

Nikita – Just Another Love Story

Rating: NC-17

Pairing: Buffy / Faith

Disclaimer: The characters belong to the great and powerful Joss.

Spoilers: All BtVS S1-5 and AtS 1-2. Picks up a year or so after The Gift.

Notes: The 1st person stuff is Angel's pov. And oh my God, there's an original character in here! But not for long... and I suck at making up names so after staring at my walls for a while I decided on naming her after the fabulous Ms. Larter. And The Cathouse is a real place! Very nice it is too. Anyway, onto the fic...Fixtures in my fics? Well there's quite often a <flashback> I guess. :)

Summary: Just Another Love Story

PART 1

We all have an idea of love. The moments that come to us in daydreams, the hope we find in a smile, the perfection in a kiss. Love is the force that drives us to acts we would never usually perform, to thoughts we would never usually entertain.

I knew, as well as Faith did, the dark side of love. It's not all light and happiness. Love is a force stronger than anything else we have ever known. We have known lies that come in love's disguise, we have known the hissing fire of jealousy and the blindness of passion. Perhaps better than anyone, we have known obsession.

But in the end, it all came from love.

(One month ago)

She had lied to Angel, told him the wrong date for her release. Sure, she had vowed never to lie again, but had she believed herself? Not really. Faith wanted redemption, she wanted to make up for her countless sins, but did that mean she'd never have any fun? Not if she could help it. The slayer admired him, his determination to do what was right, but surely he could do it less... moodily. Anyway, Faith would go to him again, and she knew it wouldn't be long. It was always Angel that she ran to. He understood the seductive nature of darkness better than anyone, and he also understood the constant struggle against it. Yes, she would go back to the vampire and fight the good fight and slay demons and all that... but one night of freedom? Surely THAT wasn't a sin.

So she stepped out of the gate and squinted in the sunlight. She needed one night, just a break, some time on her own, just to prove to herself that she could do it. That prison hadn't taken away her ability to stand on her own two feet. Speaking of which, she looked down at her feet, taking her eyes away from the sun's hypnotic gaze, and studied her boots. And then her leather clad legs, her black top, her black jacket. Lots of black here. This was her uniform now, as it had been before she had been forced into baggy blue shirts and pants. She took a few steps forward, appreciating the feel of the material on her body. Her body, her clothes, just her... yeah baby, Faith was back.

She grinned to herself and walked forward. It took her a few minutes to slide back into her overconfident strut, but once she got there, oh yeah, it felt right. She moved along the LA street with a firm destination in mind. What does a girl do after she gets out of prison? Checks her wallet and heads for the nearest pizzeria, that's what.

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So that's what she did. She threw open the door, glanced around and sat down at a table to order. She still had a grin on her face when the waitress walked over to the table and she still had grin on her face when she looked up.

Maybe it was just the shock of talking to someone who wasn't wearing a prisoner's uniform or had a baton hooked in her belt, but when the short blonde waitress simply said "hungry?" and Faith automatically replied "starved", the grin slid from her lips like melted ice cream. She stumbled over her words as she ordered the biggest pizza on the menu and a large coke, and sat back as she watched the waitress move away. Faith shook herself. This was not the plan. She had thought about little else inside her cell, and now she was out, she wasn't going to mope over the other slayer. Not yet, anyway. First, there was pizza to eat, and fun to be had. Tonight, she was going to forget why she had gone to prison in the first place, tonight she was going to forget about obsession.

So Faith gave herself a mental shake and slapped the grin back on her face, ignoring the fact that it didn't feel real. Make yourself believe it, and it'll become real, she reasoned. She was good at that denial thang, after all.

The waitress brought over her order, and Faith flashed her a winning smile. Pretty waitress! "Looks good." She said in a voice something like a growl. The colour rose in the waitress's cheeks, the possible double meaning not lost on her.

She met Faith's eyes hesitantly. "Yeah... you get some great stuff in here." She replied.

The brunette nodded. "Got that right." Faith shook off the familiarity of the exchange and dragged her eyes over the blonde.

"You haven't tried it yet." The waitress said, growing more confident under the girl's appreciative gaze.

"It gets better?" Faith smirked. "Glad I chose this place..." She glanced at the girl's name tag. "... Ali."

"Now that's not fair. You know my name and I don't know yours."

"Well it's written right there." She smirked. Ali pouted at her and Faith felt an involuntary shudder go up her spine. "Faith." She said.

The blonde grinned at her. "Enjoy your meal... Faith." She purred.

The slayer watched her walk away with a small smile on her lips. She sighed and turned her eyes to the feast in front of her.

Faith wasn't a believer in doing things by halves. She focused on her meal like there was nothing else in the room. The blonde watched her with interest as she wolfed down her pizza like someone who hadn't seen good food in a long time. Ali was watching her so intently that she jumped when her boss tapped her on the shoulder and pointed to a new customer. Ali nodded and walked over, ready to take the tall brunette's order.

Faith gulped down the last of her drink and sat back with her eyes closed, finally feeling full. It was a feeling she had missed, prison food was definitely not suited to slayer appetites. She closed her eyes, drifting off in the contentment of someone knowing she did not have to live by a bell today. No one was going to give her orders now, today she was free.

She was snapped out of her thoughts as Ali tapped her on the shoulder. "Was it good for you?"

"Oh yeah." Faith smirked. "Now I've gotta work off another appetite."

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The blonde blushed under her gaze once more and began to clear the table. "There's a club near here that's pretty cool." She murmured.

"Yeah?"

"Cathouse."

Faith nodded. "Maybe I'll see you there."

"Maybe." Ali said innocently as she picked up the dishes and walked away.

Faith smirked to herself and threw some notes on the table. She stood up and stretched, pulled on her jacket and walked towards the door. Feeling a hand on her shoulder, she turned with a grin, expecting to see the blonde again. "Yeah-"

She shut her mouth as she was met with a decidedly pissed off seer. "Let you out early, huh?" Cordelia said, with more than a hint of sarcasm in her voice. "Hotel. Now."

Faith just shrugged helplessly and allowed herself to be pushed out the door by Cordelia.

Cordelia shoved Faith into the car and slammed the door. Without saying anything, she got into the driver's seat and started the car, keeping one eye on the slayer and one on the road.

Faith squirmed in the seat. Damn it, why did she feel so guilty? She just wanted one night, one night to feel free again before she allowed herself to be put under the LA gang's watchful gaze. Now here she was, being pushed around by Cordelia Chase like she was a kid. Fuck it, maybe she wasn't the old Faith after all. The old Faith would have told the ex-cheerleader to go fuck herself, but now... Faith needed them. She was willing to admit that.

"I'm sorry." She said through gritted teeth, the words still feeling alien to her. Shouldn't she be used to them by now? She'd been apologising for two and a half years just by being in prison. Saying it shouldn't be such a problem.

"I'm sorry." She said again, slightly louder this time. "I just wanted a night out."

Cordelia's eyes flashed at her for a second. "I don't want you to apologise, Faith. Just take some responsibility."

Faith nodded. Man, what was with people telling her not to say sorry? They always acted like she should, then she'd try it and they'd tell her to shut up. Women!

"I know you want to make things right," Cordelia went on. "You just have to stop lying."

"Yeah, I know." Faith said, feeling guilty again. "Look, Cordy... thanks."

"What?"

"For writing to me and stuff." Faith blushed. Thank yous weren't really her strong point either. Being a good girl was definitely going to be a struggle.

Cordelia shrugged. "It's OK." She was still a little pissed with her. Telling Faith why she had kept in touch would come later. Right now, she was debating what to tell Angel. The vampire trusted Faith,

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and whatever she had done, deep down Cordelia believed he was right. Besides, she knew how hurt he'd be if he knew Faith had lied to him already. "Faith, I'm not going to tell Angel why you lied."

The slayer turned to her, somewhat surprised. "Huh?"

"I don't want him to get hurt. He's put a lot of faith in you... uh... Faith." Cordelia said, breaking out in to a smirk.

Faith grinned at her.

"Look, I just think it'd be better if we say that you told me you were out today. We'll tell him we wanted to surprise him."

"OK." Faith said. "Thanks." Maybe saying thank you wasn't so hard after all.

Faith walked into the hotel with her mouth open. Angel always did have a thing for big impressive buildings, definitely the stereotypical part of his vamp nature showing through. She followed Cordelia into the lobby and gazed around. Cordelia had obviously been the decorator. Everything was polished, smart, and looked expensive. Faith wasn't the person for this kind of thing. She was happy with a roof over her head, didn't matter what the place looked like. Still, she couldn't help being impressed with the brunette's taste.

"Hello."

Cordelia nodded towards the girl standing by the desk. "Faith, this is Fred."

"Hey." Faith said, slightly nervous. She wasn't really in the mood for meeting new people.

"Hey! Weren't you supposed to out tomorrow?" Gunn asked, walking into the room and running his eyes over the slayer with interest.

"And that's Gunn." Cordelia said.

Faith sighed inwardly. "Hey." Where the hell was Angel?

"Where's Angel?" Cordelia asked. "We thought we'd surprise him."

Gunn nodded in understanding. "Him and Wes went to kill that demon you saw."

"Right!" Cordelia said. She'd completely forgotten about it after seeing Faith. "Forgot. C'mon, I'll show you your room." She said to Faith, who nodded and gratefully followed her out.

Faith lay down slowly on the bed after Cordelia left, appreciating the softness after her prison bunk. She closed her eyes and sank into its comforting embrace. She must have drifted off to sleep, because the next thing she felt was Angel's hand on her arm.

"Hey." She said, opening her eyes and seeing him, Cordelia and Wesley next to her.

"How are you?" The vampire asked with a smile. "Cordelia said you wanted to surprise me."

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"Surprise!" Faith said, sitting up. "Nice place you got here."

"Do you want to sleep?"

Faith shook her head. "Actually..." She said, wondering if she was going to get a lecture, "I want to go out."

Angel frowned. "Clubbing?"

Man, he knew her well. "Yeah."

The two men looked at each other. "I don't know..." Angel said. "Maybe you should rest."

"Angel, I've been in a cell for two years. I'm rested."

"I'll go with her." Cordelia said. "And you should come too. Mix a little."

"Not for me." Wesley said. "I have a date."

"It's not really my thing..." Angel shook his head.

Cordelia motioned to Faith with her fingers as she looked at Angel.

Angel sighed. He nodded reluctantly.

"Cool!" Faith said. "Get ready. We're gonna have some fun!"

"I need to find something to wear!" Cordelia exclaimed, rushing out with Angel clinging to her, asking her how she should dress.

Faith tapped Wesley on the shoulder as he was leaving. The ex-watcher flinched.

"I wish I could take it all back." Faith said softly, hating that he was still scared of her. "I'm sorry."

"Don't tell me you're sorry." He said. "Just prove to me that we can trust you."

Faith nodded. There it was again, "Don't say you're sorry." Men!

The music was blasting as they entered the Cathouse. The three of them walked towards the bar and ordered drinks. Faith's eyes were searching the place for Ali, the adrenaline of her freedom and the loud music mixing with the sight of swaying bodies, making her body howl with excitement. This was a club where you went to dance and fuck. Not to chat. It was Faith's sort of place.

They walked towards the rails that cut off the dance floor from the bar, leaning on them and looking out. Faith stole a glance at her two companions. Angel, like her, was dressed all in black, and unlike her, was looking extremely nervous. It wasn't surprising, of course. All these young, hot people, and he couldn't get close to any of them. Faith smiled at him with sympathy, understanding the feeling, although for her it wasn't physical.

She was slightly surprised by Cordelia, however. Faith would never have imagined that the ex-cheerleader could look natural in a place like this. She looking stunning, all in red, and the look on her face was suggesting that she was enjoying this trip to the bad side of town.

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Faith grinned and looked back towards the floor. Taking a swig of her drink, she did a double take. She saw Ali, dancing with none of the nervousness she had shown earlier that day. Faith put down her bottle and muttered barely loud enough for her friends to hear. "I'm going... there..."

"Huh?" Angel said, but Faith was off. He watched her walk towards the blonde, and without speaking, they started to move together in perfect synchronisation, pressing against each other, their hands straying over their bodies. Angel glanced at Cordelia, who was watching them with her mouth agape.

"Did you... I mean, is she...?"

Cordelia shrugged, her eyes still on the two girls. "No I didn't... and apparently she is..."

After an hour or so, Faith walked back to her friends. "Having fun?" She asked, wiping the sweat off her forehead.

"Not as much as you." Cordelia replied, her eyes flicking between Faith and the blonde.

Faith grinned sheepishly. "We're gonna go -"

"Don't want to know!" Cordelia exclaimed, cutting her off. "Have a good time! And tell me NOTHING."

"OK." Faith smirked, clapping a still speechless Angel on the shoulder. "Oh, and Cordy?"

"Yeah?"

"You're looking great tonight." She winked, and went to find Ali. Cordelia just blushed as Angel turned back to her with a helpless look in his eyes.

Ali unlocked the door to her little apartment and pulled Faith inside. The two girls fell onto the bed ripping each other's clothes off. Sweat and desire filled the room as hands and tongues explored each other's bodies.

Faith straddled the blonde's waist, hitting Ali's hands away as she tried to enter her. "No." She breathed, as she slid down Ali's body, ignoring her frustrated moans. She wasn't ready to be touched, hot as she was. Faith needed control and she took it in the way she knew best. Ali's moans quickly gave way to cries of pleasure as Faith's tongue swept over her folds and ran over her clit. Faith slid her fingers inside her, enjoying the sounds the blonde made almost as much as the feeling of her clenching around her fingers. It wasn't long before the girl was bucking and crying Faith's name as the brunette thrust her over the edge. Faith crawled up her body and kissed her lightly. The blonde grinned through her gasps and began to kiss Faith's breasts.

Faith squeezed her eyes shut as she felt a nipple being sucked into the blonde's mouth. Hot girl! Great sex! Screamer!... Buffy!!! Faith gently pulled Ali up and shook her head. "Don't." She said softly. It was no good. When it came to guys, Faith could detach herself, make it just sex. No big deal. With girls it was different, more intimate. Faith cursed herself, knowing that she couldn't let Ali touch her. Damn it! No one else could, she wouldn't let anyone have that power. No one but Buffy.

Ali gave her a look of confusion and hurt. Faith touched her cheek. "I'm sorry."

Ali shrugged and lay back down. "No, it's OK. Don't apologise."

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Oh for fuck's sake... Faith sighed. "I like you, but..."

Ali turned to her and watched her for a moment. Faith tried unsuccessfully to hide the look in her eyes from the blonde. "What's her name?"

Faith didn't want to open herself up, hell, she never did. She didn't want to lay this on the girl either, as she really did like her. But she couldn't help herself, the need to talk about her was so strong. Talking about her made her feel closer. So she sighed and rolled onto her side. "Buffy."

Ali nodded. "Big love?"

"It was for me."

"Oh." Ali touched Faith's cheek. "Tell me."

Faith nodded, and leaving out the slayer parts, told the blonde everything.

When the blonde fell asleep, it was with her arms around Faith. The slayer kissed her gently and unwrapped herself from her embrace. She pulled on her clothes and smiled once at her. There had been a time where Faith would have wanted to hurt her for making her open up so much, but now... now all she felt was grateful. Ali had taken it all surprisingly well, and Faith was sorry to leave. She kissed her one last time and left. In another world, they might have worked out together. But not in this one.

Faith began the long walk back to the hotel in the early morning light, and understood.

In this world, there had never been anyone for her but Buffy.

PART 2

(Today)

Faith and I have travelled the same road. We have both done things that make our hearts curl in disgust as we remember them, we have seen darkness few ever dream of, and tasted power that was not ours to hold. We travelled these roads alone, seeing others along the way, but never walking with them. It is a journey nobody can share.

That path is an easy one to walk, with no fear, no remorse, and no guilt. It has called us back so many times with seductive promises to free us from our pain, but we resisted. There is one thing that held us back from returning to that path, and that was Buffy.

I knew Faith wouldn't stay with us, that as hopeless as it was, she would return to the source of her obsession and do everything in her power to make things right. Had I known what that would mean, perhaps I would not have let her leave.

But after all, it was not my choice to make.

(Three weeks ago)

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Angel, Wesley and Gunn watched as Faith rammed the stake into the vampire's heart. She wiped the dust off her clothes and turned to face Angel, who nodded at her. "Nice job."

She shrugged. "It's what I do. We done here?"

"You get going. We'll do one more sweep." He replied. Faith nodded at him, and strode off, hands in pockets.

"Think she's OK?" Gunn asked the vampire. "She seems a bit-"

"Distracted?"

"Yeah." Gunn said as they began to walk down the alleyway.

Angel shrugged. "She won't talk to me about it."

"She's dealing with a lot." Wesley said, tucking his axe back under his coat. "You can't expect her to open up straight away."

"Got any ideas?"

"I think all we can do is wait. We're doing the right thing, Angel."

Faith headed to the nearest bar, intending to get really unconscious. Yeah yeah, good girl now. Not supposed to drink, not supposed to party. Not supposed to hide in the oblivion of sleazy bars. Fuck that. She walked over to the bar and ordered a shot of vodka and a beer. She'd barely gotten the first swig of alcohol past her lips when she felt someone walk up behind her, a little close for comfort.

The voice was slightly slurred. "Aren't you supposed to be a good girl now?"

"I was just thinking that." Faith replied, before doing a double take as the smartly dressed woman sat down next to her.

"Fuck..." Faith said, turning to face her. "Lilah Morgan. I thought you only came to dives like this on Wolfram and Hart's orders." She said, her body tensing, ready for combat.

"Who says I'm not?" Lilah said, nodding to the bartender for another.

Faith smirked. "Well if you are, I can't see them being too pleased with that." Faith said, pointing at the beer Lilah was drinking. "Never thought you'd be a beer drinker."

Lilah leaned forward and whispered into Faith's ear. "I've got lots of secrets."

"Yeah?" Faith raised an eyebrow. Man, what the hell was going on? She should be getting as far away from the lawyer as possible, but something told her that she wasn't a threat at that moment. There was no way she was this good an actress, Faith reasoned. She'd have been able to tell after last time.

"Can I get you a drink?"

Faith shrugged and put her bottle to her lips, downing it smoothly. "Why not?"

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"Isn't she back yet?" Wesley asked a few hours later.

Cordelia shook her head and continued filling. "She's probably out... dancing." She said, rolling her eyes.

"You mean getting it on with some chick?" Gunn grinned.

Wesley spluttered out his tea and stared wide eyed at him. "Excuse me?"

"Cordy didn't tell you? Seems Faith likes girls." The young man smirked, interesting images wandering through his mind.

"Well that explains a lot." Wesley nodded.

Angel looked at him. "Explains what?"

