

Title: In Her Own Words...

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Rating: R-For violence, very strong language, and disturbing imagery

dealing with children.

Disclaimer: Characters and show are owned by JW and ME-No comment.

Pairing: B/F

Feedback: For the Love of God-YES!

Dedication: This one goes out to Amy in Australia who should really embrace the nakedness. And, of course, Gina--the only person in my life who could inspire me to go to a sex shop in NYC and buy a vibrator as a Christmas present. No, the present was not for me. All of you have such dirty dirty minds!

Notes: FINALLY! Episode 7 in my little series. If you haven't already read the other parts, or did and forgotten what the hell's happened since it's been so long, then check out the first 6 eps that

can be found in this group or at OralFxatn the web site version. If you have any questions just email me. Excuse the timeline issues. I decided to move up the timing so that the series--or at least this section--corresponds with Christmas. Also, please disregard any inconsistencies with the timeline presented on the show. I'm sure you'll know what I'm talking about when you read it. So, ENJOY!

FADE IN

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - NIGHT

The store is decorated with that familiar holiday cheer. BUFFY pulls a couple of hefty bags off a counter and waits as the CLERK pulls out cash from the register.

CLERK
(counting the bills)
One, two, three, four, and...
(displaying the coins)
...twenty one cents.

The Clerk hands the money to Buffy.

BUFFY
Thank you.

CLERK
Oh no, thank you. We get so little business at night...it's not only boring but the home office is considering earlier closing AND OPENING times.

BUFFY
I'd sympathize, but the prospect of checking out the latest Donna Karen before my morning coffee is very appealing.

CLERK
(regretfully agreeing)
Yeah, it is. Still boring.
(beat)
Merry Christmas.

CUT TO:

EXT. MAIN ST. - NIGHT

A CRASH emanates from an alley. A vampire thug sprints out and makes his way down the street. Hot on his heels: a ragged FAITH pumping those arms and legs for everything they've got.

CUT TO:

EXT. DEPARTMENT STORE - CONTINUOUS

The door opens and Buffy steps out of the store with the bags. Without missing a beat, she jumps into the air, spins, and kicks, connecting with the just-arrived Vampire.

The Vampire swivels in mid air and slams to the ground.

Faith finally arrives on the scene. She pants, bends over with her hands on her knees, head hanging as Buffy stands there smirking. Faith pulls out a stake and drives it into the Vampire's chest, turning him to dust. Faith reluctantly peers up at a now disgruntled Buffy showing off her bags.

BUFFY

This is so not my idea of shopping.

FAITH

(mocking)

That is so not my idea of shocking.

BUFFY

Insulting behavior will not get you presents.

FAITH

Won't get me presents; won't get me dinner; won't get me sex...and yet, the behavior is so much fun.

Buffy shoves a bag into Faith's frame.

BUFFY

Carry my bag woman.

FAITH

Yes Sir Master Man.

Buffy bites back a retort and starts walking. Faith joins her.

BUFFY

Why can't you embody the Christmas spirit?

FAITH

Oh come on B--after all these years, I'd figure YOU would know how much it sucks to be possessed by spirits and all those other supernatural suckers.

BUFFY

Be serious Faith, namely in response to my seriousness.

FAITH

Why the seriousness? Don't ya got the Christmas spirit?

BUFFY
Nice.

 FAITH
Thanks.

 BUFFY
Where is this negativity coming from?

 FAITH
I hate Christmas.

 BUFFY
How is that possible?

 FAITH
You don't wanna know.

 BUFFY
Actually, I do. It's classified
under "everything" in the "what I
want to know about Faith" file.

 FAITH
Trust me--you really don't wanna
know, and I really don't wanna
fuckin' tell ya, so drop it down
the chimney with Santa.

Buffy shakes her head, failure covering her face.

 BUFFY
 (murmuring)
Can't be that bad.

Faith darkens sharply, but continues on without a word.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DARK ROOM

Rays of light snake in from underneath the door, barely enough to illuminate the room. It's small with a bed, a cracked dresser, and a closet. A lamp rests on the floor along with some bottles. There's nary a personal object in sight, and very little to suggest it's hospitable to humans. The place reeks of booze and sex.

A loud SCREAMING MATCH is going on in another room, although the closed door muffles the sound somewhat. The closet door is slightly open and as we pan inside, a pair of childlike legs are visible. Those legs belong to a little brunette GIRL who sits tense, scared, caressing a worn doll.

She WHISPERS a song in a way that says it's to both the doll and herself.

GIRL
And have yourself--a merry little
Christmas...

The Girl trails off as the UGLY NOISE outside gets frighteningly louder until something SLAMS against the door causing the Girl to nearly jump out of her skin before cowering deeper into the closet. She clutches the doll to her chest. There's another SLAM.

MAN (OS)
(booming)
You in there you little bitch?
Daddy's got a big present for ya.

The Girl shuts her eyes tight as the monster on the other side of the door BANGS constantly.

GIRL
(hopefully; whispering)
It's going to be a merry Christmas.
It's going to be a merry Christmas.
It's going to be a merry Christmas.

The door BREAKS open. The Girl SHRIEKS.

END TEASE

ACT ONE

FADE UP

INT. DAWN'S BEDROOM - DAY

DAWN fixes herself up in front of a mirror. Her eyes stray when the image of a lovely, similarly-outfitted ELLE appears in the mirror. Elle is off to the side, surveying some accessories.

ELLE
What color lipstick should I go with?

DAWN
Take your pick--you wear 'em all so
good.

Elle smiles shyly.

ELLE

Every other best friend that's ever existed pales in comparison to you. But let me rephrase: what color would be simultaneously attractive and appropriate?

DAWN

You're overthinking this.

ELLE

Better than thinking about the depressing funeral thing.

DAWN

I'm sure Kennedy appreciates that.

Elle sidles up behind Dawn and looks at her in the mirror over the Girl's shoulder.

ELLE

Excuse my insensitivity, but I barely knew the Girl. It may be easy for you to throw around genuine feelings and emotions at anyone...

DAWN

Hey, I didn't like her much myself, but faking it goes a long way.

ELLE

You're not faking.

DAWN

No I'm not. I'm exaggerating.

Elle grins. Dawn's left hand finds Elle's. She brings them up so that Elle's forearm snakes over Dawn's shoulder, hand hovering over her chest.

DAWN

I know for a fact that you've got emotion stocked up, on reserve, ready to be released.

ELLE

For a select few only. I have less to give than you think. When I do give, it's to Chris, you...and the list comes to a stop.

DAWN

Does that mean at my funeral, you won't have to fret about makeup since all the tears from crying would ruin it?

ELLE

Let's hope that day never comes.

DAWN

Where is this coming from? How could you get to be like this?

ELLE

You don't want to know.

Elle rubs her forehead lightly against Dawn's right shoulder. When she looks up, she sees Dawn's reflected expression. With steely eyes, Dawn disagrees.

ELLE

Okay, you do.

Elle rests her head on Dawn's shoulder.

ELLE

I don't want to tell you. That help?

DAWN

If you really know me...

Elle looks up again. Her eyes connect with Dawn's. A long silence settles between them.

ELLE

...then I'll tell you later.

Elle tries to disengage, but Dawn won't let go of her arm.

DAWN

I'm holding you to that.

Dawn's burning eyes make it clear she's serious. Elle, in a touch of distress, swallows hard.

CUT TO:

INT. SUMMERS HOUSE - DAY

In the living room, Buffy adjusts XANDER's tie.

XANDER

Ahh, the holiday season in
Sunnydale. Am I the only one
tempted to break out into suicide?

