyes dancing. "We'll save that for another night. Was thinkin' something else. Look at the sofa. Seems someone left something behind."

She did. There, nestled between the cushions, was Xander's camcorder. And one look at her mate clearly outlined what he had in mind.

"You're a bad man," she said matter-of-factly.

"The baddest, baby."

"And now I'll have documented evidence to prove it."

"Don't reckon this'll be the sort've thing we share with friends, yeh?"

"Don't tell me William the Bloody is shy."

"Not at all. But these tasty parts of yours..." He slipped a hand between them to cup her pussy through her pants, then sucked a nipple into his mouth. "Are all mine. And I don't like to share."

A shiver raced down her spine. "Me, either."

Spike leered and lowered her to the floor, then reached behind him



to grab the camcorder with his free hand. "I'm gonna fuck you raw all night."

In spite of herself, she giggled.

The leer vanished. "Pet?"

"I'm sorry. That was kinda adorable."

For a second, he didn't know whether to look amused or insulted.

"I mean, the bad boy thing...love it. But...it's just...with the funny."

He pouted, shoulders deflating. "Bugger. You went and ruined my moment."

"I did not!"

"Yeah, you did. I was bein' all—"

"Spike." She grabbed his wrist and guided his hand under the waistband of her slacks. "Feel my panties."

His nostrils flared and his eyes flickered. "Don't need to," he rasped, even as his fingers delved between her folds. "Naughty girl."

"Then stop acting like I sullied anything...and get to sullyin' me. All I wanted to say was I love you—the bad boy and the big softie that got me this lovely diamond necklace. I didn't mean to do anything other than...well...tell you that. That I love all of the above." She raised a hand to the chain. "All of it."

"Then all of it, my lady shall get."

The next thing she knew, she was over his shoulder and moving for the bedroom; camcorder and all.



"WONDER HOW MUCH OF THIS XANDER CHARGED UP BEFORE HE came over," Buffy said as she flicked the camera on. "So...to rewind and tape over everything he filmed today or to make tonight the grand finale?"

"Rewind," Spike growled, stripping his tee off his body, leaving his chiseled chest bare to her drooling pleasure. "No sense wastin' perfectly good film on anythin' else, yeah?"

She giggled and nodded, hitting the rewind button. "Think he'll mind?"

"Filling up his toy with amateur pornography?"

“We are not showing this to him.”

“Of bloody course not. For our eyes and our eyes only.”

She made a face. “I feel kinda dirty, doing this.”

“Yeah?” His eyes flickered with interest as he turned his hands to his belt. “It’s just us, sweetheart. Just you and me. Nothin’ shameful in it.”

“And yet, I feel dirty.”

“Want me to help you *overcome*?”

She giggled. “Bad pun.”

“Those are the best kind.”

“Mhmm...” Buffy raised the camcorder to her eye and hit record. “We are in the bedroom. Sparsely furnished, but considering that we just moved in two weeks ago, I think we’re on top of things. Spike?”

“Gonna be on top of you in a minute,” he growled, prying open the buttons of his jeans. “Inside you. Devourin’ you. Eatin’ that delectable pussy of yours...”

“Spike!”

He smirked. “Can’t blame a bloke for bein’ honest.”

“Perv.”

“My bein’ a perv always seems to work in your benefit.”

Buffy flushed and scaled the lens down his body, landing at his crotch. “There’s the beast,” she murmured as though filming a documentary. “Dormant for now, but when he wakes up, no one in this house gets any rest.”

Spike growled. “Dormant?” he demanded, cupping himself. “You call this dormant?”

She giggled. “Ohhh...looks like our boy’s rising. I’ll warn everyone at home—he’s got a nasty, insatiable temper.”

“You’re one talk,” he quipped, shoving his jeans down his legs. His cock bobbed against his stomach, fully erect and straining for attention.

And Buffy, naturally, had to make a production of it. She aimed the camera at his length and managed to exclaim, “He’s awake!” between giggles, zooming in and out rapidly. “And on the prowl.”

“Prowl my very bitable arse,” Spike retorted, moving toward her

with a smirk. "This bloke knows what he wants. And she's far too dressed for the occasion."

"Watch the beast as he sizes up his conquest," Buffy instructed her nonexistent viewers, keeping her camera trained on his cock. "You can almost see the perspiration, the concentration, the attention to detail as he—ahh, Spike!"

She was flat on her back the next minute, the camera torn from her hands, placed on the mattress just a few inches away from her head. Though she would never say so aloud, there were times when Spike unknowingly endorsed the fables of vampiric speed as popularized by Anne Rice and other hack writers. One second, she had been by the door; the next, she was on the bed, her blouse and bra having vanished, and her slacks torn down her legs.

