

BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER: ORIGINAL SYN

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Deepest, darkest underground. We're pushing slowly forward through a man-sized, circular tunnel, passing jagged rock formations and roots, with nothing but darkness ahead of us.

Suddenly, we hear a distant CLINK, the sound of metal scraping against stone.

We continue pushing forward - and now, a dim LIGHT can be seen, flickering like a torch flame in the distance.

BUFFY (V.O.)

I knew... Before we even set off,
back when we were still just making
the plans, even without that
prophecy, I just... I just knew.

Still pushing in, but the tunnel is starting to narrow, tapering down into a crawlspace. We continue to progress through the gloom, the dancing orange light cast by the torch up ahead now illuminating what looks like a small, round cavern up ahead of us.

The circular room is about twenty metres across, but the focus of our attention is a FIGURE, hunched over and with its back to us, one thick, muscular arm holding the torch giving us our light as we approach.

BUFFY (V.O.)

I didn't want to say anything to
the others - it doesn't really do
much good to have the people you're
about to trust with your life know
that you think... Well, I guess
that doesn't matter now.

The figure looks to be a tall, well built man, with long, straggly grey hair, but as we draw closer we start to make out more details - the man's skin is completely jet black, and the hand holding the torch is made up of five thick, taloned fingers.

The man appears to be hacking away at something out of sight, hidden by his body, so our view starts to crane up, looking down on the scene from above.

The man is trying to prise open a locked casket, a large, square metal box that's coated with dirt, slime and rust.

A large hole dug out of the ground next to it shows where the casket came from, and the man is now using the shovel to batter the locks into submission.

BUFFY (V.O.) (cont'd)
I can't believe I'm not going to
get a chance to say goodbye.

With a sudden SNAP, the locks snap away and fall from the box. The man pauses, and allows himself a brief, gruff chuckle. He reaches out a cautious hand for the box, tentatively lifting the lid.

After a beat, confident there are no traps, he THROWS the lid open - and reveals an old, leather bound book, securely wrapped and bound, the casket around it filled with dust.

BUFFY (V.O.) (cont'd)
After all we've been through
together, I owed them that.

The man reaches his free hand into the casket, and gingerly lifts up the book.

BUFFY (V.O.) (cont'd)
But I guess most people don't have
the luxury of knowing they're about
to go into their last fight, do
they?

CRASH! There is a sudden, loud noise from behind us, and as we rapidly pull back, the man starts to turn round.

We can't make out his features in the gloom, but what we do see is a pair of glittering green eyes - GLOWING in the darkness as it engulfs the figure again.

Still pulling back at increasing speed, the blackness of the tunnel takes over again, and as it fills the screen, we black out and cut to:

SLAM! We're staring at the door of a jet black van as it slides shut, before the van's engine starts and it drives away, out of frame.

The scene it reveals is one of utter mayhem - the most prominent feature is the police station in ruins as the backdrop, the once tall Cleveland Police Department smashed down into a heap of rubble.

Red and blue emergency services lights dance across the scene, which is filled with police cars and vans, ambulances, fire engines, crowds of curious onlookers restrained by yellow tickertape and plastic barriers, and lots of cops.

We start to pan left across the scene, and as we do two paramedics pass us, with a body inside a half-zipped body bag on a gurney between them.

The body is that of the unfortunate SHANNA, Jackson Shaw's runaway little sister. The first paramedic pauses to finish zipping up the bag, before the two of them heft the gurney up into the back of a waiting ambulance.

Panning further across the scene, we pick up DAN and ANDREW, the cop and the geek, sitting on one of the side steps of a parked fire engine. Both men show signs of battle - cuts, scratches and dust caking their clothes - and sip from foam coffee cups as another paramedic drapes blankets round their shoulders.

Both men are staring blankly ahead of them, still processing all that went on to cause the devastation around them.

We pan further along, past a large flatbed truck piled up with the corpses of a dozen different shades of ugly demon warriors, along with two marines wearing masks against the smell, tossing another body onto the rest of the pile.

Finally, we come to an old car. The old car that belongs to GILES, in fact, with the man himself leaning against its bonnet. His one arm is around BUFFY, and his other around SOFIA, the two Slayers pressed close against Giles for some kind of fatherly comfort.

GILES

Time we thought about heading home,
I think. We've all seen quite
enough excitement for one day.

Giles releases the girls and turns his attention to Buffy, but he's distracted as a uniform COP strolls up to them.

COP

Are you in charge of these two?

GILES

I'm sorry? Oh, yes, yes, I'm their,
ah, uncle. I'll take them home.

COP

We'd appreciate that, sir. With all
these gang members' bodies still to
clean up, we're going to need all
the space we can get round here.

GILES

(puzzled)
Gang members?

(CONTINUED)

Giles looks over as another flatbed truck loaded with dead demon bodies rolls past, and he nods and looks back to the Cop with a forced smile.

GILES (cont'd)
Bloody gangs, eh? Always causing
some kind of trouble.

The Cop eyes Giles for a beat - then turns and walks away.
Giles breathes a sigh of relief.

SOFIA
'Gang members'?

GILES
Believe me, we've heard flimsier
excuses. What was it Principal
Snyder used to say to cover up
vampire activity? PCP?
(shakes head)
Thoroughly unpleasant little man.

SOFIA
What happened to him?

GILES
(beat)
Come on, let's head home. Xander
and Hope are waiting to see you.

Sofia nods - you'd expect her to look overjoyed at the news
of Xander's safe return, but she's too worn out.

SOFIA
And still no word from Willow?

Giles shakes his head, then looks up as Dan and Andrew walk
over. Dan looks a little uncomfortable.

DAN
Uh, hi. You must be...

GILES
Giles. Rupert Giles.

He offers Dan his hand, and they shake.

DAN
You part of this whole 'hell demons
and vampires' thing too? Your girl
Buffy here promised me some answers
earlier, but I couldn't help but
notice she's been kinda spaced out
since Jackson... well, you know.

GILES

If you'd like to join us back at Buffy's house, I'm sure we can fill in any blanks you may still have.

DAN

Blanks? I'm thinking more like a mosaic of missing pieces here! I mean, what happened here tonight, with the monsters, and fire, and explosions... I just don't even know where to start processing any of it, you know?

Giles lays a fatherly arm round Dan's shoulders and motions towards his car.

GILES

You're not the first person we've had to give the summarised version of Slayer history to, and I very much doubt you'll be the last.

Giles opens his car door for Dan to step in. Dan looks Giles' somewhat shaky car over and raises an eyebrow.

DAN

Uh... no offence, but I've got my own ride.

GILES

(beat; sighs)
Please yourself.

Dan nods once to Buffy, then turns and heads away as an ambulance siren starts up, and the vehicle rushes past the group by the car, on its way to the hospital as Giles opens the passenger door and turns to Buffy.

GILES (cont'd)

Shall we go?

Buffy stands still, staring ahead of her. Giles and Sofia exchange a worried look, before Giles gently nudges Buffy and guides her into the car.

As Sofia and Andrew clamber into the two back seats, Giles starts the car's engine, and we cut to:

The gang are all here - almost, anyway. XANDER is cradling the sleeping baby HOPE in his arms, sitting on the living room sofa next to Sofia, who gazes fondly down at the sleeping infant.

Curled up tightly on one of the armchairs is Buffy, her arms wrapped round her knees. Andrew sits on the floor by the sofa, still shivering slightly, as Giles walks in from the kitchen and hands Andrew a large glass of water.

GILES

This should help with any smoke
left in your lungs.

ANDREW

Uh, thanks.

He GULPS a few mouthfuls down, then puts the glass on the floor and scans his eyes across the room.

ANDREW (cont'd)

So, uh, how did Dan take
everything?

XANDER

You mean Giles' condensed history
of the last nine years in Buffy
World?

SOFIA

Pretty well, considering.

We quickly cut outside to:

EXT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE - BACK GARDEN - NIGHT.

Dan is sitting on the back porch, staring out towards us.
There's a cigarette in one hand and a beer in the other.

After a beat, he takes a swing of beer, then a drag off the
cigarette, before resuming his staring.

DAN

Huh.

We cut back inside to:

INT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT.

Giles is watching the still silent Buffy with concern in his
eyes, when Sofia speaks up.

SOFIA

Giles, how's Marie?

GILES

Oh, she's fine, I spoke to her not
long ago.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GILES (cont'd)

She should be back on her feet in a few days. Still no sign of Max, however.

XANDER

That backstabbing bastard. I always knew we couldn't trust him.

SOFIA

(tongue in cheek)

Oh, that's right, I forgot how you were the one who warned us all that he was going to turn on us.

XANDER

Well- I- I could have, if I'd had the time to notice!

(gestures to Hope)

I did have other things on my mind.

Giles heads over to Buffy, crouches down next to her and places a hand on her knee.

GILES

Buffy? Are you still with us?

Buffy's eyes flick to look at Giles, before she nods.

GILES (cont'd)

Would you like anything? Some food, some more water perhaps?

Buffy shakes her head, child like, and Giles gets the message to leave her be for now. He strolls back across the room, lost in thought.

SOFIA

What do we all make of that Dan chap, anyway? He seems very...

GILES

American?

SOFIA

I was going to say 'resilient,' but, since you mention it...

XANDER

All comedy national stereotyping aside, guys, we need a plan! We need answers, and Willow.

GILES

Agreed. Let's go over what we know.

(CONTINUED)

Giles finishes his tea and heads for a pile of reference books heaped up on the coffee table, as Sofia, Xander and Andrew spread out to take a book each.

GILES (cont'd)

Buffy, did I hear you say Kane told you that somebody's planning to open every Hellmouth in the world, all at once?

BUFFY

He said 'he knows where they all are, and you can't stop him.'

(to Giles)

I'd kinda like to prove him wrong.

XANDER

Woah there, Bat-Buffy. I'm as much down for some payback against that slick-haired creep as you are, but... every Hellmouth? How many is that?

GILES

At the last count?

(thinks)

A hundred and twelve. Recorded ones, anyway.

A beat as the room processes the news.

SOFIA

Well, that's only...

(counts)

Eighteen each, if we get Dan to help. We could manage that, couldn't we?

The round of weary looks in the room tells Sofia no, they couldn't manage that.

BUFFY

Kane also gave me something, might have been a name. Just before he died, he said he was only following orders, and when I asked him whose, he said 'the original sin.'

GILES

'Sin'? With an 'i' or a 'y'?

BUFFY

(impatient)

I don't know, Giles, it's not like I was at a spelling bee!

(CONTINUED)

GILES

It could help us work out what he was on about, is all I meant.

XANDER

(snaps fingers)

Hey, didn't we fight somebody called 'Syn' when we first came to Cleveland? That biker guy, possessed people's bodies?

BUFFY

Kennedy killed it. Broke its neck.

XANDER

Oh yeah. I'd say that rules him out of our Most Wanted list.

GILES

Unless...

Giles gets a thought and reaches round for another book, starting to leaf through it.

SOFIA

(curious)

Giles?

BUFFY

(louder)

Giles?

GILES

(looks up)

Sorry?

XANDER

You performed a classic.

(bad Giles impression)

'Unless...'

GILES

Oh, yes, sorry. Well, it's Kane's use of the word 'original' that just got me thinking.

XANDER

What, you think he should have used 'primary' instead?

GILES

No, just that perhaps the Syn we faced may have been the latest in a line of demons to bear that name, or something similar.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

GILES (cont'd)
It wouldn't be the first time a
demonic entity has referred to
itself as 'the original' something
or other.

Giles begins to get lost in his book, and sensing that he's
settling down for a night of research, Buffy stands.

BUFFY
Find out what you can. Andrew, help
him. Xander, I think you ought to
get yourself and Hope to bed.

XANDER
What about Willow?

BUFFY
Don't worry, we'll get to that. Now
go rest.

Xander nods, stands and heads for the stairs as Sofia gets up
and stands before Buffy.

SOFIA
What about me? I got the impression
you were in a 'giving out orders'
kind of mood.

BUFFY
(checks watch)
Grab a weapon. We're going out.

Buffy heads over to the weapons chest as Giles catches up
with what she just said.

GILES
Going back out? Buffy, I really
think you should-

BUFFY
(interrupts)
I really think I should hit every
demon bar, nest, apartment, hideout
and hole in the ground that I can
find in this town, and beat the
crap out of everybody until one of
them tells me who 'Syn' is, and
where we can find him.

Sofia smirks, impressed as always by Buffy's strength under
pressure, as Giles stands, taking off his glasses.

GILES
Really, Buffy, you've been through
a tremendous amount tonight
already. I'm concerned for your
well being.

BUFFY
(looking at Giles)
Sofia, you feel up to it?

SOFIA
I suppose so.

BUFFY
Then we're good. Don't wait up.

Buffy walks around Giles, tossing a sword to Sofia and pausing to scoop the Scythe up from its place, propped up next to the door.

Giles knows he won't be able to talk her down and lets her go, watching the two Slayers leave.

The door closes, and there's a beat of silence before Andrew finally speaks again.

ANDREW
Um, can I be excused to go to the bathroom, please?

Giles sighs and nods his head. As Andrew stands and quickly shuffles towards the bathroom, we cut to:

Back up in the pocket dimension inhabited by the three members of the Circle, we pan down across the snow-capped trees of the thick forest surrounding the wooden village on stilts that the Circle call home.

The volcanoes in the background RUMBLE ominously, but as we pan across the fields of waist-high grass surrounding the village, bathed in glorious sunshine, we pick out a figure in amongst the grass, who appears to be DIGGING.

It's WILLOW, her red hair tied back in a loose ponytail, wiping away the sweat before continuing to dig.

Lying next to her on the ground is a sealed cloth bag, human sized - the body of the unfortunate Amy Madison, the witch who fell at the hands of the Circle.

Willow is digging a grave for Amy's body into the ground, wrapped up in her efforts and not noticing the shadow falling across her.

Willow looks up, one hand shielding her eyes from the sun, to see TRINKETS, one of the Circle members, squinting down at her, his short, scruffy brown hair as rumpled as the rest of his plain brown overalls.

TRINKETS

Are you really going to dig a whole grave, just for her?

Willow ignores her and keeps on digging, and from her expression we can see she's struggling to control her anger.

TRINKETS (cont'd)

She was just an ordinary witch, you know. She didn't have anything like your level of power.

WILLOW

She tried to save me. I owe it to her to at least try and give her a proper burial.

TRINKETS

You humans have a funny way of doing things when it comes to death.

Willow pauses, almost ready to unleash another barbed comment, but she manages to restrain herself.

TRINKETS (cont'd)

Anyway, I just came out to tell you what's going on down on Earth.

Willow doesn't stop digging, so Trinkets continues.

TRINKETS (cont'd)

Somebody's about to make things very interesting for everyone down there, really shake things up.

WILLOW

Am I supposed to care?

TRINKETS

Well, yeah, only because if you don't help us make his job easier, then you know what'll happen.

As if to prove his point, Willow hears a Snake Demon HISS from just beyond the treeline, and she pauses to look up.

The Demon can just be seen past the edge of the forest surrounding the village, slithering through the undergrowth.

TRINKETS (cont'd)

So will you help us? I shouldn't give you another chance, but what could happen may be more than just the three of us can handle. We need someone with your power.

(CONTINUED)

Willow sighs, then tosses the shovel she was using to one side and looks up at Trinkets.

WILLOW

I'll think about it. Right now, I
just want to bury my friend, and
then go back to the library. Can I
do that in peace?

Trinkets stares at her for a beat, then with another shrug turns and wanders off, back to the village. Willow watches him go, then turns back to the forest.

The snake demon is still there, and when it notices Willow staring at it, it pauses and stares right back. A half grin crosses Willow's lips, and she starts to walk over towards the trees.

The snake demon waits, watching her as she approaches, its tongue flickering but making no hostile moves at all.

WILLOW (cont'd)

Yeah, you're just like a big old
kitty cat, aren't you?

Willow moves ever closer, not afraid of the huge demon in the slightest. The demon's eyes blink as it watches Willow - and then it slowly slithers forward a few more feet, close enough for Willow to stroke the top of its smooth, scaly head.

WILLOW (cont'd)

That's right. You'd do anything for
little old Willow, wouldn't you?

(more serious)

Because I know what you used to be.
And if you help me, I promise to
find a way to set you free.

The demon pauses, blinks its eyes and stares up at Willow.

WILLOW (cont'd)

(smiles; nods)

That's right.

We stay on the snake demon's almost hopeful expression for a beat, before we cut to:

We're walking along a row of beds, each one holding a sleeping patient, passing a nurse making her nightly rounds.

The last bed in the row is occupied by MARIE, the brunette Watcher resting peacefully despite the rain kicking up outside.

(CONTINUED)

A faint BUZZING sound break the quiet of the ward, and Marie stirs. The buzzing continues, and after a beat, she comes to.

Blinking, she looks round to the bedside table and opens the top drawer, taking out her cell phone. Marie checks to make sure the nurse is nowhere in sight, then takes the call.

MARIE

Hello?

VOICE

(filtered; through phone)

How are you feeling?

The voice is male, gruff and deep. Marie smiles.

MARIE

Going out of my bloody mind stuck in here! I must remember to make my self-inflicted wounds a bit less dramatic next time. As soon as I'm out of here, I'll go back and look for Max. I want to make sure I took care of him.

VOICE

Disregard Max, you have a new order. The Slayer is close to discovering our plans. You must eliminate her and her team before they can find me. Leave no survivors.

A beat. Marie takes a moment to process the information.

VOICE (cont'd)

Do you understand?

MARIE

I understand.

VOICE

Good. When the sun rises, leave the hospital. We will speak again soon.

Marie nods, clicks the phone off and quickly places it back in the bedside table as she hears the returning nurse's footsteps approaching. As she feigns sleep, we cut back to:

Andrew is watching the television with interest as Giles walks in from the kitchen, midway through a phone call.

(CONTINUED)

GILES

(into phone)

Yes, that's right, also try spelling it 's,' 'y,' 'n.' I think it could be the name of a demon, or some sort of entity, maybe even an actual name. See what the databases turn up and get back in touch as soon as you can, would you?

Giles hangs up and takes a seat, taking off his glasses and rubbing his weary eyes.

ANDREW

Any luck?

GILES

Not so far. I'm running at something of a disadvantage - with Marie out of action, Max missing and Willow still trapped in the Circle, I'm without my usual research aides.

ANDREW

Can I help?

Giles leans forward and selects a thick book from the pile on the coffee table before him.

GILES

Start working your way through that. We're looking for something that could unlock and open a series of Hellmouths at once. It may be a spell or incantation, or even a demon of some kind. Keep your eye out for the word 'syn' too.

Andrew nods and gets to work, and Giles takes a moment's break to turn up the television volume.

TV

And with further reports coming in of severe meteorological disturbances around the world, we're able now to bring you pictures of a dramatic typhoon just off the coast of Japan.

We focus on the TV screen as it shows some amateur video footage, taken from the coast of Japan and showing a massive collection of clouds, winds and rain lashing the ocean around it, the cameraman struggling to stay on his feet as he's buffeted by the strong winds.

(CONTINUED)

TV (cont'd)

Apparently, the typhoon was not forecast, catching the coastal services totally off guard. At the moment, it's at a safe distance from the Japanese coast, but evacuations of the nearby cities have already begun, prompted by nervous officials who want to avoid another potential tsunami disaster.

There's a KNOCK at the door, and Giles heads over to open it. He's surprised to see Dan there, who looks restless.

DAN

Okay. Here's the thing.

Dan steps past Giles and into the house. Giles blinks, then closes the door as Dan starts to pace around the living room.