BUFFY

In this room--yes. But since it's
not murder, I'm under no obligation
to save you. So go ahead.

GILES enters wiping his glasses.

GILES

I can't say this enough: for the
slayer, there are no exceptions to
the rule.

BUFFY

Yet there are exceptions to the
rule of school--the school you
worked for--the school whose rules
I constantly broke for the sake of
slaying. Those rules mean nothing?
Is that it? Huh? Huh? Giles?
How 'bout it? Giles?

A beat.

GILES

(seriously)
Exactly.

Buffy and Xander are taken aback.

XANDER

You're either lying, or Buffy just
got burned.

(to Buffy)
Burned! Oh so burned.

BUFFY

Don't make me get another casket.

GILES

Would it be at all possible for
everyone to be...

(pause)
I was going to say sensitive. For
the people in this house however, I
think the operative word is
COGNIZANT of today's event and all
difficulties related to it.

BUFFY

Giles, we know. It's just, in this town, getting dragged into the depths of despair can happen on a whim. I'm tired of feeling sad, especially at this time of year, so excuse me if I try to stay upbeat when not around Willow.

XANDER

Yeah. Also, ANYA is a person--a person that is not currently in this house. Don't let her off the hook.

BUFFY

Is Anya coming?

XANDER

Maybe. Depends on how much she hates me today.

(ruefully)

Women.

BUFFY

Tell me about it.

They nod. Giles shakes his head. Faith strides in draped in white. All eyes turn to her with incomprehension.

BUFFY

What are you wearing?

FAITH

Besides the dress? Nothin'.

XANDER

Prove it.

BUFFY

We're going to a FUNERAL. Not a reaffirmation of your purity.

FAITH

I wear a lotta black, right? I love black, it's a happy color for me. So, it only makes sense that white would be my sad color.

GILES

That logic is very--well--logical.

BUFFY

I'll never understand you.

FAITH
Then quit whinin'.

Buffy flinches. Faith strides towards the door.

FAITH
Are we hittin' this or what?

CUT TO:

EXT. SILVER BELLS CEMETERY - DAY

The beauty of the day betrays the atmosphere concentrated on the casket in place, ready to be lowered when the ceremony calls for it. There are flower settings surrounding the casket, and one flowing bouquet on top. WILLOW stands transfixed at the box with DINO beside her.

WILLOW
She'd be pissed.

DINO
I would be too if I died. I heard
the afterlife is overrated.

WILLOW
This whole arrangement. She
probably would've wanted a--a
martial arts theme or a 21-stake
salute or some other full-blown
tough-minded military kind of setup.

DINO
You want me to get my shotgun? I
have a lot of guns--22 total.

WILLOW
That's sweet, but we'll be starting
soon. I'd prefer to get it over
with.

DINO
So the problem is...

WILLOW
...it's too NICE.

DINO
Tough bitch to please. I mean
LADY. A tough LADY who is drawing
no complaints out of me.

WILLOW

No need to backtrack. She was a bitch. A sleek, mean, devoted bitch. And soon, a bunch of people will show up and pretend to care about her. Pretend because she was a bitch.

DINO

It's okay to be resentful.

WILLOW

I'm not.

DINO

Good, 'cause you shouldn't be. What the hell did they know? I mean, you can spend extreme amounts of time in a countless situations with a person and never really see who they are. Kennedy and the gang mixed it up, but...none of them shared a bed with her. That's rising up to a whole other level of intimacy. They can only imagine what went on with you two in private. They've got wild speculation. You have reality. And from what I can tell, Kennedy wasn't very enamored with the others. Your friends probably don't care about Kennedy...but wherever she is, Kennedy could probably care less about their not caring. She cared about you and you're here...and that's that.

WILLOW

(sadly)

That's that.

Willow steps up to the casket and gently puts her palms on top. She leans in close, and in a whisper:

WILLOW

You deserved better. I hope you find it.

Willow places a soft kiss at the head.

LATER

Everyone, including a respectful ANYA, is gathered as a PRIEST reads from the Bible.

Willow stands in between Buffy and Xander. Xander wraps his arm around Willow while Buffy takes Willow's hand, squeezing in a comforting way. Willow shows her appreciation to both with a tiny smile.

On cue, the casket begins it's descent into the grave. Willow shuts her eyes. Dawn and Elle magnetically move closer together. Xander glances over at Anya who seems hellbent on looking anywhere but at him. Buffy's free hand seeks out Faith and finds her, but Faith isn't responsive. A disconcerted Buffy looks over and sees a despondent, lifeless figure. Buffy can't keep herself from leaning on Faith anyway. On the gathered:

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE UP

INT/EXT. ESPRESSO PUMP - LATE AFTERNOON

The whole gang sits at connected tables, trying to enjoy their drinks. It's fairly quiet. Faith scarfs down one pastry and then starts up on another, Buffy eyeballing her the whole time.

Giles swirls the tea bag out of his cup. Xander soothingly rubs Willow's back, but he can't stop himself from stealing glances at Anya who couldn't care less because she and Dino are hypnotically watching Dawn and Elle get playful with their respective drinks, GIGGLING, and WHISPERING to each other. Elle brings her cup to Dawn's lips and implores her to take a sip, which Dawn does while staring into Elle's eyes. Dino and Anya are dumbfounded at the display, with Dino a little bit more than disturbed and confused.

GILES

It was a beautiful ceremony.
Exceptionally planned and executed
without complication.

XANDER

I too thought it was nice.

ANYA

Would you people give me such an
effervescent funeral?

DAWN

Effervescent?

BUFFY
Of course we would Anya. Just no
demony guests allowed.

ANYA
Halfrek is dead--you were there.
You were responsible for it happening.

BUFFY
I will not dignify that with a
response.

FAITH
(to Buffy)
You killed her demon friend Halifax?
That's not nice.

ANYA
Her name was Halfrek.

FAITH
Whatever. I didn't know the chick.
She get a funeral?

ANYA
She combusted after Buffy tried to
kill me.

FAITH
Tisk tisk, B. Major tisk action.

BUFFY
Can we not dwell on the past please?

FAITH
(pointedly)
Good idea.

Buffy wallows.

WILLOW
How about a toast?

DINO
With coffee? Isn't this an
alcoholic occasion?

WILLOW
I've been drunk for three days
running. Just do it!

Xander takes the initiative and lifts his glass cup.

XANDER

All right. Here's to Kennedy.

(pause)

May she do plenty of asskicking in the afterlife.

They clink cups.

DINO

Is there a way of getting in touch with her spirit or something? I'd really appreciate it if she kicked Michael Jackson's ass.

BUFFY

He's not dead.

DINO

Oh you just wait.

Dino looks away as the others questioningly look at Elle. Elle signals with her hand not to say anything.

GILES

While the holidays are an excellent deterrent to attacks by the underworld, I feel we could use it to our advantage. Possibly catch Spike and Drusilla off-guard.

WILLOW

I think I will have a bourbon.

GILES

I'm sorry Willow. This probably is not the best time for a strategy session.

WILLOW

Gee, ya think?!

FAITH

(to Buffy)

Hey, sun's goin' down. Better go lock and load for the hunt.

BUFFY

You're slaying tonight? Have you no feelings?

FAITH

I got plenty. Almost as many as the innocents dumb enough to roam these streets at night. The vamps ain't on Christmas break yet B.

ELLE

It's "winter break" now.
(seething)
Fucking ACLU.

Dawn strokes Elle's hair to calm her down. Dino's eyes latch onto the sight and when the Girls notice him looking, they separate.

GILES

It's really not necessary. The occasional night off is perfectly reasonable.

