

BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER

"Contrition"

by
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TEASER

FADE IN:

1

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREETS - NIGHT

1

We follow a falling leaf as it spins in the air, rolling as if it were being twirled. It finally falls to the ground, where the camera pans, to reveal a HAND.

Pull back to reveal a CRIME SCENE, sectioned off by the black and yellow tape with the words "DO NOT CROSS" clearly visible. Along the ground we see two figures lying motionless - dead. A woman, MARY, and her son, of just eight years old, MICKEY. Their bodies are being outlined with white chalk, the usual process.

A familiar face comes on the scene. JACKSON. He scans the area until he comes to LIEUTENANT NAOMI RYLE, waiting for him.

JACKSON
Lieutenant.

NAOMI
Sir, glad you could make an
appearance.

JACKSON
Yeah. Got nothing better to do
these days.
(beat)
What have we got here?

NAOMI
A hit and run, I'm afraid. Two
killed, mother and son.

JACKSON
Hit and run?

NAOMI
Forensics are dusting, some paint
could have been scraped off in the
collision. Dan's with the husband.
He's pretty shaken up.

JACKSON
No doubt.

Jackson walks over to the husband and father, BILL HUGHES. He's more than shaken, he's devastated. Sweat and tears pouring off him like buckets of water. Jackson nods to DETECTIVE DANIEL RADCLIFFE, who takes the hint and leaves.

JACKSON (cont'd)
Mr. Hughes?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BILL

Yeah.

JACKSON

I'm afraid you'll have to come with us for now.

BILL

I can't... I don't think I can stand up.

JACKSON

It's okay. Take as long as you want.

BILL

(incoherent)

I have to change this. It has to be altered.

JACKSON

Sir --?

BILL

I did this before. It's the same. But it's different. No matter what I do... it always ends like this.

JACKSON

Maybe we should get you checked out, if you'd like to-

Bill suddenly GRABS Jackson by the scruff of the neck, violently shaking him.

BILL

(shouts)

They must be brought back! I will change this!

On his GLOWING RED eyes we...

BLACK OUT.

END OF TEASER

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

2

INT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE - LOUNGE - NIGHT

2

We pan the room to see three anxious faces. First XANDER, who looks in confusement. Then WILLOW, who's a little shocked. Then Anya... who is snacking on a pickled gherkin.

XANDER

Um... it's...

WILLOW

It's... yeah... I, um...

ANYA

(muffled)

Fantastic!

ANDREW (O.S)

Really? You think?

Pull out to reveal the lounge, covered in balloons and a banner saying: "WELCOME HOME." There are snacks on the table, including a cake.

WILLOW

Yeah. But I'm not sure it's that kind of a homecoming, you know?

XANDER

It's more of a... I don't know, a...

WILLOW

Buffy's been through a lot... I don't think she's gonna want to party.

ANYA

No. See...

(points)

Cake! Everybody loves cake.

(to Andrew)

Is there mustard?

Andrew nods, smiling from ear to ear, offering her the mustard. She takes it, smothering it on a biscuit, before taking a huge bite. Willow CRINGES.

XANDER

We just mean, you know, she may be coming home but... she still lost Dawn and we're not so sure she'd wanna celebrate so soon.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANYA

Oh, it's been months since then.
She should get over it.

BUFFY (O.S)

I keep hearing that.

Everyone turns to see BUFFY standing in the doorway with her suitcases. None of them know quite what to say.

Except, of course, Xander. Who immediately HUGS her.

XANDER

Welcome home.

BUFFY

Thanks.

He backs off, letting Willow get a hug in.

WILLOW

We've missed you.

Buffy smiles, as Willow joins Xander. Next up is Anya, who grabs her tightly.

ANYA

I'm glad you didn't die in your coma.

BUFFY

Um... okay.

Anya beams a smile, in between snacking on her mustard biscuit. Buffy turns to Andrew.

BUFFY (cont'd)

We don't hug do --

She's cut off by Andrew WRAPPING his arms around her, holding her so tight not even she could break loose.

ANDREW

We've been so lost without you,
Buffy!

BUFFY

Andrew... I need to breathe.

ANDREW

Oh, sorry!

He quickly lets go, taking a step back. Buffy looks at them, one by one. A little uneasy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BUFFY

So... what's been going on with you guys?

3

INT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE - KITCHEN

3

Willow leans on the breakfast bar, dipping into some of the snacks. The door opens and Buffy ENTERS. With the door open, we can hear the faint sound of talking and some music.

BUFFY

Hey.

WILLOW

Oh. Hey. Are you okay?

BUFFY

Yeah. I'm good. You?

WILLOW

Yeah... same.

They share brief smiles but there's an atmosphere between the two. Something anyone could pick up on.

BUFFY

Will --

WILLOW

(quickly)

Want some snacks?

BUFFY

No. Thanks.

(beat)

Are we okay?

WILLOW

Huh? Buffy, we're fine. Why wouldn't we be? I mean, no reason at all. Right? Okay. So how about we mosey on into the party?

BUFFY

Are you sure? Cos, I'm sensing something here.

WILLOW

Sensing? No...

(beat)

It's just... I guess it's just been so long. It takes a while to digest... that you're back. We didn't think you'd ever come back.

(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WILLOW(cont'd)

I kept going to the Council, to use everything I could to bring you back but... you just didn't wanna wake up.

BUFFY

Will --

WILLOW

No. Buffy, it's all good. Really, it is. You're back. I couldn't be happier.

BUFFY

It wasn't you.

WILLOW

Huh?

BUFFY

You're upset because it wasn't you who woke me up, right?

WILLOW

(ashamed)

It's selfish, I know.

BUFFY

It's not, Will. It wasn't because I didn't wanna see you or... I wasn't ready to wake up. The world I was living in was where I needed to be right then... it's where I wanted to be.

WILLOW

But Giles said you were going to leave.

BUFFY

But I didn't. I'm here and I'm here to stay. I've done the running away before. I've already cliched that.