Watching him just made her hotter.

Spike whipped his head back, nuzzling her center through her panties. "So bloody wet for me."

"Mmm," she hummed. "Always."

"Now smile for the camera."

The panties were gone the next instant—another victim to his impatience. She'd at least gotten him to stop tearing the rest of her clothes, so there was a bit of progress, though he refused to show her underwear any mercy. Buffy suspected it was a part of the larger campaign to discourage her from wearing them in the first place.

Spike plunged his tongue deep inside her without warning, and she bucked against his mouth, tunneling her fingers through his hair. "You always taste so fucking good," he whispered into her skin.

"Guh..."

"And you're so bloody responsive." He pinched her clit before giving it a good suck and drawing a long whimper from her throat. "My gorgeous girl."

Buffy moaned again and tried to focus on something else. Anything else. Anything that would distract her from how good he felt, how he played her body like a harp. She arched again as he drove his tongue inside her again, her eyes landing on the camcorder that was capturing every second of her agony. The instant horror surged through her again, and she let go of herself, gasping loudly and clutching him

tighter. "Isn't this how Pam Anderson and what's-his-name got in trouble?"

"Mhmm," Spike agreed lazily, his teeth scraping her wet flesh as he caressed her clit. "Somethin' like this."

"Not...something..." she argued. "This is what got them in trouble. And Rob Lowe...made a sex tape...in the eighties, I think."

"Difference bein', pet. They're them. We're us."

"What if demons get a hold of this thing and sell bootleg copies all over town?"

"Most of them would just die of envy; I'm the only one that gets to eat this pussy."

He slid his tongue over her clit again, spreading her open with his fingers.

"Ooohhh..."

"Though I wouldn't mind sendin' a copy to Angel."

Buffy hummed at that, then her eyes shot open. "What? No!"

"Why not?"

"B-because...that's..."

"Afraid the wanker'll get a happy and turn into the great ponce again?"

"No, afraid he'll come down here and I'll have to kill him for trying to kill you."

Spike raised his head at that, his wet mouth stretching into a smile. "That settles it. Your ex is gettin' a belated Christmas present."

Before she could object, he wrapped his lips around her clit and gave it a good, hard suck and her body exploded into orgasm. She shattered on the mattress into a thousand satisfied pieces.

Some three hundred years later, when she returned to herself, Buffy blinked and attempted to sit up, but Spike's arms were around her middle and his head was resting on her stomach. She gave a contented little sigh and ran her fingers through his hair.

"I love the way you come," he murmured. "The way your body trembles. And that shine in your eyes, and that little sound you make."

She released a heady gasp but didn't say anything.

"And I love the way you do that." He smiled and pressed a kiss against her belly. "Make like you're surprised, every time, with what I

wanna do with you. To you. What I want you to do to me.” He began prowling up her body, rubbing his cock along her sodden folds, coaxing another half-gasp, half-moan rumble through her lips. She was still buzzing from the orgasm he’d given her, too sensitive to be teased.

“It got you hot, didn’t it?” he rumbled into her ear as he cupped her breast.

“What?” she managed to croak.

“The idea of anyone watchin’ us do this.”

Hot? No. Mortified was more like it. Except something within her did pulse at the thought.

Either way, she lost her chance to answer him. His mouth was out of range the next second, wrapped around one of her breasts as his fingers played with her neglected nipple. His hips were swirling above him, the tip of his cock nudging her pussy.

“Spike,” she sobbed.

“I love you, Buffy,” he said softly. He’d gone from planning Angel’s humiliation by way of homemade porn starring Buffy and Spike to murmuring sweet nothings in her ear as his body moved over hers. “I love you so much.”

Her heart clenched. Yeah, there was no way she’d ever tire of hearing that. “I love you, too,” she whispered, her nails tracing a light path down his back.

He abandoned her breast with a parting kiss, then raised his head to devour her mouth with his. Then he sank his cock inside her, and the world around them melted.

It had been a month, and the simple bliss of being one with him had never stopped surprising her. She didn’t know what she’d expected, actually, other than, perhaps the novelty of their explosive sex life to have settled. It hadn’t—she launched into a new wake every time he slid inside her, a new bout of self-discovery that left her dizzy with happiness. And of course, she knew that she shouldn’t be surprised. She and Spike weren’t exactly a mundane, everyday couple. They were meant to be explosive. They were meant to burn each other up with passion. She honestly couldn’t imagine a time where she wouldn’t want him like she did. Wouldn’t burn when he touched her like she did.

“Unh...”

“Mmmm?” Spike drew his head up, stirring her from her thoughts. He licked his lips and smiled, his hips swirling every time he entered her. “Fucking nymph, you are,” he decided lowly, his cock striking her at an angle that she decided the Powers had invented to drive her crazy. She clenched her muscles around him, reveling in the flash of eyes. He growled against her lips and began thrusting faster.