FAITH

(standing up)
Well I got some steam to blow, so I'm blowin'.
(to Willow)
Wanna come Red? Killin' things is healthy.

WILLOW

No thanks. I need to focus on my drinking.

FAITH

Sounds like a plan. Anyone else? No? Then I'll check ya later.

All eyes follow Faith out and then turn to Buffy who rubs her face, rough and tired.

OUTSIDE

Faith makes her way down the sidewalk. Buffy hurries out of the Pump and jogs to meet up with Faith who doesn't break stride.

FAITH

Wanna give me a goodbye kiss?;

BUFFY

I'd like to avoid a possible forever-goodbye.

FAITH

Oh, right, I need protection from my slayer Girlfriend since I'm just a lowly superhuman second-string superhero.

BUFFY

That's a lot of S-words. The attitude is beyond unnecessary.

FAITH

Gotta make you see I ain't puttin' up with this shit.

BUFFY

Meanwhile, I have to put up with the constantly increasing pile of Faith shit. I'm supposed to accept it as a fact of life?

FAITH

Now you're gettin' it.

BUFFY

It doesn't work that way. You are stuck with me and it is my accepted duty to throw in your face every moment of unacceptable stupidity and insensitivity. Our friend Willow was tortured for hours on end, near death, and then found her lover deader than dead. But hey, we shouldn't let that get in the way of your desire to kill things, which is merely a cover for your need to escape any situation that involves serious emotional engagement.

Faith halts them.

FAITH

How much do I owe for the hour? Those state-provided therapists got nothin' on you babe.

BUFFY

Piss me off as much as you want-- I'm not leaving you.

FAITH

So this is punishment for supposedly treatin' Willow...INCORRECTLY?

BUFFY
I'd just rather not lose my
Girlfriend on some Christmas fluke.

FAITH
For the last fuckin' time: I don't
need you bein' my fuckin' chaperone!
I'll be fine!

CUT TO:

EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT

Buffy watches Faith SLAM into a mausoleum. Buffy is unconcerned. Faith makes a futile effort to get up as a demon--a cross between a hippo and a dog--approaches Faith, picks her up, and SLAMS her against the mausoleum again, this time holding her upright. The demon sniffs a woozy Faith, then sticks out a long blue tongue and licks Faith's face in one extensive, slobbery lashing. Buffy cringes.

BUFFY
(calling out)
You will shower thoroughly before
any kissage takes place.

The demon punishes Faith against the wall for a few more moments before Buffy finally interjects.

BUFFY
Excuse me--Mr. Hungry Hungry
Hippomonster?

The demon stops and turns around. Faith plops to the ground.

BUFFY
You hurt my lady love. Your mutant
ass is headed for the grinder and a
stray dog's food plate.

The demon has no idea what that means. Buffy SIGHS and runs at it. She leaps in the air and nails the demon with a kick, then takes off in the opposite direction. The demon follows. When Buffy nears a tree, she hops, steps up the tree's trunk, jumps, and grabs a sturdy branch. She swings a couple of times and as the demon gets to where she is, she lands a swinging boot into the demon's face causing it to ROAR and stagger back. Buffy takes the opportunity to swing her lower body upwards to kick at the base of the branch several times, hard enough to break it. Buffy hits the ground like a cat, huge branch in hand. She breaks it into a few pieces. The demon stalks up to Buffy with fury, but gets nothing done as Buffy slices through it with the broken limb.

She goes dangerously wild, slicing and dicing and chopping and whacking the demon into a worthless pile of flesh. Buffy picks up another piece of the limb and proceeds to pound the remains relentlessly 'til there's barely anything of substance left. Buffy crushes one final blow, eyes the remnants for a second, then tosses the limb.

BUFFY
And the moral of the story:
(screaming)
You don't mess with the slayer's
woman!

Buffy stomps a stray piece of flesh. She saunters over to Faith who regains her senses and balance.

BUFFY
I saved your life...so tell me
about your childhood.

FAITH
Where was I when that deal was
struck?

BUFFY
Getting whooped by the dogopotomus.

FAITH
(looking around)
Where is it?

BUFFY
(pointing)
Scattered around there.

FAITH
Goodbye ego. Hello I suck.

BUFFY
That's not true. You know what
they say: can't slay 'em all.

FAITH
I ain't talkin'!

BUFFY
You told me we would.

FAITH
I'm not in the mood.

BUFFY
You meant it when you said it.

FAITH

When I said it, I was in the mood.
Now, I'm not. I'm a moody girl.

BUFFY

Then get in the mood you fucked up
second-stringer!

Faith takes a swing at Buffy who ducks.

BUFFY

I didn't mean that last part.

FAITH

Yeah you did.

BUFFY

No, you're a fucked up FIRST-
stringer. But you're MY first-
stringer and no matter how fucked
up, I still--

FAITH

--don't get it.
(tearing up)
You can't expect me to play the
game like the others. I ain't soul
boy, farm boy, or soul boy jr.
Their lives and unlives might not
be smiles and roses, but they're
not mine.
(beat)
Death woulda been a dream come
true...and you want me to go back
there?

BUFFY

I wish every day and night for you
to feel good--be happy. You
deserve those things...and I want
them for you more than anything--
more than I want them for myself
because if you feel good, feel
happy, then I do too.

FAITH

Sounds peachy. In reality, you
won't let that happen.

BUFFY

It can't happen until you get rid
of all the bad stuff. You have to
face it and I want to help you. I
want to know you.

FAITH
I couldn't even if I wanted to.
For you--B, I'd do whatever crap
you asked of me. This--this is a
hurt you couldn't imagine if you
tried...and believe me you would
NEVER dare try. It's not worth it.

Faith grows increasingly unstable. Buffy isn't doing too well herself. Faith streaks a finger across Buffy's cheek, off her lips down across her chest...and then walks away. Buffy's stunned for a moment.

BUFFY
(loudly)
Aren't I worth the pain?

Faith stops and turns around.

FAITH
That's the problem--just bein' in
love with you brings the pain. Why
do ya think you're single?

Buffy ponders that as Faith disappears into the night.

CUT TO:

INT. FAITH'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Faith somberly enters, tossing her keys in the direction of a table--but she misses. She circles the small living room, then heads into the kitchen straight for the fridge. She opens it and yanks out a beer. She weighs it in her hand, admiring the bottle. Then, nonchalantly, she throws it across the room, shattering it against the wall. Faith doesn't care and proceeds down a short hall into a bedroom.

Faith scans the wildly decorated room loaded with posters and pictures, cd's, makeup, and clothes strewn wall-to-wall. Faith steps up to her dresser, opens the top drawer, and pulls out something wrapped in cloth. She unwraps the cloth revealing two superbly fashioned stakes. Faith's watery eyes focus on nearly identical engravings: the letters F and B with a heart in between--the heart has a stake through it.

Faith lovingly looks at the engravings. That love becomes determination as she looks at the phone on the nightstand. That determination quickly changes to apprehension. Her breathing gets heavy, painful. With regret, she settles herself, rewraps the stakes, and places them back in the drawer. She takes a deep breath before walking into the open closet. She relaxes inside and digs through a box until she finds that familiar worn doll.

She caresses it, resting her head back against the closet door. She shuts her eyes tight, a tear escaping down her cheek.

CUT TO:

INT. BUFFY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Buffy sits at her vanity brushing her hair. She's deliberate with her strokes, clearly wishing she was somewhere else. A KNOCK at the door brings her out of her daze.

BUFFY

Yeah?

The door opens and Dawn pops in.

DAWN

Hey. How went the killing?

BUFFY

Killed a demon. Killed the environment. Killed Faith's ego. Killed my relationship with Faith. I'm on the FBI's most wanted list.