"Well, B- Uhhh..." He stopped as Cordelia glared at him. "Anyone for scrabble?"

Angel stood with his mouth hanging open, everything falling into place.

"So where'd the pretty guy go?" Faith asked, ordering yet another drink from the bar, the alcohol finally overcoming her slayer stamina.

"Lindsey? Don't know. Don't care." Lilah shrugged.

"No, I guess you wouldn't."

Lilah sighed. "I'm bored."

"Yeah?" Faith asked, keeping one drunk eye out for vampires.

"Why don't we cut to the chase?" She drawled, placing a manicured hand on Faith's thigh. Faith's eyes snapped to where her hand rested. Duh. "You said you're more of a doer..." She continued, her hand sliding up Faith's leg.

Faith caught her hand in her own and looked straight into Lilah's smouldering eyes. "You're evil."

Lilah smiled. "So are you."

"Not anymore." Faith replied, shaking her head furiously.

"Don't kid yourself, Faith. You weren't hard to find, you know." She purred, grinning wickedly.

Faith looked at her. Hot woman, there was no doubt about that, but even through her drunken haze, she knew Lilah Morgan was a one way ticket back to hell. "I'm not gonna fuck you, Lilah." Faith grinned sweetly. Personal triumph there.

Lilah whipped her hand away. "It's just a matter of time, Faith." She spat. "You'll fuck up again, and I'll find you."

"Don't waste your time." She replied, slamming a few notes down on the bar. "Good luck finding someone stupid enough to get you off." She hissed, stumbling away.

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"It's never a problem." Lilah said quietly. "Good luck with Buffy."

Faith stopped in her tracks. "What did you say?"

"I said good luck with Buffy. You'll need it."

Faith spun round and walked back towards her, invading her personal space quite dramatically. "What the fuck do you know about Buffy?" She growled.

"Just that it's never going to happen. And if it does, you'll wish it hadn't."

Faith slapped her, the drink being the only thing that kept Lilah off the floor. "Fuck you."

"You had your chance." Lilah replied, rubbing her cheek. "I could send you back to jail for that."

Faith growled at her again.

"Don't worry, I won't. I just can't wait to see you hurt more people. You're evil, Faith. Whether you know it or not."

With all her willpower, Faith clenched her fists and walked away, shaking with rage.

When she finally managed to stumble back to the hotel and found her way upstairs, Faith stood with her arms folded across her chest and swayed, staring out of the window. The city below could have been hers, it could have given her the chance to prove her worthiness as a slayer without constantly being bettered by Buffy. It wasn't right though. It hadn't been right for a long time. She missed that old feeling of Buffy's closeness, of knowing that she was one of the chosen two.

Lilah's words kept screaming themselves in her head. "Evil", "hurt", and perhaps most importantly, "you had your chance." But she had to try, as stupid as it was, she couldn't give up. She needed Buffy. There was no point in living without happiness, and she knew she'd never be happy without her. Without her other half. Faith moved away from the window and began to pull her clothes out of the drawers and threw them into a bag. Maybe she should just leave. Good byes were never her thing.

"I heard you come in. What are you doing?"

Guess that's out the window. Faith turned around to find Cordelia staring at her with a confused expression. "You're not..."

"I gotta get moving." Faith sighed, hating herself as Cordelia looked at her with hurt in her eyes. "I'm sorry, but there's stuff I gotta do."

"You're going to Sunnydale?" She asked.

Faith nodded, wondering how much the ex-cheerleader had worked out. Faith thought herself pretty hard to read, but Cordelia was good at seeing through the shit, and considering the time they'd spent together over the last week, Faith wouldn't have been surprised if she knew everything. She looked up at the seer, meeting her eyes. "I gotta make stuff right."

Cordelia nodded. Her fingers drummed on her leg for a few seconds as she thought of what to say. There had been a time... most of her life, actually, when she wouldn't have thought twice about who her words hurt, but she had changed. As Faith looked at her, she could almost see the mental

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screening process take place in Cordelia's brain. Faith smirked and took pity on her. Fuck it, she probably knew anyway.

"Yes, I know B might tell me to fuck off, or she might try to beat the hell out of me, but I gotta try." She shrugged. "I... I..." Faith struggled. Fuck, why was it so hard to say? "I love her." She said firmly.

"I know." Cordelia walked slowly towards the slightly drunk slayer. "I just don't want you to get hurt, Faith." She said slowly. "There's a real chance that she won't want to hear it."

"More than a chance, I think." Faith agreed, sitting down on the bed. Cordelia sat down as Faith looked at her. "How do you know?" The slayer asked.

"Promise you won't get all defensive?" Cordelia asked her, reaching out a hand and gently stroking the slayer's hair. Faith nodded, slightly surprised by the gesture. "I'm a seer, Faith. Just after you went to prison, my mind was opened up to all the pain in this city." She sighed at the memory. "There's so much of it..." She said, shaking her head.

Faith looked at her, confused. "I felt you, Faith, all that hurt and passion and anger, all directed at Buffy."

Faith turned her eyes to the floor, embarrassed that someone had seen her so fully. "That's why you wrote to me?"

Cordelia nodded. "I'm glad I did, though Faith." She said, moving closer to her and bringing up her eyes to meet her own. "I really am."

"Why are you so good to me? I don't deserve it." Faith said, blinking back tears. The memory of that pain was still there like a shadow on her soul. Pain she had caused, pain she had suffered. There was still part of her that honestly felt she deserved to feel nothing else. "I'm gonna fuck it up again." She said, one tear making a run for it and actually escaping.

"No you won't." Cordelia said softly, catching the tear and brushing it away with her fingers. Buffy had never been that high on Cordelia's 'people I love' list anyway, and as irrational as it seemed, she was drawn to the dark slayer. Perhaps the fact that they hadn't spent much time together before she had gone all evil helped, but the seer had started to feel as protective of Faith as Angel did. "You'll be OK." She whispered. The two girls stared at each other for a moment that was filled with possibility. Cordelia broke the tension by leaning forward and kissing Faith on the cheek. "You'll be OK." She said again, before standing and walking towards the door. "I'll see you in the morning."

"Yeah... night." Faith said softly. She shook her head and got undressed, slipping blissfully under the covers. God, why was it always this way? Figure out who you want and all these great girls came along at once. She sighed and rolled onto her back. But that was the least of her worries. She drifted off to sleep thinking of what she was going to tell Angel.

The gang were waiting for her when Faith got downstairs the next day. She put down her bag and put her hands in her pockets.

"So..." She said, looking at them all nervously.

"Take care, Faith." Wesley nodded at her, joined by Gunn and Fred.

"You too." She grinned. Maybe this wasn't going to be all emotional after all.

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Angel walked towards her and handed her an envelope. Frowning, Faith opened it to find a large sum of cash. "Angel..." She said, feeling guilty again. She was going to try to hook up with the girl he loved and he was giving her money. This was not a good thing.

Angel shook his head. "It's OK, Faith." He said gently. "I want you to stay somewhere decent, OK?"

"I... I..."

The vampire looked at her with understanding. "It's OK." He said firmly. "Good luck."

Faith looked up at him and felt her eyes start to get moist again. When did she suddenly become emotional girl. "Are you sure?" She asked, her voice full of double meaning.

"Yes." He clapped her on the shoulder. "And Faith? You're always welcome here, you know that?"

Faith nodded. "Thanks." She whispered.

"C'mon. I'll drive you to the bus station." Cordelia said.

Faith paid for her ticket and walked back over to the seer.

"OK?"

"Yup." She replied, holding up her ticket. "So this is it?"

"For now." Cordelia smiled. the two girls stood for a moment, before Cordelia broke the tension once again. She stepped forward and hugged the slayer. "She'll be lucky to have you." She said softly. "You better go."

Faith glanced at the bus and nodded. "I'm... uh..." She said, before stopping and looking at her friend again. "I'm gonna miss you, Cordy."

"Me too." She smiled. "Now go."

Faith grinned at her and nodded. "Later." She said, turning and getting on the bus to Sunnydale.

"Yeah." Cordelia sighed. "Later."

PART 3

(Today)

Fear is something that does not exist without love. With no love we are empty, cold, inhuman machines with nothing to lose, and with nothing to lose we have nothing to fear.

I know now that Faith had always loved Buffy, even when that love showed itself in hate and anger, but for a long time, she didn't know it herself. She pushed love away until she believed she cared about nothing, including her own life.

But love cannot be tamed. It rages inside us until one day it bursts free, so much stronger than before. And once we let it out, it will never be caged again.

And then? Then we have something to lose.

(Two weeks and six days ago)

As the bus ground to a halt, Faith grabbed her bag and made her way to the door. She stood and looked out at Sunnydale bus station in the afternoon sun. Her stomach was doing cartwheels, the seemingly quiet little town made her senses tingle, vampires, slayers-

"Move!" A voice growled behind her. She felt a hand on her back and found herself falling off the bus steps. Barely managing not to land on her face, her boots hit the hard concrete followed quickly by her hands. Crouching, she turned and snarled at the man who had pushed her, who quickly walked away. Great start. She stood up and picked up her bag, muttering. Note to self- thinking too much is dangerous... wait! Wasn't that her motto?

Shaking her head in annoyance, she set off instinctively towards the sleazy motel she had stayed in on her first Sunnydale visit, her hand finding the wad of money Angel had given her. The now familiar feeling of guilt washed over Faith as she fondled the money in her pocket. "Stay somewhere nice"... she frowned to herself. The Motel was shitty, but she knew the place, and it was close to the station... and besides, it would leave her some cash for more important things. Faith grinned to herself as the motel came into view. Yup, there were much more important things to spend money on than a roof and a bed.

She threw her bag onto the bed and sat down, taking in the room with her eyes. She'd purposely asked for the same one she'd stayed in before, but as she looked around, it surprised her how many memories it brought back. Why did she do it to herself? Simple really. Faith wasn't the person for doing things by halves and she was facing up to her past the only way she knew how, confronting it with every inch of her soul. There was no turning back.

Of course, that didn't mean she didn't have time to go shopping first.

Faith wandered down Sunnydale's main street in the dim early evening light, keeping one eye out for the scoobies and one eye out for a shop that would suit her tastes. Surely there was someplace cool, the vamps had to buy their leather somewhere, right? Faith wasn't the girliest of girls, that was true, but even she had to admit she got a kick from clothes shopping. Spending money was a great stress reliever, almost as good as sex... but not quite. She turned up her nose at most of the places; way too Buffy, way too Cordelia... way too Willow! ... And then she saw it. Had it always been there? A little store on the corner of the street hiding next to a cafe, was a place that made Faith grin ear to ear. Fuck a nice place to stay, it was all about the leather, baby!

She strode into the shop and grinned at the assistant like she owned the place. Her heart skipped a beat at the goods on offer, and not just the clothes either... Snapping her eyes back to the rail in front of her, she trailed her fingers along the clothes, cold and new under her skin. She could feel eyes burning into her back as she flicked through the rails. Ignoring the look of interest on the woman's face, she pulled out a pair of leather pants and licked her lips. Mmmm... you can never have too many clothes, right? Besides, her old leather pants were looking kind of worn... She skimmed her eyes down her own legs, clad in black jeans and shrugged. Denim. Denim jacket. Leather jacket? She glanced around at the assistant who smiled at her wolfishly.

Nikita – Just Another Love Story

"Try over there." She said, reading her mind (or possibly her eyes) and pointing to the other side of the shop. Faith grinned a winning smile at her and walked over to the rail, swinging her hips seductively. Was the woman pretty? Hell no. Did she have the power to give discounts? Hell yes!

"What do you think?" She asked, holding up a tight black jacket.

"Why don't you try it on?" The woman breathed at her, walking closer. Faith nodded and slipped her own jacket off her shoulders.

"Can you help me?" She asked, innocently.

The woman gulped and moved behind her, taking Faith's jacket in her hands and pulling it off slowly. Faith could have sworn she heard her moan. "Maybe a new top too?" The woman gulped, holding her breath as Faith pretended to contemplate it. The woman grabbed a deep red tank top and handed it to Faith. "It'd suit you." She said.

Faith took it and glanced at the price, doing a few calculations in her head. "OK." She said, smiling at the woman. "But you've gotta tell me how it looks."

The woman was nodding vigorously as Faith stepped into the changing room. A moment later, she was out, tight leather trousers that gripped her thighs and butt for dear life, the deep red top showing off her cleavage and strong back and arms. With her dark hair framing her face and her tongue flicking over her lips, she didn't need a mirror to know she looked good. "Well? I'm not sure..." She lied.

"You... amazing... buy..."

She grabbed the jacket and slipped it on, pulling it tight around her small frame. "Yeah?" She asked again. Oh, this woman was SO not saying no to anything.

"Yes." She nodded again.

Faith sighed. "I wanted to show it off tonight."

"You're going out? Here?"

"Yeah." The slayer smirked, before quickly letting her face fall. "I can't afford it though."

"250 bucks..."

Faith cast her eyes longingly at the clothes. "Oh well."

"I'll give you them for 225."

"I've only got 200." Faith shrugged. "Maybe I'll just take the jacket..."

"No! 200 is fine." The woman exclaimed, smiling again as Faith grinned brightly at her. The brunette began throwing off her new clothes even before she got to the changing room, suppressing a giggle. God, people were so easy.

She handed over the cash and picked up her clothes. Heading towards the door, the woman called after her. "So where you going tonight?"

"I'll see you around." Faith grinned. "Small town." She walked out the door with no intention of ever seeing her again, and shook her head. Being good wasn't as easy as it looked.

Back in the street, darkness had quickly fallen over the town. Faith swung her arms, the bags swishing against her legs. Funny how something so small can make you feel so good. She had found a little optimism simply by the shopping experience, and as she walked along the road, she almost didn't see Willow and Tara until it was too late. "Fuck!" She whispered to herself, slipping into an ally as the two girls walked towards her. Faith's eyes glinted out of the shadows as Willow babbled on to her girlfriend, oblivious to the world. A pang of jealousy shot through the slayer, that was what she wanted, to be so wrapped up in the person she loved that danger and fear didn't even register.

As the two girls walked past her hiding place, Tara's eyes flicked towards her. It was only a split second, but Faith felt her fear rise in her throat. Uh oh.

But she didn't stop. The witches kept walking, and as soon as they rounded a corner, Faith bolted in the direction of the motel.

And then there was nothing, only the pounding of her boots on the road, and the rustle of the bags against her legs. Thought went out the window as panic washed over her, and not soon enough for Faith's liking, the motel rushed into her view. Still running, she found her key in her pocket and held it ready. Bam. Motel. Clink. Key. Clunk. Door open. Slam. Door shut.

She threw her bags on the bed and sunk to her knees. As she caught her breath, Faith started to giggle, the absurdity registering in her mind. She'd fought vampires, demons, lost the person she loved, been in prison. And it was the two girls that had made her truly scared, the most frightened she'd been since that night in LA. The night she'd remembered the word 'consequence'.

She was sitting on the floor, her giggles becoming an insane cackle when the tears started. She gasped out for air as her laughter gave way to sobbing. What if Tara had seen her? What if she told the gang? What if she told Buffy? Her chance, if she even had one, would surely be gone.

Struggling to her feet and wiping the tears from her eyes, she made her way to the bathroom and rested her hands on the sink. It took her a moment to look up in to the mirror, scared of what she might see. So much fear.

Raising her eyes, she stared at her reflection, her cheeks stained by salt water, her eyes bloodshot. There had been a long time where Faith thought she was all evil, that there was no light in her at all. She'd thought she was a woman, never having the chance to just be a kid. She thought she was strong, not this person staring out at her with so much fear. She'd kept it locked up for so long. Let people see your weaknesses and they walk all over you. But now, now the gates were open and she couldn't help it.

"Wuss." She whispered. Faith rubbed her eyes and shook herself. This was not how it was going to be. There would be time for crying later, but right now she was going to get to Buffy before Tara did.

She washed her face and puled on her new clothes. The important word was 'new'. She wasn't going to fight. She wasn't going to run. If she did, she'd regret it. Maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow, but soon and for the rest of her- ugh! Gotta stop watching so many movies...

She left the motel and walked towards the biggest cemetery still thinking about Casablanca. It really didn't go with the bad girl image, that one. Getting all weepy over some old movie? Man...

Nikita – Just Another Love Story

Thinking about anything but Buffy, the walk seemed shorter than ever. Then she saw it, looming dark and overbearing in the distance was the largest of Sunnydale's cemeteries. Forcing her feet to keep moving, Faith steadied her breathing and walked in the gate.

Perhaps she was drawn by the vampires, perhaps she was drawn by her, but something pulled Faith towards Buffy with a force that she couldn't have resisted if she wanted to. She heard the thump and crack of fist on bone, and before she could even stop and panic, the blonde was in sight.

Buffy moved and fought with all and more of the skill she had always possessed, and as Faith watched her move she was almost overcome with desire to run to her side and join in the fight. To be together, the chosen two against all the darkness in the world. Together, Faith had no doubt that they would win.

The vampire exploded into dust with a 'poomf'. Just as Buffy was about to make a witty remark, her senses started tingling, and not in a vampirey way. "Come out, come out where ever you are..." She sang softly, looking around in the darkness.

Faith held her breath, an internal battle raging inside her. This was it, perhaps the only chance she would ever have to make things right. She took a step backwards as her confidence faded. Maybe this could wait...

Buffy turned and faced where Faith was standing hidden from the blonde's view. Did she know? She couldn't...

Buffy stared ahead with a strange expression on her face. Expectation? Hope? Fear? Faith cursed herself, frustrated that she couldn't read the blonde's mind. It really would have solved a lot of problems.

"I'm gonna leave." Buffy whispered. "Do you want to do this or not?... Or are you too scared?"

Faith's breathing kicked back in at that moment and she stepped out of the shadows. "Hell, no." She lied.

PART 4

(Today)

For a long time Faith was as dead as I, emotions muted almost to nothing, the meaning of consequence long since forgotten. She functioned only in the actions of murder, and as a walking corpse she killed not for passion, not for revenge, but as a reminder of the life she had taken first. Her own.

When Faith finally struggled free of death's icy grip, she was drawn back to the one person that made her feel more alive than anyone. Living for so long feeling nothing, even pain can be a kind of ecstasy, and no one can hurt us like someone we love.

And Faith loved no one like she loved Buffy.

(Two weeks and six days ago)

Nikita – Just Another Love Story

Faith met Buffy's gaze with a confidence she didn't quite feel, the blonde's blank expression making her more nervous than she would have liked. So much had passed between them, so much pain, so much time, that a simple 'hello' seemed ridiculous. Besides, Faith was sure that Buffy would attack at the slightest offence. So instead she stood there silent, hushing her nature and waiting for Buffy to make the first move.