WILLOW

(smiles)

Good. Cos, I don't think I could take it if you were to leave again.

(beat)

I thought you blamed me.

BUFFY

For what?

WILLOW

I went after Dawn... I tried to kill Ulithios...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

WILLOW(cont'd)

I wasn't even thinking about you at the time. I let that vengeance take me over again.

BUFFY

Will, you did what you thought was for the best. I could never blame you for that. What is is meant to be, right?

WILLOW

So, you're okay?

BUFFY

(beat)

I'm better. I'm not suicidal or anything.

WILLOW

Always a plus.

BUFFY

Time to start looking on the bright side of life.

WILLOW

Which is?

BUFFY

(smiles)

We've got cake.

Willow lets a laugh escape her lips. She nods and heads into the lounge. Buffy hangs back, alone. That smile soon wears away, turning to a troubled expression.

ANYA (O.S)

Andrew! It's pin the tail on the donkey, not pin the tail on the pregnant lady!

Buffy takes a deep breath before making her way into the lounge, turning on that smile.

4

INT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE - BUFFY'S ROOM - LATER

4

Buffy is sitting on the bed, holding a photo frame. The camera pans to reveal it, a PHOTO OF HER, JOYCE, AND DAWN. Buffy stares hard at it, a sadness overcoming her.

KNOCK! KNOCK!

She quickly puts the frame back on the desk.

BUFFY

Come in.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Xander peers his head around the door. He sees that she's decent, then ENTERS.

XANDER

Just thought I'd get you alone
before we went home.

BUFFY

Xander, you're an engaged man.

XANDER

Good to see you haven't lost your
sense of humor.

BUFFY

Yeah.

(beat)

So, you and Anya, got a house, got
a baby on the way... are you gonna
marry her this time?

XANDER

I figured I should, don't like to
be monotonous, you know?

(beat)

It's good to see you smiling, Buff.

BUFFY

It's good to smile. Feels like the
last time I did... I can't remember
the last time I did.

XANDER

Don't try. Focus on the now.

BUFFY

Sounds like something a
psychiatrist would say.

XANDER

And you should know, right?
Speaking of...

BUFFY

I don't know, Xand. Not sure if I'm
really ready to go back to work
yet.

XANDER

I know. I just meant, they know
about Dawn and they gave you leave,
for as long as you wanted. You've
still got a job if you want it.

BUFFY

How did --?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

XANDER

I sorted it. Don't worry about it.

BUFFY

You always come through for me.

XANDER

It's what I'm here for.

(beat)

Giles told us you were... um, in a constructed reality.

BUFFY

Yeah, it was... actually very, very strange.

XANDER

Really?

BUFFY

The whole world was against me. And I had these Tarantino moves going on.

(beat)

And Spike was in it.

XANDER

Spike? What does that mean?

BUFFY

I got no clue. It was a crazy place.

XANDER

Well, it makes sense.

BUFFY

What?

XANDER

It was in your mind, Buff, that's a crazy mind to be in!

She playfully nudges him. After a beat, the tone turns a little more serious.

XANDER (cont'd)

I'm always here for you.

BUFFY

I know. That's why I came back. What would I be without my friends?

XANDER

(somber)

And...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

XANDER(cont'd)

I just wanted you to know we, um...
we had a ceremony for Dawn... we
took the body and...

(beat)

Well, we all said some words for
her.

BUFFY

(uneasy)

That's... great.

XANDER

I'm just saying, you know, that you
should maybe go out there and...
say goodbye.

BUFFY

No.

XANDER

Buffy --?

BUFFY

Xander. No, I can't. It's too soon.
(beat)

Still feels like yesterday, when
she was looking at me... all I
remember are those red eyes... I
don't wanna remember her like that.
I wanna think of her and think
about the way she was... before she
was violated by that thing. God, I
just --

She stops, her eyes welling. She quickly wipes a tear away,
shaking her head as if resisting the commanding urge to let
it all out.

BUFFY (cont'd)

Listen to me, I'm a bit jet lagged,
you know? Long flight.

XANDER

Of course, I'll... well you should
come see the house. Tomorrow?

BUFFY

Tomorrow sounds good.

XANDER

Good. Great, even. We'll see you
then. And, Willow'll be here if you
need anything.

BUFFY

Willow?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

XANDER

Yeah... she kinda lives here now.

BUFFY

It's like musical houses.

XANDER

Yeah... you, um... try to get some rest.

Buffy nods as he EXITS. She runs her fingers through her hair before falling flat on her back on the bed, tired, mentally and physically exhausted.

5

INT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE - LOUNGE

5

Anya is at the front door, ready to leave. Willow looks up to see Xander coming down the stairs.

WILLOW

How is she?

XANDER

I think she's coping. It must be hard... being in a coma for three months after your sister was killed.

ANYA

Especially as it was the man she was having sex with that killed Dawn.

(thinks)

And what is it with everyone and comas?

WILLOW

Did she say anything about... Jackson?

XANDER

Nothing. I don't think she's really ready to acknowledge his existence yet.

WILLOW

I feel kinda sorry for him, you know? He... he was just saving us.

XANDER

But he destroyed all hope of ever getting Dawn back.

ANYA

There was no hope. Dawn was dead. Ulithios was steering the wheel.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

XANDER

I don't think Buffy sees it like that. I think it's best if Jackson doesn't come around here anymore.

WILLOW

I don't think he plans to.

ANYA

Geez, the guy can't catch a break can he? First he gets all amnesiay, then starts going whacky with the visions and various outbursts... now the love of his life won't even go to him.

They all take a moment to think about it.

ANYA (cont'd)

Well, I'm hungry. Come on, Xander, I think there's still some pig guts in the freezer.

Xander and Willow exchange grossed out looks as Anya drags him away. Willow WAVES before closing the door.

She turns to look up the stairs, worry dancing across her face.

6 INT. POLICE STATION - JACKSON'S OFFICE

6

Jackson ENTERS, almost SLAMMING the door behind him. Luckily Dan is there to catch it.