DAWN

You and Faith all right?

BUFFY

Depends on your definition of "all right".

DAWN

Bad.

BUFFY

Yep.

DAWN

Wanna tell me about it?

Buffy gives her a look that Dawn accepts as her answer.

DAWN

Understandable. Is it you or her?

BUFFY

What do--

Buffy stops when she realizes the meaning.

BUFFY
She won't tell me...certain
things...I'd like to know about her.

DAWN
I honestly don't know what to tell
you. Faith is Faith--expert
opinion on issues dealing with her
is useless.

BUFFY
Thank you for not trying.

DAWN
Always my pleasure.

BUFFY
How was your night?

DAWN
Willow got drunker than a drunken
sailor. I like Drunk Willow--she's
so loose and slutty. She kissed
Giles, massaged Xander's manhood,
dry humped Dino, and gave Anya a
lap dance.

BUFFY
Wow. Did Anya like it?

DAWN
She commented unrelentingly on
Willow's gorgeous skin and supple
buttocks.

BUFFY
As long as she's not hitting on
Faith...

Dawn LAUGHS. Buffy smiles.

DAWN
Have a great night. Tomorrow is
for worrying.

BUFFY
'Night.

Dawn moves to leave, but chooses instead to hug Buffy and
kiss her on the cheek.

DAWN
Be careful what you wish for.

Dawn pulls back. Buffy looks at her curiously.

DAWN
Just sayin'...remember where you
are. WHO you are.

Dawn slips out the door leaving Buffy to think. She gets frustrated fast though and turns the light off. She gets into bed and stares outside the window where the moonlight filters in. Before long, she enters an uncomfortable sleep.

LATER

Outside, snow falls. Outside the room, there's a THUMP, RUNNING, excited GIGGLING, YELPING causing Buffy to awaken. She GROANS and then notices the snow.

BUFFY
Miracle snow was not on my list.

Buffy shakes her head. She turns her attention to the door where the unusual NOISES are amplified. Buffy gets out of bed and walks to the door. She opens and:

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

This looks nothing like the Summers' hallway, a fact that freaks Buffy out. It's fairly nice lined with framed photos of a family trio and toys. A tiny brunette, no more than 4, scurries up to Buffy, letting out THRILLED SQUEALS as she grabs a doll. Buffy has no idea what the hell is going on.

BUFFY
Excuse me little girl--what are you
doing in my house? Or is it, what
am I doing in your house?
(beat)
Damn hellmouth. Damn Dawn. Damn
day I was called! Sorry kid--
excuse the damns.

The Girl doesn't answer. In fact, the Girl acts like Buffy's not even there which angers Buffy.

BUFFY
(shouting)
Hey! I asked you a question.
Where's your manners? You should
respect your elders.
(beat)
Wait...

MAN'S VOICE (OS)
(with Boston accent)
Where's my little firecracker?

GIRL
Nowhere!

MAN'S VOICE (OS)
If she's nowhere, then why do I
hear her?

GIRL
'Cause you're super!

Buffy smiles. The owner of the voice, a nice-looking GUY,
appears from around a corner.

GUY
And that's why I always say I got
the smartest Girl in the world.
Come on--time to light the tree.

GIRL
(whining)
No. I wanna play my toys.

GUY
So you don't want the three eclairs
waiting for you in the living room?

The Girl's eyes bulge, immediately leading to her racing
into the Guy's arms. He CHUCKLES.

GUY
My Girl and her appetite. Give me
five.

The Girls obliges with enthusiasm. Buffy narrows her eyes
as she watches. She takes a closer look at the Girl before
snapping her head in the direction of a close-up photo of
the Girl. Buffy stares in disbelief.

BUFFY
Oh...goddess.

The Guy and the Girl go off. Buffy, mesmerized, follows.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE UP

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The tree is tall and littered with decorations. The rest of the room is illuminated by holiday decor.

The Guy stands at the tree, holding a plug and an extension outlet. The Girl bounces on her toes with anticipation as she munches on an eclair. Next to the Girl is the woman from the hallway photos. She's a little on edge while she strokes the Girl's flowing raven hair that matches her own.

Buffy spies the scene in full amazement and, as she directs her vision to the excited little brunette, amusement.

BUFFY

Reminds me of the good ol' days.
God you were an insanely cute child.

WOMAN

Duke, how 'bout movin' this along?
You did a wicked super job with the trimmin', but I told Claire I'd call her.

GUY

Did I miss somethin' Barbara? Was Claire adopted into this family while I was at work? While you were watchin' the soaps...in between talkin' on the phone to Peggy and Mary Louise and...CLAIRE.

BARBARA

Just light the fu--

Barbara cuts herself off as she looks down at the Girl who innocently looks up at her.

BARBARA

Damn tree. Light the damn thing so we can get on with our lives. The tree'll have to be re-lit tomorrow anyway.

GUY

Ya see, this is where you're misguided my bedeviled beauty. This isn't merely any old tree. This--this is the Maddux family version of Rockefeller Center.

Buffy mouths "Maddux?".

GIRL
What's Rockefeller Center?

BARBARA
Rockefeller Faithy. Nobody likes a
girl who don't talk right.

That earns fiery glares from both the Guy and Buffy. The Girl pouts, not really comprehending the comment. Barbara is unfazed by Guy's reaction. He softens up and faces the Girl.

GUY
Sweetie, why don't you come here
and help daddy?

GIRL
Okay.

The Girl runs to him. He hands her the plug but keeps the extension cord.

GUY
On the count of three, you put that
one into this one. Got it?

GIRL
Got it.

GUY
All right--here we go. One--two--
THREE!

The Girl inserts the plug into the extension cord lighting up the tree in all its glory. The Guy and the Girl applaud.

BARBARA
Merry Christmas to all, and to all
a good light.

Barbara salutes and leaves.

GIRL
What's wrong with mommy?

GUY
Sweetie, you go ahead and scarf
down another eclair. I'm gonna
talk to mommy about stuff, then
we'll go outside and play in the
snow. Sound good?

GIRL
Yeah!

GUY

Great. Love you sweetie.

The Guy kisses the top of her head.

GIRL

Love you too daddy.

The Guy steels himself and heads after Barbara. The Girl sits on the floor and eats another eclair. She's happy and HUMMING, serenely eyeing the tree. Buffy enjoys the sight until ARGUING is heard from afar. Buffy grows concerned for the Girl. The Girl acknowledges the ARGUING and furrows her brow, but that's all. That reaction only concerns Buffy more. On cue, the entire room fades to black.

BUFFY

What the hell?

Light returns and the scene has changed. Now, the Girl is sitting on the floor, dressed in black, sadly playing with her doll. No sign of Christmas. The change confuses Buffy. She takes a seat across from the Girl.

BUFFY

Faith, what's wrong? Did something happen?

The Girl continues with her doll.

BUFFY

Obviously you can't hear me. I wish you could. It'll be o--

BARBARA (OS)

--shut up! I'm not some fuckin' weakling. I can take care of myself.

FEMALE (OS)

I know you're strong in that sense. I'm not doubting that. Your husband is dead.

Buffy drops her head before sympathetically looking at the Girl who flinches at the remark.

FEMALE (OS)

He was a wonderful guy. It's okay to be hurt.

BARBARA (OS)

Thank you for giving me permission.

Buffy rolls her eyes.

BARBARA (OS)
I'll be fine. The worst thing in
all this is havin' to deal with the
damn kid alone. That's what Duke
was always best at.

The Girl slouches and SNIFFLES. Buffy modulates between
rage and despondency. The Girl begins to cry. Buffy
reaches out to her, wanting so much to help, but the contact
she makes with the Girl's cheek might as well be nonexistent.
Barbara stalks into the room and hovers over the Girl.