DAN (cont'd)

So I get back home, and I try to go to sleep, only I can't, because every time I close my eyes all I can see are the faces of those... those things, swarming out of the police station, and then that giant B-movie reject trashing the whole precinct, and Jackson covered in flames, and...

Dan trails off. Giles watches him for another beat.

GILES

Would you like some tea?

DAN

Tea?

GILES

English tea. I find it very soothing whenever I have a lot on my mind.

DAN

(beat; sighs)

Yeah, sure, whatever.

Giles heads into the kitchen, and we cut to:

We're inside TAMMAZEL's demon bar, as the demon herself's head SLAMS into frame, yanked down and onto the bar counter by Buffy.

Nervous looking demon and vampire clients start to shuffle away and dash out through the doors, as the blue-skinned, horned demon struggles against Buffy's iron grip.

TAMAMZEL

For the love of Ungulack, Slayer!
We've had this conversation
already, I don't know anything!

BUFFY

Yes, and when you said that a few
hours ago I believed you. But
here's the thing.
(to Sofia)
Little help?

Sofia obligingly takes over and keeps Tammazel's head pressed against the counter, as Buffy steps back and folds her arms.

BUFFY (cont'd)

Every snitch I've spoken to tonight
told me you'd know something. Now,
one or two I'd mark up as a
coincidence, but all of them?

TAMMAZEL

Listen, if I knew where your man
was, I'd tell you! Now get your
Mini-Me to let go of me before I
beat that accent out of her!

Buffy raises an eyebrow, then nods to Sofia, who places her sword casually on the counter next to Tammazel. Not an obvious threat, but an effective one.

BUFFY

Look familiar?

TAMMAZEL

Should it?

BUFFY

That's the sword Xander used to cut
you in two, and if you don't start
talking I'm going to give Sofia a
demonstration of how he did it.

Tammazel struggles for another beat, then sighs and nods.

TAMMAZEL

Alright, alright.

Buffy nods to Sofia, who lets Tammazel go. The demon straightens up and takes a deep breath before she continues.

(CONTINUED)

TAMMAZEL (cont'd)

Okay, first, the Guardian? All I know about that is that it's old. Old Ones, Deeper Well, First Evil kind of old.

BUFFY

What else?

TAMMAZEL

Honestly, not much more. It's like an underworld urban legend, you know, some ancient force of pure magical power, going back to-

BUFFY

(interrupts)

Wait, back up. 'Pure' magical power? What does that mean?

TAMAMZEL

(irritated)

If you're not going to listen to me, I'm not saying another word!

BUFFY

(narrows eyes)

You know, it's funny, you'd think my knuckles would be sore from all the hitting I've done tonight, but they're still doing pretty good.

Buffy clenches her fist, and Tammazel gets the message.

TAMMAZEL

Aereus, no idea. Never heard the name before.

BUFFY

It's what Jackson said just before he attacked the Hellmouth Demon. Even though he was about twenty feet away, I could hear him like he was right next to me. He said 'Aereus commands it.'

TAMMAZEL

I don't know, maybe he thought it sounded dramatic?

BUFFY

(beat; shakes head)

This is getting us nowhere. Come on, Sofia, let's see what Giles managed to find out.

(CONTINUED)

Sofia picks up her sword and starts to follow Buffy out.
Tammazel calls out to them as they get to the doors.

TAMMAZEL

You know, if you're looking for
theories on what went down tonight,
I've got one you can try.

BUFFY

What is it?

TAMMAZEL

Sounds to me like your boyfriend
had a lot of power inside him,
something he couldn't control.
Maybe it was put there for a
reason?

Buffy stares back at Tammazel for a long beat, then turns and
leaves. As Sofia follows her out, we cut back to:

Buffy and Sofia walk back in to find Andrew asleep on the
sofa, the book he was reading open across his lap, and Giles
and Dan in mid-conversation.

GILES

And for a long time, nobody
realised that Dawn was-
(sees Buffy)
Ah, Buffy, good.

BUFFY

(off Dan)
Couldn't sleep?

DAN

Nope. I figured you guys would
still be up so I came over to see
if I could help.

BUFFY

Dan, you've done enough for one
night. Let us handle this now.

DAN

(shakes head)
No can do. Until we get Jackson
back, you're stuck with me.

GILES

I'm providing a potted history to
bring Dan up to speed. What did you
find out from your patrol?

SOFIA

Not much, unfortunately. Tammazel seems to know more than she's letting on, but we didn't get much out of anybody.

BUFFY

A few guys said that the Guardian was a kind of demon bedtime story, some ancient power that has access to massive amounts of purified energy.

GILES

Purified energy? I thought that was just a theory?

Buffy hangs up her jacket and takes a seat on the sofa.

BUFFY

Apparently not. Just turns out there's nobody around who can control it. We're talking 'Dragonball Z' kinds of power.
(beat)

Okay, I've been hanging around Andrew far too long...

GILES

Well, I, ah, made some enquiries of my own, focusing on finding something that has the power to open all the world's Hellmouths.

Giles prises the book away from the sleeping Andrew.

GILES (cont'd)

I've seen a few vague references to some kind of network of devices that are connected to them, but nothing solid. If I were to hazard a theory, if there are mystical devices that are linked to the Hellmouths with the power to unlock them, there may also be one central controller, a master unit with the power to control all the other links in the chain.

BUFFY

(beat)

That's quite a theory! You wouldn't happen to be able to theorise how the heck we go about finding this master control thing, would you?

GILES

Ah, sadly, no. My resources here aren't detailed enough, and without Willow's technical help I'm having to call the Council and request that they search their records for us instead of just doing it online. It's rather time consuming.

BUFFY

(stretches)

Okay, let's call it a night. Whatever Kane was talking about, makes sense it wasn't going to happen right away. He'd have allowed at least a day to get Cleveland under control first, so we'll start again in the morning.

SOFIA

Giles, is Xander still awake?

GILES

I believe so, yes.

Sofia nods and scampers off upstairs, as Buffy yawns.

GILES (cont'd)

You look exhausted.

BUFFY

Rough night. Lots of punching and looking threatening.

GILES

Off to bed with you, then. I'll stay here with Dan and continue acclimatising him to the past nine years, and hopefully the Council will call me back soon.

Buffy nods and heads upstairs, and we cut to:

Xander is dozing on the bed with Hope's cot alongside him. He stirs as the door CREAKS open, and Sofia peeks inside.

SOFIA

Xander? Are you awake?

XANDER

(opens one eye)

Why do people always ask that?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

XANDER (cont'd)
Has anyone ever said 'no' and
actually been asleep?

SOFIA
(grins; steps inside)
You're back to normal then.

XANDER
I will be, once we get Willow back.

SOFIA
(looks down at Hope)
Look at her. You'd think she spent
the whole night tucked up in that
blanket, not getting kidnapped by
vampires, almost handed over to a
group of evil interdimensional bad
guys and then being rescued again!

XANDER
She appears to have inherited her
mom's sense of permanent
disinterest. It'll serve her well.

Sofia chuckles and watches Hope for a few more moments.
Xander sits up, looking like he's got something on his mind,
and Sofia glances over.

SOFIA
Are you alright?

XANDER
Sofia, I... I've been thinking.

SOFIA
(smirks)
Now that can't be good. As my dad
used to say, don't scratch your
head or you'll get splinters in
your fingers!

Sofia's smile soon fades when she registers Xander's serious
expression. She sits down next to him on the bed.

SOFIA (cont'd)
What is it?

XANDER
It's about Hope. All of what
happened tonight keeps going round
my head. I keep trying to work out
why those vamps would have gone to
such an effort to come in here
after her, and why the Circle were
so interested in her.

SOFIA

I know, it doesn't make much sense.

XANDER

Actually, it makes a lot of sense.
And the more I think about it, the
more other details start to add up.

SOFIA

What do you mean?

XANDER

She's special, Sofia.

SOFIA

We all know that.

XANDER

I mean 'special,' like baby
Superman kind of special. I don't
know why, but the moment I first
laid eyes on Hope, I knew there was
something different about her.
Willow said so herself, she told me
Hope was going to grow up to be
somebody important one day.

SOFIA

Do you think Anya knew something?

XANDER

Maybe. I don't know. But all I know
for sure is that Hope won't ever be
safe while she's around us.

Sofia frowns, and Xander reaches in to tenderly stroke the
side of Hope's face as he continues.

XANDER (cont'd)

What do we do, Sofia? We fight the
bad guys. We trashed one city to
save the world, then moved on to
the next and did it all over again.
Demons, vampires, ghosts - they've
all gotten into this house at some
point. Good people have died in
this house because of what we do,
the things that hunt us down for
trying to fight back.

(beat)

I can't have Hope growing up in
that kind of life.

SOFIA

Xander, you can't-

(CONTINUED)

XANDER

I'm putting her up for adoption.

Sofia is stunned. She stares at Xander with wide eyes.

XANDER (cont'd)

It's the only way I can be sure.
She'll grow up in a different place
with a new name, far away from the
trouble that always follows us.

SOFIA

Xander, don't be ridiculous. When
she's with us, Hope has two Slayers
watching over her, and when we get
Willow back she'll have her own
personal fairy godmother! Doesn't
that mean she'll be better with us?

XANDER

Vampires got into this house and
took her from right under our
noses. It's like Buffy used to say
about Dawn - you can't be there all
the time to watch out for her.

Xander looks over to Sofia, who looks like she's close to
tears. Xander smiles and reaches over to embrace her.

XANDER (cont'd)

It's the right thing to do. If
she's meant to be special, she will
be. But if she can grow up
somewhere safe, surrounded by more
people who love her and without the
threat of some hungry demon kicking
the door down every day, then as
her father it's my duty to do
what's best for her.

Xander is now becoming tearful, and Sofia lets out a sob as
she squeezes him tightly.

SOFIA

But... but there's evil all over
the world, Xander, how do you know
she'll be any safer wherever you
send her?

XANDER

That's where we come in. We have to
keep trying to make the world a
safer place, so that she can grow
up and never have to look over her
shoulder to see some vampire sizing
her up for its next meal.

(CONTINUED)

Xander lets go of Sofia and looks into her eyes.

XANDER (cont'd)
We'll always be there for her. But
I can't let anything happen to her.
She's the only thing left in this
world that has any part of Anya
inside her. I owe it to both of
them to keep that safe.

Sofia nods, the tears rolling down her cheek, and Xander puts
his arm round her again.

SOFIA
Oh, Xander - you keep saying how
you don't have powers, or you're
not a hero, or a champion, or
whatever, but...

XANDER
But what?

SOFIA
But that is the single most heroic
thing I have ever heard anyone say.

XANDER
(smiles; shrugs)
I have my moments. I guess I've
learned a few things watching Buffy
and Willow all these years.

As Xander looks down on Hope again, we cut to:

Buffy is already tucked up in bed, but as she shifts around
and frowns, it's clear she's not getting a restful night's
sleep. We push in on her as she continues to turn, as a
familiar voice can be heard.

JACKSON (V.O.)
It's all in the air now.

We suddenly WHITE OUT and find ourselves in:

Buffy stands in the middle of a rocky desert landscape. Her
hair blows in a slight breeze, and she stares at something
off camera, a relieved smile on her face.

JACKSON walks towards her, cresting a small sand dune and
grinning back at her. He's dressed in a smart suit and tie.

BUFFY
Isn't it a little hot for formal?

JACKSON
I wanted to look my best.

They stand before one another, a few feet apart.

BUFFY
This isn't going to have anything
to do with cheese, is it?

JACKSON
(chuckles)
Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar.

Buffy slowly reaches out a hand towards him, but with a HISS she draws her hand back quickly, sucking her fingertip as though she'd burnt it.

JACKSON (cont'd)
Sorry. Look but don't touch. I'm
hot stuff now.

Buffy stares at him again, her head tilted to one side.

BUFFY
What are you?

JACKSON
Yours.

BUFFY
(smiles)
I know that much.

JACKSON
I'm where I'm meant to be. It's
taken me a long time, but I got
there in the end.

He starts to walk in a slow circle around her.

BUFFY
Will I see you again?

JACKSON
When it's time. I'll have a story
to tell you in a little while.

BUFFY
How long is that?

JACKSON
Not long. There's trouble ahead,
you know.

BUFFY
There's always trouble.

JACKSON
It's going to change you. You won't
be the same ever again.

BUFFY
I hear that a lot.

Jackson stops, his back to her, staring out across the desert
sands, heat waves shimmering across the horizon.

JACKSON
Last time, you said no. This time,
you have to say yes.

BUFFY
To what?

JACKSON
To the power.

He starts to walk away from her. Buffy looks sad, but doesn't
try to follow him.

BUFFY
Be safe.

JACKSON
I've always been safe.

As Jackson starts to disappear from view, we stay on Buffy as
she watches him leave, before we WHITE OUT back to:

15 INT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE - BUFFY'S ROOM - NIGHT.

15

With a GASP, Buffy wakes up, her skin covered with sweat. She
reaches over and flicks her bedside lamp on. She settles back
in her bed, taking a deep breath - then, with a frown,
examines her hand.

The fingertip she burnt in her dream is red raw - as though
it had actually been burned. Buffy stares at it for a beat,
before we cut to:

16 INT. THE CIRCLE - GRAND LIBRARY - DAY.

16

Willow sits at one of the long desks, leafing through a book.
Overhead, other books float silently from shelf to shelf as
the Library maintains its own unique filing system.

TATTLES skips in through the open doors and heads over to
Willow, who doesn't look up, still leafing through the book.

(CONTINUED)

TATTLES

What'cha doin'?

WILLOW

Reading.

TATTLES

Oh.

(beat)

So, are you gonna come help Trinkets now? He's still pretty mad that you let the Oracle escape back to Earth, but he says if you help him he might not turn you into a snake.

WILLOW

In a minute. I just need to finish my reading. If I'm going to help, I have to know everything first.

Tattles nods, waiting for a few beats for Willow to finish. When it becomes clear she won't, Tattles takes a step back.

TATTLES

Okay then, so... see you back in the workshop? Trinkets made all these shiny new pieces for the game board to help what's going to happen. It'll be fun.

Willow still hasn't looked up.

WILLOW

I'll be there.

Tattles waits for another beat, then turns and skips away.

Willow waits until Tattles is out of the library, before she EXHALES. Checking over her shoulder that the coast is clear, she flips through the book to a section near the back.

We peer over her shoulder at the illustration before her - it's of a large, swirling vortex, chaotic and angry, with a title beneath reading 'Returning From The Void.'

Willow studies the page for a beat, then looks up - and SMILES. She SNAPS the book shut and stands, and we cut to:

With the book from the library beneath one arm, Willow walks up the spiral staircase that leads to the top floor of Trinket's workshop.

The myriad of ticking clocks and devices all round accompany her as she walks on into the main room, and we see the game board in all its glory - the many tiers stretch from floor to high ceiling, linked together by supports and accessible through tall, wheeled ladders.

TALEDRAW sits cross legged at its base, concentrating on whatever he's drawing in his book, as Tattles beams happily as Willow heads over. Tattles shouts up to the game board.

TATTLES

She's here!

Trinkets' head appears over the edge of one of the highest levels, and he peers down at Willow.

TRINKETS

Good, we're getting everything in place now.

He steps over to the nearest ladder and slides down it, reaching the ground in a few seconds.

TRINKETS (cont'd)

Are you ready to help us?

WILLOW

I am. But I just wanted to read you guys something first.

TRINKETS

(frowns)

We don't really have time for-

TATTLES

(excitedly)

Is it a story?

WILLOW

Yeah. It's a good one, too. I just thought, you know, now I'm back on your guys' side and everything, we should do something to mark the occasion. So, I was looking through the library for a good story to read out, and I found this one. It'll only take a minute.

Trinkets frowns, but Tattles looks ready to pop out of her skin with anticipation. Trinkets sighs and nods.

TRINKETS

Alright then. But only a short one.

TATTLES

Yay!! Teach tells us a story!

(CONTINUED)

Trinkets looks over to Taledraw, who is drawing a large spiral across the page in his note book.

TRINKETS
Are you listening?

TALEDRAW
Yeah. Keep going.

Trinkets turns back to Willow and nods.

WILLOW
Okay, here we go.

She lifts up the book and flips through it to get to the page we saw earlier, but she keeps this hidden from the Circle children around her.

WILLOW (cont'd)
This is a story called...
(beat; strong)
Nan dugno intente, cur ya herti!

TATTLES
(frowns; confused)
That's not a very good-

There is a sudden HUM, and a blue globe of energy appears and envelops Willow in an instant. Willow continues, taking a step back and raising her voice.

WILLOW
Man dur eiento!

Taledraw is now furiously scribbling, his coloured pencil digging into the page as he continues to draw the spiral.

Tattles throws a confused look at Trinkets, whose eyes are narrowing. He does not look happy.

TRINKETS
Stop it.

WILLOW
Calla rime wert zonia!

The workshop begins to RUMBLE, the walls vibrating. Behind us, clocks and devices start to shake themselves off their shelves, clattering against one another and smashing.

TRINKETS
(shouts)
Stop it!

WILLOW
Cuy di san tenzono!

TATTLES

What is she doing? Teach! Stop it!

TRINKETS

No! You can't do this!

Trinkets surges forward, reaching to grab the book out of Willow's hands, but with a quick sweep of her hand, she BLASTS him off his feet, and Trinkets flies through the air to SMACK into the side of the game board.

TATTLES

Trinkets!

Willow is now having to shout over the rumbling noise - and a wind has blown into the workshop, buffeting her hair.

WILLOW

Ghuy madra ga na keski!

Taledraw's pencil BREAKS and he drops it, feverishly scrabbling for another one and starting to draw a new shape inside the spiral.

WILLOW (cont'd)

Requiente incantori!

TRINKETS

(furious)

No!

Willow glances up, and gasps with shock at what she sees - Trinkets' eyes are BLZING RED, his skin is starting to turn jet black, with tendrils of darkness snaking across his body.

Tattles is in tears as she watches the transformation.

TATTLES

You made him mad! You made him mad!
Why did you do that, Teach, why?

WILLOW

Afuera de esto lugar!

There is a colossal BANG, and Willow is knocked off her feet.

Trinkets GROWLS, suddenly sounding like a wild animal, and he drops to all fours, baring his teeth and HISSING at her.

As Willow watches with wide eyes, Trinkets starts to CHANGE further still - he seems to grow, his arms and legs bulging as muscles pop out all over them.

His mouth begins to fill with long fangs, and he fixes Willow with his terrifying red eyes - and HOWLS.

(CONTINUED)

Taledraw is still scribbling away, but he suddenly YELLS and throws his pencil away, before looking down at the page in his notebook with horror.

In the middle of the intense spiral is the figure of a tall man, stepping out of it.

Taledraw looks up - and with another loud BANG, a VORTEX opens up in the air between Trinkets and Willow.

Trinkets HISSES again and steps back, as Willow quickly scrambles to her feet.

The vortex looks like a gigantic, vertical whirlpool, its outer edge crackling with power and electricity. A deafening HUM has now filled the room, along with the howls of the wind and the rumbling all around.

TATTLES

Teach? What have you done?

Willow faces the Circle children, determination blazing in her eyes.

WILLOW

I did what I had to! I can't let you go on just playing with the world however you like, using people to change the way things should be!

Trinkets speaks - but it's a low, guttural voice to match his new, ferocious-looking body.

TRINKETS

We cannot be stopped! We have existed for thousands of years, altering the destiny of mankind for our own amusement! You dare to challenge us? What can you do? You're just a stupid little witch!

Willow grits her teeth and stares right back at Trinkets.