DAN

What is up with you, Jacks?

JACKSON

That guy... there's something not right about him.

DAN

What, cos he grabbed you by the neck? It's just a little frustration. His wife and child were just killed, I'd say that's a fair share of pain for him. You're lucky, I know this Kate Lockley girl down in LA, and she had to deal with way more heavier crap than this --

JACKSON

His eyes... they glowed. I know it sounds crazy but he's...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACKSON(cont'd)

(off his look)

You think I'm going crazy.

DAN

No, of course --

(then)

Well, yeah, kinda. Look, you've been back on the force five minutes, it takes adjusting. Don't worry, bud, you're a great detective. You know, you're a pro at the... detecting.

(beat)

The guy's just hurt.

JACKSON

I remember how that feels.

DAN

You mean cos your fiance died that time?

(quickly)

I mean... sorry, that was too blunt.

JACKSON

I lost Kelly to cancer. I lost James. He was my partner, you know? We were a team... I couldn't help him. I keep asking myself why I lived and he didn't? We were both stabbed.

DAN

James was a... he died doing the job he loved more than anything. What happened that night isn't your fault. You know that.

JACKSON

I guess.

(beat)

I wanna catch the murderer who killed those people today.

DAN

We will. Matha's running a search on the license we got from a witness.

JACKSON

Right. You deal with that.

DAN

What are you gonna be doing?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JACKSON

Someone's gotta be keeping an eye on Mr Hughes. I know you dismiss the notion he could be dangerous but I can't. I saw it in his eyes. Something's up with him and I won't be happy until I know what.

DAN

Jacks, this crusade you're on --

JACKSON

I don't wanna hear it, Dan. I just wanna do my job.

DAN

Maybe you should see a counselor.

JACKSON

I was seeing one.

DAN

What happened?

JACKSON

(sullen)

We ended.

Dan nods, not completely understanding. He turns and EXITS the office. Jackson STARES into his coffee mug, the steam rising, covering his face.

7 INT. HUGHES RESIDENCE - ATTIC

7

The darkness only adds to this creepy atmosphere, where various charms hang from the uneven ceiling. The camera pans the attic to find Bill standing in the middle of a circle, drawn on the floor with chalk.

BILL

*Estu leia biruina veil, shan tu
letrio callarosso.*

(commanding)

Callarosso!

A RED LIGHT cracks through the floors, where the chalk is, and surrounds Bill. It gradually overcomes him and with a gigantic pulse of light, he VANISHES into thin air.

BLACK OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

8

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

8

All around us stand tall, bulky trees, much like the ones you see in books but never see in real life. The snapping of some twigs draws us to a figure walking confidently though the muddy pathway.

It's Willow. Dressed in a neutral toned dress, which actually looks as though a blanket has just been thrown over her.

She comes to a small HUT and looks inside. Nothing. She pulls back, only to find TRINKETS standing beside her. The boy holds a clock, with the hands encrusted with various jewels.

TRINKETS

For you, Teach.

WILLOW

A clock?

TRINKETS

I make so many and time is a strange thing. Shame it can't be preserved.

WILLOW

I think that'd be messing with the system.

TRINKETS

So, why are you here?

WILLOW

I need some help.

TRINKETS

You came to the right place. This world is yours for the taking.

He shoots her a devilish smile that only a boy of his age could get away with.

Then, he rushes off into the thick of the woodland. Willow shakes her head, used to these games.

WILLOW

(calls)

Trinkets! I don't have time to play.

She waits but there's only silence. As she starts off again, there is rumbling on the ground. The very earth begins to SHAKE. Willow turns, only to be faced with --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A GIANT SNAKE DEMON!

It roars at her, the saliva in its mouth spitting at her. Willow cocks her head, unimpressed.

WILLOW (CONT'D) (cont'd)
Quit it. I'm serious. Just go kill
the villagers again.

She SHOOS IT AWAY. The snake looks a little deflated, retreating back into the forest as Willow continues on her way.

9

INT. CLOCK WORKSHOP

9

The trap door opens. Willow hoists herself up, looking around as the incessant ticking of the clocks continues. She doesn't even notice it anymore, used to the sound. She looks around, alone.

WILLOW
Trinkets? Taledraw --?

TATTLES (O.S)
Teach!

Willow almost jumps out of her skin at the sight of TATTLES, the scruffy little girl of the Circle.

WILLOW
Hey, Tattles.

TATTLES
You're back again.

WILLOW
I know, it seems like only a day
ago I was here.

TATTLES
You were just here, Teach. Time has
no meaning in this place. You know
that.

WILLOW
Of course. Look, I need something
in the library --

TATTLES
Can't go in there.

WILLOW
Why?

TALEDRAW (O.S)
Business.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Willow spins around to see TALEDRAW, dressed not unlike a native American, complete with bow and arrow.

WILLOW
What kind of business?

TALEDRAW
Never you mind!

TATTLES
Taledraw! You have to show respect for our Teach. She does not yet know.

WILLOW
Know what?

TATTLES
(hesitant)
You cannot go into the Grand Library today, Teach. Let's play a game instead.

WILLOW
No. I need some help. I've been feeling something... I couldn't tell the others, I didn't want to scare them

TALEDRAW
(to Tattles)
She feels it.

TATTLES
I know she feels it. She just told me!

WILLOW
Okay... so what am I feeling? What is this --?

TRINKETS (O.S)
He plays with time.

Willow turns to see Trinkets holding another clock, but the face on this one is SMASHED.

10 INT. HARRIS RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - DAY

10

Xander is standing by the kitchen worktop as Anya ENTERS carrying a cake of some kind, followed by Buffy.

ANYA
Look, Xander. Buffy is here. And she brought me a gift.
(pleased)
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANYA(cont'd)

Pie! I love her.

(to Buffy)

You are a dear friend and are much
welcomed in our home. Please be
comfortable.

BUFFY

Uh... okay.