Buffy's eyes trailed over her, head to foot, as if to make sure she was really there. Slowly, the blonde put her stake in her pocket, and then did the last thing Faith had expected. She turned and walked away. That was it, no anger, no venom, nothing. Shocked, Faith almost let her leave, before she shook herself and ran after her. "Buffy?" She asked, tentatively placing a hand on her shoulder.

Buffy didn't even turn. She just stopped and pushed Faith's hand away. "Leave." She said simply.

"I'm not going anywhere." Faith replied, still confused by the lack of emotion in Buffy's voice. She had been so sure that Buffy had been calling her, urging her to confrontation, and now this...

The blonde slayer's silence was unnerving. As she stood completely still, the rustle of wind through the trees was the only noise in the darkness. There should have been something, a sign, thunder and lightning. But there was nothing. Only calm.

"Please?" Faith asked softly. "Talk to me?"

Buffy's shoulders rose slightly as she smirked. "Why? So you can blame me for your mistakes again? So we can fight?"

"No... I want to-"

"Make things right?" Buffy broke in, her voice still a whisper. "Apologise? Tell me you've changed?"

"B..." Faith pleaded. "Do something... hit me, tell me you hate me. Just-" She stopped talking as Buffy turned slowly towards her.

"It doesn't matter anymore," she said, still oddly emotionless. "That's it."

"That'll never be it." Faith said, her voice close to breaking.

Buffy shook her head. "That's it." She said firmly, turning away again. "You're not worth my anger." She whispered, struggling to keep her own voice steady as she started walking again.

Faith stood and forced down the urge to cry, or to run after Buffy and attack, or to scream... anything to get a reaction. There had always been something, a passion between them, and even when it had been focused around pain or hate, it had been a kind of comfort. She had mattered, made a difference, and that was something. "That'll never be it," she whispered to herself as she watched the other slayer leave the cemetery. "Never."

She forced her feet to move in Buffy's direction. Fuck it, she wasn't going to leave it like that, the blonde was holding something back and she was going to find out what it was.

Unfortunately, as Faith walked out into the street, she could no longer see Buffy. She glanced around, and seeing nothing, she let out a grunt of frustration. No no no! That wasn't going to be it! Faith closed her eyes and tilted her head to the sky, silently calling out for Buffy in her mind. Where was she? Logic told her that the blonde was probably heading to her dorm to surround herself with Scoobies and get out a really big axe or something, but she shook her head slightly. She hadn't sensed any fear. Following her instincts, Faith opened her eyes and decided to go to the Summers' home.

She struggled to keep her mind blank as she walked up Revello Drive, refusing to think of what could be waiting for her. It all looked the same, so familiar and yet so alien. She had walked this street so many times, and she had always felt like a visitor in a place she didn't quite understand. Happy families, people walking their dogs, playing with their kids. This had never been her life, and she didn't believe it ever would be.

And there it was. Buffy's home, everything she had ever wanted and everything she could never have was inside, and it scared the shit out of her. For a long time she had lashed out against it, needing to make herself believe that she didn't want that kind of life, that it was beneath her. She was good at bullshit.

Her boots seemed to stop outside the yard of their on accord, and try as she might, she could not get them moving again. "Wuss." She whispered to herself for what felt like the millionth time that day.

But still she stood, looking up at the house and praying for something to take the decision away from her. Where the hell were all the vamps when you needed them?

Faith's breath caught in her throat as a light flicked on in Buffy's window. She'd been right. Give it up for instincts! Breathe. Breathing is good... willing herself forward, she walked underneath Buffy's window and began to climb. Doors? Fuck doors, we're making an impression here.

Pulling herself up, she looked in the window and found that Buffy had left the room. Deciding that it would be hard to make things worse, she opened the window and crawled in. "You should know better, B." She said softly, shaking her head. Her boots landed softly on the carpet and she straightened up, once again holding her breath. After what seemed like eternity, and yet not long enough, she heard the padding of feet on the carpet, louder, louder, louder, stop. Buffy stood in the doorway, her hands halting in the process of brushing her hair and her mouth hanging open.

Faith stood there and tried not to think about how cute Buffy looked. "Window was open." She murmured, as if it explained everything.

Throwing her brush on the bed and placing her hands on her hips in her trademark full body version of Willow's resolve face, Buffy stared at Faith and questioned her with her eyes.

"Can we talk?" Faith asked nervously.

"No!" Buffy exclaimed with a look of disbelief, before forcing down her emotions again.

"Please?"

"What part of 'no' don't you understand?"

Faith eyes slid to the floor, knowing that a smart ass comeback would only make things worse. "I just want to talk. I'm not gonna hurt you, B."

Buffy smirked and rolled her eyes. She glanced around the room for a moment, controlling herself before she looked at the brunette again. Faith watched her, praying for the impossible as Buffy trailed her eyes over her.

"I don't want to talk." She said. "I don't want to listen. I don't want to see you. All I want," Buffy said slowly, "Is for you to leave."

Nikita – Just Another Love Story

"I thought I told you that I'm not going anywhere." Faith snapped back, and mentally slapped her forehead. Control!

But Buffy ignored her. "Listen to me very carefully." She said, marvelling at the steadiness of her voice. "Leave. Leave this house. Leave Sunnydale. I don't care where you go, as long as it's far away from here."

Summoning all her will, Faith looked into the cold, green eyes and shook her head. "No."

"I know what you want, and I'm not giving it to you." Buffy said, her voice close to cracking. She gulped once, her eyes flicking towards the ceiling before falling back on Faith. "You're nothing to me."

Faith stared at her and shook her head, familiar tears in her eyes. "And you're everything to me." She gasped out, before steadying herself and walking past Buffy to the door. The blonde's hand grabbed Faith's wrist. Without looking at each other, they stopped and stood for a second, all of their senses burning at their point of contact, taking their breath away. For an instant, that contact was all that existed. But it was only an instant.

Buffy freed herself from the moment first. "Don't come back." She said, before letting Faith go and walking to the window.

The brunette didn't look back, not trusting herself not to cry. She walked out the door, down the stairs, outside, onto the street. When she couldn't stand it any longer, she glanced at Buffy's window. But the blonde slayer had gone.

Faith didn't so much walk back to the motel as stumble. She shouldn't have been confused, after all that had happened she hadn't been expecting to be welcomed back into Buffy's life with open arms, it was just... she seemed like she was holding back. Faith would have known what to do had Buffy attacked her, or screamed at her, but this?

She hadn't expected 'nothing'. It was harder to deal with than anything else that could have happened. Her boots scuffed the concrete as she dragged herself along the road, not in despair, but in absolute confusion. She needed to clear her head.

Taking a detour towards a cemetery, Faith took a stake out of her pocket and held it tightly. There were some things that stayed constant, and being a slayer was one of them. Thank god for that.

Like they knew she was ready for a fight, three vampires soon descended on the young slayer, the grins on their faces quickly fading as they saw she was prepared. They circled her slowly as she stood firm, stake in hand and her eyes flashing.

One.

Duck, punch, balance, thrust, poomf.

Two.

Side-step, trip, crouch, thrust, poomf.

Three.

Jump, kick, land, thrust, miss, dodge, kick, thrust, poomf.

Nikita – Just Another Love Story

Easy. She held her stake like it was part of her body and panted slightly. Easy, but it still felt good. She wandered deeper into the cemetery and looked around, willing away the nagging feeling at the back of her mind that still latched on to Buffy.

Four.

Run, grab, thrust, poomf.

There were some things that stayed the same, all right.

Five.

Kick, punch, kick, thrust, poomf.

The effects of slaying being one of them.

Six.

Punch, punch, punch, kick, punch, kick, kick, kick, kick, thrust, poomf.

Not a scratch. "Is that all you got?" She called out into the darkness, hearing a scamper of feet running away from her. Who could blame them?

She sighed and put the stake back in her pocket. Stretching, she walked back to the motel, her mind still calling out for Buffy.

Opening the door, she began stripping off her clothes even before she got into the room. A reaction. That was all she was hoping for right now. That was she could hope for, she sighed as she walked into the bathroom and turned on the shower. Leaving the room dark, she got in and leaned against the tiles, letting the warm water run over her and closing her eyes.

She had looked so cute, standing there with her mouth hanging open, her hair draped across one shoulder, leaving her neck bare on the other side. Smooth, soft skin, muscles tense... Faith's hand slipped down between her legs of its own accord.

"No, no, no!" She gasped, pulling it away. She felt guilty enough already. Running her hands through her hair, she attempted to concentrate on something else.

Buffy hadn't been shocked in the graveyard, that was the weird thing. It was like she had known she had been there all the time. She stood there, her eyes trailing over Faith's own body. What she would have given to pounce on her right then...

Somehow, her hand had made its way back between her thighs. She gasped into the darkness as her fingers trailed over her own clit. Damn slaying side effects!

Her finger trailed their way around her pussy, slipping in the wetness of her body and the water from the shower. Images of Buffy flashed through her mind as she lost all will to remove her hands.

<She felt Buffy's eyes on her as she danced, amazed at how strong the feeling was. Faith moved to the rhythm of the music, pressing against the vampire, using her body not to tease him, but her. The girl she had come here for. Heat mixed with the vampire's cold skin as Buffy's eyes burned into her, every nerve in her body aware of the other slayers stare.>

Her fingers massaged her clit, drawing groans from deep within her throat.

Nikita – Just Another Love Story

<Thud, thud, thud.

Buffy pummelled the gloves on Faith's hands as she let out all the tension of her break up. Her face pink from anger and exertion, her eyes fuelled with rage. Faith's breathing was ragged as she took Buffy's blows, suppressing the urge to comfort her in a rather special way...>

Faith slid two fingers inside herself with ease. Gasping into the night, she leaned harder against the slick tiles, cold against her burning skin.

<She saw her from the other side of the Bronze, smiling and giggling with the scoobies. Faith moved slowly towards her, savouring the anticipation of a night alone with the older slayer. Then she was there, a smile plastered on her face to hide her nerves. So close, so warm, and then Buffy touched her. Her arm wrapped around Faith's shoulder, in their first intimate contact, their only contact past training. Faith's senses screamed Buffy's name as she struggled to keep a neutral look on her face, heat rising and pulsing through her body as she could only shrug as the gang looked at her. With Buffy so close, she had no idea what they were saying.>

Her fingers slid in and out faster and faster, her breathing shallow as she neared climax. Her hips ground against her hand, and she was oblivious to anything but the slayer in her mind.

<They moved together, hands clasped, bodies close. Sweat and desire mixed together as they moved in perfect synchronisation. Only them. Only them in a room filled with people. No one else existed.>

Harder and harder, faster and faster, so close...

<Then Buffy's eyes flicked to hers, and for a split second, Faith saw in them everything she had dreamed of.

Passion. Desire. Love.>

She felt her muscles clench tightly around her fingers, her body throbbing with pleasure. And then...

<They stopped moving, holding their breath as Buffy's hand gripped her wrist, searing her skin with one touch.>

Faith yelled Buffy's name as she climaxed, coming hard around her own fingers, her hips bucking and thrusting in the darkness.

She slid gasping down the tiles to the floor, pulling her fingers free of her body. She shook away the feeling of guilt she had known she would experience, and closed her eyes. Sitting under the warm water, a tear slid down her cheek.

It had only been a moment, but a moment can seem like eternity, and that was enough to keep her hope alive.

Faith smoothed the hair out of her face and knew she wasn't going anywhere. Not without Buffy.

PART 5

(Today)

When it gets difficult, we hide.

Nikita – Just Another Love Story

Faith had hidden herself for years against the pain of loving, and opening herself up to it once more was harder than anything.

Hope is a hard thing to kill. She tried not to let it take her over, but it stayed, urging her to confrontation, pleading with her to stay near Buffy. And she did, giving in helplessly to its whispers, letting herself believe once more in happiness. But love leaves us open, naked and vulnerable, and if that love hurts us, our defences come back up and we cling to the one thing we know we have control over, whatever that may be.

For Faith, that one thing was obvious.

(Two weeks ago)

"And you've been, what? Stalking her?"

Faith was sure Cordelia was rolling her eyes. "Not stalking." She said firmly. "Just... looking out for her. And y'know, waiting."

"For what?" The seer asked. "For her to send an invitation?"

Faith sighed. Perhaps calling hadn't been the best idea, a lecture was really not what she needed right now. "It's not easy." She said, switching phone hands and playing with the bedclothes.

Cordelia sighed back. "I know. Look, does she even know you're there?"

"Yeah, I told you I spoke to her."

"But since then?"

Faith flopped onto her back and stared at the ceiling for a moment. "Yeah." She said finally. "She knows. I can feel it."

"Then what's stopping you?"

"It's..." Faith paused and shook her head. God, this was dumb. "I get to be near her this way." She said quietly. "I get to see her fight and walk and breathe... I get to see her without us fighting. It doesn't hurt so much." Faith waited for a reply and was met with silence. "Cordy?"

"You're in love." She said after a moment.

"I know 'duh' is your word, but I'm gonna steal it for a sec." Faith replied. "Duh."

Cordelia's death stare was almost audible. "You have to take a chance with these things. God, I've had it with you dark moody types and your obsessions over little blondes!" She exclaimed. "I mean, hello, I know she's not the most open person in the world, and she's whiny and self-involved, but... wait, why do you love her again?"

Faith was silent for a moment, allowing the seer to catch her breath. "She's Buffy." She shrugged quietly.

Yet another sigh was heard down the phone. "Yeah. She's Buffy."

Nikita – Just Another Love Story

A few tension filled seconds passed before Faith broke the silence. "I miss you." She said, the words feeling strange in their honesty.

Cordelia closed her eyes. "Me too." She whispered.

Faith drummed her fingers on her knee nervously for a moment. "I gotta-"

"Go slay, I know."

"I'll call you."

"You better." Cordelia said sharply. "And Faith?"

"Yeah?"

"Take a chance. Maybe she'll take one too." She said, before hanging up the phone and shaking her head. "You're worth it."

Willow was worried. She had that cute little frown on her face and her hands were clenching and unclenching frantically. Tara smiled softly at her girlfriend. "What's wrong?"

Willow got up from Buffy's bed and poked her head out of the door to make sure the slayer was still downstairs. "Buffy." She said, turning back to Tara. "She's been sort of... unBuffylike."

Tara looked at her questioningly.

"Off on her own a lot and stuff."

"Buffy does that." Tara shrugged, not seeing anything different.

"I mean, yeah, with the slaying, but she's not usually so 'I can't wait' about it, you know? Or maybe you don't know and I'm just thinking too much..." Willow paused for breath and caught the amused look on her girlfriend's face. "I'm thinking too much, aren't I? I do that sometimes."

Tara smiled at her affectionately. "Why don't you talk to her if you're worried?"

Willow's hands started clenching again. "I don't want to seem nosey, is it nosey? I can't ask her why she's going off on her own- oh! Maybe she has a new boyfriend?"

"Maybe. She's your best friend, honey. You can ask her."

"Yeah, maybe I should. Just say 'Buffy, new boy?'"

"No new boy." Buffy said firmly, walking back into the room. "No romance in Buffytown."

"Oh! I didn't mean to-"

"Will!" Buffy exclaimed. "Chill."

"Yeah, OK." The red head sat back down again and instinctively took her lover's hand.

Nikita – Just Another Love Story

Buffy tried not to notice their closeness and instead pulled out a box of weapons. "I'm just being responsible." She said.

"But it's been quiet?" Tara asked her. "No big evil, I mean?"

"Well, yeah." The slayer replied quickly. "But that's always when something bad happens, you know?" She put a stake in her pocket and picked up a small knife, examining it closely.

"Maybe we should go with you?" Willow asked. "We could try that new paralysing spell we were-"

"No!" Buffy exclaimed. "I mean, I don't want to put you guys in danger."

"But it'd be safer if you weren't alone."

Buffy threw her knife back in the box and pulled out a bigger one. "I'm not alone." She said absentmindedly as she looked it over before putting it in her pocket.

"You're not?" Willow asked.

"Huh? Oh! Uh..." Buffy stammered, realising what she had just said. "I mean, uh, Spike! Spike usually turns up, so no. Not alone."

"Well if you're sure..."

Buffy smiled at her friends. "I'm sure."

Faith walked where ever her instincts told her to go, just as she had every night that week. The cemetery was deserted as it always was, save for a few vampires that were hiding in the darkness, and Buffy. Yes, Buffy was there. Faith could feel her senses tingle as she drew closer, slipping through shadows and past gravestones. She could barely hear the thump of wood hitting flesh over the beating in her chest, but it was there. She was there.

Buffy walked slowly through the cemetery, her eyes and ears open for any sound of movement, her heart crying out for something she knew was there, but would not allow free reign. She ignored the excitement of possibility she felt, and looked around. It was too dangerous. Suddenly, her thoughts were broken as the third vampire of the night flashed across her view and she pounced, pushing against him and swiping his legs.

Faith watched her in fascination, repressing the urge to clap as Buffy's efficient hands ended his movements, her stake reducing him to a pile of dust. Every nerve in her body called out to her to walk over to Buffy, to stop hiding. But she couldn't. She wasn't supposed to be there.

The blonde slayer stood and looked around, perhaps it was movement that she sensed, perhaps it was something deeper. This had to stop. She knew nothing could come of this, she wouldn't allow it.

It was time for confrontation.

"I know you're there." She said to the blackness.

Faith could have sworn her heart stopped beating for a second.

"This has to stop." Buffy said, putting her stake back in her pocket.

Nikita – Just Another Love Story

Faith breathed deeply and nodded to herself. She could do this.

"No more hiding." Buffy said loudly. "Come on!"

Faith took a step forward and then stopped suddenly as Spike stepped out behind Buffy.

Buffy whirled round. "Spike?" She said, somewhat shocked. Was this who she had felt? Couldn't have been...

"So you can feel me here, huh slayer?" Spike grinned. "I knew it."

"Spike, what the Hell are you doing here?" Buffy asked, looking over her shoulder for signs of another person.

Spike shrugged and lit a cigarette. "Looking out for you," he said. "In case you needed some-"

"I. Don't. Need. You." Buffy hissed, wishing he would leave. There were more important things to worry about.

"Yes you do. I've waited so long for you to realise we're meant to be together, and I'm not leaving now." He said smugly.

Buffy sighed in exasperation and whipped out her stake again. "I don't want to do this." She said. "No, that's a lie... I do want to do this, but I'm giving you a chance because of what you did for me and Dawn."

Spike looked at her with a pained expression. "Oh that's bloody great." He said, his cigarette leaving trails of light in the air as he moved his hands. "You need to figure out what you want, Summers." He said, spinning around and striding off, muttering to himself.

Buffy shook her head, feeling slightly guilty. She sighed and turned around to see Faith leaning against a gravestone.

"Maybe he has a point." She said.