BARBARA
Hey! No cryin'. We don't cry in
this house. Tough women keep their
composure and move on. You're a
tough girl aren't ya? Daddy
thought you were. Was he wrong?

The tears keep coming, but the Girl tries to stop.

BARBARA
(flatly)
Daddy may be gone, but he'll always
be in your heart Faithy. So
there's no reason to be sad.

Buffy can't believe her eyes and ears. The Girl weakly nods
and the tears slow down. Barbara heads back to where she
was. As she goes:

BARBARA
I need a drink...or ten.

Once Barbara is gone, the Girl curls up into a ball on the
floor. Buffy rubs furiously at her eyes. Suddenly, the
lights go out again.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

The light returns with Buffy and the Girl in their previous
positions but in a conspicuously different room. Buffy
immediately notices this place is low-rent, pale, dirty,
depressing--nowhere near the quality of the previous
surroundings. There are no visible objects of
sentimentality. Only the barest of bare essentials abound.

BUFFY
This has to be a nightmare. My
subconscious is punishing me for
being a bitch.

GIRL
(quietly)
I don't feel good.

The Girl--a few years older and frail--lifts her head putting on display a cut on her cheek and a bruise under her right eye. Buffy GASPS.

GIRL
Did you come to take me away?

Buffy twists around to search the room. She returns to the disheveled Girl.

BUFFY
You can see me?

GIRL
(nodding)
You're pretty--like the barbie I used to have.

BUFFY
A smartass at any age. You said you weren't feeling good. Where does it hurt--besides your face.

GIRL
My arms and legs.

The Girl shows off her arms. Buffy flinches at the sight of circular burn marks on her forearms. The Girl reaches for her skirt and prepares to lift it but Buffy stops her.

BUFFY
You don't have to.

GIRL
(sadly)
I don't mind.

BUFFY
I do. Where's your mom?

GIRL
Sleeping. She does that a lot.

BUFFY
Did she do these things to you?

GIRL
Only when she pays attention to me.
Bill pays too much attention.

BUFFY
Bill?

GIRL
Mommy's boyfriend.
(beat)
I wish daddy were here. He'd kill
Bill...and mom too.

Buffy's appalled.

GIRL
Are you God?

BUFFY
No. I can be pretty conceited and
self-absorbed, but even I have my
limits.

GIRL
I asked God to come and take me
away. I wanna go away. I love my
mom, but...but...

BUFFY
Shh, it's okay. You--
(pause)
--you'll be fine.

The Girl softly shakes her head. Lagging footsteps can be heard. Buffy turns to see behind her as Barbara sloshes in. She's haggard and grumpy. The Girl drops her eyes.

BARBARA
School finished?

The Girl shrugs. Barbara pours herself a drink and knocks it down without hesitation.

BARBARA
This place is a mess. Clean it up
before Billy gets here.

GIRL
Yes mom.

The Girl takes a deep breath before getting to work. Barbara lights up a cigarette, relishing every puff. Buffy doesn't like this one bit. Buffy stomps over to Barbara, glaring at her up close.

BUFFY
I hope to God you got a long and
painful death.

The front door opens and a gruff man, presumably BILL, enters.

BILL
Hey hey, what da ya say?

BARBARA
I say it's about time you got here.
Place is no fun without you. Got
somethin' for me?

Bill smiles and pulls from his pocket a small bag of white powder. Barbara giddily reaches for it, but Bill holds it out of reach.

BILL
Uh uh. First, what do I get?

Barbara grins and smashes her mouth to his in an energetic, sloppy kiss--uncaring of the child in the room. Bill gropes and paws at Barbara. Buffy's disgusted. Bill's eyes remain open throughout. With intensity they stray to where the Girl is kneeling on the floor sweeping. The look is predatory. The Girl glances at the kissing couple. She quickly sees his eyes and fearfully turns away. When Buffy sees this, she rapidly shoots her head back and forth between the two in shock and dismay. She's hyperventilating. Finally, the kiss ends. Bill lowers the bag enough for Barbara to snatch it. She heads for the bedroom. As she does:

BARBARA
Keep Faithy company. Play nice.

GIRL
Mom, I'm hungry.

BARBARA
Then eat somethin'!

Bill retrieves a beer and sits on the couch. The Girl nervously continues her task.

BILL
(playfully)
Faithy...oh Faithy. Come sit next
to me.

The Girl boldly shakes her head "no".

BILL
(peevied)
I said get over here. This ain't
optional.

The Girl looks over at Buffy, staring at her for several long moments. Buffy has no response. The Girl turns her attention back to Bill and again denies him. Bill is pissed. He leaps off the couch and yanks the Girl to her feet by her hair.

BUFFY

NO!

BILL

(yelling)

You do what I say you little cunt!
You don't disrespect me! What
happens when you disrespect me?

Bill SMASHES the beer bottle over the Girl's head. She collapses to the floor, still conscious, WHIMPERING. Buffy flies at Bill, intending to crucify him, but comes up with air.

BUFFY

(shouting)

FUCK!

BARBARA (OS)

(shouting)

Keep it down!

BILL

(threateningly; to
the Girl)

Are you gonna be a good girl and sit?

Beat.

GIRL

(weakly)

If my daddy...

(pause)

...were here...

(pause)

...he'd rip you apart without even
trying.

Buffy silently chastises the Girl. They both know it's about to get worse. Bill unbuckles his belt and removes it.

BUFFY

Don't.

(in direction of Barbara)

Fucking do something!

BILL

I'm gonna make you pay for that one. Maybe I'll send ya to be with your precious daddy who was so worthless he couldn't satisfy that slut you call a mom.

The Girl hides in her own arms, ready for the punishment. Bill raises the belt high. Buffy shuts her eyes. As Bill rains down the first blow:

CUT TO:

INT. FLAT - CONTINUOUS

Close on Buffy. Someone is COUGHING up a lung. Buffy opens her eyes and the scene has changed. Barbara lies on a sofa bed, the image of a woman who's been on death's doorstep forever. She COUGHS some more and GROANS in exasperation. Buffy follows Barbara's eyes to the Christmas tree in the corner. No decorations except for the lights.

The front door opens. A junior high version of Faith walks in with a plastic bag. She closes the door and hurries to Barbara's side, pulling out bottles of cough syrup and aspirin.

BARBARA

That's not what I wanted.

FAITH

No shit. Even if I could get what you wanted, I wouldn't. It's one of the reasons you're like this.

BARBARA

Don't be playin' the moral decency card with me. Join a church for that bullshit.

FAITH

It ain't about morals--it's about fact. Now take two of these and drink some of this and you should feel like 10 bucks.

Barbara chokes out a LAUGH and ends up COUGHING. Faith brings the pills to Barbara's mouth and feeds them to her. She pours liquid into the little cup and has Barbara drink it.

FAITH

Two-for-one deal.

Barbara swallows but struggles and COUGHS mightily. Faith holds her down, attempting to settle and soothe her.

FAITH

Had better?

BARBARA

And worse. How'd you get the tree?

FAITH

I went to a place that sells trees.

BARBARA

Smartass. I mean--

FAITH

--yeah. I got my ways.

Barbara nods in understanding.

BARBARA

You should go.

FAITH

Where?

BARBARA

Anywhere but here. Jake's gonna show any minute. As I go, so goes his mood.

FAITH

I'm not afraid of him.

BARBARA

Yeah you are. Don't be ashamed-- you're only human. When was the last time we had a tree?