Anya, smiling and seeming like on drugs, EXITS. Xander offers
Buffy a beer but she is quick to decline.

XANDER

So she gave you a tour?

BUFFY

We saw every single room. It really
is a great house, Xand.

XANDER

Yeah, it's a step up from the
apartment in Sunnydale. Of course,
that's now rubble so a ditch
somewhere is a step up.

BUFFY

A ditch is nice. This is better.

XANDER

(beat)

So how you holding up?

BUFFY

I'd be all right if people stopped
asking me that.

(then)

Sorry. I'm being Lil' Miss Snappy.
I'm good, easing my way back
into... the real world. A slow but
I'm told necessary process.

XANDER

Buffy... I don't mean to bring
anything up for you in the memory
sense but... what are you going to
do about Jackson?

BUFFY

(emotionless)

What about him?

XANDER

You have to see him at some point.

BUFFY

I don't know. I guess I have to
talk to him at some point --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

XANDER

No, see, you don't. I know I've always been the one to hate your boyfriends, and I don't hate Jackson, but you don't owe him anything, Buffy.

BUFFY

I do. What he did was because I bought him into this life of demons and death. If anything, we owe him our lives.

XANDER

So you're thinking about continuing the relationship?

BUFFY

My mind's too confused to contemplate anything at the moment. If I see him, I'll talk to him. But if I don't, well, then time can only build a bridge. Or something to that effect. There's a general time theme.

11 INT. POLICE STATION - JACKSON'S OFFICE

11

Jackson is going through some paperwork at his desk, frantically looking over every last word. There's a KNOCK at the door, then Dan ENTERS.

JACKSON

Dan, good. I've been looking over Bill Hughes' record. He's been into some dodgy dealings. Theft, hijacking, suspected arsonist.

(beat)

Seems the widower isn't exactly as innocent as we initially thought.

DAN

Jackson, that's got nothing to do with the case. Let it go, man.

JACKSON

I can't. I just keep picturing his eyes.

DAN

(sighs)

Well, we've still got the driver in the cells. You wanna do the interrogation or shall I?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACKSON
You've got the driver?

DAN
Yeah... of the bus that hit the
mother and son.

JACKSON
Wait... bus? No. It was a car. A
hit and run.

DAN
No. They'd just got across the
street when a bus lost control and
hit them. Come on, Jacks, you
brought the driver in here just
last night. You telling me you
don't remember?

Jackson rises from his chair, completely and utterly confused
with what his partner is telling him.

JACKSON
No. They were hit in the street,
when they were crossing the road.
The driver didn't stop... we have
witnesses!

DAN
Yeah we do. They all say the same
thing... the bus swerved onto the
sidewalk and crashed into them.
(concerned)
Are you okay, bud?

JACKSON
No. Something's not right here. It
wasn't like this.
(beat)
It's been changed.

DAN
What?

Jackson looks down at his watch, lost in his own thoughts and
theories.

12 INT. CLOCK WORKSHOP

12

Trinkets and Willow are standing on the scaffolding,
overlooking the giant board game. There are countless
figures. Mortals, demons, some indistinguishable.

And on one square there is a fury of RED ENERGY.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TRINKETS

(points)

You see that?

WILLOW

The energy?

TRINKETS

(nods)

It is a fragment of power. Not nearly as big as yours. A mortal. Just a mortal. But the forces he wield are big and strong. Like a hurricane.

WILLOW

A warlock?

TRINKETS

He is playing with time, Teach. But he is throwing the world into chaos. The earth cannot withstand such alterations, it does not understand it.

WILLOW

Just tell me what's going on. The 'in-your-face' way, okay?

TRINKETS

I feel his heart. It is aching, Teach, it hurts cos he has lost the things he cares about the most. This pain has blinded him, he is oblivious to the chaos he is causing.

(beat)

Time is a tricky thing to master, and he is far from completion. He tries to fix it but it's not broken. It is how it is but he won't accept it.

WILLOW

He's trying to change the past?

TRINKETS

(nods)

Soon the dimensional walls protecting the earth dimension will fall and many more will collide. The world will be subject to much havoc. You must stop him.

WILLOW

Tell me where he is.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

TRINKETS

He is where you live. I can't lock onto his heartbeat, it's too erratic. You must find him and stop what he is commanding. Before the world falls.

WILLOW

I will.

Willow offers a reassuring smile before closing her eyes. The screen becomes engulfed in BRIGHT WHITE, her eyes remaining closed...

13 INT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE - WILLOW'S ROOM

13

... and flicker open again. Willow looks around, finding herself dressed in normal attire now, and makes her way to the phone by her bed. She dials a number.

WILLOW

Xander, is Buffy with you?
(listens)
We've got a problem. I think we're gonna need the Slayer.

14 INT. POLICE STATION - JACKSON'S OFFICE

14

Jackson is rummaging through the paperwork he was going over only a short while ago. Dan is hovering beside him.

JACKSON

Look, see.

He shows him a file.

DAN

What?

JACKSON

It's been altered. Something has changed. I was reading these less than an hour ago and they were completely different.

DAN

Jackson, I think --

JACKSON

Don't tell me I'm going crazy or that I need to see a shrink... or either of those suggestions. I know what I'm saying and I know it sounds a little whacky but it's also the truth. You have to believe me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAN

Okay. I do. I believe you saw what you saw but what I'm seeing right now tells a whole different story.

JACKSON

No. Those people were in a hit and run. We were searching for the driver of a blue escort.

DAN

I'm sorry but no, we weren't.

JACKSON

God, what is going on? The vehicle, the place, the files, it's all changed.

DAN

As if by magic, right?

JACKSON

No, not --

He stops himself, suddenly realizing.

JACKSON (cont'd)

Magic.

DAN

I was joking there, Jacks. No such thing as magic. Trust me, if there were, I'd be getting me a whole lot of action right now.

Jackson grabs his jacket and heads out the door. Dan is left alone, ignored as if he didn't exist.

DAN (cont'd)

Okay... what the hell?