Buffy stared at her, her hands in pockets, leaning casually against the stone, long hair framing dark lips and darker eyes. For a moment, Buffy lost herself in memory, memory of who they were when they first met. Carefree, wild, fun. No no no. Buffy shut her emotions down as soon as they began to rise.

She shook her head slightly and met the brown eyes with as much coldness as she could muster. "I thought I told you to leave."

Faith shrugged. "First you tell me to stay away, then you tell me to come back. You need to figure out what you want." Both girls were as surprised as each other at Faith's slip into her old cocky self.

Buffy's head was leaning to the side in confusion, giving her the appearance of an inquisitive puppy. Faith couldn't help but smile slightly. So cute.

"I know what I want." Buffy said finally.

"Yeah?"

Nikita – Just Another Love Story

"Yeah. And I know what you want, too." She said, moving closer to the other slayer. "You want this, don't you Faith?" She purred, indicating her body with her fingers. "It's what you've always wanted."

Faith could feel her heart ready to explode, but unwilling to submit, she gave it all right back. "We all know what I want, B." She said. "This is about you."

Buffy stopped in her tracks, surprised at Faith's honesty and slightly disappointed that her game had been cut short. "I want you to leave me alone."

"Really?" Faith took a step closer. "It doesn't look that way to me." God, what was she doing?! This was where Faith's confidence lay, and she knew she could use it. She didn't have anything else.

"Yes." Buffy whimpered, electricity shooting up her spine. This shouldn't be happening, this was the end.

"Tell me one more time." Faith said, raising a hand slowly to Buffy's cheek and sliding it softly round to her neck. Fuck it, all or nothing. "Tell me one more time, and I'll leave."

Buffy shivered against her touch, her brain screaming to tell her to go.

Their eyes burned into each other's, years of unresolved tension still evident in each. "Tell me one more time."

"Fuck you." Buffy whispered, grabbing the dark slayer roughly by the shoulders and pulling her closer. "Fuck you."

Their lips met suddenly, hungrily, devouring each other's taste and touch, lips and tongues sliding over and into each other, and as quickly as it had begun, it was over.

Buffy pulled away and stepped back, her breathing shallow and her eyes wild. "Fuck. You." She said one last time, before turning and leaving as fast as her slayer legs could take her.

And once more, Faith was left alone and confused.

But this time, she was smiling.

PART 6

(Today)

We cannot fight it.

As much as we try, passion cannot be tamed, will not be silenced. It rushes through us like fire, burning our senses, dimming our minds and lighting our hearts. It sees no consequences, blind to the future, blind to the past, blind to everything but the present.

Passion is now, and nothing more.

But once it is released, it will ever be caged again.

Nikita – Just Another Love Story

(Two weeks ago)

It took a moment for Faith to register that she was truly alone. Buffy was no longer in sight, having bolted for the nearest gate with a look of anger on her face. Anger that her defences had been broken so dramatically. The grin slipped from Faith's lips as she looked into the darkness, her mind battling over the most important decision she would make. Follow, or stay.

She didn't want to push her. Part of her was scared that pursuit would force Buffy into a state of panic, closing her off completely. But waiting could do the same thing. Defences would be given time to rebuild, excuses would be given time to form, and Faith would be left alone once more.

A second later, she had made her decision. Hell, she was sick of waiting.

Faith shrugged inwardly and headed towards the gate and into the street, realising that it led to the Bronze. She nodded to herself. Seemed pretty likely. She picked up speed and walked on, a look of determination forming on her face, it falling momentarily as she realised the scoobies might be there. Standing on the road, she went over it all again, the risks and rewards chances and opportunities. She could ruin it all.

But it was a cold, empty motel room and crap TV, or a chance to tell Buffy what she felt.

Unsurprisingly, Buffy came out on top... in a manner of speaking.

She walked on again, her brisk pace turning into a jog. Music could be heard, filling her with a confidence as she remembered the last time they had been there together. The night they had come so close to working everything out, so close to being happy... the night it all went wrong. Insecurities, guilt, remorse, they all clawed their way back up into her soul at the thought. Fuck.

She stopped once more, the Bronze now in sight. Last chance to leave.

Faith took a deep breath and remembered the feel of the blonde's lips on her own, the strength in her arms and the touch of her hair. It all came flooding back in that second, and she walked towards the backdoor. She was Faith. This was what she was good at. She entered, praying that Buffy was alone.

And she was.

Sort of.

Through the crowd of people, Faith's eyes instantly fell on the other slayer. Buffy shone, her skin glowing gold in the dim light of the Bronze as she moved sensually to the pulsing beat of the music. Faith watched her as she moved slowly towards the dance floor, drawn as always to the heat she felt radiating from the girl she loved, the girl with her arms linked around the neck of a tall, blonde man, her hips caught in his eager grasp.

Buffy tried to keep her gaze fixed on the man in front of her, but she felt Faith's eyes burning into her, her presence refusing to be ignored. Slowly she turned, her back against him as she swayed, almost daring the girl to make a move. Their eyes locked in their constant struggle as Buffy grasped the man's hands, pulling them around her to rest on her stomach.

Faith growled with a mixture of anger and arousal. But still she stayed, unable to move her stare from the other girl. The man's lips lowered to her neck, and Faith swore she heard Buffy gasp. The brunette's body was shaking, knowing that she was a beat away from attack, and that would only serve to make Buffy push her even further away. Struggling, she pushed down the hate that threatened to overcome her, and turned, walking back out the door.

Nikita – Just Another Love Story

Buffy's breath caught in her throat as she saw Faith leave, and against everything her mind told her, she pushed away from the man and ran after her.

Only to find Faith leaning against the wall.

"Good show, B. Really proved your hetero status." Faith said, slightly bitterly.

Buffy stared at her for a moment. "I wasn't trying to prove anything. You mean nothing to me and I-"

"Then why are you here?" Faith walked towards her slowly, circling her with her body and devouring her with her eyes. "You trying to tell me that show wasn't for me?"

Buffy gulped as she felt Faith hands push her into the darkness of the alleyway, too far gone to put up a fight. "It wasn't." She whimpered as her back hit brick.

"Sure B." Faith growled, the arousal she felt from Buffy pushing her confidence higher. "You gonna tell me you just came out here for air, too?" Faith leaned into her, her hands snaking up the blonde's top and lying where the man had had his. "This is better, isn't it?"

"I-" Buffy gulped as Faith's fingers started to trace circles, leaving fire in their wake.

"Yeah, I know it is. I know what you want, and I can give it to you." Faith growled, her thigh nudging between Buffy's legs. "And all you ever had to do was ask."

Buffy eyes flicked to Faith's own, a defiance still dimly there. Fading, but there. "I never will."

"Yeah?" Faith grinned. "Maybe, but I know you'll never tell me to stop, either." Her lips pushed firmly against Buffy's, their tongues sliding against each other's as Buffy mouth opened despite her brain screaming for her to stop. Their hands tangled in each other's hair, running over shoulders, muscle, and in an instant, Faith hands had pushed Buffy's top above her breasts, her bra snapped open with a confident flick.

Faith's lips trailed slow, hot kisses down the smooth tanned skin, nipping at the flesh on her shoulders. Buffy breathing came in short gasps as she felt her tongue flick lightly over one erect nipple, her hands pushing Faith's head closer to her breast. Faith's fingers found the other, rolling it softly as she continued to suck and nip with her mouth. Buffy hips were swaying back and forth as she gasped, and unable to wait, she began to push Faith down, down towards the place she need to be touched, as much as she hated to admit it.

Faith grinned inwardly as she fell to her knees, unzipping the blonde's pants and pulling them slowly to the ground and following them with her panties. She ran her hands up the other slayer's firm legs, easing them apart, and inhaled sharply as she looked, Buffy's arousal coating her completely. Buffy groaned loudly as Faith softly touched her with her tongue, drinking in her scent and her taste, the very things she had longed for for so long. She ran her tongue along the other slayer's wet folds, before dipping in to massage her clit slowly. As Buffy's hips moved against her, Faith found her own moving in time, her own arousal building to boiling point. Her fingers ran up the inside of Buffy's legs, and Buffy cried out as she felt her enter her, her fingers filling her completely.

It was Buffy cries that were ecstasy to Faith, however. This what what she had wanted, the chance to make her happy. And she sounded happy. Faith slid her fingers in and out of the blonde, growing faster, harder as she heard her gasp out and near climax. With an overwhelming desire to see her as she came, Faith moved back up the blonde's body, her thumb massaging her clit and her fingers slamming into her. Buffy pulled her close as she bucked under her, their mouth meeting once more in a passionate kiss.

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She pulled back as Buffy's body tensed, her orgasm overcoming her. The dark slayer looked at her with awe in her eyes. She had never said it until then, had never felt it in her heart. But she did now, and it was time to stop playing.

"I love you." She whispered as Buffy climaxed under her hand.

Gasping, the blonde turned to her, pushing their lips together for one more instant. "I know." She replied softly. She smiled gently at Faith, her eyes filled with sorrow, before becoming blank once more and pushing her away. "But I can't love you."

"Can't, or won't?" Faith asked, as Buffy words hit her like a fist.

Pulling her clothes back on, Buffy turned to her. "Don't ask me, OK? Don't try to make me."

Faith stared at her. "I..."

"You had me. Isn't that enough?"

"No! B, it's not about that. It was never about that." She said, "It's more. I-"

"Faith!" Buffy pleaded, tears glistening in her eyes. "Just trust me. I shouldn't have even done this."

Faith looked at her, wishing to be allowed to hold her as she saw her wiping away her tears. "What's wrong?"

"Nothing." Buffy shook her head. "Just... I have to go."

Defeated, Faith sighed and nodded. "OK, B." She said, letting her pass. "I'll see you tomorrow." She added under her breath.

PART 7

(Today)

We cannot choose who we love.

The wrong person is so often right, and the right one so wrong. If we could choose, if we could shut down the fire that rages inside us, life would be easy. But who would want it? Faith would never pick such a life, and neither would Buffy.

But we didn't yet know what that would mean.

(One week ago)

Faith sat nervously on her bed as she listened to the silence on the other end of the phone. She knew what Cordelia felt. Faith had spent a long time finding other people's weaknesses and using them as a weapon, and although she no longer craved that power, she found that it was still as sharp as ever. So she knew. But she also needed a friend, and Cordelia had been her only choice.

Eventually Cordelia spoke, obviously struggling to keep her voice steady. "So you got her then." She said, more of a statement than a question.

Nikita – Just Another Love Story

Faith shrugged, unwilling to admit the pain the whole experience had caused her. "For a moment."

"Since then?"

The slayer almost laughed out loud. It was either that or cry. "Since then? Every night, there's been someone. One of her little Scooby gang." She shook her head. "Or Spike."

Cordelia spluttered his name out in disbelief. "Spike?!"

"What about Spike?" Came a voice in the distance.

"Hang on, Angel just walked in."

Faith sat back against the headboard as she listened to Cordelia giving Angel a quick run down about the situation, noticing that she was leaving out the sex details. Probably fill him in later, after all, they had something in common. Faith winced, knowing that she was hurting her. It was the last thing she wanted to do. The girl had helped her so much, sitting here and listening to her whine on about Buffy, and all the while... she felt too guilty to even think about it.

By the tone of the seer's voice, Faith could tell she was alone again. "Angel says 'hey'."

"Hey back." Faith replied, wondering just how much the vampire knew about everything. Probably a hell of a lot.

"So, Spike."

"He's in love with her apparently. I think she keeps him around cause he helped Dawn or something, I dunno."

Cordelia paused for a moment, bracing herself. "What are you going to do?"

"I'm such a dumbass, I can't believe I left you guys and came here where everyone hates me." Faith said, starting to ramble. "Maybe I should come back."

As much as she wanted to kick herself for saying it, Cordelia shook her head. "No. You're not running."

Faith sighed. "I know. I just... I miss you guys."

"We'll still be here when you get the girl." Cordelia said. "You're in love, and you have a chance. Don't throw it away." She finished, her voice cracking again. "Look, I'm going to go--"

"I'm sorry Cordy."

She closed her eyes tightly. "I know. Bye." And then she hung up.

Faith sat and listened to the dial tone for a second, feeling horrible, and then put the phone down. She walked to the bathroom and stared into the mirror, steadying herself for the night ahead. "Well?" She said to her reflection. "You gonna do the smart thing, or are you gonna try again?" She smirked at herself and shook her head. Like there was ever any doubt. "Dumbass." She said as she grabbed her jacket and walked out the door.

Nikita – Just Another Love Story

Buffy walked a step ahead of Xander and Anya, and tried to ignore Anya's annoyance at having to patrol. Of course, it wasn't easy when the ex-demon was so vocal about it.

"I don't see why we have to be here." She complained as Xander rolled his eyes at her. "She's a slayer. What are we going to do?"

"Buffy just wants some company." Xander replied, taking his girlfriend's hand.

"But it's pointless. Why couldn't Spike go with her? He likes to fight, and we could be having sex."

"Spike's a vampire." Xander said, a frown on his face. "He definitely shouldn't be here." What was everyone's obsession with vampires who couldn't kill?

Anya shrugged. "Spike is OK, considering he's evil."

"So you like Spike?" Xander asked her with a hurt tone in his voice. "He's a demon!"

"I was a demon!" Anya exclaimed, annoyed that everyone seemed to forget. "And anyway, he's got a chip."

Xander let go of her hand again. "That doesn't mean we can trust him."

"Maybe. But we could be having sex." Anya sniffed.

At Xander's lack of reply, Buffy turned to them. "You guys can go if you want." She said, getting fed up with the constant whining.

"No, it's OK. We want to be here." Xander said.

Anya scowled at him.

"Really guys, it's OK." Buffy shrugged, looking around and seeing no sign of Faith. "It looks pretty quiet anyway."

Anya and Xander looked at each other for a second. "Yeah?" Xander asked, reluctant to leave Buffy in any danger, despite knowing that he wouldn't be much use in a fight anyway.

Buffy nodded. "Yeah."

The couple smiled gratefully at her and made their getaway, leaving Buffy twirling a stake and wondering if Faith would turn up. Part of her wanted it, there was no denying that, the week since their... mistake... feeling longer than any Buffy had known. But there was the sane part, the part that knew nothing should happen.

Still, she couldn't ignore the excitement that pulsed through her, knowing she was alone and that soon she might not be. She shook her head. This was exactly the reason she had refused to patrol without her friends for so long.

Faith was almost there when she was jumped by a vampire. In her hurry to get to the other slayer, she hadn't been paying attention, and she cursed as she fell flat on her face. Twisting, she pulled a stake out of her pocket and rammed it into him, coughing as dust fell on her face. "Asshole." She muttered, flipping up and wiping herself down.

Nikita – Just Another Love Story

She looked up in surprise as another leapt towards her. Catching her off guard again, she felt a kick connect with her stomach.

"You're off your game." Buffy said as she ran towards her, seeing another two vampires joining the fight.

Faith smirked slightly and kicked the vampire, breaking his nose. "I had other things on my mind." She grunted, staking him as Buffy did the same. The remaining vampire looked at the two slayers with fear and turned to run, only to have his legs swiped by Faith, who jumped on him and punched him a few times before staking him. "I think they're getting easier." She muttered, standing up and facing Buffy, who was looking flushed.

They stood and looked at each other for a moment, breathing heavily, heat filling the air between them. Unable to take the intensity of her gaze, Buffy turned and walked away, going further into the cemetery.

Faith put her stake in her pocket and followed the blonde. "You've been avoiding me." She said after a moment.

Buffy whipped back round and stared at her. "No I haven't."

"What's wrong?" Faith grinned. "Scared you couldn't control yourself?"

Buffy paused, the challenge in Faith's voice urging her to fight. "Me?" She asked. "I don't think I'm the one with control issues."

"No?" Faith gulped, the tone of Buffy voice raising the hairs on the back of her neck, as she involuntarily stepped forward.

"No." Buffy said, an evil glint in her eyes. "I could walk away, Faith. Could you?" She backed up against the side of a tomb and slid a hand over her breasts, hoping Faith would... no, she didn't know anymore...

Faith just watched her as her hands moved to her pants, unhooking the button and slowly pulling them down over her hips. She walked closer, ignoring the voice in her head that yelled at her not to.

"I'm not gonna play your fucking weird mind games, B." She growled.

"No?" Buffy asked, sliding her fingers inside herself as she kept her eyes fixed on Faith's. She slid them out again, coated in her own juices, and ran them over Faith's lips. "Then walk away." She purred, thrusting them into her mouth.

Faith groaned as she sucked helplessly on her taste, hating herself as she lost all power to resist. As she felt Buffy's hand on her shoulder, she sank to her knees and buried her tongue deep inside the blonde's centre, crying against her as Buffy came fast underneath her.

Faith half stumbled, half crawled away from Buffy as she pulled her clothes back on. Shaking her head in self-disgust, Faith finally got to her feet and ran.

Her eyes were so blurry that she hadn't seen the blonde's own tears.

PART 8

(Today)

Nikita – Just Another Love Story

We tell ourselves that we can have just one more, that we control our addictions, that they do not control us.

We believe what we want to believe, pushing away the truth to justify our desires, lying so we can take have one last taste. But every time we give in, its hold becomes that much stronger, our wills decaying under the strength of our need.

And love can be the strongest addiction of all.

(Six days ago)

She had slept badly, filled with anger, confusion, and a burning sense of disgust. Disgust at herself. She had dreamed of Buffy so many times, of making love with her. Not fucking her against some wall. And of course, her body was begging for release, release from the tension that Buffy had installed in her from day one.

She hated herself for it, that loss of control. Faith's power had always been her sexuality, and now that one thing had been ripped from her. And she was helpless without it.

So finally giving up, she got out of bed and started to pack her bags. She should have done it a long time ago. She was going back to LA.

Her heart jumped at the sound of knocking a few hours later. Her few possessions had not really taken so long to throw together, but perhaps she had been stalling, hoping against all odds that Buffy would return. Apologise... tell her she loved her...

Stupid. What was she thinking? Besides, even if Buffy had come crawling back, she wouldn't listen. Fuck her.

It was in that state of mind that she opened the door. And saw the other slayer.

Faith rolled her eyes and left the door open, turning back to her packing, praying that... no! It was over.

"You're leaving." Buffy stated, an unreadable expression on her face. "I knew you would run eventually."

"Yeah? Good for you. Got me sussed, huh B?" Faith said, her voice matching Buffy's face.

The blonde walked into the room and stood awkwardly by the door, reminding them both of a time long since past. "I came to say..." She trailed off, not really sure what she wanted to say after all.

"What? How'd you know I was here anyway?"

Buffy shrugged. "I don't know." She said, answering both questions at once.

"Well figure it out, or leave." Faith replied. Refusing to give up any more emotions that could be used to hurt her, she pushed down the pain she was feeling and reverted to the person she had been for years. Maybe she had been right all along. People are shit.