“Nymph, huh?”

He grinned, moving harder still. Faster. The world could be made and unmade in that grin. That rakish smirk of his that had entirely the wrong effect. Manly men think they can get anything just from flashing those pearly whites. It was true enough for Spike. That grin unwound her in ways that were downright humiliating.

“You know what you are,” he growled against her lips before licking at her diamond-heavy throat, tugging at her nipples. The mattress beneath her squeaked noisily, the headboard striking the wall in timely rhythm with the grunts, moans, and mewls that she couldn’t keep inside. “Fuck, you feel so good. So good.”

She tightened her muscles around his cock again and nipped at his shoulder. “You, too.”

Biting him during sex was possibly the easiest way to earn a spanking of the good kind. And true, while nipping didn’t technically constitute biting, his pace increased tenfold as a small but effective roar tore through his throat. His balls slapped her ass as his thrusts grew harder, and she felt his fangs trace the claim mark embedded in her skin.

“You little vixen,” he gasped. “You’re just askin’ for it.”

Buffy’s eyes fell shut. “Begging’s more like it,” she replied. “Oh god...oh god.”

“My saucy little slayer.”

“Shut up and fuck me raw.”

He chuckled, which had honestly been her intention, and the vibrations tickled that invisible erogenous zone buried somewhere in her body. She cooed and flexed, smashing her hips upward, chasing him every time he pulled away.

“You’re right,” he mused, his slick cock slipping out of her. “That is adorable.”

She moaned in protest. “Told you so.” She felt his velvety head brush against her magic button and dug her nails deeper into his skin to keep from losing her head. “God, what are you doing?”

“Drivin’ myself outta my mind,” he replied, manipulating his cock so that the head was rubbing soft but tantalizing circles into her clit. “God, you’re so gorgeous. I want you to stay like this forever. In fact, that’s an order. Wear nothin’ but that necklace ever again.”

“Driving *you* out of your mind? Where do you get off giving me orders? Get back inside me!”

He had the audacity to look amused. “Is that an order?” he asked, sounding much more controlled than he had a second ago.

“Yes! Yes, dammit, stop teasing me!”

Once more, pure ardor stormed his gaze. He kissed her furiously, teasing her mouth with his tongue before abandoning his quest to incite her to madness by way of abandonment mid-coitus. Not that what he’d done hadn’t felt damn good, because there weren’t words enough for how good it’d felt, but she needed him inside her. There was nothing like the sensation of reaching that euphoric plane with him with her—in her—and feeling him tremble as he followed. And damn all if she was going to deny herself that.

Spike pushed inside her again, coaxing her hands to abandon the trenches she’d dug into his skin. He stretched her arms to the sides, then upward until her fingers were clasped around the bedposts. All the while, he moved slowly within her. So slowly she thought perhaps she had slipped into purgatory, and it was her punishment to remain in sexual limbo for the rest of eternity. A silly thought, but he had the ability to make logic fly out the window.

Finally, unable to stand it, Buffy bucked beneath him and cried out, “Spike!”

“Yes, kitten?”

“Please!”

“Please, what?”

“I’m so close. Please.”

He grinned and nibbled at a breast. The slide of his wet flesh from hers touched every single nerve in her body, singeing her with want, burning her with need. The fire raging within her was growing unbear-

able; she would burst with it. She had to. The pleasure was so sweet and she needed release.

Then Spike's fingers slid over her clit and began to rub.

"Oh my god!"

"That's it, baby," he murmured. "That's it."

"Oh...Spike!"

"That's it." His incisors slid across her throat. "When you come, I want you to scream."

"Oh god!"

"Scream for me, baby. You'll scream for your Spike, won't you?"

The first scream was by far the best. All the rest were for show.

His fangs sliced into her skin, and she detonated, swallowed in a torrent of ecstasy. She clutched at him, riding out the volatile waves of her orgasm, and cried out again when she felt him explode within her. Felt him growl into her throat, thrusting like mad as he emptied himself inside her.

The symphony of screams that escaped her lips echoed throughout their small apartment for what felt like hours. Well after his hips had rocked to a still, after his fangs released her and left her to the care of his tongue.

"Oh...god."

Spike chuckled and raised his head. "You're amazing," he said. "So bloody amazing."

"The neighbors are gonna call the cops." Not a very romantic follow-up. Buffy: always the pragmatic.

He didn't mind. Rather, he chuckled again and licked at her claim mark. "Neighbors are used to it," he said reasonably. "Frank and Jill sent us a fruit-basket after that first night, remember? They were impressed."

"Yes, but that was two weeks ago and they've ceased being impressed."