WILLOW

Maybe. But I'm a witch who knows who her friends are.

The vortex suddenly PULSES with purple light, and a figure can be made out inside it - a tall, humanoid figure, making its way towards the entrance.

WILLOW (cont'd)
You killed Amy, you tried to steal
Xander's daughter, you used my love
for Tara against me, and you expect
me to still want to help you?

TATTLES
(sobbing)
I'm frightened!

WILLOW
It's time you learnt your lesson!

Willow turns to the vortex - and the figure steps out of it
and into the workshop.

It's THE CARETAKER!

The tall, lithe demon is still covered with the black body
armour that almost looks like an expensive suit, and despite
his lips and eyes being sewn shut, he still manages to GRIN
down at the trio of children before him.

Tattles SCREAMS as she sees him, and Trinkets HISSES as
Taledraw dashes for cover behind the two of them.

TATTLES
Teach, no! Why? I didn't do
anything wrong! I just kept them
company!

Willow now has tears in her eyes as she starts to back away,
towards the exit of the workshop.

WILLOW
There's no other way...

The Caretaker surveys the room around him, his gaze returning
at last to the three children, dwarfed by the seven foot tall
demon's frame.

He extends his hands, and Trinkets HISSES again - and then
the Caretaker CRACKS his knuckles. It's time to finish what
he started. The Caretaker turns to Willow and nods once.

Willow looks from the Caretaker to the Circle children, then
back - then spins on her heel and RUNS for the exit.

TATTLES
(screams)
Teach, no! Don't leave us! Willow!

The Caretaker steps towards the children, who gaze up at him,
and as his huge hands reach out for them, Tattles starts to
SCREAM again. We cut outside to:

18 EXT. THE CIRCLE - OUTSIDE WORKSHOP - DAY. 18

Willow stumbles out of the workshop and into the sunlight, gasping for breath and sobbing.

From inside the workshop, we can still hear the rumbling and humming of the vortex, along with crashes, screams and other sounds of mayhem.

WILLOW

I'm sorry...

Another CRASH from inside the workshop snaps her back to reality, and she gets to her feet, gritting her teeth and trying to stay focused.

She runs towards us, and she passes through the camera to begin to run away from us.

19 EXT. THE CIRCLE - FIELDS - CONTINUOUS. 19

She's heading for the edge of the forest, noticing that the volcano in the distance is starting to ERUPT, rumbling ominously and spitting gouts of molten red lava into the sky.

As she nears the tree line that marks the edge of the forest, we can see movement within, and as she comes to a stop, we see that there is a Snake Demon there, slithering anxiously from side to side as it waits for her.

WILLOW

It's time. Did you bring them?

The demon HISSES and flicks its tongue out at her, then turns - and from the forest beyond, dozens more of the demons emerge from the darkness.

Within moments, there are almost a hundred of the demons, all of their reptilian eyes fixed on Willow. She takes a deep breath, wiping her hands on her blouse.

WILLOW (cont'd)

Alright, like I told you. One at a time, then we can all go home.

Willow closes her eyes, slowing her breathing and trying to bring her ragged nerves back into order.

Behind her, part of the workshop EXPLODES outwards in a shower of planks and bricks, but Willow doesn't react.

She raises her hands, and traces her palms down through the air. She repeats the motion, and each time she does a ball of WHITE LIGHT starts to build around her hands.

(CONTINUED)

The clustered demons watch on as Willow continues to sweep her hands through the air, and as the light starts to build, an oval shape starts to form in the air before her.

After a few moments, it's become thick and tall enough for her to open her eyes and lower her hands. She steps back, gesturing to the demons.

WILLOW (cont'd)
Okay, you first.

She points to one of the snake demons, and it obediently slithers forward. It hesitates as it reaches the oval shape, hanging in the air.

WILLOW (cont'd)
(reassuring)
It's alright. It'll do what I said.

The demon glances at her - then surges forward, passing through the shape. As soon as its body hits the white light, it begins to CHANGE - dark, scaly skin brightens to a soft pink, and its long, thin body shrinks and moulds into a new form - human!

A fully clothed YOUNG WOMAN falls from the other side of the shape, landing on the ground before Willow.

Willow crouches and helps her up - the dazed looking girl is the same age as Willow, with long, auburn hair. She looks thin and weak, but as she realises she's back in human form, she GASPS with amazement. Willow turns proudly to the rest of the demons.

WILLOW (cont'd)
You see? It works! Now come on, form a line and get through this thing quick as you can. Together, we'll have enough power to get everybody home.

The second demon approaches the oval shape, as the Young Woman clutches at Willow, tears of joy filling her eyes.

YOUNG WOMAN
Thank you...

The Woman lets out a laugh of relief. Willow smiles back at her, and we dissolve to:

With the volcano still rumbling away in the background, we look down on an incredible sight - Willow is surrounded by almost a hundred other people.

(CONTINUED)

Men and women of all ages and sizes, some young, some old, all sitting on the grass in a huge circle of two rows, their hands linked together.

WILLOW

Is everybody ready?

There are murmurs of agreement, and Willow nods, taking a breath as she psyches herself up.

WILLOW (cont'd)

Okay. Now what I need you to do is just think of home. We used to be able to get up here just by thinking about this place, and go back by thinking of home. Use your kite string.

A middle aged MAN next to Willow looks at her curiously.

WILLOW (cont'd)

You know, the one thing that keeps your feet on the ground. It could be a person, or a place, anything. Just focus on it, concentrate, will yourself back there. If we all do this together, we can all go home. Right now.

MAN

(nods)

Okay, I get it... what's yours?

WILLOW

Oh. Uh, well, it used to be...

(thoughtful; smiles)

Actually, I think I've got a new one now.

Willow looks round the circle - everyone is holding hands, eyes closed in concentration.

WILLOW (cont'd)

I'll go first. It should pass the energy round the chain, and one by one we'll all go back.

Willow closes her eyes. The growing noise of the volcano seems to fade away, until all we can hear is Willow's heartbeat and her breathing. We push in close on Willow as she takes one last breath.

WILLOW (cont'd)

(whispers)

Xander... here I come...

Willow is suddenly bathed in a soft GREEN LIGHT, and after a moment she simply fades from view.

The light that surrounded her flows to the Man next to her and the Young Woman who was on her other side, and as they start to fade away, the energy passes on.

We look down on the circle of former Teaches of the Circle as the green light flows around them, and as the rescued humans start to fade away and vanish, we dissolve back to:

Giles and Andrew are both asleep on the couch. A KNOCK at the door wakes Giles up with a snort, and he readjusts his glasses and stands.

Giles opens the door with a YAWN - and double takes at the person standing there.

It's a well-groomed, handsome man in his fifties, whose suit and glasses can only mean one thing - a Watcher.

GILES
(squints)
Anthony?

This is ANTHONY FLETCHER, one of Giles' old Council colleagues. He's carrying a leather briefcase and smiles warmly at Giles.

ANTHONY
Good morning, Rupert.

GILES
What on earth are you doing here?
(beat)
Am I still asleep?

ANTHONY
I was sent out on one of the first flights after you called the records department yesterday evening. It seems you've stumbled upon something rather important that needs a lot of explaining, so it was decided that it'd be quicker for me to fly out here and explain it all in person to you.

GILES
(beat; blinks)
Oh, I see. Well, you'd better come in, then.

Giles steps away from the door and Anthony heads inside with a gracious nod. He puts his briefcase down and shrugs off his jacket as Giles heads into the kitchen.

GILES (O.S.) (cont'd)
Would you like a cup of something?

ANTHONY
I trust you have some good old fashioned tea? That stuff they gave me on the plane constituted a breach of human rights.

Giles leans back into the living room with a grin.

GILES
Two proper English Teas, coming right up. Have a seat. Don't mind Andrew, he's part of the team.

Anthony nods and heads for the couch. As he sits down, Andrew wakes up with a jolt, his eyes falling on the new arrival. Anthony smiles down at him and extends a hand.

ANTHONY
Anthony Fletcher, Watcher's Council. Pleased to meet you.

Andrew stares back at Anthony for a beat, before:

ANDREW
(calls out; freaked)
Giles!!

Andrew doesn't take his eyes off the bemused Anthony, as we cut upstairs to:

Xander snores softly, fast asleep. Sofia is curled up on the floor next to the cot, a blanket draped over her. Looks like she fell asleep there before Xander dozed off himself.

Xander stirs and starts to come round with a yawn. He doesn't react as Willow, lying in the bed next to him, turns over and settles back down, her eyes still closed.

WILLOW
(murmurs)
It's too early...

XANDER
(half asleep)
Ssh. Quiet, Will.

A beat.

Then Xander and Willow's eyes SNAP OPEN, and they both sit up in bed. Xander's jaw hangs open as he stares at Willow, who blinks - then starts to BEAM a huge, relieved smile.

XANDER (cont'd)

Willow?

WILLOW

Xander! Xander, it's me! It's me!
I'm back! I'm back!

She throws her arms round him, and as the realisation sinks in, Xander breaks into an equally huge grin, the two old friends laughing as they squeeze the life out of each other.

On the floor, Sofia is roused by the laughter of Willow and Xander, and she blinks blearily up at the bed.

SOFIA

What's all the...
(sees Willow; boggles)
Willow!

Sofia LEAPS over and throws her arms round Willow as well.

XANDER

What happened? How did- I mean,
when did-

WILLOW

I just thought of home! It's a long
story.

XANDER

But you're back, right? You're
really, really back? I'm not just
having some kind of crazy dream?

WILLOW

I'm really, really back.

Xander HUGS her again, closing his eyes and squeezing like he doesn't want to ever let go. There are tears of relief in Willow's eyes as she hugs back.

WILLOW (cont'd)

I'm back...

Sofia stands and dashes out of the room.

SOFIA

(calling)
Buffy! Giles! Everyone! Willow's
back! Willow's back!

(CONTINUED)

After a few moments, Buffy and Sofia race back into the room, and with a YELP of glee, Buffy throws her arms around Willow.

Giles hurries up the stairs, but as he reaches the door he stops. He watches the openly crying Willow, Xander and Buffy embrace each other with a proud, fatherly grin, before he LAUGHS and shakes his head.

Buffy finally lets go, looking Willow up and down as if checking she's the real thing.

BUFFY

Will, are you okay? I mean, what happened to the Circle? Are they-

WILLOW

They're being dealt with.

Buffy opens her mouth to ask 'how,' but the look in Willow's eyes tells her this is a story for another time.

XANDER

Come on. Breakfast time. And your first breakfast with the little lady, unless I'm mistaken?

Xander reaches into Hope's cot and scoops her up, holding her out for Willow. Willow cradles Hope in her arms, looking sixteen different flavours of happy to see Hope again.

WILLOW

Hey, you! Guess what? Your guardian angel came back!

Xander KISSES the top of Willow's head, and we dissolve from the happy reunion down to:

The team are gathered around the kitchen table, with Giles and Anthony standing over by the sink as Willow busily tells the story of her escape, gesturing with her hands.

WILLOW

And so, then, Trinkets start to change, you know, going all 'grr' and spooky, like he was showing his true form at last or something.

XANDER

And for the benefit of those of us not in touch with cosmic kindergarden rejects recently, what did this 'true form' look like?

WILLOW

(beat)

Bad.

Xander picks up on what's left unsaid.

WILLOW (cont'd)

So then, I found this incantation in one of the library books that helped me open the vortex and summon the Caretaker again, but I had to put up a shield round me to stop Trinkets just zapping me back into that cell.

BUFFY

What if it hadn't have worked?

WILLOW

I, uh, didn't get that far in my plan. After they'd killed Amy, I was kind of anxious not to be there any more, you know?

GILES

It all sounds very dramatic so far, Willow, I'm just glad you made it back in one piece.

XANDER

Which is thankfully more than we can say for the Circle kids, right?

WILLOW

It was awful. I rushed out into the fields and started restoring all those snake demons back to their human form, you know, all the old Teaches that the Circle had gotten rid of, but I could just about hear the Caretaker tearing the place to pieces in the background.

(shudders)

I couldn't get home fast enough.

BUFFY

And home is where you're going to stay now, right? We've got big trouble and we need all the gang together to stop it.

WILLOW

(proudly)

I'm your girl!

XANDER

So is that the last we're going to hear of freaky kids with colouring books now?

WILLOW

I think it's safe to say they won't be bothering anyone ever again.

Willow is lost in contemplation for a moment, as we cut to:

SLAM! A thick, heavy book is dropped onto the kitchen table in front of us, and as we pull back we see that it's Anthony who is leafing through it, the rest of the team arrayed around him.

ANTHONY

Now, please bear in mind that this is one of the oldest texts currently in the Council's possession, so some of its dialogue may be somewhat...

BUFFY

British?

ANTHONY

Archaic.

BUFFY

(to Giles)

That's another word for 'British,' right?

Giles chuckles as Anthony continues.

ANTHONY

When Rupert called to tell me what Irwin Kane had said just before his death, it set off all kinds of alarm bells within the records department. It seems that there is indeed a device that controls the world's Hellmouths, but its location and the procedure for operating it have been lost for some time.

WILLOW

Lost how?

ANTHONY

Are you familiar with the Lost Codex, Giles?

XANDER

Judging by it's title, I'm gonna go with 'nuh-uh.'

GILES

The Lost Codex is, well, almost urban legend inside the Council. It's said to be a book that contains the location of every single Hellmouth on the globe, along with activation and sealing rituals, among other information.

(to Anthony)

I thought that was just a rumour, are you about to suggest this book actually exists?

ANTHONY

Worse, I'm afraid. Not only does it exist, but it's been found.

XANDER

Shucks, sounds like they'll have to go ahead and change it's name now.

WILLOW

The 'Lost And Found Codex' has a nice ring to it.

ANDREW

Maybe the 'Previously Lost Codex'?

ANTHONY

(bemused; to Giles)

Are they always like this?

GILES

I'm afraid so...

BUFFY

Back on topic. Could Kane have found this Lost Codex thingy?

ANTHONY

It's unlikely, the Codex was sent to a remote demon dimension generations ago for safekeeping.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ANTHONY (cont'd)
I'm sure you can imagine how
dangerous a book that gives
detailed instructions on where all
three hundred and forty-seven fonts
of evil on the planet can be found
would be in the wrong hands!

A beat. That's a lot more than the hundred and twelve Giles
quoted earlier. Anthony registers their surprised looks.

ANTHONY (cont'd)
And I see that figure isn't what
you were expecting...

GILES
That's- well, I mean, it's just...

BUFFY
We thought there were a lot less.

ANTHONY
Recorded ones, yes. The Lost Codex
is a comprehensive list of every
Hellmouth in existence, even ones
that have lain dormant since before
the dawn of civilisation.

XANDER
So if whoever Kane was working for
has got their hands on this book,
then they've got a backstage pass
to the end of the world, right?

ANTHONY
No human could stand a chance of
survival inside the realm the Codex
was kept in, but if his boss was
something nonhuman, then there's a
chance he may have pulled off the
heist of the millennium.

Andrew wanders off into the front room as Anthony continues.

ANTHONY (cont'd)
Now, one chapter of the Lost Codex
deals with the Hub, a mystical
device said to be able to control
every Hellmouth simultaneously -
both to open and close all of them
at once. Most Hellmouths have been
dormant for centuries, so one can
only imagine what manner of
creatures are lurking inside them,
ready to pour out into the mortal
world when given their chance.

BUFFY

With the stuff we've seen coming
out of these things, I'm going to
just leave it as 'bad.'

We cut from the kitchen to:

INT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM - MORNING.

Andrew scoops a book up off the sofa, but pauses as he sees
the TV has been left on, the news feature on it catching his
attention.

TV

So this is live at the scene,
footage from a local Japanese news
channel's helicopter as it hovers
over the newly active volcano,
trying to give you an idea of the
sheer size of this thing.

Intrigued, Andrew settles down to watch as we cut back to:

INT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - MORNING.

Anthony continues as the others watch on.

ANTHONY

We also flagged Giles' specific use
of the word 'Syn.'

BUFFY

Yeah, we've heard it a few times.
Somebody said it to me in my dream,
and the last thing Kane said was
'the original sin.'

GILES

Buffy recalled a demon we fought
almost two years ago that called
itself Syn, it had the ability to
possess people's bodies.

ANTHONY

(shakes head)

Unfortunate coincidence. You'd be
amazed how many demons adopt the
moniker 'Syn' for themselves,
believing it adds a layer of street
credibility to their actions.

GILES

So why the interest?

ANYTHONY

'Syn,' combined with a plan to open the world's Hellmouths, leads us to one very specific demon.

Anthony leafs to another section and opens the book out. The page shows an illustration of a demon very much like the one seen excavating the book earlier on, with jet black skin, long, grey hair and a smooth, featureless face except for two glittering green eyes.

BUFFY

(peers at illustration)

Is that him?

ANTHONY

This is Synade, a very old, very powerful demon who made it his life's ambition to discover the Lost Codex again, after it was stolen from his possession by one of the monks whose order would go on to found the Council.

BUFFY

He doesn't look so bad. I could probably take him. Right?

ANTHONY

In a straight fight, probably yes.

Buffy grins proudly at Giles.

ANTHONY (cont'd)

But Synade isn't known for playing by the rules. He'll most likely have an army of devotees around him, and if he manages to find the Hub and unlock it, he'll channel an awesome amount of power that will render him virtually unstoppable.

BUFFY

So we get to him first and make sure that doesn't happen, right? Where do we find this Hub?

Anthony hesitates, and Buffy rolls her eyes.

BUFFY (cont'd)

You guys have no idea, do you...

ANTHONY

It's called the Lost Codex for a reason, Buffy!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

26

CONTINUED:

26

ANTHONY (cont'd)
It hasn't been in Council hands for
almost seven hundred years.

Anthony continues to talk over the following scene:

27

EXT. FIELDS - DAY.

27

TITLE OVER - Scotland, United Kingdom, 1316 A.D.

We're racing across a wide, open plain, focusing on a terrified looking man, ANGUS with short, red hair as he runs, stumbling as he tries to keep his speed up.

His clothes are in keeping with the medieval setting, and clutched tightly to his chest is the large book we saw being discovered in the underground chamber earlier.

ANTHONY (V.O.)
One brave Watcher, Angus McFanchon,
gave his own life by personally
taking the Codex into the hell
dimension, never to return.

ANGUS's lips are moving as he runs, and as he streaks past a confused looking pair of farm hands, planting a row of vegetable seeds, Angus throws a glance over his shoulder.

Closing fast on him is the man we saw unearthing the book - this is SYNADÉ. His featureless black head emphasises his eyes, which blaze with fury as he chases Angus down.

Angus turns his attention back to the front, still muttering something under his breath - and with a CRACK, a circular blue PORTAL snaps open in the air before him.

Without breaking stride, Angus LEAPS into the air and sails through the portal - which snaps shut again in an instant.

ANTHONY (V.O.) (cont'd)
It was a one way trip.

Synade skids to a halt, looking left and right, but when he realises Angus has escaped, he throws his head back and HOWLS with rage, before we dissolve back to:

28

INT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - MORNING.

28

Anthony finishes his story, but Xander raises his hand.

XANDER
Okay, all well and good. Here's
something I don't get. Giles is
Head Watcher now, has been for
almost two years, right? How come
he didn't know any of this?
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

XANDER (cont'd)

Isn't there a book you get when you become Chief Watcher Guy that tell you all about this kind of thing?

Anthony turns to Giles, who folds his arms and stares back - that's a very good question. Anthony bows his head.

ANTHONY

With all due respect, Rupert, they don't tell American Presidents the contents of Area 51. By the same token, there is a small faction of the Council whose job it is to keep information such as this secure and classified until it is needed.