Nikita – Just Another Love Story

Buffy watched her, knowing that she was about to lose her, and knowing that she didn't have a choice. "You deserved it, you know." She said, hating herself for saying it, but unable to give up the fight. "You had to-"

"God! Why are you even here?" Faith asked, turning to face her. "I'm a bad person, I know this. I don't need you to tell me. Again."

"I'm-"

"What?" Faith cut her off, walking towards her until they were face to face. "I'm leaving. That's what you wanted. You here for one more fuck before I go?" She hissed. "Cause it ain't going to happen, B. I'm through being your whore."

"Why?!" Buffy yelled at her, her confusion erupting as anger. "It's what you're good at!"

Faith zipped her bag shut and slung it over her shoulder, calming herself before she spoke again. "Thanks for the compliment." She growled, slamming the blonde out of the way and walking out the room.

Buffy watched her go, forcing down the urge to cry, to run after her and tell her... what she wanted to hear.

But she didn't. She knew it was easier this way, that it was what she had to do.

Faith strode towards the bus station trying to suppress the emotions that threatened to overcome her. Fuck her. She'd tried, she'd done everything short of beg, and Faith would never beg. Not even for Buffy.

Still, pain and disgust reared their heads in the way they always had. In uncontrollable anger. She checked her watch and made a detour, deciding that slaying might calm her down.

Searching her bag for a stake, she entered the nearest cemetery ready for a fight, ready to hunt.

She walked quickly, her face giving away no sign of the pain she felt, it all contained in the muscles tense in her arm. She flung her bag to the side and search the grounds, looking for a vampire unlucky enough to stumble across her path.

It didn't take long. It never did. The undead found her, drawn to the heat and sheer energy radiating off her in waves, the pure life that always surrounded her as she focused her anger into the slaying. It was what she was built for, after all.

But she wasn't thinking. As focused as she was, the slaying raised in her the same feelings it always had. Hungry? Yeah. Horny? Hell yeah, and with that came images of Buffy.

Buffy stopped in her tracks as she felt the force of Faith's feeling, directed straight at her. She tried to keep walking home, but it was impossible. She stood for a second, reminding herself of the consequences... but to no avail. Sighing, Buffy turned, unable to leave things as they were.

Nikita – Just Another Love Story

"Fuck you!" Faith yelled at a hapless vampire, her rage overtaking her as she broke his nose. "Fuck her!" The vampire squirmed underneath her, trying in vain to shield himself from her blows. As he finally passed out from the pain, Faith rammed her stake into his heart, and found herself sinking to the ground. "Fuck her... fuck her..." She sobbed.

She felt a hand on her shoulder, and she turned, hoping once more for Buffy...

A fist connected sharply with her chin and she rolled backwards, the force of the blow making her see stars. The vampire grinned, kicking her in the ribs. "You should pay attention, slayer." He grinned as Faith struggled to her feet, only to be kicked back down. Was this it? She was going to die at the... teeth of some anonymous vampire. Weirdly, she didn't care.

"Slayer's blood..." The vampire drooled. "Heard it's good." He crawled on top of her, slightly surprised at her lack of resistance. "You want it, don't you?" He said, almost tenderly. "All slayers do." His fangs lowered to her neck, sinking into her flesh, making her groan somewhere between pain and...

"You've been talking to Spike, haven't you?" Buffy's stake rammed into his back, and he ripped his teeth out of Faith's neck as he howled and rolled off her.

"You missed!" He gasped.

"I won't." Faith looked at Buffy once and slammed wood into his heart. She got up and looked at Buffy, before grabbing her bag again and starting to walk.

"Wait!" Buffy said, taking her arm. "What were you trying to do? Suicide by vampire?"

"No!" Faith said. "He took me by surprise, that's all. Look, thanks." She said through gritted teeth. "But I gotta go." She finished, wondering why she still couldn't hate her. She should.

Buffy shook her head. "Not like that." She said, eyeing the wound on Faith's neck. "Come with me."

"It's OK. It's healing already."

Buffy paused, before giving in. "Please?"

Faith slid her key into the lock and was shot a confused look from Buffy.

"I thought you were leaving?"

"Yeah..." Faith shrugged, "but the room was paid up for another week, so I thought I might as well keep it just in case..."

"Right." Buffy followed her in, kicking herself. She hadn't been able to leave it, not like that. She knew it had been the right thing to do, to hurt her like she had... it had been the only way to make sure...

But she had felt so guilty. At least, that was what she wanted to believe was her reason for returning. It would never be more than that.

Faith put her bag down and turned to the other slayer, the look in her eyes still challenging everything Buffy was telling herself. "I'm gonna take a shower." She said. "Stay or go. It's up to you." She walked in to the bathroom, not allowing herself to breathe until she had closed the door. It was up to her now. Buffy's call.

Nikita – Just Another Love Story

Buffy stood nervously outside the door, a mental fight going on inside her head. She sat down on Faith's bed with her head in her hands, amazed at the contradictory emotions flying around her. It hadn't worked. Even after all she had done to make her hate her, Faith was still giving her a chance, still waiting for her to make her final decision. She hadn't believed at first, that Faith actually loved her, despite all the evidence that she did. She hadn't wanted to believe, it's making what she was trying to do so much harder. Deep down, she had known that it would all come down to her, that the choice was hers to make. God! Why was she here? She knew it could only lead to one thing...

She heard the shower come on, and decided to wait. Maybe she could explain. Not everything, of course, that wouldn't be fair... but neither was this.

No, she should just leave. She got up and headed towards the door, ready to open it when-

"B?" Faith's voice called out. "Before you go," How had she known that? "Can you get me some clean clothes? On the shelf above the bed."

Buffy hesitated. Just leave... but surely she should tell her? She kicked off her shoes and got up on the bed, pulling down some clothes and jumping back down. She walked to the bathroom and opened the door. "Here. Faith, I'm going to..."

Faith stood under the shower, water running down her pale body, her dark hair back off her face. Buffy's breath caught in her throat as she looked at her, their eyes locked together. Buffy dropped the clothes on the floor and moved slowly towards her, never taking her eyes from Faith's.

Not daring to breathe, Faith watched her come closer, almost seeing her tell herself as she always did, that this was not about love. For the first time, Faith didn't believe her. She wanted her, wanted her more than anything, the desire taking over even the anger she felt at having been used so violently the night before. This would not be the same, she told herself. Not by the look in Buffy's eyes.

The heat from the water was nothing compared to the heat between the slayers as Buffy climbed into the shower, not stopping to remove her clothing, not stopping to think. Without words, their lips met hungrily, passionately, their hands running through each other's hair and over skin. Faith pulled off Buffy's clothes, tossing the soaking articles aside until they stood naked, their bodies pressed together at every possible point, hands and fingers roaming over skin, breasts, everything. As years of pent-up desire finally erupted, they slid into each other, giving up their bodies to each other's control, and climaxed, each groaning into the other's mouth.

They stayed, their arms wrapped tightly around each other, shaking, crying, unwilling to let the moment end.

Kissing her once, lingering for longer than she should have, Buffy pulled away.

"You're going." Faith said quietly.

"I have to." Buffy got out, grabbing a towel and picking up her clothes, frowning as they dripped water onto the floor.

Faith got out and walked up behind her, her arms wrapping around her waist, sensing indecision. "You don't have to go." She whispered, her lips finding the blonde's neck.

Buffy groaned, her body responding against her will. "You don't understand..." She said, moving into the main room. "I have to."

Faith walked to the bed and lay down, looking at Buffy. "Your clothes are wet." She said.

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"So is the bed." Buffy smirked as water rolled off Faith's body... Faith's body...

"Yeah. And I'm cold." Faith purred.

"Is that what it is?" She asked, looking at Faith's erect nipples. Maybe it would be all right... just one night, no emotions. Just sex... one last time...

Buffy walked to the bed and lay down, finding herself wrapped in Faith's arms. "This is just"

Faith shook her head. "Don't say it." She whispered, before kissing her again.

PART 9

(Today)

Maybe I should hate her.

I have never stopped loving Buffy, even now I know there is no hope. But I wanted happiness for her, I loved her enough for that, and I knew Faith was the only way she would find it. And it was all worth it, that I truly believe.

But it hurts. Losing someone always does.

(5 days ago)

Buffy woke to find herself entangled with the other slayer. Without her permission, her arms had wrapped themselves tightly around Faith during the night, their bodies pressed tightly together. She stayed not moving for a few seconds, the only few seconds she would allow herself, before sighing and unwrapping herself gently. Faith grunted in her sleep, an unconscious protest as Buffy moved her warmth away, leaving her once more.

Crawling out of bed, Buffy pulled on her clothes, still damp and cold, and reminding her of the slip she had made last night.

That was what it was. A little slip... Faith rolled onto her back, one arm wrapped around herself and one flung over her head, tangling itself in her hair. Buffy felt herself going weak at the knees once more.

God, she had to get out of here. Get out before it was too late.

With one last glance at Faith, she turned and left the room.

Faith was disappointed, yes, but not entirely surprised when she was woken by the phone and found herself alone again. Groggily, she fished her arm over the side of the bed, finding it, dropping it, and cursing. When she managed to pick it up, she heard Cordelia's voice before she had even said hello.

"You alone?" Cordelia asked, her breath held.

Faith sat up and leaned against the headboard. "Apparently." She sighed, determined not to admit she was hurt. "Do you know what time it is?"

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"3pm."

"What?" Faith spluttered, almost dropping the phone again. "Shit, must have tired me out more than I thought..."

Silence for a moment. "Buffy?"

"I think so..." Faith murmured, wondering if it had been a dream. "She's gone now, anyway."

"You don't seem that upset."

She shrugged, her hands roaming the sheets and finding no trace of the previous night's heat. "I'm not surprised, I guess. Get some, get gone. I know the drill."

"I'm sure it was more than that." Cordelia replied gently, half wishing it wasn't and hating herself for the thought.

"Maybe." Faith shrugged again and changed the subject. "How goes it in LA?"

She heard Cordelia grunt down the phone. "Same as usual. Mind shattering visions, death, destruction. Angel says hey."

"Did you tell him?"

Cordelia paused. "Yeah."

"He's OK?"

"Fine. I think he kind of wants you guys to get together actually. He trusts you."

Faith smirked. "That's a first."

"Hey!" Cordelia protested. "I trust you. We all do."

"I know." Faith said softly. "Thanks." She got up out of bed and looked down at it. "You know what I'm going to do?" She asked. "I'm going to forget about it. That's it. Fuck it. I don't care."

"Faith..."

"No! I tried." She said firmly, still looking at the bed and seeing Buffy. "I tried so hard, and she's not letting me in. Maybe I was right with the way I was before." She closed her eyes and tried to get the blonde out of her mind. "Who cares?"

"I care." Cordelia said softly.

Faith sighed and opened her eyes again. "I know. I just wish I didn't."

"You can't just stop loving someone because it's wrong." The seer replied, trying to hide her underlying emotions as she comforted her friend. "It's hard. But there's nothing you can do."

Faith nodded, wishing there was something she could do to make this all better. God, what she would give to fall in love with Cordelia. "I love you." She whispered honestly. "You're my best friend."

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"Same." Cordelia choked, not knowing if it was the best or worst thing Faith could have said. "Don't do anything stupid, OK?"

Like leaving the people who care about you, almost allowing a vampire to make you into his late night snack, falling for someone who doesn't love you and letting them fuck you both literally and emotionally? "Of course I won't." Faith replied.

"Good. Take care."

"Same to you. Later." She said, hanging up the phone. Faith walked over to her bag, still unpacked from the previous night, and pulled out some clothes. She got dressed and left the room, determined to forget... just for a little while. Without thinking, Faith went for pizza.

In the restaurant, she sat and studied the menu, jumping as the waitress asked her what she wanted.

"Big pizza. Everything... and beer." The waitress looked at her suspiciously for a moment, and was quickly met with a confident smile. "OK?"

She nodded and hurried away, leaving Faith to sit back and watch the other customers. God, normal people. How nice it must be to live in that oblivious comfort, unaware of the danger of a town like this, no idea that the small brunette was one of the few people who could save them from harm. Her food was put down on the table with a smile, and Faith nodded at the girl, picking up a slice of pizza and taking a bite. She thought about Ali, one of those people. normal. However hard their lives got, at least they didn't have to deal with demons on a nightly basis. She would have accepted her though. She was so willing to let Faith into her life, fuck-ups and all.

And so was Cordelia. She never would have believed that they would become so close. They had never connected when she came to Sunnydale, but then, Faith had barely connected with anyone, all her time and thoughts focused on Buffy. Besides, maybe it was because of that that they could start again. She sat back and drank her beer, remembering all the seer had told her. She knew her better than anyone really, having seen and understood the pain she had kept from everyone's eyes. And she loved her for that, for everything.

It could have been so good.

Faith stood up and left a few notes on the table, realising that for the first time in weeks, she was out during the day. She was sick of hiding in shadows, terrified that the scoobies would see her and give Buffy another excuse to push her away.

Of course, she was doing pretty well with the finding of excuses anyway, she thought as she walked out into the evening sun. And that's what they were. Excuses. She wouldn't have been surprised if Buffy had hated her, wanted to kill her, wanted nothing to do with her. But last night... maybe it was stupid, but she had found hope again. The look on the blonde's face as they had... made love? God, this was dumb.

She walked towards the Bronze, in serious need of escape as she thought about her. Maybe she was just imagining things, seeing what she wanted to see.

Striding into the building, Faith went straight to the bar, not even checking to see if the gang were there. Fuck it, what could they do? She let the music pulse through her, and got a drink, remembering who she used to be.

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Hours (and much alcohol) later, a hand landed on Faith's shoulder.

"Remember me?" An unfamiliar voice asked as she turned round. Faith glanced at her and then her leather pants as the realisation came to her. The woman from the clothes store. "I think you owe me a drink."

Faith shrugged and motioning to the seat next to her, she called over the tender and ordered a couple of beers.

"Haven't seen you around much."

"No." Faith smirked. "I've been kinda busy." She wasn't bad looking, really. A little older than she usually would have gone, but slim, blonde, and... hell, she was getting a little bit drunk. A little. It took a lot of alcohol to get her wasted, she had had lots of experience after all. And then there was that slayer thing...

"Want to dance?"

Yes, but not with you. "Sure." It's not like Buffy was offering. It's not like Buffy was even there, actually. Faith got up and followed her to the floor, grateful that she could hold the drink. Wonder if Buffy can?... no! No Buffy!

Music... the beat got her, it always did, and soon she was moving and forgetting to think. The woman's hands were on her, but she barely registered them, focusing instead on losing herself completely.

And she did.

For a while.

But there was always that connection, so much stronger with the force of her emotions for the other girl, and when Buffy finally made an appearance, her eyes burned into Faith and made her stop abruptly and find her.

Faith followed the blonde as quickly as she could, as she stormed out of the door. "B!" She called, not really expecting her to stop. But she did.

"Who was that?!" Buffy yelled, turning around to face her.

"Who?... oh... no one."

Buffy rolled her eyes. "No one. Yeah, that's why she was all over you."

"It happens." Faith scowled, remembering what had happened the previous night. "Get some, get gone, right B? I'm not the only one who plays by that rule."

"That was different!" Buffy exclaimed, throwing her hands in the air.

"How? And by the way, what the fuck right do you have to be jealous?" Faith asked her, her anger rising. "You don't want me, why shouldn't someone else have the pleasure?"

Buffy glared at her. "Fine! Go fuck her, if that's what you want."

"You know what I want!" Faith yelled back at her. "Why are you trying to make me hate you?!"

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"Because I can't!" Buffy exclaimed. "I can't hate you!... god..." She shook her head in despair. "I just can't..."

Faith reached out towards her, her anger giving as she watched the blonde struggle with her tears. "It doesn't matter." She whispered. Their lips were on each others almost before she had got the words out, kissing with all the fire that was always between them.

"Don't." Buffy said, pushing her away after a second and looking up at her with panic in her eyes. "I can't control myself. Don't you understand? I can't stop." She pushed Faith out of the way and started running, leaving Faith growling in frustration.

Buffy got as far away as she could before stopping to wipe her tears away. She could feel herself breaking a little more with every look Faith gave her, every word penetrating her defences even further. She felt so close, even now, even as she had run from her that morning. The brunette was constantly in her mind, and the excuses for her being there were getting used up far too quickly.

And it scared her. She had used up every ounce of control she had ever had over the other slayer, and she didn't know what else to do. It was so close to the end, she could feel it every time she looked at her. She had fought her feelings for so long, and now, feeling weak and tired, all she could think about was curling up in Faith's arms. Like she had the night before...

And it had felt so right, so much more right than she wanted.

More right than anything had ever felt before.

Faith walked for miles around the town, attempting to clear her head. She tried to avoid cemeteries, knowing that the fire that burned in her would only be heightened by slaying, but eventually, her instincts took over and she went anyway.

She was angry, as the vampires soon found out. Angry at Buffy, angry at herself. She had seen something in Buffy's eyes, trying to hide behind her defiance and her fear was... love? She rammed a stake into the vampire and laughed. Love? God, she wanted it so much... wanted it that she imagined she saw it. Surely that was all it was.

But something...

Hope is a stupid thing. As the sun rose in the sky, Faith went underground, her lust for the slay not yet quiet. She stalked and fought and killed, focusing on the vampires. She felt in control again, her confidence boosted by her skill.

God, she was sick of it all. Chasing, running, fear. She wanted it all to end more than anything... but she knew it never would. It was always one more chance, one more try. She slammed her stake into a vampire and checked her watch. "All or nothing." She muttered, climbing out into the daylight.

Buffy stood outside the magic shop, not really listening to Xander and Willow. Her mind was elsewhere. Duh. Like it hadn't been for the last week? The Faith situation hung over her like a cloud, blurring everything around her. Why couldn't she get her out of her mind? Why did she miss her, think of her awake and asleep, wish for her arms around her when she-

"Well?" Xander asked her.

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Buffy looked at him in confusion. "Huh?"

"Tonight? Bronze, just the old gang?"

"You've been kind of... not around so much." Willow said slowly. "We thought it might be nice if... if..." She broke off, staring past Buffy shoulder, her jaw falling somewhere near her shoes.

"What?" The slayer turned. her mouth doing a fine impression of her friend's.

Faith didn't so much walk, but stride towards her, the sun glinting off her skin in a way Buffy didn't remember ever seeing before. It had been a while, after all, since they had stepped out of the shadows. She could see the look of absolute determination on her face, even from the end of the road. She cursed herself as she felt her heart beat faster, leaping for joy at the sight of the slayer.

This was not how it was going to be...

Faith's arms swung by her sides, her eyes not even seeing Willow or Xander as she came forward.