15 INT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE - LOUNGE - LATER

15

Buffy, Willow, Xander, Anya, and Andrew are gathered around in the lounge. Our Scooby Gang. A little less than the previous year.

XANDER

So you're saying somehow this guy is leaping back through time trying to change something?

WILLOW

Yes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

XANDER

And you know this because some little kids told you in a clock shop?

WILLOW

They're not really kids but... uh, yeah.

XANDER

I might sound a little crazy here but who else is not getting this?

Andrew raises his hand.

WILLOW

Look, the Circle consists of these three beings, who look like kids, but they're not. They powerful. More powerful than anything I've ever seen. They're got so many resources at their command --

BUFFY

So why don't they get off their immortal asses and do something about this? Why is it always down to us?

WILLOW

Buffy --

BUFFY

No. I'm serious. You go back to them and tell them we're not doing it. They'll have to do it themselves.

ANYA

That's not the way it works, Buffy. You know that.

BUFFY

Well, I think it's time the higher powers started to listen to our needs instead of the other way around.

WILLOW

Buffy... if we don't do something, the world will end.

BUFFY

So, it's another Tuesday night in Cleveland.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

XANDER

And we thought Sunnydale was bad!

ANDREW

Buffy's got a point. Why should we be the ones always getting our hands dirty. I think it's time we took a stand and said no to low paid lackeys! Now who's with me?

(off their looks)

Just me, huh?

WILLOW

This guy... he's hurting. I think someone he loved has died and that's why he's trying to change the past.

ANYA

Maybe we should help him.

Everyone looks to her.

ANYA (cont'd)

I just mean, Kennedy, Dawn, if we helped him we could get them back. Just a suggestion.

BUFFY

Could that work?

WILLOW

Uh, I... don't know but that's not the issue. We can't mess with time, it's something that's just not meant to be played around with.

BUFFY

But if we help, you could use your magic... you're really powerful, Will, and --

WILLOW

Buffy, no! I'm not sure I could even if I wanted to.

BUFFY

You don't want Kennedy back?

XANDER

Buffy, I don't think we should really be talking about this.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BUFFY

I think we should. If there's even a remote chance I could have Dawn back here with me now, I'll take it.

WILLOW

Even at the cost of the world?

ANYA

Buffy, Jackson killed Ulithios to save the world.

WILLOW

And it's done. Once it's done there's no going back.

Buffy looks at them all, glaring eyes looking back at her. She breaks.

BUFFY

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to get all... whatever.

WILLOW

It's all right, Buffy. We understand.

BUFFY

(beat)

So, how do we find this guy?

WILLOW

Shouldn't be too hard, I can use a locator spell to find the magicks he's conjuring.

BUFFY

Good. You do that and, Will... time is an issue here.

WILLOW

I'll be as quick as I can.

ANDREW

'Time is an issue.'

(smiles)

Nicely punned.

Buffy checks them all over once more before walking away, expressionless.

16

EXT. HUGHES RESIDENCE

16

A car pulls up outside the house. Jackson steps out, looking over a piece of paper, confirming the address.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He's got the right one. As he slips the paper in his pocket, he pulls back his jacket, and reveals a pistol tucked into his belt.

With a deep breath Jackson takes the long walk up the driveway, checking through some of the windows before knocking. All the lights are off though, there doesn't appear to be any sign of life.

He goes to KNOCK but stops, just millimeters away, seeing that the door is already ajar. He pushes it open...

17

INT. HUGHES RESIDENCE - HALLWAY

17

... and walks into the complete darkness. He fumbles around for a light switch and, flicking it, sees the house is a mess. He turns to walk into the next room but --

BANG!

Jackson DROPS to the floor, crumpling like he has no bones in his body at all. Standing over him is Bill, holding a baseball bat, breathing hard.

BLACK OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

18 INT. HUGHES RESIDENCE - ATTIC - NIGHT

18

Jackson begins to come to, finding himself strapped to a chair in the attic. Scanning the area he sees Bill in the shadows, lurking like a hunter to its prey.

JACKSON
(groggy)
Untie me.

BILL
You came here to stop me.

JACKSON
Yeah, I did.

BILL
How did you know?

JACKSON
(thinks)
I'm different.

BILL
Do you know how much preparation has to go into one jump? A lot. I have to be completely as one with the universe, something that doesn't come easy. I knew there was a spark in you, I felt it when I grabbed your neck. There's life running through your veins... not your life.

JACKSON
That's great but seriously...
(struggles)
... untie me!

BILL
I keep trying to go back to save them, to find a way for them to survive, but every single time I fail. Did you know, in my time, they've been dead for weeks? Yet, I see them every time I go back and it seems like they're not gone at all. They're only a jump away.
(beat)
I've been unnoticed, till now, of course. Somehow you know.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACKSON

Look, whatever you're doing, trying to change the past... it won't work. The world works as it should and if you try to tamper with the laws of nature, you'll end up regretting it.

BILL

Posh talk for a simple detective.

JACKSON

Listen... I lost my fiance, a long time ago. I loved her... I loved her. I would have given anything to be with her and yeah, if I knew about magic back then I'd probably have done the same thing you're doing right now.

BILL

So where's the right and wrong lecture?

JACKSON

There isn't any. There is no wrong in grief. But the consequences of your actions will come back to bite us all in the ass. Trust me, I've been dealing with consequences for a long time now.

(beat)

Even though Kelly died... I moved on. I never once forgot about her but I found someone else. Okay, so Buffy isn't exactly the poster child for happy ever after, but she had the brightest soul I've ever seen.

(beat)

Just because your wife and son have died, it doesn't mean you won't have more of what you've lost.

A beat.

BILL

Touching. Really, it was. Almost brought a tear to my eye. But let's get real here. I'm not going to listen to some pep talk about how I'll get over it. For weeks I've been running it through my mind... how to stop it. The world seems to be working against me but I can cheat the system, I know I can.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BILL(cont'd)

(beat)

I've come to realize I need someone
in their place.