SOFIA

Isn't that shooting yourselves in the foot a bit? I mean, with something this dangerous, shouldn't more people know about, so they know to look out for it?

ANTHONY

I'm afraid I don't make the rules, I just enforce them. There are four custodians of a small and highly restricted library inside the Council, where this kind of information is stored. We have to keep the number of people who know about it to a minimum to avoid any security leaks.

(looks round at Scoobies)

However, in order to enforce the rules, one must be prepared to break them.

(to Giles)

I believe you taught me that.

Giles allows himself a proud smile before Buffy stands and brings everyone back to the subject.

XANDER

Watcher-y back rubbing aside, how do we go about finding this Hub?

ANTHONY

Well, from what we know, the Hub requires a tremendous amount of natural energy to be useable, so, for example, the bottom of a ocean, somewhere with an abundant supply of non-manufactured energy.

We cut back to the front room:

29

INT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM - MORNING.

29

Andrew is still watching the TV, one ear listening to the conversation in the kitchen.

TV

Apparently, the volcano became active almost overnight, in the words of one reporter 'as though somebody had flicked a giant 'On' switch and left it running.'

Andrew frowns and turns towards the kitchen, where we can hear Anthony talking.

ANTHONY (O.S.)

It could also require heat, so it may be located on a fault line and have access to volcanic gases, but I can tell you that the power would have to be fresh, no more than a few days old. If there are any major meteorological disturbances currently affecting any part of the world, that's where we'd need to start looking.

Andrew turns back to the TV, realisation slowly dawning.

GILES (O.S.)

I remember hearing something about a typhoon off the coast of Japan.

ANTHONY (O.S.)

That sounds likely - the ritual that activates the Hub's initial power would cause a backlash like that which would result in those kinds of conditions.

Andrew stands, looking panicked.

TV

So as the as-yet unchristened volcano rumbles on, the world braces itself for the one important question - when is it going to blow?

Andrew turns and runs for the kitchen.

ANDREW

Guys!!

We quickly cut to:

30

INT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM - EVENING.

30

It's several hours later now, and the gang are assembled as Buffy paces up and down before them. Anthony walks in from the kitchen, tucking away his cell phone.

BUFFY

Well? What did you find out?

ANTHONY

It seems one of the fellows in my department was on the ball, and sent a research team out in the guise of vulcanologists as soon as he heard about the disturbance. They confirmed that the energy readings there match those we normally associate with Hellmouths.

BUFFY

Giles, how fast can you get us there?

GILES

I've already made a few calls, and despite the finance department taking a painfully long time to approve it, we'll have a chartered jet and pilot ready to leave Hopkins International in the morning.

BUFFY

Okay, everyone else, listen up.

We begin to pan across the assembled Scoobies as Buffy's speech continues.

BUFFY (cont'd)

If ever there was a time we needed manpower, it's now. I don't care who you have to call, how many favours you need to pull in - we need everyone we can get. Willow, I get the feeling we may need a lot of magical backup to either close this thing or stop Synade from opening it, so see who you can find.

WILLOW

I'll do what I can, I've kind of lost touch with most of the wiccans I used to know recently.

(CONTINUED)

BUFFY

You're not signed up to the Circle any more, Will. We need everything we can lay our hands on. There's somebody else I need you to find for me, but we'll sort that out later. And call Oz, too.

WILLOW

(surprised)

Oz?

BUFFY

He knows what we do and he's on our side. Sofia, I want you and Giles to start calling in as many Slayers as you can. I don't know who's in the area or who can get here by morning, but find whoever you can.

ANTHONY

That shouldn't be too hard, our operation to begin cataloguing the mass of newly created Slayers last year has proven very successful.

BUFFY

Anthony, you and Andrew need to start gathering all the information you can on this Synade guy, his weaknesses, anything, as well as all the stuff you can on this 'Hub' thing and how we can close it.

ANTHONY

I think the situation will allow me to de-classify a few helpful texts, I'll have the records department wire them to Mr. Wells' computer.

BUFFY

Good, I'm going to call Dan and see if he's up for helping save the world.

WILLOW

Oo, it'll be his first time! That's gotta be exciting.

XANDER

I can remember my first apocalypse like it was yesterday. The blood, the screaming... good times.

BUFFY

Xander?

(CONTINUED)

XANDER

Yeah?

BUFFY

Xander, I want you to stay behind.

XANDER

(blinks)

Excuse me?

BUFFY

You have Hope now, you can't bring her with us, and we know she's not safe without people watching over her. If we're all gone there'll be even more risk, so I want you two to lay low until we get back.

SOFIA

Buffy, I don't think that's-

BUFFY

(interrupts)

I've made my decision. I don't want Hope to grow up an orphan. There's already been too much death in this house.

There's a beat of silence. Willow starts to shuffle out of the room, and the others follow her lead, quickly leaving the room empty except for Buffy and Xander.

XANDER

You're not serious, are you? I mean, after all we've-

BUFFY

Xander, it's because of all we've been through that I'm doing this!

Buffy steps right up to him and takes his hands.

BUFFY (cont'd)

If you came with us and something happened to you, what would happen to Hope? Or what if none of us come back? You can't risk leaving her without any parents. Anya would have wanted you to stay.

XANDER

Anya's dead, Buffy. I have to make my own decisions.

BUFFY

But-

(CONTINUED)

XANDER

Anyway, it doesn't matter.

BUFFY

Why not?

Xander sighs and hangs his head.

XANDER

I talked it through with Sofia, and
I came to a decision.

(looks up)

I'm putting Hope up for adoption.

Buffy's jaw drops, and Xander sits on the sofa, with Buffy following suit.

We start to pull away, and although we can't hear their conversation, the increasingly distressed look on Buffy's face shows she can't quite believe what she's hearing.

Buffy eventually throws her arms round Xander, who squeezes her tightly back, before we dissolve to:

There's a storm going on, with rain lashing the house as Buffy steps away from the spare room and heads towards the bathroom.

There's a FLASH of lightning which startles her, and as she turns back round she bumps into Anthony.

ANTHONY

Oh, I'm sorry.

BUFFY

No big. Can't sleep either, huh?

ANTHONY

I'm afraid not. I'd put it down to
my still readjusting body clock...

BUFFY

(finishes sentence)

... but you're just as tense as the
rest of us. I get it.

ANTHONY

Stories about the kinds of thing
Rupert encountered while he was
assigned to you always filtered
back to us, and... well, I just
thought they were exaggerated.

31 CONTINUED:

31

BUFFY

Sadly, this is what it's like. You
get used to it.

ANTHONY

I don't think I could. I'm very
proud of him, you and your friends,
for the way you deal with it.

Buffy smiles at him and steps into the bathroom, as Anthony
heads downstairs.

32 INT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - NIGHT.

32

The lights are off as Anthony steps into the kitchen,
accompanied by another flash of lightning. He tries the light
switch, but nothing happens.

With an annoyed grunt, he heads over to the sink to make
himself a glass of water.

33 EXT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE - OUTSIDE KITCHEN - NIGHT.

33

Someone is looking in on Anthony from just outside the house,
hidden by the bushes and suffering the heavy wind and rain
battering the exterior.

We look through their eyes as Anthony fills a glass of water
and drains it, then turns to the fridge.

34 INT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - NIGHT.

34

Anthony puts his glass down, looks left and right and then
glances at the fridge.

ANTHONY

She won't mind.

He heads over and opens the fridge door - the light doesn't
come on, of course - and looks for something to snack on. He
settles on a small yoghurt, and closes the door, heading for
the sink to grab a clean spoon when a CRACK of thunder
overhead makes him look round.

The back door is open, swinging gently in the wind. Anthony
frowns and heads over.

35 EXT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE - BACK GARDEN - NIGHT.

35

Anthony leans out and looks across the rear of the house, but
he can't see anybody in the darkness. Satisfied, he steps
back inside and closes the door.

36 INT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - NIGHT. 36

Anthony walks back across the kitchen, pausing to peel the lid back off his yoghurt.

As he does, there is another FLASH of lightning - and Marie is standing right behind him! Anthony is oblivious as she silently draws a knife from her jacket, her eyes burning into the back of his head.

Anthony lifts the yoghurt pot lid to his mouth, licking it clean, and grins to himself.

ANTHONY

The guilty pleasures do serve us
the best, as a wise man once-

Anthony GULPS as Marie sinks her knife deep into his back.

He turns round, eyes wide, his hands flailing desperately for the knife buried between his shoulderblades as he drops the yoghurt. Marie frowns as she stares at him - wrong target.

Anthony drops to one knee, a wide eyed look of shock and disbelief on his face, before his strength finally fails and he slumps to the ground, landing with a heavy THUD.

Marie looks round, leaning down to twist and yank her knife back out of Anthony's body, before we cut to:

37 INT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE - ANDREW'S ROOM - NIGHT. 37

Giles has been forced to bunk up with Andrew, and despite Giles getting the bed, and Andrew the floor, Andrew's loud and abrasive SNORING is keeping Giles awake.

After a few beats of Andrew's sinuses doing a great impression of mating warthogs, Giles gets out of bed with an irritated sigh, and steps over Andrew to leave the room.

38 INT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - NIGHT. 38

Marie is dragging Anthony's body out of the way, hiding him just out of sight behind the fridge.

39 EXT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE - OUTSIDE KITCHEN - NIGHT. 39

As Marie stands, still checking round to make sure nobody's about to walk in on her, we look in on the kitchen from outside again - there's somebody else out there!

40 INT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - NIGHT. 40

Marie looks up to the ceiling as she hears the toilet flushing, and with a smile grips her knife blade tightly.

MARIE

Don't worry, Giles. I promise to make it quick for-

CLICK! Marie freezes as a gun barrel suddenly slides into frame, resting squarely against her temple.

We pull back to see that the gun belongs to MAX! He's soaked to the skin and looks pale and weak, but the anger blazing in his eyes is what's giving him his strength.

MAX

Hello, darling. Did you miss me?

As Marie's eyes flick quickly to see Max, we cut to:

41 INT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE - UPSTAIRS LANDING - NIGHT. 41

Giles steps out of the bathroom and starts back towards Andrew's room, but pauses as he hears the snoring echoing across the landing. He sighs, and looks towards the staircase.

42 INT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - NIGHT. 42

Marie tries to act cool as Max reaches across and takes the knife from her grip.

MARIE

I expect you'll be wanting an explanation.

MAX

Actually, I was going to start by shooting you, and then, if my conscience allowed it, I was going to sit and think about all the excellent and penetrating questions I'd have asked you afterwards.

MARIE

It doesn't have to be like this, Max. We can still-

MAX

'We'? I'm sorry, any use of 'we' in this conversation ended the moment you sank that knife into my belly.

(CONTINUED)

Max presses the gun against her head, making Marie wince.

MAX (cont'd)

Actually, I will ask a few questions first, given that I think my mission to find the spy in Buffy's group has come to an end. Who are you working for?

MARIE

Somebody who pays well.

MAX

Why are you in Buffy's house?

MARIE

To stop them interfering with my employer's plans.

MAX

How long have you been working for this 'employer'?

MARIE

A while.

Max glares coldly at her. Another FLASH of lightning illuminates them for a beat. Max's hand trembles slightly - it's clearly all he can do to not pull the trigger at the moment, and Marie picks up on this.

MARIE (cont'd)

So are you going to kill me, Max?

MAX

By rights, I should...

Another long beat - then Max thumbs the safety back onto the gun and lowers it.

MAX (cont'd)

But I think seeing you rot in Laneshead for the rest of your life will keep me happier for longer. Do you know what the penalty is for murdering a Watcher?

MARIE

(smirks)

I expect I'll find out.

She turns to Max as he takes a step back, the knife still in his other hand. He's pale and obviously weak from the blood loss, but the hatred blazing in his eyes is what's giving him strength right now.

(CONTINUED)

MARIE (cont'd)

I must admit, I'm surprised by your resilience. A knife to the gut and a day spent out in the wilds, and yet you still make it back here with murderous intent? Your superiors would be proud of you.

MAX

I'm thinking bringing you in is just what I need to help my case. I cost Sierra her life, and I wasn't here quick enough to save that poor man you just stabbed, but at least Giles and the others are-

GILES (O.S.)

What's going on in here?

Marie spins round - Giles has just stepped into the kitchen!

The power suddenly returns, and the kitchen lights flare into life. Max shields his eyes from the glare, and Marie doesn't waste a second, moving away from Max and yelling at Giles.

MARIE

Giles! Max just stabbed Anthony, and now he's-

MAX

No!!

BANG! Marie GASPS - then looks down.

A red stain is seeping through her shirt - she's taken a bullet through her lung.

GILES

Marie!

Giles LUNGES forward and attacks Max, trying to wrestle the gun out of his hand as Marie sinks to the floor.

MAX

Giles, no! Marie was-

GILES

You murdering bastard!

Max manages to SHOVE Giles backwards, but it's clear he's at the edge of his strength.

MAX

Giles, you have to listen to me, she isn't-

(CONTINUED)

Giles CHARGES forward again, and this time he catches Max's knife-holding arm - and drives the knife into Max's chest!

Giles is silent, his features twisted with rage as he PUSHES the knife deeper into Max's chest.

GILES

(cold)

I should never have let you stay. I should have locked you up and thrown away the key.

MAX

(slipping away)

No, Giles... she was...

But it's too late. Max slides away from Giles, slumping across the kitchen table, then falling to the floor, pulling one of the chairs with him with a CRASH.

Giles, breathless with exertion, looks slowly down at the bloody knife in his hand as Buffy, Willow, Xander and Sofia all clatter down the stairs and pour into the kitchen.

BUFFY

Giles? What's-

Buffy's eyes go wide at the carnage before her.

WILLOW

Oh, my God! Marie!

Giles comes to his senses and turns to Marie, dropping the knife and rushing to her side. He cradles her head and lifts her up as Buffy and the others try to figure out what the heck just happened.

GILES

Don't worry, Marie, we'll get you to the hospital on the double, you'll be-

MARIE

Giles... I'm sorry...

GILES

No! No, Marie, you have to stay awake!

He shouts frantically across to Willow.

GILES (cont'd)

Call a bloody ambulance!

Willow races for the phone as Buffy steps over to help Giles sit Marie up, leaning her against the kitchen unit.

(CONTINUED)

BUFFY

Is she alright? What happened?

GILES

It was Max. He must have come back,
and... he shot her.

Xander finds Anthony's body, shoved awkwardly out of sight
next to the fridge.

XANDER

Looks like he got Anthony first.

BUFFY

How could this happen?

MARIE

I tried... to stop him... but...

Marie's eyes flutter, and Giles quickly reaches into the sink
for a handful of water, SPLASHING it across her face.

GILES

Don't speak. Conserve your energy.
(to Willow)
Where's that damn ambulance?

Willow steps into frame, holding the phone receiver.

WILLOW

On its way, they said about ten
minutes!

We focus on Marie as Giles and Buffy fuss over her, her gaze
suddenly drawn to something just off screen.

Her knife has landed on the floor, just a few feet away from
her - if she stretched, she could reach it.

She glances up at Giles, as Buffy races over to one of the
kitchen cupboards, trying to find the emergency medical kit.

GILES

(to Marie)

What were you doing here? You're
supposed to still be in the
hospital!

MARIE

I found out... Max was coming...
and I had to... warn you...

Giles turns away again as Buffy hustles over with the medical
kit, and Marie sees her chance.

(CONTINUED)

She leans to one side and stretches out her arm, quickly scooping up the knife and returning to her place without anybody noticing.

Giles stands, seeing Xander still staring in horror at Anthony's body.

GILES

For God's sake, Xander, it's not the first dead body you've seen!

XANDER

It's the first I've seen in this room, okay? Can I be freaked out for just a second?

Buffy stands and heads back over to the cupboard for more supplies, leaving Marie unwatched.

Marie sees her chance, and with a GRUNT of effort she pushes herself upright.

GILES

(to Xander)

Well, don't just stand there, find a sheet or something we can wrap him in until the ambulance arrives, we don't want-

WILLOW (O.S.)

Giles!!

Giles spins round - and Marie ROARS with anger as she sinks the knife into his chest.

WILLOW (cont'd)

No!!

Giles' eyes boggle as the exhausted Marie falls against him, her weight pushing the knife further into his gut.

A horrified Willow and Buffy are frozen to the spot.

BLAM! Marie spins round like a top and crashes to the floor.

Max, one arm propping himself up against the kitchen table, lowers his smoking gun.

MAX

I tried to tell you...

Giles starts to wilt as Buffy and Willow rush over.

BUFFY

Giles! Oh, God, oh, God...

(CONTINUED)

WILLOW

Giles, hang on! I'll- I'll get some spells, I can-

GILES

(weakly)

Buffy...

Buffy freezes. Giles looks up into her eyes, his breathing heavy and laboured.

GILES (cont'd)

I don't think... I'll be going with you... after all...

BUFFY

(tearful)

No, Giles... you can't die! You can't die now! Please!

GILES

It's... all right... I can't feel a bloody thing...

Buffy glances over to Max - Xander is standing over him, checking his pulse. He looks up at Buffy and shakes his head.

Buffy turns back to Giles, tears rolling down her cheeks. Her hands are already soaked in his blood.

BUFFY

Giles, you have to listen to me, you have to hang on! You can't-

GILES

Please... don't cry for me... you have a job to do...

Buffy looks at Willow, who is emptying out the medical kit as she looks for anything that will help.

Sofia and Andrew join the scene, Sofia gasping in shock at the dead bodies strewn across the kitchen.

BUFFY

Giles, I need you! You can't die!

Giles manages a weak smile, his eyelids fluttering.

GILES

Buffy...

Buffy squeezes his hand tightly.

BUFFY

Yes? Giles, what is it?

(CONTINUED)

42 CONTINUED:

42

Giles smiles up at her, looking for all the world like a proud father - and then his head lolls forward.

BUFFY (cont'd)
(quietly)
Giles?

She stares at him for a long beat. Giles is still. Buffy presses him close to her, weeping.

BUFFY (cont'd)
Giles...

We start to pull away from them - Xander and Willow watching, helpless, as a sobbing Buffy cradles Giles, rocking back and forth and repeating his name, over and over, before she rears her head back and SCREAMS!

BUFFY (cont'd)
Giles!!

We slowly dissolve from the kitchen to:

43 INT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE - BUFFY'S ROOM - NIGHT.

43

Buffy is in her bed, curled up tightly. The lights are out, but as her eyes glisten in the darkness we see that the tears are still rolling down her face.

Over in the doorway is Willow, watching her with a similarly lost expression, before she gently closes the door.

44 INT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE - UPSTAIRS LANDING - NIGHT.

44

Willow turns away from Buffy's room and looks down the staircase, into the living room - two PARAMEDICS are rolling a gurney out through the front door, a zipped up black body bag lying on it.

45 INT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT.

45

Xander is giving a statement to Dan, there with a uniform cop who is looking round the place.

DAN
And that's when the second intruder
fired the shot?

XANDER
Right after she'd...
(beat; sighs)
Right after she stabbed Giles.

(CONTINUED)

DAN

(beat; closes notebook)
Alright, I'm going to leave Officer Burnley here in a car outside your house till the morning, just to be sure. Are you guys going to be alright here?

XANDER

We'll have to be.

Dan turns and nods to Officer Burnley, who heads outside. Dan closes the door, leaving just himself and Xander.

DAN

Is that really what happened?

XANDER

Giles was just murdered right in front of us! You think we'd want to cover something up?