God, she was beautiful.

Her boots hit concrete in a steady march, her concentration not wavering for a second as Buffy gazed towards her.

She wanted to cry as she watched, her final defences breaking.

Faith's breathing was almost non-existent, betraying the only trace of the fear she held that Buffy would push her away once more. Last chance. She didn't stop walking until their bodies met and her hands reached towards her face.

This was what was meant to happen.

Then nothing.

Nothing but their lips on each other's lips, their tongues in each other's mouths, their hands in each other's hair.

There in the sunlight, on a busy street, the final decision was made.

It was only them.

They hardly even heard Xander and Willow.

"Gaaaaa...." Xander gulped as he watched Buffy kissing the girl he hadn't even know was out of jail.

Willow nodded, her eyes wide. "Gaaaaa is right." She murmured before grabbing Buffy by the arm. "What are you doing?!" She shrieked. "This is wrong! I'm gonna-"

"Will." Buffy shook her head, leaving Faith's gaze for a brief second. "Don't." She looked back at the slayer and smiled slightly. "I'm in love." She whispered. "I'm sorry I-"

Faith just smiled at her, and kissed her again.

PART 10

Nikita – Just Another Love Story

Dedication: For Sway, an inspiration in writing, drinking, and a whole lot else. ;)

(Today)

We all make mistakes. It's what we do afterwards that counts.

Faith never stopped trying. The determination she had always possessed was for the first time focused on repairing the damage she had done, instead of causing it. But it's not easy. Forgiving ourselves can be the hardest thing to do, and when we're not allowed to forget our mistakes, it becomes nearly impossible.

But we try, what else can we do?

(4 days ago)

Somewhere in the back of Buffy's mind, she registered the Scooby Gang's open-mouthed stares. Reluctantly pulling away from Faith's embrace, she turned and saw them all at the window, as Xander and Willow seemed to have backed away into the shop and collected the gang.

She looked at Faith, who had followed her gaze and now had a look on her face that indicated that she was about to bolt. Buffy took her hand and smiled softly. "You want to get this over with?"

Not really. "I guess." Faith murmured, shrugging. It had to happen eventually, after all.

The gang retreated from the window and back to their seats as the two slayers walked in, hand in hand with an unmistakable glow about them. Giles watched them, blushing slightly. "You're... um..."

"In love." Buffy stated for the second time that morning. "Yes. Do you have a problem with that?" She glared.

"No." Anya said, not really caring all that much. "Orgasms are good. Well done."

Spike just grunted and grabbed his blanket, shooting Buffy a hurt look as he ran out of the shop.

Ignoring the vampire's exit, Willow started ranting again. "Well I have a problem with it!" She exclaimed. "You're in love?! Have you forgotten that she's a psychotic?"

"Murderer?!" Xander finished, glaring at Faith. Glaring that is, until Faith met his eye and he decided looking at the floor was a better idea.

Buffy glanced around the room sadly, her eyes finally resting on Dawn, who was sitting at the back of the shop. She walked over and crouched in front of her. "She won't hurt you." She said softly. "I trust her."

Dawn just looked at the wall and refused to make eye contact with her sister, flinching as Buffy's hand reached out to stroke her hair. Sighing, Buffy turned back to her friends. "She's sorry."

"Why doesn't she say that?" Tara asked quietly, as all eyes turned to Faith, who felt her mouth go dry.

"I am." She choked out, before clearing her throat. "I'm sorry. I wish-"

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"It doesn't matter!" Willow shouted. "You hurt us all. You tried to KILL us!"

Tara stood and put her hand on her lover's arm. "Willow..."

"No!" She continued, turning to her best friend. "I'm sorry, Buffy. But no."

Faith watched them all arguing, shutting out their cries of disapproval. She knew they didn't want to hear what she had to say, that it would only make it worse. This had to happen. She watched Buffy through the murmur of voices, marvelling as the room blurred around her, until only the blonde was left in focus, the only light in the darkness.

It was the way she moved, graceful and confident, like a mirror of Faith's own body. She had thought it was a slayer thing. But no, it was just Buffy.

And then their eyes met, through the blur, through the noise. Their eyes met and it was only them, giving each other everything they needed.

A smile grew on Buffy's lips, despite the situation, despite the awkwardness and disapproval. For an instant, everything was perfect, and she knew she had made the right decision.

"Are you even listening?" Xander asked, stepping in front of her and blocking Faith from her view.

"Yes." Buffy lied. "And I understand. I wish things were different." She looked at them all. "But they're not. This is how it is." She stepped around Xander and walked back towards Faith, who's smile played on her lips as she watched her walk towards her. "I love you all." Buffy said, looking around the room. "ALL." She repeated, looking at Faith again.

"I think-" Xander started, only to be cut off by Giles.

"I think we should take a break." He said firmly. "This is a difficult situation, and it needs to be considered carefully."

Buffy threw him a grateful look, despite not seeing what had to be considered. Giles looked away and began to rearrange books, signalling that the discussion was over. Buffy gave her friends one last pleading look, and dragged Faith out of the shop, letting them make up their minds like she had made up her own.

Faith let out a sigh of relief as Buffy pulled her out of the shop and back into the sunlight. She marched down the street with Buffy, still loving the feel of the blonde's hand grasping her own. It wasn't until they had made it to the end, that her mind kicked in and she wondered where they were going.

"Uh, B?" She said, tugging her hand and pulling them to a halt. "Where are we going?"

Buffy turned to her with a pained expression on her face, an expression that melted into a smile as she was met with the dark, concerned eyes of the other slayer. "Yours." She said firmly.

"What, now?" Faith asked her, a little surprised. "Maybe you should go sort things out with-"

Buffy leaned in and kissed her gently, quieting her protests. "I don't want to waste any more time." She said softly. "I want you. Only you."

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Faith sighed and shook her head, knowing that the blonde would regret not making amends later. Kicking herself, she choked out what she hoped was the right thing to say. "It'll be easier if you go talk to them now, B. I'll still be here when you get back."

"I want-"

"B..." Faith grinned, planting a soft kiss on her lips and wondering how she managed to have any will power at all. "Meet me at the Sun at 6, 'K?"

Reluctantly, Buffy nodded and watched the brunette drag herself away, her leather clad ass finally hitting its confident swing in the morning light. Buffy growled to herself and turned back to the magic shop.

The gang looked at Buffy with a mixture of surprise and anger as she walked back in the door and closed it softly behind her. She had been in this situation before, when Angel had come back from Hell and Xander had caught them together. But this was different. She had felt guilty back then, and now? Now she knew that what she was doing was right.

But they didn't know that. They couldn't.

Xander glanced up at her as she moved to take a seat next to her friends, who had their noses buried in various books. "Faith busy?" He asked, venom in his voice.

"No." Buffy replied. "I want to help. What's going on?"

"Big nest of vamps just moved in, according to Spike." Xander said. "But then, you'd know that if you'd been here instead of off with your girlfriend."

"Look-" Buffy started, only to be cut off by Xander again.

"No." He said. "You look. Don't you remember the last time you got involved with a killer? Do you even remember Miss Calendar?"

Buffy glanced at Giles, who had moved away from the group and was looking everywhere but at his slayer. "That's not fair..." Buffy said. "I wouldn't put you in danger. You don't understand-"

"You're right. I don't." Xander slammed his book shut and got up. "If you have time, you might want to check this nest out. Looks like they're getting ready for a major spree."

"I will." Buffy said softly. "Of course I will." Xander snorted at her and grabbed his girlfriend by the hand.

"Come on."

Anya nodded and glared at Buffy. "You've upset him now." She snapped and turned back to her boyfriend. "I'll make it better." She said as they left the shop.

Buffy stared after them with a look of despair and turned to Willow. "Faith can help too." She tried.

"Not while I'm there."

"Will-"

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Willow shot her a look filled with hurt. "Not again." She said, shaking her head. "Not now. Not ever."

Buffy sat helplessly as she watched her best friend get up and walk to the door, Tara following her after giving Buffy a slightly sympathetic glance. "I'll see you later."

"Wait!" Dawn called, rushing over to the witches. "I wanna stay with you."

Willow turned to Buffy, raising her eyes questioningly. Sighing, the slayer nodded. "OK. I'll pick you up-" She called after her sister as they left the shop and slammed the door. "... Tomorrow." Buffy shook her head sadly and stood. Wandering towards Giles, she breathed out a sigh and leaned on the shop counter. "Do you think they'll ever get it?" She murmured.

Giles turned towards her, his face a blank slate. "No." He said softly. "I don't think we will."

Buffy winced at the inclusion of himself in the statement, "I've made a decision, Giles. I can't go back on it." She said, wishing there was some way she could explain everything that had happened. "Even if I wanted to." She added.

"That's up to you." Her watcher nodded, turning back to his books. "But don't expect us to understand, Buffy."

Of course you can't. Buffy sighed and walked to the back room, deciding to train until she was able to meet Faith.

Despite all the tension, Faith's step was unusually light as she made her way out of the motel room that evening. Everything seemed to be going to plan, everything seemed right for the first time in a long time. She tried not to let her doubts in, that Buffy would choose her friends above her, or that something unexpected would tear them apart. Live in the damn moment.

Her heart was beating faster and faster as she approached the cinema, the same one she had shot an arrow from all that time ago. Still came down to the same reason. Still came down to Buffy.

She felt Buffy's presence ring in her soul as she walked closer, her stomach leaping and her heart punching her chest. Anticipation burned its way through her veins as she caught sight of the other slayer, standing waiting for her under the overhanging roof of the cinema.

Too soon, and not soon enough, Faith walked up to her and grinned. Before she could make a comment on the blonde's earliness, she found her mouth invaded roughly by the other slayer, her arms suddenly wrapped around her neck. Buffy's tongue slid against her own, growling somewhere deep within her throat.

"We're gonna see a movie?" Buffy pouted, unsure whether she could wait that long, the training she had done that day leaving her in a state of unresolved tension. But it wasn't just that. Her eyes trailed over the leather clad form of the brunette slayer. No... it wasn't just that.

Faith grinned at her through her shallow breathing, feeling the heat radiating off the blonde and turning her legs to slush. But she resisted, wanting to do this right. "Well... I've never been on a date... thought it might be nice." She said sheepishly.

Buffy grinned back at her, putting a leash on her raging hormones with difficulty. "K." She said, kissing her again briefly and taking her hand. "Does this mean you're paying?"

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Faith rolled her eyes. "Sure, B." She replied, pulling Buffy into the cinema and joining the queue, "How'd it go at the shop?"

Buffy sighed. "Fine. Whatever. I've got to go check out a nest though."

"Cool." Faith shrugged. "Movie, slay, mi-" She stopped herself and blushed. Maybe she shouldn't push it.

"Yours." Buffy grinned, slinking closer to her. "Definitely yours."

About an hour into the movie, Faith had started to think Buffy had had the right idea. To be honest, she wasn't even watching it, instead finding her eyes drawn to the blonde's chest rising and falling in the dim silver light. Dark, warm, quiet, the room wrapped around her and took her in its arms, and she found herself inching closer and closer to Buffy.

Nervous. Why was she nervous? The sound of Buffy's breathing was the only noise Faith could make out in the room, above the sound of the voices from the film, or the giggling from the teenagers around them. It was all just Buffy.

Buffy could feel her eyes burning into her, her whole body tingling at the feel of the other slayer's closeness. Then suddenly she felt Faith's breath soft on her skin, tickling her neck and sending shivers shooting up her spine. She moaned slightly as she felt Faith's lips brush against her, closing her eyes as every nerve in her body latched onto the feeling of the warmth on her skin.

Faith's lips touched the blonde slayer's neck, drawing a gasp from deep within her throat, gasp that grew to a groan as Faith's fingers touched her leg, trailing up her thigh and resting on her stomach. Buffy let out a moan as Faith's teeth nipped gently at her burning skin, and she wished for the third time that day that they weren't in a public place. Both struggling to control their breathing, their lips found each other in the darkness, meeting more hesitantly than they ever had before. Faith's tongue glided slowly into Buffy's mouth, massaging her softly, her arousal growing as Buffy groaned against her. As the heat between them grew, Buffy's hands tangled themselves in Faith's hair, pulling her closer towards her, their kiss increasingly passionate and-

They stopped as they heard a loud cough behind them, and turned to meet the eyes of a man glaring at them. Faith growled at him, making him slide back in his seat slightly. She felt a tug at her arm and met the gaze of the blonde, who was grinning sheepishly. "You wanna get out of here?"

Faith didn't need to be asked twice.

Barely making it out of the cinema before their lips meet again, Buffy found herself pushed up against the other slayer, breathless with desire as the brunette's hands caressed her skin. Only to lose that feeling as Faith stepped back from her.

"What?" Buffy gasped, for the first time feeling the pang of fear that Faith's feelings towards her had changed.

Faith grinned at her. "B, unless you want to piss the Scoobs off even more, I believe we have slaying to do?"

Buffy groaned. "Yeah... forgot." She took Faith by the hand. "Wanna get this done quick?"

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"Quick as possible." Faith agreed, pushing her lips against Buffy's once more, desire shooting through her at the promise of what was to come.

Their fingers linked together, the two slayers went to kick some ass.

"12." Buffy said, poking her head round the door of the crypt.

Faith stood for a moment, wondering whether her instincts could be controlled. 12 against 2...

Their eyes met as a grin grew on both the slayers' faces.

"I'm not gonna die tonight." Buffy said, whipping out a stake.

Faith shrugged, a little surprised by the blonde's willingness. "I don't have plans to either."

"We're safe." Buffy said. "Trust me."

Grinning, Faith nodded at her, at that moment giving Buffy her heart completely. She took out a stake and licked her lips, busting the door with a smash.

The vampires didn't know what had hit them. Dust flew about the room as the slayers thudded their stake into them, synchronised, side by side, in harmony.

Kicking apart a chair, Faith laughed out loud. "Wood?!" She smirked, slamming a chair leg into the vampire's heart. "Wooden furniture?!" She heard Buffy giggle from the other side of the room. "Stupid fuckin' vampires..."

In minutes they were alone, efficiently completing their slayer duties and panting heavily. As soon as they realised, Buffy pounced on Faith. "Yours now?" Buffy grinned.

They were kissing before they were even in the door. Jackets were discarded as they moved together towards the bed that welcomed them with open arms. It had seen them before, that was true, but this was different. All different, and all the same.

Kicking off her boots, Faith watched as Buffy did the same and lay down on the bed, reaching for Faith and pulling her towards her with an urgency that had been a fixture in their few times together. She slid on top of the blonde slayer, her lips caressing Buffy's, softly, slowly, determined to make this time different. Their tongues slipped into each other's mouths as their hands tangled through hair and over faces and necks, brushing away everything until only one moment was left in their minds.

Now.

Slowly, Faith's hands trailed over Buffy's body, sliding her top above her breasts as the blonde raised slightly, allowing the garment to be removed and her bra unclipped. The brunette's lips landed soft kisses on her skin, flowing down her neck, her collarbone, to her breasts. Faith's tongue wrapped around an erect nipple, drawing gasps once more from her throat as her teeth grazed over it lightly. She grinned as she felt Buffy's hand reach for her own top, pulling over her head and whining slightly at the brief loss of contact. But it was brief. Faith's lips fastened tightly around her again, groaning as her own bra was unclasped and her nipples found quickly by Buffy's fingers, hardening under the blonde's touch.

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Faith unzipped her lover's pants and slid them down slowly, her breathing quickening as Buffy thrust her hips gently, signalling her desire. Removing Buffy's clothing, Faith sat up and undid her own buttons, pulling her leathers roughly down past her hips and shrugging them off as Buffy watched her with fire in her eyes. Naked, they pressed together, their legs entwined and their hands roaming frantically over each other's skin. Passionately they kissed again, their hands slipping together between their bodies and finding each other's centres smoothly.

Buffy ran a hand over Faith's back as she gasped out into the room, their fingers sliding deeply inside one another with ease. Sucking on her tongue with increasing force, she thrust against Faith's hand, her desire heightened by the feeling of the brunette doing the same. Thumbs circling, fingers thrusting, they breathed heavily against each other's mouths joined together in more ways than one.

Almost too soon, they felt each other's oncoming orgasms and stopped kissing for want of oxygen. "Faith..." Buffy gasped as she tightened around her fingers, a question in her voice.

"Yeah..." Faith whispered with difficulty, her breathing ragged as Buffy pushed her towards the edge.

"It was all... god... worth it..." Buffy gasped, her hips starting to buck and feeling the brunette's do the same.

Faith nodded, closing her eyes tightly as Buffy's body tightened, propelling her faster towards oblivion.

Buffy tensed briefly before her orgasm took her, gasping Faith's name into the dark. She thrust her fingers hard into Faith again, bringing her with her. "I... love you." She breathed as Faith joined her, climaxing against her hand and meeting her lips again.

They kissed deeply for a moment, before withdrawing their hands and staring at each other. "I think I always did." Buffy said softly.

Faith slid against Buffy, wrapping her arms around the blonde slayer and nodded. "I love you too."

They stayed like that for a while, their hearts beating in time, enveloped in each other's arms, before Faith spoke again, slightly embarrassed. "I wanted to do this right." She muttered, kicking herself for forgetting. "I even bought champagne."

Buffy grinned at her. "Get it." She said. "We've got all night."

PART 11

Dedication: Kayleigh, for being so darn cute. Not that you're reading this, of course. ;)

(Today)

We search for reflections of ourselves everyday, in the reactions of others, in the things we see and the voices we hear.

Autumn will always be Faith's reflection to me. A season laden with contradictions, looking like fire and feeling like ice, Autumn is winter in summer's disguise. But somewhere deep in its layers of cold, there is a heat burning inside its heart, hoping, remembering the light that once surrounded it. It yearns for that heat to be set free once more, fighting against the frost that descends on it a little more everyday, a frost that comes no matter how hard we try to forget.

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But we know that no matter how hard we fight, summer will always die, and we will be left in the bleakness of winter once more. And then, then we can only wait and pray that summer will once more return.

(3 days ago)

Buffy woke to find herself wrapped tightly in the arms of the other slayer. Her head nestled in the crook of Faith's neck, Buffy's eyes remained closed as she listened to her soft, steady breathing. Peace.

Light crept into the room, touching the blonde's eyes and willing her to open them just in time to see the dark slayer's skin turn gold in the morning sun. She sighed gently, her eyes drinking in her body, firm, smooth, and strikingly female. Sometimes anticipation is the best part, but sometimes you're not with Faith, under Faith, surrounded by Faith... Buffy groaned slightly, remembering the previous night's events, remembering the feel of her lover's confident touch. Sleepily, she pulled Faith closer, her thigh nudging between Faith's legs and her hand running lightly over her hips.