JACKSON

Look, just let me out of this and
I'll let you walk. I won't arrest
you or --

BILL

(continuing)

Because every time I try and save
them, they end up dying a different
way, at a different time. It
doesn't work because the balance
needs to be respected.

Jackson struggles some more, desperately trying to get free
but there are some very thick ropes on him.

BILL (cont'd)

So I need someone in their place,
someone to die instead of them.
It'll work, it has to work.

JACKSON

You'll be a murderer.

BILL

But I'll have my family. Don't tell
me you wouldn't do the same. This
fiance of yours... you would kill
to have her back, no?

JACKSON

No. Because if I had her back, I'd
never have known Buffy. And even
though that ended with me having to
kill the thing that walked and
talked like her sister... I
wouldn't prevent our meeting for
anything.

BILL

You love this girl.

JACKSON

More than... yeah, I do. I'd give
her the world and then some.

BILL

You'd kill for her then?

JACKSON

No. You know why? Because I'm a
decent person.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JACKSON(cont'd)

Sure, I killed Ulithios but... that
was to save the world. I never
meant to --

He stops, suddenly realizing everything he's saying. He's not
speaking to Bill, he's assuring himself that what he did was
right.

BILL

Regardless, I'd kill for Mary and
Mickey. I'd kill a thousand men to
have them back.

(beat)

But it won't take a thousand. It'll
just take one.

He eyes Jackson, who finally gets it.

19

INT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE - BUFFY'S ROOM

19

Buffy is standing by the window, looking out into the
backyard. She turns to see Willow.

BUFFY

You got it?

WILLOW

Yeah. Are you ready?

BUFFY

Sure am. Boot me up.

WILLOW

Then let's go.

BUFFY

Wait... you can't come.

WILLOW

Sorry, Buffy, but I am. I saw that
look in your eye... and with your
mind still fragile, I don't trust
your judgment at the moment.

BUFFY

You don't trust me?

WILLOW

I trust you, Buffy. But you said it
yourself, if there's a remote
chance you could have Dawn back,
you'll take it. No doubt this guy
has magic to travel through time,
so the chance is there... I can't
let you risk the world.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUFFY

You think I'd do that?

WILLOW

I lost Kennedy, Buffy. I miss her so much, more than I even thought I would do. Which is, kinda horrible, I know. I want her back, and I want Dawn back but... this isn't the way. There isn't a way.

BUFFY

I just... it hurts, you know? That she's not here with me. I keep thinking I'm gonna see her come out of her bedroom or stuck in the books in the dining room but... I'm not gonna see that again am I?

WILLOW

Maybe. One day. But for now, we have to save the world. Can you deal with that?

BUFFY

I'm the Slayer.

WILLOW

Then saddle up. Cos this could get messy.

Buffy nods as they both EXIT.

20

INT. HUGHES RESIDENCE - ATTIC

20

Bill is pacing the attic, reading something in a book, but every so often he'll look at Jackson.

JACKSON

What are you waiting for?

BILL

It has to be done at a certain time. Now be quiet, I need to be at one with the universe.

JACKSON

(beat)

Do you think you're God?

BILL

God is a belief. I am real.

JACKSON

You realize the dangers in using magic like this?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACKSON(cont'd)

I had a friend who went off the deep end after her lover was brutally killed. She tried to destroy the world with the vengeance that had consumed her.

(beat)

I wasn't there to see it first hand but... I'm told it was the worst thing to watch. What if this fails, Bill? What if they die again? How many times are you going to see them get killed?

BILL

I'll watch forever with the hope I can change it.

JACKSON

What if the magic gets too powerful for you and it consumes you like it did... this isn't the way, Bill. You have to trust me on that.

BILL

Trust you? You have to be insane! I may not be very powerful but I can sense when there's something wrong with a person and by golly, I can sense it on you.

JACKSON

What?

BILL

A parasite crawling through you like disease. You haven't begun to know what this world looks like through the eyes of power but you will soon.

(beat)

But for now you are just... you.

JACKSON

Maybe.

SNAP! He breaks loose of the restraints.

JACKSON (cont'd)

But you know what I've come to find over the past few months?

WHAM! He smacks Bill across the jaw with a devastating fist, knocking him down.

JACKSON (cont'd)

Since taking a life, I've grown stronger.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JACKSON(cont'd)

My strength is heightened... don't
ask me how, don't ask me why...
just ask me to read you your
rights.

BILL

What?

JACKSON

False imprisonment, buddy. It's
breaking the law.

BILL

You can't do this. I need to go
back and change it!

Jackson grabs his collar and pulls him to the chair, sitting
him on it.

JACKSON

No. You need to listen. There will
be no going back in time tonight.
It's over.

BILL

Wrong.

Bill, as quick as a bunny in heat, whips out a KNIFE and
drives it into Jackson's ribs.

Then, hastily, takes the gun from his belt, aiming it at the
fallen cop.

BILL)

I can't have you jeopardize this
for me. You will die, Mr. Shaw, but
not yet. I still need you.

21 INT. WILLOW'S CAR

21

Willow is at the wheel, turning the wheel. Buffy in the
passenger's seat. Suddenly she CLUTCHES her rib.

WILLOW

What is it?

BUFFY

(painfully)

I don't know... I just got a
shooting pain in my left rib.
God... it hurts!

WILLOW

Probably indigestion. Anya's food
does that to a lot of people.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUFFY
Feels like I've been stabbed.

Willow stops the car and opens the door, Buffy doing the same.

22

EXT. HUGHES RESIDENCE

22

They're at the same house Jackson was at, and is still in. Buffy holds her rib, unsure of the pain she just experienced.

WILLOW
This is it.

BUFFY
Willow --

WILLOW
It's okay, Buffy. I know what I said before was kinda out of line but I just didn't want you to go off the deep end. I don't like my friends doing that... I didn't like it when it was me. Nobody's perfect, right? You had a brief moment when you thought you could manipulate the universe to your will, have it do your bidding, but it's over now. I trust you completely.