DAN

Of course not, I'm just...
(sighs)
Look, all I meant is, now I know what you guys do, I just wanted to make sure this wasn't something... you know, something that Jackson would normally handle.

XANDER

No, no, this was all natural.
(beat)
And I can't believe part of me is actually glad to say that.

DAN

Okay. I'll get going, start taking care of the paperwork, you guys get some rest. You need anything, you've got a uniform just outside.

Xander nods his thanks, and Dan opens the door and exits. Xander turns to head up the stairs.

Willow shivers as Xander reaches the first floor, and he wraps his arms around her.

WILLOW

(tearful)
Xander... I just, I just can't-

XANDER

I can't believe he's gone either.
Always thought it'd be the group of
us, the Core Four, always and
forever, right?

Willow nods, too close to tears now to speak.

XANDER (cont'd)

Don't think about that now. Giles
wouldn't have wanted us to stop and
mourn him while there was still a
world to be saved. He'd have said
something like 'there'll be plenty
of time to get upset later, Xander,
right now I'd appreciate you
keeping your mind on the mission.'

Willow manages a brief chuckle through her tears.

WILLOW

Yeah... yeah, he would.

She leans against him again, and Xander looks over towards
Buffy's room.

XANDER

How is she?

WILLOW

(shakes head)

Not good. I left her to try and get
some rest, but I don't think she's
going to get any tonight.

Xander nods, closing his eyes and squeezing Willow.

INT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE - BUFFY'S ROOM - NIGHT.

Exhausted, Buffy is finally drifting off to sleep, and as she
does, we WHITE OUT and find ourselves in:

EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY.

We fade back in to a sunny playground, with a sandbox, swings
and slide, but nobody there except Buffy.

Someone steps into frame behind her, and she turns round,
smiling when she registers who it is.

BUFFY

That was fast. You only just left.

It's Giles, and he smiles warmly back at her.

(CONTINUED)

GILES

It's all relative, really.

Buffy's expression saddens, and she frowns.

BUFFY

I'm never going to see you again,
am I?

GILES

(shakes head)

This is just an afterthought.

BUFFY

What do I do now?

GILES

Everything.

BUFFY

But how do I do it without you?

GILES

You've managed before.

Buffy looks at her feet, then goes and sits on one of the swings. Giles joins her on the second, and the two start to gently push themselves back and forth.

BUFFY

Giles?

GILES

Yes?

BUFFY

You do know you were... well, that
you were kind of like my...

GILES

(smiles)

I know. And thank you, that's very
flattering.

BUFFY

(smiles back)

You're welcome.

They swing for a few more beats.

BUFFY (cont'd)

It'll be morning soon.

GILES

And you have a plane to catch.

(CONTINUED)

BUFFY
(turns to him)
Will you be there?

GILES
I'll always be with you.

Satisfied, Buffy nods, and Giles smiles back at her.

Suddenly, Giles' smile drops, and as Buffy watches, his features start to rapidly change - his skin darkens to jet black, and his head morphs into a new, smooth shape - and in a few moments, SYNADE is sitting on the swing next to Buffy, the piercing gaze of those green eyes staring malevolently back at her.

SYNADE
I'll be waiting for you.

Buffy GASPS as Synade suddenly LUNGES towards her, and we quickly cut into:

49 INT. VOLCANO - CHAMBER - NIGHT.

49

We're standing on a circular platform of rock at the very heart of a raging volcano, rising up out of the lava below.

Buffy boggles as she looks round, seeing Synade standing a few feet away from her, and some kind of metal device on the ground behind him, before we SMASH CUT back to:

50 INT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE - BUFFY'S ROOM - MORNING.

50

Buffy's eyes snap open, and after a beat she sits up in bed, bringing her knees up and wrapping her arms around them.

She sits there for a beat, then quickly slides out of bed and walks off screen, heading out of her room.

51 INT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE - SPARE ROOM - MORNING.

51

Willow is still dozing in bed, Xander and Sofia having already got up and headed out.

Buffy, now fully dressed, enters frame and sits on the edge of the bed, gently shaking Willow to wake her up. Willow blinks as she comes to, seeing Buffy.

WILLOW
Buffy?
(sits up)
What time is it?

(CONTINUED)

BUFFY

Early.

Willow registers Buffy's serious look at last and rubs her eyes, trying to wake up faster.

WILLOW

Where's everyone else?

BUFFY

They've all headed out. Xander's taken Hope to your mom and dad's house, then he's meeting Sofia and the others at the airport.

WILLOW

Oh, okay. I called Oz, he said he'll be there, but I didn't have much luck with finding any wiccas who could help out. Maybe I can try-

BUFFY

(shakes head)

There's no time now. We're going to have to manage with what we've got.

WILLOW

Wait, so why are we still here?

BUFFY

There are some other people who can help us, but I can't contact them without your help.

WILLOW

Okay, sure, no problem. Who are they?

BUFFY

(beat)

I want you to find Riley and get him to the airport. Use your magic if you have to, but I want him there with us.

WILLOW

That I can do. Who's the other person?

BUFFY

Technically, other people. And it might be kinda tricky.

Willow frowns, confused, and we cut from Buffy's look to:

52

EXT. HOPKINS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - DAY.

52

We sweep over one of the airport's busy terminals, taking in a large 'Welcome To Cleveland' sign, before focusing on a smaller runway towards the rear of the airfield.

There is a small chartered jet waiting there, its doors open and stairwells down.

As we push in, we see that there is a battered-looking van parked close by, and as we watch, Xander's car draws into frame.

It parks by the jet, and Xander and Sofia step out. Xander surveys the airfield before he heads over to the van.

Xander raps his knuckles on the side of the van, and after a beat the sliding door is pulled back - and there's OZ! Xander grins, and the two men shake hands warmly.

XANDER

Glad you could make it, Mr. Osbourne!

OZ

No problem. Good to be in the thick of things for once.

(beat)

I'm not just here to take a ring over to somebody, am I?

XANDER

Uh, no, don't worry, Frodo. You're here because of that big old furry killing machine inside of you, we want you and that on our side.

OZ

Who else are we waiting for?

XANDER

We're waiting for Buffy and Willow, they're still back at the house getting some things together, and...

(looks off screen)

... and this looks like Andrew on his way over.

Oz steps out of the van and peers back towards the terminal - and walking towards them is Andrew, a bag slung over his shoulder, with JODY by his side. Xander smiles and hugs Jody warmly as he steps into frame.

(CONTINUED)

XANDER (cont'd)

Hey, Jody. Good to see you again.

JODY

You too. Sorry I haven't been in touch, but-

XANDER

Don't worry about apologies. You're here now, that's what matters.

OZ

(to Sofia)

Sofia, right?

SOFIA

(salutes)

Private Romero, reporting for duty. I've heard a lot about you, it's a pleasure to finally meet you.

OZ

(to Xander)

Slayer?

XANDER

Newest recruit.

SOFIA

I was hoping to have a few more Slayers with me, but sadly...

She trails off as the memory of Giles' death hits her again, and Xander takes over.

XANDER

Our attempt to get a little more Girl Power hit a pretty big snag last night, so this is pretty much everybody that's coming along.

JODY

(points)

We've got incoming.

Xander looks round - a plain blue Ford Taurus is heading towards them. It stops near Oz's van, and Dan steps out.

DAN

This the flight to Certain Doom?

Xander and Sofia exchange a glance before Dan walks over and shakes hands with Xander.

(CONTINUED)

DAN (cont'd)

Sorry I'm late. I did a bit of last minute soul searching, and figured the only chance I have of seeing Jackson again is with you guys, so, here I am.

XANDER

Hey, works for me. Okay, I'm going to find where Buffy and Willow are. The pilot's on the Council payroll but I don't think he's going to wait all day for-

JODY

I think that's them.

Xander looks round - and a shuttle bus is heading over. The assembled group wait for it to come to a stop, and Willow is the first to step out.

XANDER

(joking)

Nice of you to join us! Did you miss the memo? We've got a bad guy to stop, Will!

SOFIA

Yes, what took you both so long?

WILLOW

Um, okay. This is going to sound a little weird, but-

BUFFY (O.S.)

Relax, Willow.

Buffy finally steps off the bus - but this is a very different Buffy to last time we saw her!

Her hair is JET BLACK and perfectly straight, tied up in a half bun at the rear. She's wearing dark lipstick and eyeliner, and is dressed from head to foot in black.

Buffy walks towards her team as jaws drop all round, and an anxious looking Willow follows her.

BUFFY (cont'd)

Hey.

XANDER

(dumbstruck)

Wha- what did- how-

(CONTINUED)

BUFFY

I'll explain it later. Let's just say Willow helped me accept an offer of help I turned down a while back.

Buffy scans over the party before her, everyone still looking pretty wigged at her drastic new appearance.

She turns back to the bus - and a third person disembarks. It's RILEY FINN, as clean cut as ever, dressed in plain fatigues and carrying a large backpack over one shoulder.

Xander gapes at Riley as he steps towards the rest of the group, looking a little awkward.

RILEY

Uh, hi guys.

XANDER

(surprised)

Riley's here! Hey, everyone! It's Riley!

(to Willow)

Why is Riley here?

WILLOW

It was Buffy's call, she-

BUFFY

I needed somebody else I could trust.

XANDER

Okay, not wanting to sound all negative here, but doesn't Riley have a slight case of being on the lam from the army?

RILEY

It's not exactly an ideal situation, but-

BUFFY

(interrupts)

Riley's with us.

(looks round)

Is this everyone?

XANDER

All present and correct. Couldn't find any more Slayers, I'm afraid.

(beat)

Buffy, what's with the-

(CONTINUED)

BUFFY

Ssh. Talk later. Is Hope okay?

XANDER

She's with Willow's mom and dad.
The Council are sending some guys
out to pick up the...

(lowers head)

To take Giles and the others back
home. They're going to get Hope
back to the Council too.

BUFFY

Good. I'll make sure you get back
to see her again before she leaves.

XANDER

(smiles)

Optimistic, much?

BUFFY

It's a gift.

XANDER

What about Angel and Faith? Any
luck getting them and their
respective gangs out here? I'm
guessing Faith doesn't have a gang,
though.

BUFFY

They're not coming. I spoke to
Wesley, he said that Connor was
killed and Angel's in no state to
do anything.

XANDER

Sorry to hear that. And Faith?

BUFFY

(shakes head)

She's somewhere else.

Xander waits for more, but that's all he's getting as Buffy
takes a step back, and the group unconsciously fall into line
as she inspects them, all obviously pretty wary of the new
look Buffy Summers.

BUFFY (cont'd)

Andrew, did you and Anthony manage
to find anything out about the Hub?

(CONTINUED)

ANDREW

Um, not much. As far as we could tell, it'd need to be somewhere near the core of the volcano, because it'd need plenty of heat energy to be able to work.

BUFFY

Alright, good work.

(to the group)

I'll keep this quick. Yesterday, we had two Watchers on our side for backup, today, there's just us. We can mourn them later, right now we have to get over to that volcano, find Synade and stop him before he figures out how to unlock the Hub.

The rest of the team exchange anxious glances as Buffy continues.

BUFFY (cont'd)

From what we know, there'll be things waiting for us. An army, probably. Demons, vamps and anything else Synade can get on his side. That's all you have to worry about. I'll be the one taking care of the problem, all you guys have to do is help me get to it.

There's a beat as Buffy finishes talking - seems everyone was expecting a longer speech. Xander claps his hands together to get everyone's attention.

XANDER

Okay, looks like Amy Lee here has finished with the briefing, let's get on our way.

Buffy stays to watch as everyone begins to file onto the plane. Riley hangs back to speak to her.

RILEY

I just wanted to say thanks, you know, for not telling the others about... well, about what I did.

BUFFY

You showed up. That means you're prepared to fight, and you know you might not make it back. That's all I care about right now.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BUFFY (cont'd)
If you're doing this to try and
make up for what you did, that's
nothing to do with me. I just need
to know I can count on you.

RILEY
You know you can always can. I
mean, getting zapped over here by
Willow when I was all settled over
in Argentina was a bit of a shock,
but still...
(smiles)
I'm here now.

BUFFY
(smiles)
Good. Now get on that plane. We
have work to do.

Riley nods, takes a step back and salutes smartly, then turns
and heads up onto the plane.

Buffy takes a last look around as she approaches the plane's
stairs, and with one last glance round she steps into the
plane. The stairs begin to rise, sealing the door off.

Buffy makes her way down the aisle as we hear the engines
starting to fire up, the others spread out across the seats.

Andrew and Jody sit together by the window, and Buffy notices
with a smile that they're holding hands, Andrew using his
other hand to type rapidly into a laptop sitting on the seat
in front's food tray.

Next up are Xander, Willow and Sofia, Sofia leaning against
Xander's shoulder for comfort.

Dan and Oz sit together, Dan not sure what to say but Oz
characteristically comfortable with the silence.

DAN
So...

OZ
(nods)
Yeah.
(beat)
You hungry?

DAN
Oddly enough, no. I think the
gnawing feeling in my stomach's
going to keep my appetite at bay
for a while yet.

OZ

You get used to it.

We move away from them and stay with Buffy, as she walks past and takes a seat, alone, at the very rear of the plane. She turns and looks out through the window.

We see the airfield outside start to roll past as the jet begins to taxi into position, and with a soft chime the pilot speaks over the intercom.

PILOT

(filtered; through
intercom)

Hello, everyone. My name is Ian Griffiths, I'll be your pilot for today's flight. I've been fully briefed on where I need to take you, so settle back and relax, we should be at our destination in a few hours, weather permitting.

There isn't much conversation as the plane starts to speed up, the passengers securing their safety belts and preparing for take off.

We watch the jet as it races towards us, building up speed, before its nose lifts and it surges into the air, flying straight over the camera and off into the clear blue sky beyond, banking slightly and gracefully arcing away, and from that we dissolve to:

The plane's night lights are on, and as we walk down the aisle we see everyone is fast asleep, using pillows, blankets and each other for comfort.

At the rear of the plane, Buffy is still awake, and as we push in on her thoughtful expression, we hear her voice.

BUFFY (V.O.)

So that's what I want from you this time. Last time, I turned you down. Now, I understand what you were trying to give me at last.

We cut from Buffy's look to:

56

INT. CAVE - NIGHT.

56

Buffy, back with her normal blonde haired look, stands before the three SHADOW MEN, the African men who tried to offer Buffy the power at the heart of the demon before she faced the First's army in Sunnydale, although that time she turned it down.

They stand in a circle around her, their faces stony and impassive as she stares right back, arms folded.

The Shadow Men all speak in SWAHILI, in SUBTITLES. Buffy speaks English. They communicate as if speaking one language.

SHADOW MAN ONE

You rejected us once. Why should we help you?

BUFFY

Because I need your help. Just like last time.

SHADOW MAN TWO

If you take the energy of the Demon into yourself, let it merge, live, and grow inside you, there will be no turning back.

BUFFY

I understand.

The third Shadow Man turns and picks up a small wooden box from the ground, and walks towards Buffy.

We take a step back and see that she's standing in the middle of a symbol painted onto the floor, and she calmly watches the Shadow Man as he puts the box down and opens its lid.

He steps back to join the other two, and the trio begin to POUND their quarterstaves rhythmically against the floor.

SHADOW MAN ONE

This is how it was then. How it must be now.

SHADOW MAN TWO

This is all there is.

A dark, swirling grey MIST starts to rise up out of the box, and Buffy takes a deep breath as it rises into the air.

BUFFY

(quietly)

This had better work...

(CONTINUED)

She watches as it swoops left and right, circling her - before it DIVES towards her. ENERGIES STREAM inside her eyes, mouth, nose - Buffy throws her head back and SCREAMS.

The Mist coagulates all around her and flows through her body - her hair starts to turn jet black, from root to tip, and as she HOWLS again, we SMASH CUT to:

Buffy stands with her eyes closed on what looks like a long blanket of clouds, with clear blue skies above her.

Behind her are a set of large, golden gates, and beyond that we can just make out a shimmering, silver CASTLE, its many wings, towers and spires stretching off into the distance.

SHADOW MAN ONE (V.O.)

Now there is something you must see. Something you must understand about how your weapon was forged.

Buffy opens her eyes and looks to her hands - and she's holding the Scythe. It's GLOWING, pulsing softly with white energy.

JACKSON (O.S.)

Took me a long time to get it just right.

Buffy looks up - and Jackson steps into frame, wearing a plain white suit. He smiles, and Buffy smiles back.

JACKSON (cont'd)

(off Scythe)

Now it's back where it belongs at last, I know it'll do what it was meant to.

BUFFY

I guess I should thank you.

Jackson shrugs, and Buffy tilts her head to one side, fixing him with a curious expression.

BUFFY (cont'd)

Is this going to be that story you promised me? Are you going to tell me what you are now? Or, at least, what you've become?

Jackson lowers his head, then steps closer to her. When he speaks again, his voice sounds softer, more eloquent.

JACKSON

I am Aereus. I am a Guardian of the first Heavenly Dimension, and Synade was my brother in arms. Together, we defended our realm from those who sought to corrupt or destroy its influence.

Buffy hears a noise behind her, and turns to see the two golden gates CREAK as they swing open. Jackson steps alongside her as we see two figures walk out of the mists surrounding the castle - both tall and well built with classically handsome features, dressed in brilliant, shining armour. This is AEREUS and SYNADE as they were.

One bears a resemblance to Jackson, and the other has the long, straight grey hair we've seen Synade sporting.

JACKSON (cont'd)

Synade became enamoured of mortal women, and forsake his duty to take human females for his own pleasure. I was forced to banish him and stand alone at the gates of our heavens.

Two two men turn to face each other - and then draw their swords, taking up a fighting stance against one another.

Synade is the first to attack, and as the two warriors battle, their swords CLASHING together, the skies above the castle start to grow dark, with crimson flames and smoke beginning to rise behind it.

JACKSON (cont'd)

Synade did not go quietly, and when he returned to take his vengeance on me, the realm was ravaged as we fought for supremacy. In the end, Synade was defeated, but he vowed to return one day when his strength had returned. I knew I would have to be there to fight him, so I gave up my immortality to be born into the human bloodline.

The two warring figures fade from view, as does the castle in flames, to be replaced by Aereus standing over a woman lying on a bed, her pregnant belly on show.

By Aereus' side is a young girl, no more than six years old, who looks a lot like the tragic little Oracle girl Emmily.

(CONTINUED)

JACKSON (cont'd)
Through the generations, my soul
was carried from body to body,
dying in one to be reborn again in
another, to find myself here, now,
in the body of the one you call
'Jackson Shaw.'

Buffy turns to Jackson, surprised to see a tear rolling down his cheek.

BUFFY
How did you know when you'd be
called?

JACKSON
The Oracle of my time told me. She
foresaw all of this and told me
which member of my bloodline would
be the one to carry my soul when it
was reborn.

Jackson reaches out and touches the Scythe in Buffy's hand.

JACKSON (cont'd)
For my part, I helped the Elder
Women forge the Scythe before I
began my journey, as I knew without
it we would not stand a chance.

Aereus and the pregnant woman fade from view, leaving Buffy and Jackson standing alone on the cloud once more.

BUFFY
And that's what the 'Guardian' is?

JACKSON
(nods)
Reborn when the time came to watch
over the Slayer, and be at her side
in her darkest hour. Our life
forces have been linked since your
birth, we were destined to meet
when the time came.

BUFFY
What about...
(beat)
What about Jackson? Is he still in
there?

Buffy reaches a hesitant hand out towards Jackson, who reaches out and takes it.

BUFFY (cont'd)
Am I ever going to get him back?