FAITH

Six years. Christmas after dad died. Claire bought it for us--you ranted about you thinkin' she was thinkin' you were a useless waste of flesh and bone and couldn't do anything for yourself.

BARBARA

Right. Admit it--that was one of the better ones.

FAITH

Sorry mom--just 'cause my ass didn't get beat doesn't mean there was anything positive about it.

BARBARA
Dad woulda liked the tree.

Faith gets teary-eyed.

FAITH
It's crappy. Barely enough lights
to cover it top to bottom. No
ornaments.

BARBARA
He'd still call it our Rockefeller.
(beat)
I want you to leave...right now.
And don't come back.

FAITH
What the fuck is that supposed to
mean? You finally sick of me to
the point where you got zero
regrets about gettin' rid of me?

BARBARA
Look at me. I look the way I sound
and feel the way I look.

FAITH
If you think you're dyin' --

BARBARA
--then I'm probably thinkin'
straight for the first time in your
life. I made it this far...seems
beyond unfair to not let you at
least catch me. Believe me,
regrettin' kickin' you out was
never an issue.

FAITH
Didn't have to say it out loud.

BARBARA
Truth is, I never wanted you. You
were a mistake.

Faith begins to lose it.

BARBARA
Your father knew it. He was dead
set against knockin' you off
beforehand. Told me that would be
against God's will. God has a plan
and YOU are a part of it.
(MORE)

BARBARA (CONT'D)
Sounded nice. I bought it.
Obviously, that didn't last.
(beat)
I don't want you to die. For so
long...I felt fucked over that I
got stuck with you.
(beat)
Now...I'm so sorry YOU got stuck
with ME.

The tears start flowing. Buffy is choked up.

BARBARA
You're a good girl Faith...now get
outta here.
(yelling)
Go.

Barbara implores Faith. After a few moments, Faith gets up and heads for the window where a fire escape is located outside. Before Faith leaves, she notices the tree. With a glance at her mom, Faith inserts the plug illuminating the tree. With one last glance, Faith climbs out the window onto the fire escape. Instead of going down, Faith hangs around, securing a spot out of sight from anyone entering the flat.

Moments later, the door BUSTS open. JAKE, drunk and high and disgruntled, marches up to Barbara.

JAKE
You fuckin' backstabbin' whore! My
money! My fuckin' money--you gave
it all away? What the fuck are you
doin'?

BARBARA
Carryin' out God's plan.

Jake yanks her upwards by her shirt and slaps her.

JAKE
This is no joke. I want my money.

BARBARA
Rot in hell you ugly, pathetic,
limp-dick piece of shit.

Jake punches Barbara causing her to bleed. He doesn't stop there however, as he unleashes one shot after another on her. Buffy looks nauseous. She turns to see Faith outside. Faith bows her head and descends the fire escape. Buffy turns back to the scene at hand.

Jake continues his assault on an already-dead Barbara.
Buffy covers her face with her hands.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

Buffy removes her hands and finds herself outdoors at night, snow falling. She's freezing, her exhaled breaths visible in the air. Her eyes widen at the sight in front of her: teenage Faith having sex against a wall. Faith may or may not be enjoying it--the dude certainly is.

BUFFY
(shouting; to the sky)
God, I can't take anymore! Wake me
up!

The dude cums with a GRUNT and a CRY. Faith's breathing is labored, but she doesn't react. The dude gets off her and goes in for a kiss, but Faith pushes him back.

FAITH
Mission accomplished. Thanks. Bye.

The dude zips up and walks out of the alley. Faith props herself against the wall, deflated. She adjusts her skirt as far as it can go and tightens her jacket. Buffy deliberately approaches Faith. The blonde sidles right into the brunette's personal space, the latter unaware of the former's presence. Buffy looks at the morose Faith in awe, her hand caressing Faith's cheek.

BUFFY
So beautiful. Aw sweetness...

LADY'S VOICE (OS)
(British accent)
Not exactly the most sophisticated
behavior.

Faith and Buffy simultaneously turn to look at the sophisticated lady, purse in hand, now in the alley.

FAITH
Fuck you.

BUFFY
Fuck you.

LADY
Language young lady. For someone
as important as you, maintaining a
modicum of manners is not
necessarily required but at the
minimum respectable.

FAITH
What the fuck did you just say?
Who the fuck are you?

BUFFY
(moaning)
Oh dear lord.

LADY
My name is Carol Daltrey--I'm what's
called a watcher.

FAITH
Whoa, okay, I got no problem you
bein' into that kinda thing, but if
you wanna watch, you gotta pay.
Cash. American. I may be a slut,
but I'm not a cheap slut.

CAROL
No, you don't understand...a
watcher in my usage of the term
means a guide--mentor--your new boss.

FAITH
Funny, I don't remember sendin' out
my resume. What nuthouse did you
escape from?

CAROL
Watcher's council headquarters.

FAITH
There are more like you?

CAROL
Too many if you ask me...and the
slayers.

FAITH
Slayers?

CAROL
Women chosen by the powers that be,
which are similar to God, only
secular. These superhuman women
protect the civilized human world
from the evil underworld.

BUFFY
You suck at this more than Merrick.

FAITH
Chick superheroes? Good vs Evil...

CAROL

Yes. Slayers are good, vampires and other demons are evil. No exceptions.

FAITH

Vampires! Dracula, Nosferatu, Count Chocula--those vamps.

CAROL

Not those. Those are stupid myths created by humans with too much time on their hands.

FAITH

Hey--don't dis the Choc. Look, whoever you are, I'm not in the mood for wacky storytellin' time. Take your act to the kindergartners.

Faith strides for the alley exit but Carol steps in her path.

CAROL

Children cannot do the job YOU have been enlisted to do.

FAITH

And what's that?

CAROL

You're a bloody slayer! Pay attention!

FAITH

This is gettin' old. Seriously, leave me alone.

CAROL

I'm sorry Faith--this is your duty. Your calling.

FAITH

You'll be callin' an ambulance soon if you don't get the fuck outta my way.

(realizing)

How do you know my name?

CAROL

I know every documented piece of information relating to you. Faith Maddux, born March 19 1983 at Schuyler Park Hospital. Father was Duke, mother Barbara. Lived at 751 Waverly Avenue until your father was killed in the 1988 Prudential fire. Your mother was found dead in a south side apartment a little under four years ago, beaten to death by a drug dealer. You've been enrolled in school only periodically, from ages 4 to 6, 8 to 9, and from 12 to the present since being thrown into the foster care system. However, you rarely attend, most likely because you feel it's pointless, similar to your feelings on the 5 foster homes you've been in and continually run away from. I have more if you'd like.

Faith shakily signals in the negative.

FAITH

I don't know how you got all that and, frankly, I don't care. Step aside before I bring the pain.

CAROL

I'm afraid I can't do that. I have a job to do. You are my responsibility. You've been chosen Faith--given powers only the brightest imaginations could conceive of.

Carol takes a step back and winds up her purse.

CAROL

This shouldn't hurt a bit.

Carol NAILS Faith in the face with her purse. Faith staggers a bit, but doesn't appear to be effected.

FAITH

What the fuck is wrong with you lady? You got a death wish?

CAROL

That was my test. If I gave you the traditional test, you'd really be spitting out the fucks. But it was a success. I hit you, yet you are perfectly unharmed.

FAITH

Well DUH! You hit me with a dinky purse.

Carol opens the purse and pulls out a brick. Faith's eyes bulge.

FAITH

That ain't real.

Carol presents the brick to Faith. Faith takes it and is stunned further. She touches her face. The brick is cracked.

FAITH

Fuck.

CAROL

Gives new meaning to the phrase "hard headed", doesn't it?

Carol GIGGLES. Faith glares to shut her up.