He shrugged, unbothered. "Their bloody problem."

"Mhmm...tell that to the cops when they show up."

"I intend to." Spike favored her with a rakish grin, rolling over then and slipping out of her, much to her dismay. He tugged her close to his chest and kissed her brow, staring at the ceiling in wonder. "Bloody



hell,” he said after a long moment. “I don’t think I’ll ever get used to it.”

Buffy frowned. “Get used to what?”

“You. Bein’ here. With me. Loving me. Being my mate.” He smiled simply. “I’ve just... I’ve never been this happy, love. Never. This is the first Christmas in all my years that—”

“I know.”

“Do you?”

She nodded and sat up, smiling as she took his still-hard cock in her hand and began pumping him, enjoying the way he moaned and stretched beneath her. “Yes,” she said, “I do. And you’re reading my thoughts again.”

“Am I?”

“Yes.”

“Mates don’t have that luxury, luv.” Spike smirked. “And you better thank your lucky stars.”

“It’s X-Rated,” she said, reaching for the camcorder that was, thanks to their mattress aerobics, taking lovely video of their bedroom closet. She grinned and turned, placing it on the nightstand, facing them. “Just like yours.”

“I know. We’d never leave the bloody apartment.” He paused. “Not a bad thing, come to think of it.”

She grinned, flicking her thumb over his cockhead. “Mhmm,” she agreed, curling her body into an arch so that her mouth was at his dick. She pressed a series of wet kisses along the base, dipping a hand to cup his balls as her tongue came out to play.

“You’re sendin’ off vibes,” he gasped, thrusting forward involuntarily. “I’m just pickin’ up on them.”

“What are these vibes saying?”

“I wanna suck Spike’s big—”

Buffy pinched his inner thigh. “Stop that.”

“Stop what?”

“Making my vibes say nasty things.”

“Nasty? Put your mouth where your money is.”

“It’s the other way around, silly.”

“Yeah, well, in this particular case, wordin’ the saying correctly wouldn’t work out in my favor.”

She smiled and took him into her mouth, swirling her tongue around him in the way that drove him craziest. She loved doing this for him. Sharing it with him—something she would never have thought to share with anyone else. Her past experience notwithstanding, along with her temperamental shyness that showed up every now and then, doing this for him took trust that she had never given anyone. Trust she hadn’t thought herself capable of.

Spike erupted in her mouth before he could bark a warning. She didn’t mind. Rather, she murmured approvingly around his cock and swallowed everything he had to give her. Vibes again. He was feeding off her vibes tonight, and she knew that trust—the trust she gave him—was almost as precious as her love. Almost.

“Nope,” Buffy said, releasing him with a parting kiss and licking her lips. “Definitely not nasty.”

“Oh god.”

“In fact...”

“Get up here.”

“Hey Spikey, I think he likes it,” she quipped, turning to face him with twinkling eyes. His cock was hard again in seconds, and he tugged her up his body until her pussy was hovering just above him.

“I love you,” he sighed. “I love you.”

“I love you, too.”

An evil spark touched his eyes at that, making her blink, and he grinned at her. “Even enough to tolerate burned popcorn.”

Buffy scowled, sinking down. “Stop talking to me,” she said, mock-wounded.

“Never.”

And that small conviction had her busting with happiness. It was a reminder that they shared her soul. That despite their differences, they were so alike. They both loved with everything they had. They relished in the fight.

She flexed her muscles around his cock again before she began riding him at a slow, intent gallop, her diamond necklace bouncing along with her breasts with every bounce. “Okay then.”

“Never,” he said again, sliding his hands up her abdomen to tease her nipples. “God, I love you.”

He made a litany of that confession at times, and never did the words grow old. Such a simple phrase gave her so much. More than she felt she deserved at times, but then, she knew he felt the same way.

With them, at least, such would always be the case.



IT WAS TWO DAYS AFTER CHRISTMAS, AND AS THEY SO OFTEN DID when they did not want to be disturbed, they were screening phone calls.

“Hi, this is Buffy. Well, Spike lives here too, but no one ever calls him. Anyway, we’re out saving the world right now and can’t come to the phone. If you’d leave your name and number—”

“And an idea of why we should care that you rang—”

“We’ll get back to you. Thanks!”

Beep.

“Buffy? Spike? It’s Xander. Ummm...I’ve looked all over, and I think I remember where I left my camcorder. I think... Yeah, I think it’s at your place. So, umm, if you see it, just gimme a call or bring it the next time we get together. Thanks.”

*Click.*

Buffy arched an eyebrow and glanced up from her plate of spaghetti, directing her gaze across the kitchen table. Spike’s eyes were dancing.

“We’ll buy him a new one.”