(CONTINUED)

Jackson looks back at her for a beat, then shakes his head. There are tears in Buffy's eyes as he continues, pressing Buffy's hand against his chest.

JACKSON

His heart shall always belong to
you. But his body serves a
different purpose now.

Buffy lets out a SOB, and Jackson reaches forward to embrace her, pressing her close to his body.

JACKSON (cont'd)

You will be reunited in time.

Buffy holds Jackson as tight as she can, as we WHITE OUT and dissolve back to:

Buffy stares at her own black-haired reflection in the small cabin window facing her. She reaches a hand up to touch her hair and lips, curious at this change in her own features.

WILLOW (O.S.)

Buffy?

Buffy turns to look at Willow, who seems a little nervous around her.

WILLOW (cont'd)

You okay?

BUFFY

(beat; grins)

Five by five.

Buffy settles down to get some rest at last, and a bemused Willow makes her way towards the toilets.

Willow nears the curtain that separates the toilets from the rest of the plane, but pauses as she hears someone talking.

RILEY (O.S.)

So that's where we'll be. You know
where and when. It's up to you what
you do with that intel now.

Willow frowns and starts to pull the curtain aside, but she jumps as Riley grabs the curtain from the other side, slowly drawing it the rest of the way.

WILLOW

Riley? Who were you talking to back there?

Riley glances down at his hand, where he's still holding a bulky radio unit, which he clicks off.

RILEY

(evasive)

Oh, you know. Just putting my affairs in order.

He quickly steps past Willow and heads back for his seat, and with a frown, Willow watches him go, before she steps past the curtain and pulls it closed, making us cut to:

We're suddenly in the following day, and as sunlight streams in through the cabin windows, Buffy's eyelids flutter and she comes round.

She sits up and sees that everyone else is up and all on the opposite side of the plane, looking out through the windows.

BUFFY

What's going on?

XANDER

You'd better come take a look at this, Buff.

Buffy gets up and makes her way over, and he steps aside to let Buffy look.

Down below them is their final destination, and the source of all their trouble - a huge VOLCANIC ISLAND, pushing up out of the sea and belching thick clouds of grey smoke and volcanic ash into the air.

The volcano easily takes up half the surface of the island, and in the water all around it we can make out dozens of ships, even a few helicopters and planes circling round.

Buffy steps away and heads for the pilot's cabin:

CAPTAIN GRIFFITHS, a tall, slightly stocky man with short dark hair and glasses, looks round as Buffy steps in.

GRIFFITHS

Miss Summers?

BUFFY

That's me.

GRIFFITHS

My apologies. I didn't recognise you!

BUFFY

What's the next step?

GRIFFITHS

Well, there's no way we can land there outright. For one thing, there's too much local traffic in the air and water, and for another I can't see anywhere on the island we'd have enough clear space to land safely.

BUFFY

So what do we do?

GRIFFITHS

We've got clearance to land at a small airstrip on one of the nearby Pacific Islands. I've been left plenty of cash to charter you all a boat from there - I expect a healthy wad of American dollars will keep the questions to a minimum. You should be able to gain access to the island if you wait until nightfall.

BUFFY

(shakes head)

We can't wait that long.

GRIFFITHS

It'll be tricky during the day, I'd imagine the Japanese Navy will be blockading the whole island for safety. How do you plan on getting past them?

BUFFY

(grins)

Like the song says, 'everywhere you go, always take the weather with you.'

Griffiths raises an eyebrow, and we cut from Buffy's grin to:

62 EXT. PACIFIC OCEAN - DAY.

62

We're thrown into the middle of a heavy storm, the ocean's waves crashing all around us, sending the large frigate in front of us lurching up and down.

As we see other boats through the fog and thick, driving rain, also paralysed by the sudden wild conditions, we make out an unusual sight, and start to push in on it.

A small, rickety fishing boat is sailing unopposed through the storm - with a thin channel forming around it, entirely free of any of the adverse conditions affecting the rest of the ships around us. As we push in closer, we cut to:

63 INT. FISHING BOAT. DAY.

63

Buffy stands at the prow of the thin, rooved boat, her eyes locked on the approaching shore of the volcanic island.

Sitting cross legged behind her is Willow, her eyes closed and her face locked in concentration, as Xander sits beside her, holding two candles and throwing glances over to the violent storm that's halting just a few feet from either side of the boat.

Dan and Riley watch on in amazement, but Oz keeps his eyes on Willow, a proud look on his face.

DAN

How is she-

RILEY

She's powerful. Very powerful. And that's all I ever wanted to know.

OZ

(grins; proud)

She's the best.

Further back, Sofia, Andrew and Jody are going through their supply of weapons, laying out a dazzling arsenal of knives, swords, crossbows, maces, staffs, axes and any other kind of sharp weapon you care to name.

Alongside that is Riley's backpack, which is crammed full of shotguns, handguns and rifles.

Sofia looks up and studies the boys' faces - they both look scared out of their wits.

SOFIA

It'll be alright, you know.

(CONTINUED)

JODY

What will?

SOFIA

When we get to the island. I can see you're both petrified, and don't worry - I'm not exactly free from nerves myself.

She holds out her hand to show them - and her hand is shaking. Jody doesn't look too encouraged by this.

JODY

Oh, great - if you're scared, what chance do we have? I've never been in any kind of fight to save the world like this!

SOFIA

Truth be told, neither have I.

Sofia turns to look back at Buffy, Willow, and the others.

SOFIA (cont'd)

But they all have. Buffy knows what she's doing, and I'd trust her with my life.

(turns back)

And so should you.

Andrew and Jody exchange looks, wishing they could share Sofia's optimism.

And finally, at the rear of the vessel, the terrified-looking FISHERMAN keeps one hand on the rudder and another pressed to his chest, not understanding what the heck is going on but praying nothing goes wrong before he gets back home.

At the front of the vessel, Dan walks up to join Buffy. He takes a beat to watch her, her eyes fixed on the island ahead still, before he coughs to get her attention.

DAN

(off her look)

Aren't you a tiny bit worried about this?

BUFFY

Not really. You see one apocalypse, you've seen them all. After the first five or so, they all start blending into one.

Dan looks Buffy up and down again, and she eyes him.

(CONTINUED)

BUFFY (cont'd)

What?

DAN

Just trying to work out what the whole Marilyn Manson look you've got going on is all about.

BUFFY

I told you - I accepted an offer of help, that's all.

DAN

Yeah, but from who? The Cure's wardrobe department?

BUFFY

It's not important. What matters is that it's what we need.

DAN

(shrugs)

Whatever works for you. I'm willing to take your word for it.

BUFFY

Good.

There's a moment of silence - Buffy keeps her eyes on the island and Dan checks the shotgun slung over one shoulder.

DAN

Can I ask one question? What the hell are we going to do when we get there?

Buffy stares at him for a beat - then looks back towards the island without an answer. Dan sighs.

DAN (cont'd)

Yeah, that's what I thought.

We stay on the two of them for a beat, before we cut to:

The boat drifts slowly towards the shore, the seas around the island still wrapped in mist from Willow's spell.

Aiming towards a rocky plateau that forms a makeshift dock, the boat comes to a stop, bumping gently against the craggy red rocks that jut out from the sand all round the island.

Buffy turns to the team as they gather their weapons - Riley and Dan with shotguns, handguns and rifles, the others with axes, swords and other medieval tools of the trade.

BUFFY

None of you had to be here today.
You could have chosen to stay at home, safe in your bed, and pretend that none of this was happening. But you didn't. You made a choice and stood by the rest of us, and for that I'm never going to be able to thank you enough.

Buffy studies her squad as she continues. There's a RUMBLE from the volcano behind them, but Buffy doesn't miss a beat.

BUFFY (cont'd)

No matter how hard we fight, they keep coming back, keep finding new ways to try to bring us down, and one day, they're going to find a way we won't be able to stop. Some new way to attack us that we're just not prepared for. But when that happens, I know where I want to be.

Buffy reaches down to a bag at her feet and unzips it - and stands with the Scythe in her hands at last. It almost seems to be GLOWING, despite the bright sunlight overhead.

BUFFY (cont'd)

I want to be standing in its way, with you guys right behind me. I'm gonna look whatever's coming right in the eye, and I'm gonna say...

Buffy pauses as a commotion starts to echo out from the thick forest carpeting the base of the volcano. The rest of the team step forward to look out, and their faces tell us they can't believe what they're seeing.

Pouring out from the trees towards the shore are hundreds of DEMONS, covering all species, shapes, sizes and colours, some armed, some not, but every single one of them worked into a frenzy, their voices howling for the blood of the intruders.

Buffy grips her Scythe tightly - and GRINS.

BUFFY (cont'd)

Hit me with your best shot.

Buffy leaps from the boat onto the shore, and one by one the others follow her.

(CONTINUED)

She leads them as they walk towards the oncoming demon horde, not slowing her pace at all, her eyes locked on her first target.

BUFFY (cont'd)
 The Hub's going to be inside that volcano, so that's where I'm going. Willow, Xander, cover me. The rest of you...
 (turns to them)
 Raise some Hell.

Riley grits his teeth and loads his shotgun with a loud CLICK, as the team start to pick up their pace, jogging across the dusty ground, moments away now from the first wave of demons.

Dan turns to Andrew, who is deathly pale and trembling with fear. He pats him on the shoulder.

DAN
 So... I guess the world tries to end itself quite a lot, huh?

Andrew looks back at Dan but is too scared to answer, and Dan nods sagely.

DAN (cont'd)
 Don't worry. We'll be alright.

Buffy raises her Scythe as the first few demons close in on them all, Riley by her side.

RILEY
 (yells)
 Come on!!

The first wave of demons CRASH into our team in an explosion of shouts, gunfire and the CLANG of metal on metal, and no sooner have the two forces clashed than we cut to:

We're deep in the heart of the volcano now, looking down on a chamber carved out of the rock itself.

A pool of bubbling lava fills the cavern with angry red light, and rising from the centre of this is a tall, circular column, the flat top of which is linked to the walls of the volcano by long, thin walkways. A shimmering field of green energy can be seen surrounding the walkways and the platform, presumably there to combat the intense volcanic heat.

Standing tall on top of the column is Synade, his featureless face lit from below by the fires of the molten magma.

Before him stands THE HUB - a simple looking device, constructed from silvery metals and looking like an oversized combination lock. There's a circular hole in its centre, and several discs running out from that which are covered in arcane symbols and letters.

Synade stands before the Hub, an open book in his hands. He raises his voice to be heard above the noise the volcano is making, and it's the same gruff, raspy voice we've heard earlier.

SYNADE

Unlock the great seal, show me the
combination to restore the mouths
of Hell, and bring me the power I
deserve!

He raises his free hand into the air dramatically and waits.

A beat. Nothing.

Synade SIGHS and lowers his hand, flicking through the book to a different page, as we cut back to:

Buffy's team are fighting their way through the swarms of demons one inch at a time.

Forming a loose circle, the team hold off the creatures attacking them - wherever there is a sword or claw swinging for them, an axe or sword swings back to block it.

Willow raises her hands and YELLS an incantation, and bolts of BLUE ENERGY blast away from her and slam into several of the demons, sending them flying back through the air. Xander covers her, tackling a warrior who gets too close and punching him into submission.

Andrew and Jody are managing to hold their own - just - as Oz and Dan fight almost back to back. Dan is emptying his shotgun into anything with more teeth than him, while Oz is rapidly firing and reloading a crossbow into the mass of bodies before him.

Further back, Sofia is a whirlwind of action - despite her relative lack of experience, Sofia is clearly already a skilled fighter, shouting with ferocity as she lays into anything that comes too close.

At the head of all this is Buffy, still striding boldly forward with Riley right behind her. If any creature gets too close, Riley BLASTS it with his rifle, and if anything gets closer than that, Buffy swings the Scythe and fells it without breaking stride.

In Buffy's hands, the Scythe is now definitely GLOWING, with swirls of black and white energy snaking around its surface. It seems to be glued to Buffy's hands, and no matter how hard she slices it into the nearest demon, it always cuts through them like they were butter.

Everyone except Buffy is already cut and bruised, the sheer number of creatures attacking them starting to take its toll.

Riley looks up and sees a demon preparing to throw a huge spear towards Buffy.

RILEY

Buffy! Look out!

He starts to push her out of the way, but she coolly looks up, sees the incoming spear - and SWATS it away with the Scythe.

Riley blinks, amazed by her speed and reflexes, but Buffy spots something else incoming and yells.

BUFFY

Get down!

She DIVES for cover as a hail of crossbow bolts rain down on the team - and Willow takes one in the arm. She CRIES OUT in pain and staggers, and Oz is at her side in an instant.

OZ

Willow!

WILLOW

(grimacing)

I'm okay, I'm okay...

Oz looks to her wounded arm, then back at Willow, before he turns to pass his crossbow to Dan.

DAN

Hey! What the-

Oz closes his eyes and takes a deep breath as a bemused Dan looks on. When he reopens his eyes, they've turned JET BLACK, and Oz SNARLS, his teeth already turning to fangs - Oz is starting the Change.

Wide-eyed, Dan is pulled away from him by Xander.

XANDER

Trust me, you'll want to give him some room to do this.

(CONTINUED)

As Dan and Xander rejoin the fight on a new front, we stay with Oz as fur sprouts from his skin, and his whole body starts to distort and bulge, new muscles knotting themselves together.

With a terrifying HOWL, Oz completes his transformation, and the Werewolf drops to all fours, its head snapping left to right as it observes the carnage around it, before it GROWLS and leaps forward, tackling a nearby demon to the ground and quickly taking him out of the fight.

Back with Andrew and Jody, and Jody is trying to push a demon with long, snapping jaws away from him.

JODY
Andrew? Little help?

Andrew races into frame and barges into the demon - but bounces straight off it.

He watches, helpless, as the demon sinks its teeth into Jody's arm, and Jody SCREAMS in pain.

A look of fury crosses Andrew's face, and with an attempt at a mighty war cry, he springs to his feet, his axe raised high in the air as he charges in again.

Jody is weakly trying to prise the demon's jaws away from his arm, when with a wet THUNK, the demon suddenly falls limp and crashes to the ground, Andrew's axe buried firmly in its skull. Jody smiles proudly across at Andrew.

JODY (cont'd)
Way to go, hero...

Andrew smiles back - then quickly SHOVES Jody out of the way as another demon lunges in to attack.

Sofia, meanwhile, is showing the determination that kept her alive when she was a prisoner in that Italian dungeon, her sword decapitating a demon that stands a foot taller than her, before kicking its body to the side and spin-kicking another to the ground.

Willow is still launching off bolts of energy, but with blood loss from her wounded arm she's starting to weaken, and Xander yells back to Buffy.

XANDER
Buffy! We're getting bogged down here, we need to get to the volcano before we all end up as demon food!

BUFFY
Willow?

Willow looks up and meets Buffy's gaze.

BUFFY (cont'd)
You know what to do.

Willow nods, and closes her eyes, her lips moving as she begins another spell.

BUFFY (cont'd)
Xander, watch her. I've got to get
to the Hub before we run out of
time. Wait for me as long as you
can, but if it gets too rough...
just go.

Xander opens his mouth to reply, but Buffy has already turned and started towards the volcano.

A huge warrior demon lands in front of her, its three mouths HISSING at her, saliva dripping from rows of razor sharp teeth.

Without blinking, Buffy reaches back and slices the Scythe down - and the two halves of the demon fall limply to the ground.

As Buffy starts to run towards the looming volcano up ahead, her Scythe clearing a path through the demons like an adventurer hacking through a dense jungle, we see Oz again, still in Wolf mode, pouncing on another demon and HOWLING.

Buffy disappears from view, and Xander calls Sofia over to help keep Willow safe while she prepares her spell.

Sofia has a nasty gash down her cheek but is still full of fighting spirit as she joins them.

SOFIA
What's going on? Where's Buffy?

XANDER
Getting the job done. We have to
protect Willow.

SOFIA
What is she-

WILLOW
Gaia, hear me...

Willow's eyes snap open, and a brilliant electric blue light is crackling around them.

Xander and Sofia step back, alarmed, but are quickly back into action as two more demons race over.

(CONTINUED)

WILLOW (cont'd)
 Open your eyes and see these
 abominations that defile your
 beauty...

Willow raises her hands, and the same blue energy gathering
 round her eyes is crackling up and down her arms.

WILLOW (cont'd)
 ... unleash your fury and cleanse
 this land of all those who dare
 disrespect it!

There is a low RUMBLING sound - and the ground beneath
 everyone's feet starts to SHAKE!

As demons and champions alike stumble to the ground, only
 Willow remains standing, her hands raised high in the air as
 she continues her spell.

WILLOW (cont'd)
 Rend the Earth asunder and devour
 all who are unworthy of you!

The rumbling dies down for a beat - and then, with an
 almighty CRACK, long, jagged lines of the island's floor
 start to break up, with some sections of rock rising into the
 air and others falling, as though an earthquake centred on
 Willow is tearing the whole island apart!

Xander and the others watch on, dumbfounded, as the attacking
 army of demons is alternately sent scattering back as huge
 chunks of jagged rock burst through the ground, and other
 sections crumble and fall away, dropping the demons out of
 sight with a chorus of SHRIEKS.

SOFIA
 (shouting over noise)
 What is she doing?!? She'll tear
 this whole place apart!

XANDER
 I think that's the idea!

We cut away from the chaotic effects of Willow's home made
 earthquake over to:

Staggering as she tries to run on with the ground beneath
 them rumbling and shaking, Buffy is finding the demon army is
 less inclined to fight all of a sudden, with groups of
 warriors turning tail and running at the havoc Willow is
 wreaking on the island.

67

CONTINUED:

67

Buffy looks up as she approaches the foot of the huge, red and brown rock of the volcano - and about ten feet above her, hollowed out of the rock, is a tunnel entrance.

She holds up the Scythe, which seems to be pulsating more urgently with energy. Buffy smiles and looks up to the tunnel again, and we cut to:

68

INT. VOLCANO - CHAMBER - DAY.

68

Synade is pacing around the Hub now, looking up and around as the RUMBLING outside dislodges the odd chunk of rock from inside the volcano itself.

SYNADE

She is coming...

He SNAPS the book shut and drops it to the floor, before turning to face the main walkway that leads into the chamber and sitting down on the floor.

SYNADE (cont'd)

Just in time.

We cut from Synade back to:

69

EXT. FOREST - DAY.

69

Willow's spell is dying down, and Willow's hands fall back to her sides as she begins to faint away.

Xander catches her and lowers her gently to the ground, as Sofia surveys the mess the island has been left in.

Apart from a small, unaffected area where the team are currently crouched, the forest around them has been torn to pieces, with gaping chasms and tall hills breaking the forest floor up. Dozens of dead demons lie all around them, with the rest of the army hanging back, cowering in fear at the awesome destruction they just witnessed.

Oz backs up into frame, still in Wolf mode, snarling defiantly at the hordes of demons around them. Dan watches him, wary, and taps Xander on the shoulder.

DAN

Uh, he's not going to, you know, turn on us or anything, is he?

XANDER

Hopefully not, no.

(CONTINUED)

DAN

Right.

(beat)

Wait, hopefully?

Dan turns to Xander, but he's over by Willow now. Xander pats her cheek to try and wake her back up, but she's out cold.

JODY

So... how long do we think they'll stay back, then?

RILEY

I'm guessing not all that long. Once they realise they're not at Ground Zero any more, they'll start coming back.

XANDER

How's everyone doing?

Sofia scans the team - Andrew is tearing strips off his own shirt to bandage Jody's wounded arm, and Dan looks like he's running on pure adrenaline, his whole body still shaking. Riley has several wounds peppering his body, but he doesn't like he's going to move an inch, no matter what the island throws at him.