BUFFY
No, I mean... Jackson's here.

WILLOW
(embarrassed)
Oh.
(then)
Wait, how?

BUFFY
I don't know. Just a feeling.

WILLOW
We'd better hurry then.

The two women rush up the driveway and, seeing the door is already open, go into the house.

23

INT. HUGHES RESIDENCE - ATTIC

23

Bill instantly turns to the trapdoor, hearing a CLICKING sound. He looks back to Jackson, who's injured on the floor.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BILL

Someone else is here. Are your cop buddies coming to rescue you?

The clock CHIMES. Bill smiles.

BILL (cont'd)

No worries. It's time.

He picks up the book once again, dragging Jackson into the circle he's drawn onto the floor. He stands in the middle, chanting.

BILL (cont'd)

*Estu leia biruina veil, shan tu
letrio callarosso.*

(loud)

Callarosso!

The white chalk begins to illuminate with redness as the light flashes up once again.

This time, however, Buffy and Willow have joined the show. They jump up through the trapdoor.

WILLOW

(shouts)

Hey!

Buffy sees Jackson on the floor, bleeding. She doesn't react at all, no part of her body moves, she just FREEZES.

BILL

(shouts)

Callarosso!

The red light grows and grows, gradually overcoming Bill again. Willow looks to Buffy, then to the light.

She grabs the Slayer's hand and makes a dive for Bill, at the exact moment the RED LIGHT consumes them all.

And in a FLASH, they're all gone.

BLACK OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

24 EXT. DOWNTOWN STREETS - NIGHT

24

The streets are filled with late night shoppers, as well as drivers, who zip up and down the road. Suddenly there is a RED LIGHT, which swirls in a vortex, spitting out four figures.

Buffy and Willow land hard against a lamppost, which almost knocks them out. Bill remains fine, and pulls the wounded Jackson up.

BILL
I'm sorry it had to be this way.

JACKSON
So am I.

Jackson KNEES him in the groin, spin-kicking him back. Then he drops again, the wound becoming too much for him.

Bill manages to get back and grabs Jackson again, pulling him across the concrete and closer to the road.

BILL
It's time to change history.

BUFFY (O.S)
I think you're right.

Bill turns to see Buffy in his face. Literally. She punches him back, and again, until she kicks him in the gut. He groans in pain.

BUFFY (cont'd)
I know you think this is the right way to go but it's not. You can't do good if it's for selfish reasons.

BILL
(angry)
My wife and child will die!

BUFFY
(sympathizing)
They're already dead, you're just prolonging their rest.

BILL
No! I won't accept that! I won't accept that this is it and they don't get to live. They deserve to live!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUFFY

Being born isn't a right, it's a privilege. Life can be taken away just as quick as it's given. You don't get to decide who lives and who dies.

(beat)

The only thing you can do is mourn and I'm telling you, this, all of this right here... is only hurting you more.

Bill looks down at himself, as if coming to some kind of realization for the first time. He looks back up at Buffy but sees something in the distance.

BILL

Mary...

BUFFY

No. I'm Buffy.

BILL

... Mickey.

BUFFY

Huh?

He looks center, sees MARY and MICKEY, about to cross the road. Looks left, a motorcycle. Looks right, a red escort. He's about to watch it happen again, for the hundredth time.

Suddenly he starts off, SCREAMING for them to get out of the way. His eyes nothing but sheer determination. He rushes across the road, the motorbike narrowly missing him.

But it swerves in the middle of the road. The RED ESCORT turns sharply to miss the bike and comes hurtling towards Mary and Mickey.

They can do nothing but react with SHOCK -- as they are PUSHED TO SAFETY by Bill, who takes the HIT. Horns and screams fill the scene as Buffy and Willow look on helplessly, watching as Mary checks her husband's pulse, shouting desperately for someone to call the police.

Buffy peers down to see Jackson struggling to stand, clutching his side. She checks her own rib out, realizing why she got the shooting pain. Jackson falls, unable to stand.

She studies him for a moment, before going to him, helping him up. He looks at her. She looks at him. There's tension, there's emotions, but most of all there's an understanding.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Willow observes as Buffy helps Jackson walk. Then she looks over to the crash scene, seeing Mary cry over Bill's dead body. She closes her eyes...

DISSOLVE TO:

25

INT. CLOCK WORKSHOP - DAY

25

... and SNAP open again. She turns to Trinkets.

WILLOW

It's over.

TRINKETS

Yes. You are becoming quite the champion, Teach.

WILLOW

It wasn't me. Buffy did it.

TRINKETS

You still don't understand. Sometimes words are more powerful than a hand. You made her understand, so she could make him understand.

WILLOW

Uh... I guess so...

TATTLES (O.S)

Teach won!

Tattles comes running along the floor, jumping over various holes and cracks in the flooring.

TRINKETS

But there's more.

TATTLES

We didn't want to tell you, Teach. We were scared.

TALEDRAW (O.S)

No. You were scared!

Tattles snaps her head around to see Taledraw sitting on a random rock.

TATTLES

You were shaking!

TALEDRAW

(stubborn)

I was cold.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WILLOW
What's going on?

TRINKETS
In there.

He points to the entrance to the Grand Library. Willow turns to him, curious, but he only gestures for her to enter.

26 INT. POLICE STATION - JACKSON'S OFFICE - DAY

26

Jackson holds his ribs, moving to the window to close the blind a little. He turns to see Dan at his door.

DAN
Knock, knock.

JACKSON
Dan.

DAN
I came by to see how my favorite injured partner was.

JACKSON
I'm doing okay. It's just a scrape.

DAN
Jackson, I've gotta ask cos it's been bugging me all day... what the hell happened to you?

JACKSON
I was stabbed. I told you.

DAN
Who by?

JACKSON
I didn't see.

DAN
Okay... but what were you doing at the dead guy's house before any crime or accident had even been committed?