FAITH

This is a fucked up trip. You're fuckin' with my head 'cause-- 'cause, uh...you're a horny dyke who loves to eat pussy with loads of weirdness and kink.

CAROL

(flatly)

Blast. You discovered my dastardly plan. A plan so surreal and shameful that I think I'll ask if you feel a prick on the back of your neck.

Buffy furrows her brow.

FAITH

Damn you're a classy freak.

Faith furrows her brow. She touches the back of her neck, a curious sensation running through her.

FAITH

What...?

CAROL
It's a bodily warning signal. One
of your many specialized slayer
powers.

FAITH
Warnin' me of what?

CAROL
(pulling out a cross)
The vampire standing behind you.

Faith's skeptical. She turns around and is startled at the sight of a vamp in full gameface. She's scared shitless. Carol is calm as she shields herself with the cross. Buffy is bewildered.

BUFFY
Where did he come from?

Faith SCREAMS. She moves to run but the vamp latches onto her jacket and throws her into the back of the alley. The vamp charges at Faith as she scrambles to her feet. Faith is disoriented. It doesn't help when the vamp hammers into her with a series of shots.

BUFFY
Faith! Fight back!

Faith mounts no defense. The vamp slams her against the wall with a chokehold and flashes his teeth. He's ready to bite.

CAROL
(loud and confident)
Faith--you have the power. This is
a fight you can win. You are the
slayer. SLAY!

The vamp descends on Faith's neck. He doesn't get to his destination. Faith knees him in the gut. She knees him again causing him to relinquish his hold. She headbutts him and hits him with successive punches. He's reeling. Faith jumps him, unleashing every ounce of angry firepower she has. She's brutalizing the vamp into a pool of blood and pounded flesh. Faith's losing control, her punches connecting with CRIES of anguish. Buffy finds it painful to watch. Carol walks up behind her and snatches Faith's fist in midair before it can connect again. Faith looks back, her eyes blood red.

CAROL
As much as you'd like, you can't
kill him this way.

Carol reaches into her back waistband and pulls out a stake. Faith stares at it hypnotically. She grabs the stake and jams it into the vamp's chest. Faith is thrown for a loop by the dusting, but she gets over it and stands up.

CAROL

Life hasn't been fair to you up to now. Unfortunately, there's no fairness in your calling either.

(beat)

Faith, being a slayer is a burden for those who don't embrace it. I'm here to help you embrace it. I want to help. The world needs you. The other one needs you.

Buffy quirks an eyebrow. So does Faith.

CAROL

I'll tell you everything you need to know over dinner. You should be getting very very hungry soon. One of the perks. Come on.

Carol reaches out for Faith. Faith is hesitant. Eventually, she joins Carol and lets Carol put her arm around her. Buffy stays behind.

FAITH

So, do I get paid on salary or per vamp?

Carol CHUCKLES. Buffy smiles. She leans her head against the wall and closes her eyes.

CUT TO:

INT. WAREHOUSE/DARK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A blood-curdling SCREAM. Buffy hops backward, opens her eyes and lifts her head. Her surroundings have changed. Faith is chained to a post. Vampires abound. Carol is on her knees, submissive to the torturous hand of a henchvamp holding a hot poker. A sinister LAUGH comes from a shadowy corner. The next moment, KAKISTOS walks out.

FAITH

(desperately)

Let her go. Kill me.

CAROL

(weakly)

Faith, quiet.

KAKISTOS

Ah, the nobility of God's warrior.
Pitiful indeed. While I respect
your devotion to the human--which,
of course, is a lie--I will
mutilate you in gruesome detail.
The watcher will get what she
deserves.

FAITH

Ya ugly pile of monster shit! I'll
fuckin' annihilate you if you even
touch her.

KAKISTOS

Touch? With me, a touch is never
just a touch. It is a monument of
pain and suffering.

FAITH

Blah fuckin' blah blah future
dustbin resident!

KAKISTOS

(to henchvamp)

Mark the lady.

The henchvamp sticks Carol with the poker. She SCREAMS.
Faith expends all her strength and energy into breaking the
chains, but to no avail.

FAITH

Stop it! She's fuckin' innocent!

KAKISTOS

I do not judge. Only punish. Are
you willing to give your life to
spare hers?

FAITH

YES! For fuck's sake YES!

KAKISTOS

Good. I am exuberant at your
exclamation. It shall make this
multitudes more enjoyable.

Faith and Buffy watch in horror as Kakistos walks over to
the quivering Carol and skewers her in several places. Blood
pours out like from a broken faucet. Carol can't say
anything. Faith is breathless and crying, struggling to
break free.

After a few more tugs, Faith snaps the chains and leaps to her feet. She shoots for Kakistos, bowling over vamps on her way. The henchvamp attacks Faith. She easily breaks his neck.

But Faith is too late. Kakistos raises the blade and chops off Carol's head. Faith falls helplessly to her knees without a sound. Faith blankly stares at Carol for a long time...before breaking down. Kakistos belts out a sinister LAUGH. He steps up to Faith and backhands her into a stack of crates.

KAKISTOS

Your death will be extraordinarily
excruciating. The watcher was lucky.

Kakistos reaches the mess and seeks out Faith. He finds her and lifts her by her neck. Her hand swiftly comes up and she slices his eye with a knife. Kakistos HOWLS and drops Faith. Faith hits him a couple of times and lands a big-time superkick. Kakistos hits the floor. Faith takes advantage and runs for the door. She stops to look back solemnly at Carol one last time. Buffy is distraught. The lights go out.

DARK ROOM

The ARGUING outside is loud and clear. Buffy wipes her eyes. She surveys the hellhole. She tests the lamp on the floor--doesn't work. She SNIFFS and her face distorts.

BUFFY

Ugh! Welcome to the crackhouse.

Buffy circles the room, examining the run-down walls and bed and closet. When Buffy zeroes in on the closet, she detects something. Buffy pushes the slightly open door all the way revealing the Girl inaudibly SINGING to her doll.

BUFFY

Back to you.

GIRL

Hi.

BUFFY

That's a pretty doll.

GIRL

Not like he used to be.

BUFFY

Sorry. Christmas again?

GIRL
Yeah. I guess. I don't get presents anymore.

BUFFY
I kinda figured that. Still so wrong on so many levels. If it makes you feel any better, I know for a fact you're gonna get lots and lots of presents in the future.

The Girl doesn't respond. She just nurtures her doll.

BUFFY
It'll get better. I promise.

GIRL
That's not true.

Heavy FOOTSTEPS. BANGING on the door.

BILL (OS)
(booming)
You in there you little bitch?
Daddy's got a big present for ya.

GIRL
See?

The BANGING is constant. Buffy worriedly glances between the Girl and the door.

GIRL
You should leave.

BUFFY
(frantic)
No. I won't leave you. I can do something. I help people. I save people. Standing by like a fly on the wall is unacceptable. No more.
(yelling; to the sky)
Let me help! Please! Whoever, whatever you are, just give me this one!

GIRL
I always wish for a merry Christmas...

The Girl shuts her eyes. The door CRACKS. Buffy ensconces herself in the closet, her breathing erratic. She reaches for the Girl, but mysteriously comes up with air. Buffy is totally lost. The Girl is trembling. The door BREAKS open. Bill appears in the doorway. The Girl SHRIEKS.

Buffy SCREAMS:

BUFFY
NO!

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE UP

INT. DARK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Bill stands ominously in the doorway. The Girl is afraid. Buffy is afraid for her.

BILL
What's the matter girly girl?
Don't you wanna unwrap your gift?