ANDREW

Did Buffy make it to the volcano?

JODY

Yeah, I saw her disappear off just before Willow went all mojo-tastic on us. Is she okay?

Sofia and Xander exchange a glance and then look towards the volcano up ahead.

XANDER

Let's hope so.

We cut from Xander's serious expression to:

Using the Scythe as a makeshift climbing tool, Buffy is literally clawing her way up towards the tunnel entrance, reaching one hand up to the edge, and with a GRUNT of effort she hauls herself up into the tunnel.

Buffy dusts herself off, and with a last glance to the outside world, she starts down the tunnel, the glowing Scythe lighting her path.

71

EXT. FOREST - DAY.

71

Willow is coming round, blinking as she tries to focus and wincing with pain, pressing a hand to her head.

XANDER

And she's back. How's our friendly neighbourhood Goddess today?

WILLOW

My head hurts...

SOFIA

(grins)

Well, you will go and tear an island apart just to save all our necks, what did you expect?

RILEY

Uh, guys?

Xander and Sofia look up - and their faces fall as they see that the demons are starting to slowly advance on the team again, no longer afraid. Werewolf Oz GROWLS menacingly, but it doesn't deter the demons this time.

XANDER

Will, they're coming back. Any chance you can cook us up another one of those spells?

WILLOW

(shakes head)

No chance. I'm out of gas.

RILEY

(to others)

Then I guess this is it.

JODY

Let's get closer to the volcano.

SOFIA

Yes, it makes sense for us to wait there, make sure nothing gets in to go after Buffy.

DAN

It'll mean we're further away from the shore, although I doubt Old Man River and his boat are going to have stuck around after that quake Willow just set off.

(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DAN (cont'd)
How the hell did she do that, by
the way?

XANDER, SOFIA & ANDREW
(together)
She's a witch.

DAN
(beat)
Oh.

Xander stands, helping Willow to her feet and looking towards
the volcano.

XANDER
Come on, let's get moving. I reckon
we've still got a few minutes
before the bad guys out there
realise we only had one earthquake
in our pockets.

The team rise and starts to hustle towards the volcano, as we
cut back to:

Buffy steps out onto the edge of the stone walkway, and her
eyes narrow as she sees the centre of the chamber at last.

Synade looks up, sees her and stands, his arms folded and the
Hub behind him, just like in her dream.

Buffy hesitates - but then notices a brief shimmer from the
energy field surrounding the walkways and platforms. With a
grin, she strides forward and along the walkway, unaffected
by the heat given off by the lava. She keeps her eyes on
Synade as she approaches him.

BUFFY
Let me guess. Some kind of magical
sun block? I guess that whoever put
that Hub thing in here wouldn't
make it so they couldn't safely
come back and check up on it.

SYNADE
Very good, Slayer. I can see why so
many of my kind run at the sound of
your name.

BUFFY
Darn, and here was me thinking it
was because I'm just that good at
my job.

SYNADE

Come to face me alone? That's unlike you, Slayer.

BUFFY

I knew this was between you and me. What's the matter, did nobody want to come and play with you?

SYNADE

I need no-one. I have survived for centuries with nobody to rely on but myself. Much like your kind, Slayer.

BUFFY

Yeah, but the difference is, those Slayers all tended to get killed a lot. I'm still here.

She glances at the Hub as Synade takes a step towards her.

BUFFY (cont'd)

So what's the deal here, anyway? Unlock this thing, open all the world's Hellmouths, then what? Throw a big homecoming party for your demon buddies?

SYNADE

I have no plans beyond settling back with a glass of fine wine, and watching the forces of darkness reduce this world to ruin.

BUFFY

Something tells me you'd be no fun at parties.

SYNADE

And when the civilisation of man has fallen, then it will be time to unleash the Old Ones from the Deeper Well, and bring about a new era for this world. As it once was, so shall it be again.

BUFFY

You demon bad guys really need to think about buying a new record.

SYNADE

Mock me if you wish, Slayer...

BUFFY

Oh, okay. I will.

(CONTINUED)

SYNADE

... but you've made one crucial mistake in coming here.

BUFFY

Really? And what would that be?

SYNADE

You've brought me what I need to complete my task.

Buffy blinks - then looks down to the Scythe in her hands. She looks back up at Synade as he starts to CHUCKLE.

SYNADE (cont'd)

Congratulations, Slayer. Your impetuous need to defeat evil wherever you find it has finally managed to seal the fate of the world. I should be thanking you...

With a SWISH of motion, Synade suddenly has two long, triangular daggers in each hand.

SYNADE (cont'd)

... but I think I'll just kill you instead.

Synade LUNGES forward to attack, and we quickly cut to:

Xander, carrying Willow in his arms, hurries into frame as the others join him at the foot of the volcano. He glances up to the tunnel entrance above him, then looks back towards the forest they've just left.

We can hear the sounds of the demon army making its way through the trees towards them, and with a GULP Xander lays Willow gently down again.

DAN

I know I've not been part of this for too long, but 'plan' isn't a word I've seen a lot of evidence of so far.

SOFIA

I was going to start with 'kill demons' and see how it went from there.

RILEY

Sounds good to me.

Dan checks his ammunition - one clip left for his handgun, nothing for his shotgun. He looks up as Andrew holds out an axe towards him.

ANDREW

Um, try this. It doesn't run out of bullets.

Dan stares at the axe - and then, with a SIGH, takes it.

DAN

Boy, my mom sure would be proud if she could see me now.

Willow weakly reaches up to get Xander's attention, and he crouches down next to her.

XANDER

What is it?

WILLOW

Xander, something... something's wrong...

XANDER

We're cut off and surrounded by an army of murderous demons, Will, I think we've gone beyond 'wrong' here.

WILLOW

No, no... with the spell... something doesn't feel right.

XANDER

Something bad?

Willow doesn't answer - and then, we begin to hear the low, RUMBLING sound that accompanied Willow's spell last time. Xander looks back to Willow.

XANDER (cont'd)

(penny drops)

That's not your spell making that noise, is it?

WILLOW

(shakes head)

The island's angry. I think... I think I woke it up.

As the rumbling grows louder, and the ground beneath their feet starts to shake again, Xander stands and turns to the rest of the team.

XANDER

Uh, guys?

They turn to face him.

XANDER (cont'd)

We have a new problem.

Dan closes his eyes, and we cut back to:

Buffy and Synade are in the thick of their fight - his daggers snap towards her with lightning fast speed, but she gets the Scythe up to defend herself.

Her new found strength starts to kick in at last, and as Buffy fights back, it's with a ferocity we've never seen in her before. Yelling with exertion, she hammers Synade back a step every time he attacks, the Scythe dancing in her hands as she lets the demon inside her out to play.

Synade darts left and right, his blades slicing towards her, and Buffy YELPS as one of them cuts into her arm.

Frustrated, she takes a step towards him, but Synade is already on the move again, and Buffy frantically fights off his attacks, losing the initiative.

Synade KICKS Buffy over, and she lands with a THUD. Synade stands over her, twirling his daggers.

SYNADE

It's over, Slayer! You can't beat me, you're just not fast enough.

(holds out his hand)

Give me the Scythe, and I'll make it quick for both of you. You're a valiant opponent, but-

CLANG! Buffy slices up with the Scythe and jumps to her feet, and Synade is forced to block.

She charges to the attack, neither of them noticing as the growing earthquake outside starts to violently shake the inside of the chamber.

The lava below starts to rise, bubbling as the pressure builds up. Silhouetted against the light it gives off, Buffy and Synade duel on, Buffy driving the demon back to the edge of the platform.

She chops down with the Scythe, but Synade FLIPS up and into the air, sailing straight over Buffy's head to land back on the platform behind her.

She turns, but he's too fast - one dagger rakes across her arm, and she drops the Scythe with a clatter, and the second plunges into her gut.

Buffy GASPS, and Synade leans in close, keeping the dagger firmly planted in her.

SYNADE (cont'd)
I offered you the choice. You could
have had a quick end, but now I'll
make sure it lasts.

He pulls the dagger back out, and Buffy collapses to the ground, panting for breath.

Synade scoops up the Scythe and walks over to the Hub, finally noticing the tremors rattling the volcano. He turns back to Buffy.

SYNADE (cont'd)
I imagine this is the work of your
friends outside! They, too, have
fought well. I will make sure I
build a monument in their honour
when all this is over - the humans
who fought to the last to try and
save their world.

Buffy tries to crawl towards him, but the pain in her gut is too much, as Synade stands over the Hub.

SYNADE (cont'd)
This is a magnificent weapon,
Slayer. It is a shame you did not
get the time to fully unlock its
potential. It can be used for a
great many things besides killing
my kind.

He raises the Scythe, aiming the stake end down at the circular hole in the centre of the Hub, and then SLAMS it down, locking it into place.

Synade steps back as the glowing energy on the Scythe flows down and onto the Hub, and with a series of loud CLICKS, the three discs that circle round the middle of the device start to slowly turn, the symbols on them lighting up as the Scythe's energy runs over them.

SYNADE (cont'd)
It is done!

Buffy tries to push herself to her feet, but she's too weak, and as she presses a hand to the wound in her stomach and grimaces, we cut to:

75 EXT. BASE OF VOLCANO - DAY.

75

The team are braced against the volcano itself, trying to stay on their feet as the entire landscape around them shakes violently.

Entire sections of the island break up and fall away, like Willow's earlier spell but on a much larger scale. The attacking demons can't get close, but the route back towards the shore and freedom is rapidly breaking away.

As Riley uses up what's left of his ammo with a few potshots at the advancing army, Xander crouches down by Willow and holds her close to him.

XANDER

I guess we woke up Mother Nature on the wrong side of her bed, huh?

WILLOW

(tearful)

Xander, I'm sorry, I should've-

XANDER

Ssh. It's alright. We did what we came here to do. I just hope Buffy managed to do her part.

Cut off, the team watch the island tear itself to pieces around them for another beat, before we cut back to:

76 INT. VOLCANO - CHAMBER - DAY.

76

The discs on the Hub are now spinning round at tremendous speed, and Synade turns to walk back over to Buffy.

SYNADE

Soon, the mouths of Hell across this planet will start to activate and open. In a few hours, this human world that you fought for so long to protect will be overrun, and darkness will take its rightful place in the sky once again.

He reaches down and grabs Buffy by the throat, lifting her into the air. She struggles against him, but she's too weak.

Synade walks to the edge of the platform, holding Buffy out and over the rising lava below. Her legs swing helplessly in the air.

(CONTINUED)

SYNADE (cont'd)
I'm going to enjoy watching the
lava consume your body, Slayer.
It's a fitting end after all the
trouble you've caused me, and-

JACKSON (O.S.)
Let her go.

Synade spins round - and standing on the platform is JACKSON!
His entire body is glowing with a divine white light, and
Synade seems to shrink away from him as he takes one step
closer.

JACKSON (cont'd)
I said let her go, Synade. Your
battle is with me now, as it has
always been.

Synade narrows his eyes - then THROWS Buffy to the ground.
Jackson clenches his fists, his eyes locked on Synade.

SYNADE
So we meet again at last, Aereus. I
always wondered how long it would
take you to be reborn and finish
what we started.

JACKSON
Too long. I have waited for many
centuries, knowing that when you
came close to completing your plan
again, I would need to be here,
now, ready to stop you.

SYNADE
Well then.

Synade flicks his daggers back into his hands.

SYNADE (cont'd)
Let's get back into it. I have a
world to destroy.

Jackson reaches into his jacket - and draws a long SWORD from
within it, seemingly from nowhere. The blade glows with the
same white light that flows over Jackson's body, and he takes
up a fighting stance.

JACKSON
This world belongs to the humans
now, Synade. Our time is long past.

Synade stares back at him for a beat - then LEAPS to the
attack.

His daggers CLASH against Jackson's sword, and with the grace of a warrior older than time itself, Jackson fights back, effortlessly fending off Synade's attacks.

Buffy manages to pull herself to her feet, her jaw hanging open as she watches Jackson fight.

SYNADE

You always thought you were the greatest warrior, Aereus, but you never truly faced me to prove it!

JACKSON

I didn't have to. The true warrior knows that battle is ultimately unnecessary. He doesn't need to fight to show that he understands that.

Synade keeps up the offensive, spinning round and launching his daggers again and again at Jackson, but Jackson is clearly in control of the fight.

JACKSON (cont'd)

But I am glad we had a chance to settle this at last, Synade.

Synade ROARS and jumps into the air, his daggers aimed at Jackson.

JACKSON (cont'd)

Because now I know for sure.

We slow the action down - Jackson raises his sword, and with one mighty swing SLICES AWAY both of Synade's hands, before spinning on the spot and SLAMMING his sword straight through Synade's chest.

Back to normal speed as Synade's body SLAMS onto the ground, the once fearsome demon wheezing as Jackson stands over him.

JACKSON (cont'd)

Now leave this world in peace.

Synade's breathing slows - and finally, his eyes disappear, leaving his smooth, featureless black head entirely blank.

Buffy looks up as Jackson walks over and holds out his hand.

JACKSON (cont'd)

Come, Buffy. There is one last thing you must do, and only one of the true Chosen Ones can do it.

Buffy looks over to the Hub, and realises what needs to be done. Accepting Jackson's outstretched hand, she pulls herself to her feet and walks over to it.

The discs on the Hub are spinning at an impossible speed now, some of the symbols on their surface staying permanently lit.

Buffy reaches out for the handle of the Scythe and GRABS it. The energy flowing over the Scythe races back and over her, and Buffy staggers backwards as though she's been zapped by an electric shock.

She recovers, grits her teeth and steps up again, grabbing the Scythe's handle with both hands and starting to shake as she struggles to control the power feeding back onto her.

She SHOUTS OUT - and her hair starts to return to blonde, the darkness flowing back out of her to give her the strength she needs.

Finally, with a final YELL, she wrenches the Scythe free, and in a few moments the Hub's discs stop spinning. Buffy gasps for breath as Jackson lays a hand on her shoulder.

JACKSON (cont'd)

Now, we must leave.

BUFFY

But- but what about-

JACKSON

Several Hellmouths have been opened, yes. There is nothing we can do about that now. But you stopped the process before they were all activated, and that is all we could ask for,

Unseen by either of them, Synade's eyes are slowly opening again - the demon is far from dead!

Jackson turns and starts to walk away from Buffy, but she calls out to him, having to shout over the noise the rumbling volcano is making.

BUFFY

Wait... wait!

JACKSON

We do not have much time, the volcano will soon erupt and-

BUFFY

(beat; tearful)
Jackson?

(CONTINUED)

Synade is staring hard at what used to be his hands - and as we watch, new flesh starts to push its way out of his wrists! Synade narrows his eyes, concentrating - he's literally growing a new pair of hands!

BUFFY (cont'd)
Is that it? Are we done? Is... is
Jackson gonna come back to me now?

BOOM! Jackson and Buffy are shaken to their feet as the volcano is rocked by another tremor.

JACKSON
We definitely need to leave now,
Slayer.

Jackson has his back to Synade as the demon rises to his feet again, unseen by either Jackson or Buffy.

SYNADE (O.S.)
Aereus!!

Jackson turns - and Synade DRIVES Jackson's own sword through his chest!

BUFFY
(yells)
No!!

Jackson staggers backwards, as Synade presses his whole weight against him, their faces less than an inch apart.

SYNADE
You've ruined everything! Why
couldn't you stay with your beloved
heavens? You had your realm, why
couldn't you let me have mine?

Buffy dives in to help, but Synade SWATS her away, and Buffy sails through the air, landing on the walkway, the Scythe clattering down to the edge of the platform.

Jackson struggles, his strength fading as the frenzied Synade stays on top of him.

JACKSON
(through gritted teeth)
You... will never... rule this
world!

Jackson ROARS as he shoves Synade away, grabbing the demon by his neck and grappling with him.

He PUNCHES Synade and knocks the demon back, before quickly scooping up the Scythe by his feet and turning to Buffy.

(CONTINUED)

JACKSON (cont'd)
Buffy! Take this and run!

He THROWS it towards her, and Buffy stretches to catch it - and as it falls into her hands, another QUAKE breaks away the section of walkway linking her to the platform. She screams back across to Jackson.

BUFFY
Jackson!!

He smiles and shakes his head.

JACKSON
I have to finish what I started.
(beat; as Jackson)
I'll always love you.

He turns back to Synade, who is recovering from the blow, and as a shocked Buffy watches on, Jackson tackles Synade - and pushes both of them off the platform!

Buffy SCREAMS again as the two figures fall down towards the lava, still fighting each other all the way.

They SPLASH into it, Synade HOWLING as the molten hot liquid covers him. Still grappling, the two figures sink beneath the lava's surface in moments.

Buffy watches, tears streaming down her face, the chamber now on the verge of shaking itself to pieces around her.

BUFFY
(quietly)
Jackson...

She stares down at the lava.

Suddenly, with a fearful SHOUT, Synade BURSTS OUT from the lava, trying to make one final bid for freedom - but Jackson surfaces too, both men visibly burned by the intense heat.

Jackson grabs Synade and pulls him back again, and this time the two figures sink back beneath the surface for the final time, Synade's outstretched hand being the last thing to disappear.

Buffy reels for a beat, then as a huge chunk of rock SMASHES through the walkway, narrowly missing her, she comes to her senses, scrambles to her feet and races back towards the tunnel.

77

EXT. BASE OF VOLCANO - DAY.

77

Things look grim for Team Slayer. The island has cut them off at last - the demons can no longer get to them, but there's nowhere for them to go.

Xander looks up as the first gout of red lava spits from the mouth of the volcano, and Willow presses herself to him.

WILLOW

Xander...

XANDER

It's all right.

The team try to take cover, before Sofia notices something and points.

SOFIA

Look!

They follow her gaze and see a huge DEMON bounding towards them on all fours - it's going to jump across onto their chunk of the island!

Were-Oz is ready for it, and with a ROAR of pure lycanthropian fury, he throws himself towards the incoming demon.

WILLOW

Oz!!

Oz and the demon SLAM into each other in midair, falling back to the ground and descending into a frenzy of fangs and claws, the demon raking its barbed tail across Oz's back.

Oz is too quick for the bulky demon, however, and with lightning fast speed he lashes out, sinking his fangs into the demon's throat.

The demon HOWLS an ungodly, piercing shriek as Oz clamps down, and in a moment the demon's thrashing body falls still, its mighty limbs falling back to the ground.

Oz looks up and HOWLS victoriously - then spots another pack of demons racing towards him, and without wasting a breath he turns and gallops back towards the team.

Oz reaches the edge of the closest chunk of island and LEAPS - sailing through the air, he lands in a heap at Willow's feet.

As she watches, Oz rapidly morphs back to his true form, his entire body covered with wounds, but thankfully nothing serious. Panting with exertion, he looks up as Xander wraps his jacket around his naked body.

(CONTINUED)

OZ

Thanks.

Willow CRIES with relief and grabs him, but Jody's eyes go wide as he sees something else.

JODY

Look out!

Three of the demons chasing Oz have reached the edge of the closest chunk of land to the team's sanctuary - and with a YELL, they leap into the air, straight for the group!

Jody is on his feet in an instant, swinging his blood-stained axe through the air. He catches the first demon and knocks him to the ground, and with an agonised HOWL the demon drops out of view.

Jody grins - but is caught off guard as the second demon SLAMS into the ground next to him.

ANDREW

Jody!!

Andrew and Sofia are racing over as Jody tries to get his axe up in time - but he's too slow.