JACKSON
Dan, you can rack your mind looking for answers to questions you're not ready for. Or you can sit down, have a coffee, and help me tidy up this case report.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAN

Well, whatever. This case is officially an accidental death. He was a good man.

JACKSON

Who?

DAN

Bill Hughes. Sacrificed himself for his family.

JACKSON

Yeah... it's a shame he lost himself in the middle there.

DAN

Something's going on with you.

JACKSON

Maybe.

DAN

I blame that ex of yours, she's changed you.

JACKSON

Um... Dan...

He motions to look over his shoulder. Dan spins on his heels to see Buffy standing just a few feet away, listening to every word. He can't do anything but force a nervous laugh.

DAN

This would be the Buffy?

BUFFY

The Buffy would be I.

DAN

Okay then... I'm just gonna go... yeah.

He quickly rushes off. Buffy heads into the office, closing the door behind her. She returns her attention to Jackson, who looks a little uncomfortable in her presence.

JACKSON

Hey.

BUFFY

Hey.

(beat)

You, uh... feeling any better?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JACKSON

I was stabbed. I don't have food poisoning.

BUFFY

Right.

Silence.

JACKSON

Is that all you came to ask me or is there something else?

BUFFY

That's all.

JACKSON

Right.

BUFFY

Yeah...

(beat)

Wait, no! That's not all. Seeing you last night threw me. I wasn't expecting it at all and... I wasn't expecting the feelings I got either.

JACKSON

You had them too? I gotta tell you, Buffy, I wasn't sure if you'd even look at me again but --

BUFFY

Jackson. Please, let me finish.

She takes a deep breath.

27

INT. GRAND LIBRARY

27

The gigantic doors widen to reveal Willow standing on the threshold. She looks absolutely STUNNED at what she's looking at. The three children follow her out, almost clinging to her.

TATTLES

We didn't do anything, Teach.

TALEDRAW

It's never happened before. We don't know what it means.

WILLOW

Uh... I...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TRINKETS

Please, Teach... won't you make the darkness go away?

The camera pans the grand library, which is very, very grand. But as we get to the other side we see the large windows, and the darkness seeping in through the cracks. There is a storm outside, so ferocious there's nothing but BLACK.

28

INT. POLICE STATION - JACKSON'S OFFICE

28

Buffy and Jackson, as before.

BUFFY

I can't lie to you, I wish I could but... I can't. Seeing you brought back everything I felt that day, the memories came flooding back, like I was reliving it. I can't live like that.

JACKSON

Buffy --?

BUFFY

I can't be reminded of the past every day. I need to move on, and I don't think I can do that with you in my life.

JACKSON

Don't say that.

BUFFY

I can't say anything else. What you did... what you did was the right thing to do. You saved us.

JACKSON

Then why --?

BUFFY

Because whether it was right or wrong, it was still my sister. You pumped bullets through her body and I have to live with that for the rest of my life. I just don't want to have to look at my lover and see her killer.

JACKSON

This doesn't make sense. Buffy... what we have, it goes beyond this. If we can survive a fight against an Old One, we can get over this.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUFFY

Maybe we could. But what I'm saying is, I don't want to try. It shouldn't be this hard to be with someone and I'm tired.

JACKSON

Buffy. Think about what you're saying...

BUFFY

I've thought of nothing else all night. And this right now... I had it all worked out, what I was going to say, but it's not going to plan. There was an analogy with a tiger and a lion but...

(beat)

I don't wanna hurt you, Jackson. Really, I don't.

JACKSON

So don't! You don't want to hurt someone, you don't!

Buffy takes a few steps closer to him, taking his hand in hers. She gently kisses him on the cheek. KRISTIAN LEONTIOU'S "STORY OF MY LIFE" starts to play.

BUFFY

Goodbye, Jackson.

JACKSON

No. You can't do this. We love each other.

Buffy just stares at him.

JACKSON (cont'd)

We do. Right?

(beat)

Buffy? You love me?

She lets his hand drop and walks away from him as he looks on, his eyes welling with fought back tears, with the background music building up.

We're looking straight ahead at her now, the reverse angle, as she walks away, fighting back emotions. We see Jackson in the background, trembling, watching his dream walk away.

DISSOLVE TO:

29 INT. GRAND LIBRARY

29

Willow slowly makes her way across the a huge library, bookshelves stretching upwards as if reaching into the heavens themselves. But this is no divine scene. The darkness outside the window is coming through the cracks, spoiling the beautiful decor.

The three children follow their mentor, one by one, in an orderly line. Afraid of what's coming. The darkness.

Willow comes to a strand of darkness, which floats in the air as if it were liquid.

DISSOLVE TO:

30 EXT. DOWNTOWN STREETS

30

Andrew strides through the crowds, rounding a corner, coming to a reclusive park. He looks in, always amazed at how beautiful it is, especially in a busy city like Cleveland.

He turns -- -- but STOPS DEAD IN HIS TRACKS. He spins back around at a sight he didn't think he'd be seeing. Not today.

We're staring into the park, at a bench. A bench where a couple are sat. Finally we get a proper glimpse. It's JODY. His hand interlocked with a guy next to him, their expressions dancing with happiness.

Andrew recoils. Shocked. Stunned. Lost for words. He backs off, starts running up the street. Soon he's but a blur on the screen.

DISSOLVE TO:

31 INT. POLICE STATION - JACKSON'S OFFICE

31

He's buried within his hands, refusing to acknowledge the world outside this wall he's created. The music plays through, hitting all the right notes with the emotions. The office is trashed. Paper flying through the air, furniture lying on the floor. Dan watches in through the window. Sympathetic.

DISSOLVE TO:

32 INT. GRAND LIBRARY

32

Willow's hand is but an inch from the darkness. As she gets closer and closer... she quickly pulls back.

As does the darkness, retreating from the library, as if they'd got a taste of each other. She turns to the children, waiting anxiously for her verdict.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WILLOW
Something bad is coming.

On this we...

BLACK OUT.

END OF SHOW