Bill doesn't wait for an answer. He rushes the closet. Buffy tries to block the way, but Bill goes straight through her and grabs the Girl. The Girl YELPS. Bill drags the Girl out of the closet and tosses her on the bed. He SMACKS her.

BILL
Shh. Relax. This is gonna be a
blast.

Bill reaches into his pockets and pulls out a cigarette and lighter. The frightened Girl peers up through her eyelashes, tears welling in her eyes. Bill lights the cigarette and indulges a few puffs. He positions himself on the bed, lowering on top of the Girl. He takes a long puff and, with an evil grin, blows the smoke into the Girl's face. She COUGHS.

BILL
Ain't that cute.

Buffy WAILS in the background. Bill LAUGHS. His hand with the cigarette moves down the length of the Girl's body to a spot in between her legs.

BILL
Can you feel the heat?

Bill promptly burns the Girl's inner thigh with the cigarette. The Girl CRIES OUT in terrible pain. Bill covers her mouth with his hand. He tosses the cigarette, leaving behind a sizzling red mark. His hand goes to his pants. He unbuttons, unzips.

Close on the Girl's eyes. Bill GRUNTS. Her eyes widen. Her SCREAM is muffled by Bill's hand.

The bed shakes, hitting the wall again and again. Bill's body almost entirely covers the Girl's, the faint PLEADINGS from the Girl audible.

Buffy can only watch in absolute horror. She's in shambles on the floor, crying uncontrollably.

BUFFY

Enough. Please...I can't take this anymore. Please. Stop.

VOICE (OS)

Easy for you to say.

Buffy's head snaps up. Now in the room is Faith. Her Faith.

BUFFY

Faith? Is it--is this--

FAITH

--must be nice to have people regularly listen to what you're sayin'.

(beat)

In this world, words don't exist. What good are they if nobody listens? They don't listen. They don't care. Whether you're pleadin' with the scumbag to stop rapin' you, or askin' God for the millionth time to get you the hell outta here...

BUFFY

Why couldn't you just tell me? Why do it like this?

FAITH

How do you put this into words?

Buffy has no answer.

FAITH

Fifteen years. If I couldn't do something as simple as use the words "I" "LOVE" "YOU" in the same sentence for fifteen years...what makes you think this would be easier?

BUFFY

I don't...I had no idea...that it was like this.

FAITH

Ain't really the first thing that comes to mind when you wonder about childhood memories. Be glad this is it for your experience. First time you're seein' it--last time you're seein' it. I lived it. Every day, I see it--feel it--hear it...and bein' a fuckin' slayer makes it worse by makin' the sensations all the more powerful!

Buffy slowly gets off the floor. She approaches Faith, the dark slayer waiting without emotion. Buffy brings her hand to Faith's face. She gently combs her fingers across smooth skin. Faith leans in to the touch.

BUFFY

I'm never going to forget this.
Not just because it's so horrifying
and tragic and reprehensible...but
because it happened to you.

Faith exhales shakily.

BUFFY

I--

(pause)

--sweetness, wake me up. Please.
I don't want to do this here.

CUT TO:

INT. BUFFY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Buffy wakes with a start. Her breathing rapid. Her cheeks are stained by tears with some still escaping her eyes. Buffy massages her face, rubs her temples, grasps her hair. She's flustered, disheveled. She slides out of bed and walks over to the window. No snow. She looks over at the clock on her nightstand--it's 3:00 am. She rushes to the dresser, pulls out a pair of jeans and a blouse and places them on the bed. She flicks on the light. She opens the door and is startled by the presence of Faith in the hallway, staring profoundly at her.

BUFFY

I was just about to come see you.

FAITH
Kinda figured that. What kinda
girlfriend would I be if I didn't
accommodate my woman?

Buffy pulls Faith into a passionate kiss. Faith melts into it. Buffy is more needy. When they separate, they stay locked in an air-tight embrace.

BUFFY
You don't have to tell me you're
not like the others. I never felt
for them what I feel for you.

FAITH
It was easier with them.

BUFFY
Since when do I prefer life to be
easy?

FAITH
I'll give ya that one.

Buffy disengages. She takes Faith's hand and guides her further inside the room, closing the door.

BUFFY
You didn't have to use a slayer
dream.

FAITH
I told you the score Buffy...

BUFFY
All you had to do was give a little
room to let me work. I would've
accommodated you--what kind of
girlfriend would I be if I didn't
do that for my woman?

Faith SNIFFLES.

BUFFY
Could've told me one step at a
time. You have me for as long as
you want me Faith--and I hope that
lasts an eternity. I wasn't asking
you to spend every day for the rest
of our lives spelling out every
detail. Just establish a starting
point. That's the way it should be
with everything in our lives.

Faith wearily sits on the bed.

FAITH
Shoulda seen this coming. Instant
regret. Even all this shit is
better in dreamland.

Buffy's stung by that. She gets on her knees in front of Faith.

BUFFY
I'm glad you showed me. All of it.
Learning everything in one night is
something I would've avoided, but
experiencing it the way I did
helped me understand...it was so
horrible sweetness.

Buffy's eyes water, her bottom lip trembling. She calmly
slips her hand onto Faith's. Their fingers entwine.

BUFFY
I am so, so sorry Faith.

FAITH
What for? You were a nag about the
talkin' thing, but I don't care.
You had nothin' to do with my past.

BUFFY
(emphatically)
No--you're wrong. The OTHER ONE?

Faith adorns a shy half-smile.

BUFFY
You came into town, looking for
me--wanting to do right by me while
still being you. And I rejected
you. Rejected and resented and
discouraged and pushed and...hated.

Faith flinches.

BUFFY
I never gave you the chance you
deserved. I contributed not only
to a new world of hurt for you, but
I added onto what you left behind
in Boston. I hate myself for not
supporting you. I hate myself for
choosing others over you. I hate
myself...

(MORE)

BUFFY (CONT'D)
(breaking down)
...for trying to kill you.

Faith does her best not lose it. Buffy's hands snake move to the hem of Faith's shirt. Buffy lifts the shirt up, revealing Faith's bare midsection. Pronounced around her navel is a thick scar. Buffy stares at it in anguish. She ever-so-lightly fingers it eliciting a GASP and shivers from Faith. Faith's eyes flutter shut, tears still managing to escape. Buffy is riveted by the scar. She continues fingering it for a while before dropping her hand onto Faith's lap. Buffy leans downward and replaces her fingers with her lips. Her crying grows heavy. She lays numerous butterfly kisses up and down the scar, then one long kiss. Faith runs her hands through Buffy's hair, caressing and comforting her.

BUFFY
I'm so sorry. For what they
did...and for what I did. I'm
sorry. I love you so much. I love
you.

Buffy falls apart completely. She clings to Faith, her face buried in Faith's midsection. Happiness flashes on Faith's face.

FAITH
Buffy, it's okay.

Faith tilts Buffy's head so the duo can look at each other. Buffy's face is red, in disarray. Faith still admires her as if she's the most beautiful thing alive.

FAITH
I've never felt this good in my life.

Buffy is in pleasant shock. Faith raises Buffy so they're face to face. They gaze deeply at each other for what seems like an eternity. At the same time, they move in for a soft, loving kiss filled with understated passion and intensity. When they finally break apart, their faces remain mere millimeters apart.

BUFFY
I want to make love to you.

FAITH
I--I don't know how. Never done it.

BUFFY
You love me?

FAITH
More than I could ever say.

BUFFY
Then you got part of it down already.

Buffy kisses Faith. They stand without separating and move further onto the bed. Buffy pulls back.

BUFFY
Let me show you.

Faith nods. Buffy kisses Faith again. As the lovers lay down together:

FADE OUT