Buffy thanked whoever it was that made sure slayers didn't need much sleep. Her lips trailed over Faith's lightly, teasing her with her tongue and grinning as Faith's mouth parted slightly, granting her access unknowingly. Her breathing quickened as she ran her fingers over one of Faith's hardening nipples, rolling it in her fingers softly, as her mouth trailed down her neck, her teeth grazing over Faith's pulse point. As gently as she could in her rapidly increasing state of arousal, Buffy rolled Faith onto her back and slid her tongue down her breast and over her other nipple, taking it in her mouth and sucking gently.

Faith's legs parted slightly as a moan escaped her, feeling Buffy's actions in her sleep. The blonde's hand trailed down Faith's stomach and through her curls to her growing wetness below. Sliding back up Faith's body, her fingers remained between her legs, stroking the brunette's folds with feather light touches, feeling her arousal begin to show itself on her hand. Her lips brushed over Faith's again as she heard her moan out, and slid her tongue back into her mouth, playing with her lover's own as their breathing became laboured.

Her hips thrusting gently, Faith gasped out as she awoke to feel Buffy sliding two fingers smoothly inside her and her tongue deep in her mouth. "Fuck..." Faith gasped, her body straining into Buffy's touch.

Buffy just grinned at her and circled her clit with her thumb, putting more pressure on it as Faith moaned and slid her nails across Buffy's back.

"Morning." She whispered into Faith's ear as the brunette came beneath her.

Buffy's breathing finally began to steady as Faith crawled back up her body, grinning widely. "Aren't you supposed to pick Dawn up?" She asked, briefly sliding her tongue back into the blonde's mouth and letting her taste herself. Buffy groaned and nodded. Time. It all ended with time.

Reluctantly pulling away, Buffy got up, feeling Faith's eyes burning into her skin and feeling the heat shoot down towards her centre. "I have to talk to her...?"

Faith frowned slightly as Buffy's voice made her statement into a question. "You really want to leave it like this?" She asked, growing distracted as she watched her dress. Focus please...

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Buffy sighed. Yeah, she couldn't let it end that way. Faith was right, it was just... time... "K." She mumbled. "But I won't be long."

"Get it sorted, B. Time doesn't matter."

Buffy sighed and walked towards her. "Maybe." She shrugged. "But I wanna spend it all with you." She leaned down and kissed Faith, her hands straying to her hair as she increased the depth of their kiss.

"Go." Faith ordered, pulling back and grinning at the blonde's pout. "Now."

Buffy sighed and walked to the door, taking one more glance at Faith's unembarrassed nakedness. Leave! She turned and walked out the room, biting her lip.

Sighing, Faith slumped back in her bed, closing her eyes as her hand trailed to the still warm space where Buffy had spent the night. It was strange, alien, the feeling in the pit of her stomach. Last night had dispelled any worries she had had that Buffy was playing with her, and she was left with this feeling of... Faith's eyes snapped open as she realised what it was. Happiness. Pure, complete happiness. This was what she had waited for, longed for, perhaps even before the two slayers had met. Part of her had always been calling out for Buffy, just not knowing that it was her she wanted. She turned and lay face down, drinking in the scent of the blonde and focusing all of her senses on remembering the feel of her body. As she drifted back off to sleep, she swore she could feel Buffy's arms around her.

Buffy walked along the street with a spring in her step that she couldn't remember feeling before. Dumb really, when she thought of all the badness that came with her decision to accept Faith. Still, it was there, and she was going to enjoy it while she could.

She felt as if she was in some old musical, the urge to sing and yell and kiss passers-by embarrassingly strong. Instead, she just smiled quietly to herself and basked in her happiness, refusing to think about the future.

Wandering up to Willow and Tara's dorm, she knocked on the door and walked in, only to be met with her sister's cold stare.

"You ready?" Buffy asked cheerfully.

Dawn grunted, picked up her bag and folded her arms across her chest, giving Buffy her best death stare.

Buffy sighed. "Where's Will?" She asked, looking around just in time to see the redhead walk back into the room giggling, with Tara's arms around her waist.

The blonde dropped her arms and blushed when she saw the Summers' sisters still standing there. "We thought you'd be- be-"

"Gone." Willow finished, glaring at Buffy.

Buffy looked at Dawn and motioned to her to leave the room, getting a scowl in return. "C'mon, Dawnie." Tara said quietly, taking her out the room, secretly grateful at the chance to let the two friends talk things over.

Buffy closed the door quietly behind the two girls. "You OK?" She asked nervously.

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Willow nodded, turning away and fidgeting with her books.

"Please, Will. Can't we at least talk about this?"

"What's there to say?" Willow asked quietly.

"I just..." Buffy paused uncertainly. "I just don't want to have to choose between you."

Willow shrugged. "You already have."

"Don't say that..." Buffy said softly, wondering if Willow was still remembering when Faith had first come to Sunnydale. "I'm not choosing anyone. I love you both."

Willow sat down on her bed and sighed. "I don't understand, Buffy. After everything she put us through." She said softly, shaking her head.

Buffy moved beside her slowly and sat down. "It was meant to happen." She murmured. "I didn't even accept that until a few days ago." She turned to her best friend and placed her hand on her arm. "Please Will. I'm not asking you to like her-

"Good thing."

"Or trust her-

"Lucky, that."

"But please..." Buffy asked, looking at her hopefully. "Just accept it. I don't want to... lose you." She said, wondering if those were the right words.

"I'm not happy about it, Buffy." Willow said firmly. "And if she so much as looks at anyone in the wrong way-" Her threat trailed off as Buffy nodded, holding her breath. Willow couldn't help but smile, not remembering the last time she had seen her so happy. "But I won't stand in your way." She said finally, her smile growing wider as Buffy hugged her. "I love you too much to lose you to her again." She whispered, not seeing Buffy's smile weaken slightly over her shoulder.

"Thanks, Will." Buffy said, pulling back and putting the grin back on her face. "I better go-

"Yes!" Willow nodded, standing and walking with her to the door. "Dawn's a bit upset."

Buffy hugged her again and threw her a look of thanks before rushing out to find her sister.

Faith's arms unconsciously felt for the other slayer as she awoke to the sound of the phone ringing. "Fnnnn... where..." She muttered, before opening her eyes and remembering that it was the middle of the day. "Yeah?" She asked as she picked up the phone, rolling sleepily onto her back.

"So much for calling me." Cordelia said, only half jokingly.

"Shit, Cordelia. Sorry." Faith mumbled, propping herself up against her headboard. "How the hell do you always manage to call me when I'm sleeping?"

Cordelia sighed and ignored the question. "How are you?"

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Faith's eyes strayed to the emptiness beside her, an emptiness that she knew would be filled again. God, she wanted to tell her everything... but how could she? "Fine. You?"

"Good. Buffy?"

Faith winced, the urge to tell Cordelia every detail about the previous day and night overwhelming. "Good... we got together...."

"She loves you?" The seer's voice was unemotional, keeping her feelings bottled down as she tried to be happy for her friend.

"Yes." Faith replied, trying not to sound too enthusiastic. "It's all good."

Cordelia gulped. "That's great. Really."

"Yeah."

They sat for a moment, unsure of what to say to each other for the first time in a long time. "When are you coming back?" Cordelia asked suddenly, not sure what she wanted to hear.

Faith frowned. "I don't know. We haven't talked about it."

"Soon?"

"I don't know." She replied softly.

Cordelia hid the urge to cry with a cough. "Right. Well when you do, give me a call, OK?"

"Cordy..."

"No! That's fine. Enjoy it!" She said, her voice overly light. "I'll just be here-" waiting.

Faith closed her eyes. "I don't know what to say." She sighed. "I love you. I miss you. But-"

"I know." She sighed, hating that everytime they talked it seemed to end like this. "You're in love. You should be enjoying it. I just wanted to... know, I guess."

"Well-"

"Well now I do." She said. "Be careful. Say hi to everyone."

"OK."

"Bye."

Faith put down the receiver and ran her hands through her hair. God, it was never perfect... She had everything she ever wanted, and yet it still seemed to hurt so many people. Cordelia, Angel, and even though she didn't really care all that much, the Scoobies. Maybe she should have stayed in LA...

Buffy walked back into the room at that point, and strode straight up towards Faith, pushing her back down on the bed and kissing her impatiently.

Or maybe she'd done the right thing after all.

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"We're going to my place." Buffy stated breathlessly. "I just have to do one thing first."

"Oh yeah? What's th- god...."

Buffy just grinned as she slid her hand between Faith's legs.

Many teen comedies and much pizza later, Dawn seemed almost happy to have Faith around. The tension that had been so obvious in the room when the two slayers had arrived to find a sulking teenager had dissolved into giggles and teasing. Faith had to hand it to her, Buffy had the big sister thing going down well. Yawning, Dawn had gone to bed, even saying goodnight politely to the slightly surprised brunette slayer, and left Buffy curled up on the couch with her head on Faith's lap.

Faith sighed contentedly, her hand playing with Buffy's hair, gently running her fingers throughout it almost absentmindedly. She was still in shock. A month ago, she would never have believed that she could be here, be tolerated let alone wanted. But maybe over analysing wasn't such a good idea.

"What time is it?" Buffy asked, sleepily.

"One. You wanna go to bed?"

Buffy shook her head sleepily. "I don't want to sleep."

"Who said anything about sleeping?" Faith grinned, kissing her gently and knowing full well that that was exactly what was going to happen.

Buffy smiled back at her. "OK." She said, getting up slowly. "But don't let me sleep. I want to stay awake with you." She took Faith's hand and led her up stairs, as the brunette wondered what her recent obsession with time was.

They walked into Buffy's room, sliding each other's clothes off before they were even in the door, and crawled into Buffy's bed. Buffy yawned again, and Faith grinned. "Sleep."

"No." Buffy said, kissing her again. "I don't want to waste it."

Faith pulled her into an embrace and stroked her hair, letting Buffy's head rest on her chest. The blonde mumbled a quiet protest before closing her eyes, lulled quickly into darkness by the steady, comforting beating of Faith's heart.

"Sleep." Faith whispered again softly, kissing her hair. "We've got all the time in the world."

"Yeah..." Buffy murmured, her dreams claiming her. "Time..."

PART 12

Author's Notes: The threesome reference is to Sway's fantastic fic One Of A Kind :) LOL, OK so it's slightly different... but hey...

Dedication: Sasha for the excellence that is Slayer Pride, and for just being cool. :)

(Today)

In the end, words don't mean that much. The names we give each other, the names we give our feelings, serve only to create an illusion that we are in control. But they're only words. They don't bind

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our desires, and they don't harness our fears. Only we can do that. We will believe what we want to believe.

No matter what we are told.

(2 days ago)

Buffy woke with a start. Gasping, she clambered over Faith and searched for her clock. "What time is it?!" She yelled, elbowing Faith in the stomach as she groped about next to the bed.

The brunette grunted and opened her eyes reluctantly. "Early. Go back to sleep." She grumbled, turning over and burying her face in her pillow.

Buffy ignored her and found her clock, gabbing it and staring at the numbers in disbelief. "It's past noon!" She exclaimed, leaping out of bed and tripping over her rug.

Faith watched her out of the corner of her eye and giggled as the blonde ran frantically around the room, trying to find clean clothes. So cute. Seeing that there was no way she was getting back to sleep, she dragged herself out of bed and wandered over to the flustered slayer. Wrapping her arms around her waist, she kissed her neck tenderly. "It's cool, B. It's not that late," she murmured.

"It is." Buffy said, calming down in spite of herself as she felt the closeness of the other slayer. "You promised me you wouldn't let me sleep," she said, her voice almost breaking.

Slightly confused at the emotion in Buffy's voice, Faith shrugged. "You were just so... peaceful." She murmured, kissing her soft flesh again, surprised as Buffy turned in her arms and wrapped her hands in her dark hair, pulling her towards her and kissing her desperately.

It took a moment for Buffy to pull away and remember why she had left the bed in the first place. "I've got so much to do." She said with difficulty, as Faith's dark eyes burned into her, filled with desire. "Wait for me." The blonde breathed. "I won't be long."

Faith nodded. "You want me to watch Dawn?"

Buffy looked at her for a moment before shaking her head slowly. "She needs... I need her to come with me." She muttered, turning back to her search.

Shrugging, Faith trailed her fingers over her back. "I'm taking a shower, OK?"

Buffy stood up and pulled her close once more. "Yes. It's OK." She whispered, looking in Faith's eyes before kissing her passionately again, her arms wrapped around her neck. They stood like that for a moment, before Buffy once again pulled away and looked expectantly at the other slayer. "Go. Hurry. I won't be long."

Utterly bewildered, Faith nodded and headed to the bathroom.

She felt the warm water wash over her body and closed her eyes, forgetting the oddness of their conversation. Every nerve was still burning with Buffy's touch. Every touch. Making love... god that was new... those touches that were given, received, just for the hell of it, those nights she spent wrapped in her arms. Everything emblazoned on her memory. It was all new.

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It had never been like this. Every dream, every wish, every thought Faith had ever had of the other slayer had never compared, never even come close to what she felt. Love. An emotion she had dreamed of feeling, an emotion she had almost given up hope of experiencing, and it was finally here.

She ran her hands through her hair and thought of her. She slid her hands over her body and thought of her. It was all her. It always would be. And god, she adored that feeling.

She took her time, feeling the feeling of being alone, even loving that pain that came with the thought of their distance. Every sense was heightened with the feeling of happiness, trust, love, and the fear that it would one day end. But even that... it all felt so good. It all felt like she was finally alive.

Flicking off the shower, she stepped out and felt a chill run through her body as a breeze hit her wet skin. And even that felt good.

She towelled herself off, and pulled on a change of clothes, their crisp cleanness new against her skin. And that felt good too.

Faith grinned to herself and stepped in front of the mirror, running her hands over her face and examining every part of her skin. Everything felt different. It was... it was weird.

But even that... well that, felt pretty damn good too.

Faith wandered back into Buffy's room and wondered just how different it all was. Faith the Vampire Slayer. In love for the first time... and she guessed, for the only time in her life. And not only that, but the one she loved... she loved her too. How fucking weird is that? She giggled to herself as she felt happiness wash over her again, before stopping suddenly. Faith does not giggle. Faith chuckles. Faith laughs deep in her throat. Faith smirks. Faith does not giggle.

But she couldn't help it.

She giggled at the strangeness of her thoughts.

She giggled again at the sound of the giggle.

She giggled some more at the feeling in her heart.

God, this was all so fucking weird!

The urge to run around and scream and yell and dance at the throbbing delight of the whole situation almost overcame her. But she took a deep breath and calmed down. Being cool was starting to become an effort. She giggled at that thought.

Oh man...

An hour or so later, Faith turned off the TV. She sat slumped on the couch and let her eyes wander around the room, feeling the strangeness of everything again. The last time she had been here... the fight they had had, the terror she had imposed on Joyce... the look in Buffy's eyes. Pain. Betrayal. And mostly... the last glimmer of hope burning out as they had... no, as she had stolen her life. They hadn't even talked about it.

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Maybe it was best left in the past, but somehow, it felt unfinished. Today, she needed to apologise. Her eyes rested on the door, waiting as always for the arrival of the other slayer. But nothing. Checking her watch, she stood and headed to the kitchen, rummaging through the cupboards, the fridge, and then stopping and thinking.

Faith was once a badass. At least, she liked to think so. Through her memories of the past, through her desire to change, something stirred in her soul, and she smirked. It wasn't totally bad, right?

She wandered through the house, poking her nose around doors, opening and shutting drawers, looking. Nosing. Maybe it was wrong, but hell. It was interesting.

She made her way up to Buffy's room and tentatively walked over to her dresser. Photos. Dawn, her mother, the Scoobs. She picked up a photo of Buffy, Xander and Willow and ran her fingers over the glass. That was a different world. A different Buffy. She suddenly felt guilty again. The innocence that was in those eyes was gone, and Faith? Well, a big part of that was her fault.

She was about to open another drawer when she stopped and sighed to herself. No point in taking any more, right?

She almost dropped the photo as the phone rang. Placing it carefully back on the wooden surface, she turned and ran down the stairs, getting to the phone and stopping. She looked at it warily as it continued ringing.

Reaching a hand out slowly, terrified that it would be a Scooby, she picked it up and choked out a quiet "hello?"

She was surprised at the voice on the end of the phone.

"Hey, Faith."

"Cordy." Faith grinned, relief surpassing the awkwardness she had felt the last couple of times they had spoken. "How's it going?"

"Good." The seer replied. "I wanted to tell you something."

Uh oh. "Yeah?"

A deep breath was clearly audible down the phone. "I love you."

"Cordy- "

"No, wait." Another breath. "You're my best friend. I want, more than anything, for you to be happy."

Faith nodded and leaned against the wall. "I am." She said, wondering where this was going.

"I know. And I don't want to stand in the way of that." She added, her carefully prepared speech going out the window as she spoke. "God... Buffy means happiness." She shrugged. "I just want you to know... that I'm happy for you."

Faith paused. "Thanks."

"No problem." The seer chuckled and changed the subject. "I think Fred has a crush on me."

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"What?! Really?!" Faith's voice raised a few notches in astonishment. "You're fucking kidding! I thought Gunn had a thing for you..."

"Yeah, maybe." Cordelia grinned. "But I'd never say no to a threesome."

"Cordy!" Faith gasped, unsure whether she was joking or not, before collapsing in laughter. "I never would have thought."

"No, neither did they."

A second passed before both girls started laughing again. "You gotta tell me!" Faith shouted. "God!"

Her laughter dying down, Cordelia hesitated again. "I will, just... when you get home. Faith, I mean it. I love you, whatever happens."

"Me too." Faith replied, a smirk still on her lips. "I won't be long, I promise."

Cordelia nodded, pleased that she had resolved the tension between them. "Later."

"Yeah, later." Faith hung up the phone and grinned, feeling much the same feeling as Cordelia had. Joke or no joke, they were OK again. She was about to walk away when the phone rang again. "Yeah Cordy?"

"Faith?" Dawn asked uncertainly.

Faith snapped out of her grin at the sound of the youngest Summers. "Yeah?"

"Bitch!"

Faith jumped, shocked to hear the word, and the venom in the girl's voice. "Huh?"

"It's all your fault!" She screamed down the phone. "I'm locked up here and all she can say is "Be brave" while she runs off to be with you! You!" She spat.

"Dawn, I-"

"Murderer!" She yelled, over and over. Faith heard Willow's voice in the background as Dawn sobbed the word down the phone, repeatedly voicing the one thing Faith hated most about herself, the one thing she knew she would never escape.

"Faith?" Willow's voice was cold, but calm.

Speechless, Faith stared at the phone.

"Faith?!"

"Uh... yeah?" She said with difficulty. "What... I mean..."

Willow was quiet for a moment, choosing her words carefully. "Buffy's on her way, she's left Dawn with Tara and I."