With a feral ROAR, the demon plunges its sword into Jody's chest, and Jody's eyes go wide as the blade sinks into him.

ANDREW (cont'd)

No!!

Andrew BARGES into the demon - just as the third lands next to him. The new arrival swings a huge, clawed hand at Andrew, gashing across his chest and knocking him to the ground.

Sofia finally arrives on the scene, her sword flashing as she deftly removes the third demon's arms, then with a SHOUT she KICKS it back off the outcrop.

Jody sinks to his knees as Andrew struggles with the second demon, but as his strength fades it pins him to the ground, SLASHING at him with its claws again.

With the last of his strength, Andrew grabs his axe and JABS it upwards, straight into the attacking demon's neck.

Sofia and Dan race into frame, shoving the now very dead demon's body away, and Sofia cradles the bloody Andrew as Dan hurries over to Jody.

Andrew's breathing is ragged, his injuries severe. Sofia is in tears as she desperately starts ripping strips off her t-shirt to tie his wounds.

(CONTINUED)

ANDREW (cont'd)

Is... is Jody... is Jody okay?

Sofia looks over - and Dan is crouched over Jody's body. Dan presses two fingers to Jody's neck, then looks to Sofia and shakes his head.

Sofia looks back to Andrew, her heart breaking as she looks into his dying eyes.

SOFIA

Andrew, I'm... Andrew, he's dead.

ANDREW

I tried... I tried to save him...

SOFIA

You saved all of us, both of you.
Those demons would have killed us
if he hadn't spotted them first!

ANDREW

I'm sorry...

Andrew exhales one last time - and then falls still.

SOFIA

(frantic)

No! Andrew, no, come on! Don't give
up! Stay with me!

Sofia stares in shock down at his body for a beat, and then the tears return and she clutches Andrew's limp body to her, sobbing in disbelief. Riley steps into frame and places a hand on her shoulder.

RILEY

Come on, Sofia. We have to get
back. More of those things could
try that trick, we have to get out
of their range.

Sofia SNIFFS and tries to stop her tears, standing and lifting Andrew's body up, carrying it back towards Xander, Oz and Willow as Riley carefully picks up Jody.

The team huddle together as the tumultuous RUMBLING grows steadily louder all around them. Dan looks round at everyone's faces.

DAN

So this is how we go out, huh?

XANDER

I guess so.

(CONTINUED)

DAN

Well, for what it's worth - you
guys are all damn heroes.

Willow looks up at Xander and smiles, but her gaze is suddenly caught by something in the sky. She sits bolt upright and points.

WILLOW

Look!!

There's a BLACKHAWK HELICOPTER heading straight for them, a ladder trailing down from its side.

Xander blinks in disbelief and watches the chopper as it makes its way towards them, noticing the military markings on its side.

As the shadow of the helicopter falls over them, a voice shouts down to them through a loudspeaker.

VOICE

(filtered; through
loudspeaker)

Riley Finn? You are under arrest!
You and your accomplices are to
board this chopper immediately!

Shocked, Xander snaps round to face Riley.

XANDER

What the-

Riley is watching the approaching helicopter, a strange look of peace on his features.

RILEY

I made a call, told the Initiative
where I'd be.

(to Xander)

This is our escape plan. Get
everyone to safety, Xander, I'll
hold those demons off.

XANDER

You've got to be kidding, there's
still hundreds of them out there!

Riley grips his sword and sets his jaw, and Xander registers the intense look in his eyes.

RILEY

I won't ask you again. I'll wait
here for Buffy. You go.

(CONTINUED)

Xander nods, turns to the others and starts shoving them towards the waiting ladder. The chopper is being buffeted by heavy winds, but stays pretty much right over the group.

XANDER

Go! All of you!

SOFIA

Buffy's not back yet!

XANDER

Riley's gonna wait for Buffy, you get on that thing!

SOFIA

No, I'm not leaving without them!

XANDER

That's an order! Get on there!

Xander PUSHES Sofia towards the ladder, which Andrew and Jody are already climbing.

The assembled hordes of demons starts throwing spears and firing arrows at the chopper, but a soldier appears at its bay doors and begins FIRING back at them with a large calibre machine gun.

Dan joins Jackson as Sofia helps Willow onto the ladder.

DAN

Who the hell are those guys?

XANDER

Military markings, fetish for automatic weapons - that would be the Initiative. Captain Commando there made a call for backup!

Dan throws one last look at the volcano, then dashes for the ladder, motioning for Oz to get on first.

DAN

Come on, Oz, time to go!

Oz looks down at himself, still naked apart from Xander's jacket, which thankfully just covers his dignity.

OZ

I'd rather go last, if that's okay.
Wouldn't want anybody to see something they'd regret.

Dan blinks - then gets the message, and grabs hold of the ladder and starts climbing, followed by Oz.

(CONTINUED)

77

CONTINUED:

77

Xander puts one foot on the bottom rung and shouts back across to Riley, as the first wave of demons starts to surge towards the edge of the closest chunk of island.

XANDER

Riley, come on!

RILEY

I'm not leaving without Buffy!

XANDER

She wouldn't want you to get killed waiting for her!

Riley doesn't budge, and after a beat Xander starts climbing the ladder. Riley stares into the approaching demons, now just seconds away from him.

RILEY

(to himself)

Come on, Buffy, hurry it up in there...

We cut from Riley to:

78

INT. VOLCANO - TUNNEL - DAY.

78

Buffy is sprinting along the inside of the tunnels as fast as she can, but she's got a way to go before she reaches the outside world yet. We cut from her back to:

79

EXT. BASE OF VOLCANO - DAY.

79

As another QUAKE rocks the island, the first pack of demons leap towards the chopper, reaching for the still-dangling ladder - but Riley charges in, his sword flashing left and right as he smashes the demons back.

80

INT. VOLCANO - TUNNEL - DAY.

80

Buffy is still running, but as she sprints and the tunnel walls start to break up around her, raining chunks of rock down onto her, we suddenly WHITE OUT before cutting back to:

81

EXT. HELICOPTER - LADDER - DAY.

81

The chopper pilot yells back over his shoulder to Xander as crossbow bolts and spears start to sail through the air towards the chopper.

PILOT

Which one of you is Riley Finn?

(CONTINUED)

XANDER

He's still down there!

PILOT

What?

Xander DUCKS as a huge spear sails cleanly through the Blackhawk's passenger bay, before yelling back at the pilot.

XANDER

There's someone else down there
still, we can't leave without them!

PILOT

We can't wait any longer!

The soldier FIRING at the demons takes a crossbow bolt to the leg, and with a SHOUT of pain he falls backwards.

Quick as a flash, Dan scoops up his rifle and starts firing wildly back down towards the demons.

PILOT (cont'd)

I can't wait! It's a god damn war
zone down there!

XANDER

You have to give them more time!

The Pilot curses as another projectile smacks into the chopper, taking a chunk out of the windshields.

PILOT

We can't! We have to go, now!

As the chopper starts to pull quickly up and away from the island, the ladder starts to retract, and Willow and Sofia shout desperately down to Riley.

Riley, already badly wounded as he holds off the demons, looks up as he hears Willow shout down to him, then glances over and sees the ladder retracting.

There's still time to make it.

Riley glances back towards the erupting volcano, but there's no sign of Buffy.

With a sad smile, Riley looks back up at the chopper - and shakes his head.

82 CONTINUED:

82

As more demons charge towards him, using the bodies of their fallen comrades as a makeshift bridge, Riley gets stuck back in with a YELL.

83 INT. HELICOPTER - DAY.

83

Tears stream down Willow's cheeks as she shouts down to Riley, the chopper rapidly leaving the island behind.

WILLOW

Riley! No!

Down below, we can see Riley fighting the creatures off still, time slowing down as a fresh wave of them surge towards him.

He's bought the chopper enough time to get to safety - but not enough time to save himself. Riley disappears under a sea of demon bodies, fighting to the last.

Xander pulls Willow away from the edge of the passenger bay, wrapping his arms round her as she sobs.

WILLOW (cont'd)

Buffy!!

Sofia is crying too, and Dan holds her as they all look out towards the self-destructing island.

As we watch, lava starts to vomit from the mouth of the volcano, and fat lakes of the red hot rock roll lazily down its sides. Around it, the island is dropping away into the seas, and the volcano is soon sinking with it.

The ships that were surrounding the island are quickly pulling back, and as we watch the volcano sink back down into the depths, we look back in on the survivors.

Willow is lost in her tears, and Xander, eyes closed, holds her tightly. Sofia is still weeping, and Dan presses her against him as Oz looks back down towards what's left of the island.

We stay with the group for another few beats, before we WHITE OUT once more, and this time we find ourselves in:

84 INT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE (SUNNYDALE) - DAY.

84

We fade back and find ourselves looking at Buffy, who blinks in surprise.

(CONTINUED)

She's standing in the hallway of her old house - the one that was destroyed when Sunnydale was sent crashing into the Earth. The colours around her seem hazy and oversaturated, and Buffy looks all around her with wide, curious eyes.

She hears a noise from the kitchen and her head snaps towards it. After a beat, she starts to walk hesitantly over into the kitchen itself, and we follow her into:

85 INT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE (SUNNYDALE) - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS. 85

Buffy walks slowly into the kitchen, freezing as she sees someone standing by the sink washing dishes.

It's JOYCE SUMMERS.

She glances over her shoulder, sees Buffy and smiles, shaking her hands dry and grabbing a dish towel.

 BUFFY
 (quietly)
 Mom?

 JOYCE
 Hello, honey.

Buffy stares at Joyce for a long beat - then races towards her and into her mother's arms with:

 BUFFY
 Mom!

Buffy lets out a sob as Joyce holds her tightly, one hand stroking the side of Buffy's hair.

Buffy lets go and steps back, looking up into her mother's eyes, trembling.

 BUFFY (cont'd)
 Mom? Is it... is it really you?

 JOYCE
 (bemused)
 Well, who else would I be?

Buffy stares back at her for a beat, then lets out a laugh halfway between joy and sadness, not quite believing what she's seeing.

 BUFFY
 But what... how did... where is-

 GILES (O.S.)
 I'm sure this must all be very
 disconcerting for you...

(CONTINUED)

Buffy spins round and sees Giles, leaning casually against the door frame, his hands in his pockets.

GILES (cont'd)
But you can rest assured. You're perfectly safe here.

Buffy looks from Giles to Joyce, her head spinning.

BUFFY
What's going on? Where am I?

Joyce reaches out to hold Buffy again, rubbing her arms as though comforting a frightened child.

JOYCE
Oh, don't you worry about that.
What matters is that you're here with us.

BUFFY
Am I... am I dead?

Joyce and Giles exchange a look, then Giles walks over, standing before Buffy and taking her hands in his.

GILES
You're here for your final reward, Buffy.

BUFFY
My what?

GILES
Do you remember that prophecy? The one Angel brought you, all about the death of the Slayer?

BUFFY
(sinks in)
So I am dead...
(to Joyce)
Is this heaven?
(to Giles)
Can I stay here this time? I want to stay here with you!
(to Joyce)
With both of you!

GILES
You're here to collect that reward, Buffy. You saved the world, once again. If Synade hadn't been stopped, the entire planet would be being overrun by millions of demons and creatures as we speak.

(CONTINUED)

JOYCE

(proud)

That's my girl.

BUFFY

So it worked? I mean, the Hub, the Hellmouths - they're not all open?

GILES

Well, I'm afraid some are, but let's not forget you're far from the only Slayer in the world. There are plenty of other girls who can take care of things from now on. You stopped the worst of it, and that's all anyone could ask of you.

BUFFY

So that's it... that's really it. I'm done.

(deep breath)

I knew... Before we even set off, back when we were still just making the plans, even without that prophecy, I just... I just knew. I didn't want to say anything to the others - it doesn't really do much good to have the people you're about to trust with your life know that you think...

(beat)

Well, I guess that doesn't matter now.

Buffy steps away from Joyce and Giles, pacing across the kitchen, wiping the tears from her eyes before she turns back to them both.

BUFFY (cont'd)

I can't believe I'm not going to get a chance to say goodbye. After all we've been through together, I owed them that.

(beat; chuckles)

But I guess most people don't have the luxury of knowing they're about to go into their last fight, do they?

A smile slowly spreads across Buffy's face, and she relaxes at last, leaning against Joyce before Giles takes her hands again, his expression serious.

BUFFY (cont'd)

(smile fades)

What is it?

(CONTINUED)

GILES

There's something I need to explain
to you.

The relief quickly disappears from Buffy's expression, and as it is replaced by alarm, we cut back to:

INT. HELICOPTER - DAY.

Everyone is silent in the back of the helicopter. Willow and Sofia have stopped crying, and everyone is too exhausted to move. Oz holds Willow's hand, who holds Xander's hand, who holds Sofia's hand.

Dan sits with his feet hanging over the edge of the helicopter's belly, as one of the soldiers steps back into the passenger compartment.

SOLDIER

We're on our way to the nearest air
base, we should be there in about a
half hour. Is there anybody you
want us to contact before we get
there?

Xander looks around at the rest of the team, then back to the soldier and shakes his head.

XANDER

No. Everybody's right here.

The soldier nods and steps back into the cockpit, leaving the survivors to their thoughts. We stay with them for another beat before we slowly dissolve to:

EXT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE - SUNSET.

A large Humvee jeep pulls to a stop outside the Summers House, and as a soldier opens one door and steps out, Xander and the others troop out after him.

The soldier waits to talk to Xander as the others trudge towards the house - Oz and Willow leaning against each other for support, and Dan with a comforting arm round Sofia.

SOLDIER

(hands over contact card)
If there's anything else you folks
need, any kind of help, then just
call this number.

XANDER

Thanks, but I think we'll manage
from here.

(CONTINUED)

87 CONTINUED:

87

The soldier nods, then gets back into the Jeep, which revs its engine and pulls away.

Xander turns and looks towards the house, sighs, and then heads towards the open front door, into:

88 INT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM - SUNSET.

88

Xander closes the door and turns to the survivors in front of him, the downcast look on his face matched by the others.

XANDER

So...

WILLOW

I need some air.

OZ

Yeah, good call.

DAN

I say we sit out back and watch the sun go down. Put a full stop on the whole day.

Xander nods, and leads the way as the group head towards the kitchen and towards the back door.

89 EXT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE - BACK GARDEN - SUNSET.

89

The back door opens and Xander steps out first, his back turned as he talks to the others.

XANDER

Will, I'd better call your mom and dad, make sure Hope's okay, then I can head over and-

Willow sees something behind him, off screen, and her eyes bulge. She grabs Xander's arm.

XANDER (cont'd)

(puzzled)

What?

Her eyes stay locked on whatever she's seen, and as Oz, Sofia and Dan appear in the doorway, Xander turns round - and his jaw drops open.

Sitting serenely at the top of the small slope that dips down into the garden, with the setting sun highlighting the view of downtown Cleveland beyond, is Buffy.

(CONTINUED)

BUFFY
(turns to them; grins)
Hey, guys.

WILLOW
Bu... Buffy?

Everyone stares, dumbstruck at Buffy - and after a beat, she rolls her eyes.

BUFFY
Oh, come on! We just saved the world by fighting a bad guy inside a volcano, and this surprises you?

WILLOW
Is it... is it really you?

BUFFY
Yes, Will, it's really me.

Another beat - then Willow lunges forward and wraps her arms round Buffy, quickly followed by Xander and Sofia.

XANDER
I'm gonna save the 'how in the?' speech for after the hugging, okay?

BUFFY
(laughs)
Okay.

The others let go of her as Dan and Oz step over.

OZ
Hey.

BUFFY
Hey, Oz. And Dan. Glad you both made it.

DAN
This is just another one of those things that happens a lot with you guys, isn't it?

BUFFY
(shrugs)
Pretty much.

DAN
Did you see Jackson?

BUFFY
(nods)
I did. But he's not coming back.

(CONTINUED)

Dan lowers his head and sits back down, as Buffy turns back to the now excited Willow.

WILLOW

So, what happened? Where did you go? How did you get back here?

XANDER

I'm sensing a long story.

BUFFY

The Powers That Be wanted to say 'thanks.'

XANDER

(beat)

Apparently, not that long.

SOFIA

The Powers That Be what?

BUFFY

(shrugs)

Beats me. They just wanted to personally shake me by the hand and say 'Hey, Buffy, thanks for all the slaying. You're fired.'

WILLOW

(beat)

Wait, what?

Buffy smiles and takes Willow's hands.

BUFFY

Can't you feel it?

Willow frowns, but after a beat her expression changes to one of surprise, and Buffy nods.

XANDER

Woah, back up. I think I speak for everyone when I say 'what in the?'

BUFFY

We can worry about the details later. All I know is that prophecy Angel found was right - the Slayer did die. But the Buffy is still alive and kicking.

Willow smiles and hugs Buffy again, and the rest of the gang take up positions either side of her, and an air of relieved silence falls over the garden before Buffy speaks again.

(CONTINUED)

BUFFY (cont'd)
So, what's everybody doing
tomorrow?

DAN
Sleeping.

OZ
Yeah, sleep definitely top of the
'To Do' list.

BUFFY
I'm sorry you didn't get to see
Jackson again, Dan. He came through
and saved the day. You'd have been
really proud of him.

DAN
(nods)
I always knew he'd end up doing
something like that. That guy was a
better man than I could ever be.

SOFIA
I think I'm going to stick around
here for a bit and then get ready
to go off to the Academy. Giles
left me all the forms I need to
fill in.

WILLOW
Ooh, can I help? I'm good with
forms and stuff.

Sofia nods and the two girls enjoy a chuckle, but stop as
Buffy stands before Sofia, the Scythe in her hands.

BUFFY
I have something for you.

Sofia glances at the Scythe, then at Buffy - and as the penny
drops, she shakes her head and steps back.

SOFIA
Oh, no, Buffy, I couldn't, it's-

Buffy grabs Sofia's hands and presses the Scythe into them.

BUFFY
This belongs to you now. I think
it's only fair that I get to choose
who I pass it down to, and you're
the only candidate I want to think
about.

Sofia smiles, and hugs Buffy warmly.

BUFFY (cont'd)
Did anybody get a chance to call
Angel?

WILLOW
Angel?
(penny drops)
Angel! Oh, no, no we didn't! We
didn't get chance, those Initiative
guys just flew us all right back
over here, everyone was too worn
out to do or say much of anything.

BUFFY
Good. I didn't want this to be like
last time.

WILLOW
What are you gonna do? I mean,
shouldn't you tell him? Maybe go
see him?

XANDER
Hey, slow down there, Will! We just
finished one apocalypse, I don't
want to risk another by putting
those two in the same room again!

Buffy hits Xander on the arm, and he grins.

XANDER (cont'd)
And I'm glad to report your punches
don't hurt like they used to.

Buffy scowls at him, and Xander raises a hand.

XANDER (cont'd)
Withering glares still present and
correct, however.

BUFFY
I'll tell Angel... soon. I think I
need to remember how to be Buffy
Summers, completely normal American
girl again for a while yet, then I
can go see Angel.

WILLOW
Yeah, but when?

BUFFY
(grins)
When I'm done.

Buffy reaches down and picks up a long, wrapped tube of
something that was lying by her feet, offering it to Willow.

(CONTINUED)

BUFFY (cont'd)
Cookie dough?

Willow GRINS, and reaches out for a piece, but as we hear the back door open, everyone turns round to see who it is.

It's DAWN.

She folds her arms and grins across at Buffy.

DAWN
So, you're back, huh?

BUFFY
(grins)
Yeah. I'm back.

The others look suitably shocked, but Dawn just smiles back at Buffy, before we:

BLACK OUT:

THE END