"OK." She replied, still shocked.

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"Don't... she's just angry at being left here." The redhead said firmly. "Don't..." She paused again, controlling her voice. "Don't pay attention."

Faith nodded slightly. "Right... but... I'm-"

"Bye." The phone was replaced with more of a slam than a click. Faith just stood there staring, the old self loathing washing over her. That was how Buffy found her a minute later.

"Dawn?"

"I-"

Buffy sighed and walked towards her, wrapping her in her arms. "I told her not to call." She kissed her gently. "You OK?"

Faith shrugged. "She's right." She said calmly. "I am a murderer."

"Faith-"

"No." She looked Buffy in the eye. "I am."

Buffy hugged her. "It's in the past. You paid."

"Did I?" Faith looked at her, her eyes wide and threatening to spill her tears.

"Yes." She said. "You've paid for too long already."

Wanting with all her heart to believe her, Faith pressed into Buffy tightly. "I wish-"

"Shh..." Buffy kissed her again. "Faith, this is very important." She met the younger slayer's eyes seriously. "You're not being punished. That's over, whatever happens, you've served your time."

"I-"

"It's done." Buffy said firmly. "It's done, and I love you. That's all that matters."

Faith smiled weakly at the blonde, hoping with all her soul that she was right. "Yes. That's all." She said, kissing her softly with an aching need of comfort. "That's all... Buffy?"

"Yes?"

"I need to say it." Faith met her eyes once more. "I'm sorry. It doesn't sound enough, I know, but I'm so fucking sorry."

"I know." Buffy said, hugging her again and wondering what would make her believe her. "Thank you." She said after a minute. "Thank you for telling me."

Faith stepped back and looked at her. "No." She said, a gentle smile forming on her lips. "Thank you."

Smiling back at her, Buffy took her hand and glanced at her watch. "3pm." She said softly.

"You want to do something, right?" Faith guessed, pushing away the darkness that had threatened to envelop her. Buffy wanted her. Buffy loved her. "Where do you want to go?"

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Buffy kissed her gently. "Right now, everything I want to do is here." She said, her eyes flashing as she looked at her. Smiling, she took her hand and led Faith back upstairs to her room.

Passion was never even a question when it came to their love making, but when they stepped inside Buffy's room that afternoon, their touches were different. Heat, desire, there as always, but something else too. Reassurance, comfort, the blatant need to be in each other's arms. There was a desperateness that both girls felt as they slid against each other, a desperateness they felt for different reasons.

As Faith worked her way down Buffy's body, the blonde's hands never left her skin. When she was about to reach her tongue to her centre, the older slayer pulled her back up and shook her head softly. "No." She whispered. "Here."

Faith nodded, her tongue sliding between her lips as their fingers claimed each other, their bodies pressing almost impossibly close as they moved together. Oxygen became irrelevant as they gasped and panted against each other, their tongues never leaving each other's mouths. Their heads swimming with each other's taste and smell and touch, they climaxed with every available inch of skin pressed together.

When they found they could think again, their lips parted contact in weak smiles from each girl. Smiles that stood on the edge of tears. Why?

Happiness.

Trust.

Love.

The fear that it would one day end.

And because it all felt like they were finally alive.

PART 13

Author's Notes: Did Buffy ever get her driver's licence? Hmm... let's pretend she did... I think I better credit Fried Green Tomatoes, cause the story thing at the end is inspired by that.

Dedication: To my lovely Marlboro Lights. *sniff* I couldn't do this without you...

(Today)

I keep expecting hate to engulf me. But it never does.

I should hate them both for the tragedy they caused, whether they knew what they were doing or not. But like love, hate never comes when you expect it, it doesn't follow rules or patterns, it doesn't understand logic. What she did seemed selfish. She thought only of herself. She hurts Faith, she hurts my friends, she hurts me.

But I can find no anger. It was her time, her choice, and no matter how much pain it caused, I know she did the right thing. I know in my heart that it was all worth it.

I just hope that someday, Faith will understand that.

(Yesterday)

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Buffy's arms pulled Faith tighter to her as she gasped out her name for possibly the millionth time that night. Her breathing still shallow, she kissed her softly and rested her head back on the pillow as Faith nuzzled her neck.

"What time is it?" Buffy asked, her voice calm.

"Just gone midnight."

She sighed quietly. "Can you drive?"

"Yeah." Faith murmured, confused by the suddenness of the question. "Well... not officially, but yeah."

The blonde couldn't help but smile. Of course.

"You wanna go someplace?"

Buffy nodded. "There's something I want to show you." She bent her head and kissed her again. "But just... five more minutes."

"Sure, B." The younger slayer whispered back. Faith's fingers wandered over the blonde's stomach, tracing the lines of her muscles softly, mesmerised by her perfection. The silence in the room hung over them like a warm blanket, lulling them closer and closer to sleep as they lay in the comfort of each other's arms, every problem forgotten for now.

Buffy closed her eyes slightly, exhausted by the events of the evening, both physical and emotional. But she willed herself awake, knowing that sleep would come soon. All too soon.

As the seconds ticked away, the blonde's eyes fell onto her clock. With great reluctance, she pulled Faith up against her and kissed her again, slowly running her fingers over her skin, and memorising her taste.

"We better go." She said quietly.

Faith shrugged, inwardly pouting at having to leave. "OK." A second passed where they looked at each other before kissing again, and sitting up. "Now?" She asked.

Buffy smiled softly. "Yeah." She whispered. "Now."

Faith's black boots rested on the dashboard as she looked out the window. "I thought you wanted me to drive." She muttered.

Buffy glanced at her, shrugging. "You can drive on the way back."

"Whatever." Faith said, leaning back and closing her eyes. "Where we going, anyway?"

"Lake."

Faith looked over at her. "Where?" She asked.

Shaking her head, Buffy didn't answer, instead keeping her thoughts on the road.

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Faith sighed and resumed gazing out the window. As the time passed, her hand strayed to the blonde's thigh, stroking her absentmindedly through her pant leg. She could never be close enough. At the back of Faith's mind, there was still that voice, that voice that told her she didn't deserve this. That voice that told her she would regret believing she did.

Her eyes rested on Buffy, her heart beating wildly in her chest. That always happened. It took a glance, a smile, or simply the sound of her breathing to send her soul on fire. Scary.

She never would have let go for anyone else. She never would have opened up. She never would have believed. But she had, and she did. Because it was Buffy.

The blonde looked over at her, catching her eye and smiling. A smile that held so much, and yet gave nothing away. Faith watched her as she turned back to the road, and shook her head. Scary, all right.

Faith woke up to Buffy shaking her softly. "We're here." She whispered, feeling slightly guilty that she'd dragged Faith out of the house. Couldn't be helped...

The brunette stretched and yawned loudly. She looked at Buffy who was watching her with a weird expression on her face, and kissed her. "Cool." She said, enthusiastically, "Let's go!"

Buffy smiled at her and nodded. "Let's."

Faith's boots hit some loose stones and she promptly fell over. "Oh." She grinned. "We're 'here' here."

Giggling in spite of herself, Buffy took her hand, a blanket in the other, and the two slayers headed towards the water. It was a tiny pool of water really, nestled in some hills just above the town. But it felt miles from anywhere. They spread out the blanket and sat down, Buffy huddled between Faith's legs and leaning back on her. "You like?" She asked, motioning to their surroundings.

Faith looked up at the sky and gazed at the stars, much clearer than they were in Sunnydale. "Yeah." She said softly, turning her gaze to the lake, her eyes a mirror of the dark water. "I like. I didn't even know this was here."

"You just have to look for these things." Buffy whispered. The moonlight danced on the stillness in front of them, a gentle breeze playing with their hair, still warm though the night would soon become morning.

"B?" Faith asked. "You ever done it..." She giggled, realising they themselves had done 'it' outside. She paused as Buffy looked at her, turning in her arms. "You ever done it out here?"

"It?" Buffy smiled. "Toasted marshmallows? Sang songs?"

Faith raised an eyebrow at her and stuck out her tongue. "Made love..." She whispered into her ear.

"Oh *that*" Buffy replied, smiling at her and wondering why the hell her heart felt so goddamn light. "No... I've never been here with anyone else." She turned and kissed the brunette, pushing her body against hers until she was lying stretched out on top of her. "I never wanted to share it with anyone. Not until now." She leaned towards her and brushed her lips against Faith's. "Not until you."

Her tongue slid into her mouth, sliding their clothing away desperately until their skin was once more connected, pushing against each other tightly. Buffy whimpered against her lover as Faith's fingers massaged her breasts, her mouth sucking gently on her neck, her thigh nudging between her own.

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Slowly, slowly, they moved against each other in the night air, committing to memory every inch of each other's bodies. Tongues and fingers brushed and slid and caressed until they were locked together in the most intimate of embraces. An intimacy they had never known before, despite the openness of their surroundings. Neither girl wanting to let the moment end, they made love until sunrise, climaxing and starting again immediately, their desire for each other's touch seemingly infinite.

As the sun rose in the sky and sunlight washed over their bodies, Buffy trailed her fingers once more over Faith's familiar skin. "I have to tell you something." She murmured. "And it has to be now."

Breathless and nodding, Faith pulled Buffy up and kissed her again, searching blindly behind her for their clothes. Smiling weakly, Buffy reached past her and handed them to her. They pulled on their clothing and kissed deeply again.

"It's 7.30." Faith said suddenly, anticipating Buffy's question.

Buffy nodded and settled back into Faith's arms, leaning against her and watching the sun glisten on the water, the lake becoming a mirror again, but this time for Buffy as tears shone in her eyes.

Buffy entwined her fingers with Faith's, and tried to find the words. "I made a choice." She said slowly, gripping her hands harder. "A choice I tried not to make... god..." Buffy blinked back tears and felt Faith hug her tighter, reassuring her. "I treated you so badly! I had to... I thought I had to..."

"It cool, B." Faith said, concerned at by the blonde's words. "It's in the past, right?"

Buffy gulped and shook her head. "No, it's now." She turned her head and stroked the dark slayer's hair with her fingers, suppressing the urge to cry. "I wanted you to hate me." She gulped. "I wanted you to hate me, because I couldn't hate you."

"B-"

"No! Let me tell you." Buffy said, leaning back into her again, unable to stop her emotions as she gazed at Faith. "I tried so hard, just so I wouldn't have to choose. God... I didn't even believe at first that you loved me, so I treated you worse, just to make damn sure that you couldn't. But it didn't work." Tears began to free themselves, falling down her cheeks as she felt Faith's lips kissing her hair. "You wouldn't. No matter what I did! You wouldn't, and I couldn't." She murmured through her tears. "I made a choice. I couldn't help it. I fell in love with you."

"Good thing." Faith said.

Buffy choked out a laugh. "Yes." She said. "And I don't regret it. The last few days were everything I was promised. Happiness, love. Everything." She gripped Faith's hands again. "Faith... I don't regret it, you have to know that. I just wish... I just wish you didn't have to be hurt. I love you so much, and it's my fault. All the pain you're going to feel..."

Faith swore her heart stopped beating for a second. "It's over, though." She said desperately, tears falling from her own eyes as the realisation of what Buffy was saying hit her. "Right, B?"

Shaking with tears, Buffy turned to her again. "Yes, it's over, but not how you think. I love you, I'll never stop loving you..." Gulping, she knelt in front of Faith and took her face in her hands. "I made a choice. A year ago." She said, brushing away Faith's tears with her fingers as her own continued to run down her cheeks. "Life... or you. Three days of happiness with you. All I had to do to make that choice," she whispered, choking on her emotions, "was to fall in love."

Faith froze, staring at the blonde. "No..."

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Nodding, Buffy closed her eyes. "8am. The same time I told you I loved you."

Faith grabbed Buffy's wrist and looked at the watch she was wearing. "Fifteen fucking minutes?!" She shrieked. "No! You can't!"

"Please-"

"Don't love me!" Faith screamed at her, her face soaked with tears. "Hate me! HATE ME!"

"Faith!" Buffy sobbed, hugging her tightly. "Don't! Please..."

"Buffy..." Faith held her tightly, as if she could keep her forever just by not letting go. "Please don't leave me." She wailed. "Please don't..."

"I'm sorry... I'm sorry..." The blonde buried her face in her neck and repeated the words over and over, regretting nothing but the pain her lover felt. "I love you so much..."

Faith pulled her up and looked into her eyes, wet with tears. "You should have hated me, B." She cried. "I wasn't worth it."

Buffy shook her head. "You were worth everything." She murmured. "You have to know that."

Sobbing, Faith nodded slowly. "So were you." Their lips met one last time before Buffy pulled back and turned, pulling Faith's arms around her.

"Tell me something... I want to hear your voice."

Gulping, forcing back her tears, Faith nodded, but found her mind blank.

"Tell me about when we first met."

Faith's right hand lay over the blonde's heart as her left clutched her hands. "I came looking for you." She said, remembering. "I did everything I could to make you like me. Everything but ask for your help." She kissed her hair softly, raining more tears down. "I couldn't ask you, but... but you helped me anyway... god..." She shook her head and gulped. "You helped me kill him, the one who I was so afraid of. And I thought... I thought... oh god..." She sobbed out again and she felt Buffy heart slowing under her fingers. "I thought it was my hardest kill. But I didn't know... I didn't know about this..." she cried.

As she felt Buffy's heart stop, Faith wailed.

She hugged her to her with every ounce of her strength as she howled out, a howl filled with the pain of loss. A howl that the residents of Sunnydale would attribute to a werewolf, despite the sunlight. A howl so primal that it seemed it could only come from a beast.

But it didn't. The howl that descended on the town that morning didn't come from a beast, or a monster, or a demon.

It just came from a heartbroken girl.

EPILOGUE

(Today)

Nikita – Just Another Love Story

I pieced the story together from a phone call from Giles, telling me what little information Buffy had told them all yesterday, and the few words Faith managed to say through her constant tears. She drove to his house and left her there, running back to LA as soon as she could, running back to the place she is loved.

She is lying next to me, curled up, refusing to sleep despite her exhaustion. Sleep seems like bliss when consciousness is Hell, but I know why she holds back from it. Tomorrow she will wake, and before she realises, she will search for Buffy by her side. When she doesn't find her, a new wave of grief will begin.

Everywhere I look, I see my friends pain. Grief for Buffy, grief for each other. Cordelia has cried all day, wanting nothing more to comfort Faith, and not being able to because she won't allow anyone near her. Anyone but me.

I understand. Guilt comes with seeing Cordelia, memories with Wesley, embarrassment with Fred and Gunn. But with me, there is understanding.

We walk the same road, we love the same girl. She will stay here, clinging to me as I cling to her, seeing Buffy in each other's eyes.

Despite the pain, I believe Buffy made the right choice. She chose a few days of love over a lifetime without. And now it is up to us.

Up to us to help Faith understand that, and in time... in time... she will.

She has to.

(One year ago)

Buffy opened her eyes to a blinding white light. Standing groggily, she looked around the room, her eyes finally resting on a person dressed in black. Squinting, she tried to make out the oddly familiar figure sitting in a chair with their feet resting on a table.

"So this is your idea of heaven?" The figure asked, swinging their legs down and turning to face her. "I gotta say, B, pretty average. Thought you might come up with something a bit more original."

Buffy moved closer to the figure, her eyes becoming accustomed to the brightness. "Faith?"

"Got in one, sweetie." She grinned.

"But... this is heaven? You're not dead... are you?"

Faith chuckled and stood up, lighting a cigarette. "Heaven all right." Her eyes drifted over Buffy's body, making her blush. "But no, I'm not dead." She took a drag off her cigarette and walked towards her. "I'll let you in on a secret." She whispered conspiratorially. "I'm not real."

Buffy frowned at her. "Huh?"

"I gotta say I'm flattered, B." Faith grinned. "I thought you'd pick... uh... Tara? Y'know, like the last time you needed a messenger."

Buffy just stared at her, not understanding what she was talking about. "I didn't know you smoked." She said suddenly.

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"I don't." Faith shrugged. "But it looks like you think I should. Hey!" Faith looked down at her body, which was now clad in hospital robes. "You feelin' some guilt there, B?"

"You're... however I imagine you?"

"Give the girl a prize." Faith snorted. "But I gotta say, I liked the leather more."

Buffy grinned at her suddenly, and Faith was instantly wearing a red cheerleader outfit.

"Haha." She said sarcastically. "Me as a cheerleader? C'mon! I think we're supposed to be serious."

"Sorry." Buffy giggled as leather wearing Faith reappeared.

"That's better." Faith stubbed out her cigarette and turned back to Buffy. "Now... why the fuck are you here?"

Dawn. Portal. Yes... it was coming back. Buffy nodded to herself. "I saved Dawn."

"Yeah, but you weren't supposed to. Shit, B. When you gonna give up the self-sacrificing stuff?"

Buffy shrugged. "She's my sister."

"Whatever. Point is, you're getting another chance."

"I am?" Buffy gasped, unsure whether that was something to be happy about.

"Yeah, save the world a couple of hundred times and the PTB feel they gotta hand out awards." Faith walked towards her slowly, and placed a hand gently on the blonde's arm. "Thing is... you've got a choice."

Buffy looked at her hand on her arm, and then back up to the brunette's face, amazed at how innocent her eyes suddenly looked. "I do?"

"You gotta be honest for this to work." Faith smiled gently. "Were you happy?"

"I was." Buffy replied, before adding: "a long time ago."

Faith was nodding encouragingly at her. "When was the last time?"

Buffy paused. "Angel." She said. "When we... y'know."

"Fucked like rabbits? Right, B. Honest."

She sighed, and thought hard. She had been happy with Angel, that was true, but pure, free, passionate, ecstatic happiness? She turned her eyes back to the slayer, who was now wearing white and not looking happy about it. "I don't know."

Faith sighed. "Yeah, you do. You don't have to tell me." She shrugged, "but you know. Now, back in black?" She nodded contentedly as her leather reappeared. "Happiness isn't easy to come by." She shrugged. "You know in your heart what you wanted, and it's your choice whether you take it or not."

Buffy shifted from foot to foot as she watched the slayer and remembered their time together. The time before they fought.

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"All you have to do, is accept it." Faith grinned. "Let yourself fall in love, and you'll get your happiness." She reached out and touched her hair softly. "Or live a long life without it. It's up to you."

Buffy sighed and nodded. "I won't fall for y- them."

"Up to you." The brunette shrugged. "Good luck." Buffy sighed and closed her eyes as the room started to fade. "B?" Faith called out.

"Yeah?"

"Since I look so good with one, can you give me another cig?"

Buffy couldn't help but smile as she nodded and Faith lit up and the room turned black.

As she disappeared, Faith sat back and sighed into the dark. "Be seeing you." She whispered softly. "Real soon."