

SLAYER ACADEMY

"Head Count"

by
Lee A. Chrimes

Based on 'Buffy the Vampire Slayer' created by Joss Whedon
(c) Twentieth Century Fox Television, Kuzui Enterprises
(c) Mutant Enemy, Inc.

WEBISODE

FADE IN:

1

INT. CAMPUS - STAFF ROOM - DAY

1

A faculty staff meeting is ready to begin - the usual faces like GREG, MANU and HAROLD are present, plus a few other Watchers on staff.

The door opens to admit FITZGERALD, arms full of folders as she struggles with the door handle.

Greg rises to meet her, taking the folders away while Fitzgerald nods her thanks and heads to the front of the room.

FITZGERALD

Morning, everyone.

A murmured response from the assembled faculty.

FITZGERALD (cont'd)

Sorry I'm a little late - Frankie's still knee deep in Council stuff in the library, so neither she nor Dade will be joining us this morning.

GREG

Kira's called in to say she won't be free either - she's off out on a 'treasure hunt.'

She raises an eyebrow - to which Greg can only shrug.

FITZGERALD

Fair enough. Right.

She exhales, keeping her head down. Silence falls as the staff watch her.

FITZGERALD (cont'd)

(subdued)

Let's get to business.

She reaches into her leather satchel and takes out a LAPTOP, which she plugs via USB into a waiting PROJECTOR on the table.

A SCREEN is already hanging behind her, and once the projector powers up, she CLICKS her mouse to bring up the first slide of a presentation:

'The Virus - Aftermath and Projections.'

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FITZGERALD (cont'd)

Before we begin, I'm sure you're all waiting to hear about how Douglas is recovering from his injuries.

(beat)

While he's expected to leave hospital within the next week or so, it's currently looking increasingly unlikely that he'll be fit to return to active duty for some time. His mobility has been affected by the spinal damage he suffered, and as there may be more permanent nerve damage yet to reveal itself, he's effectively off the roster until further notice.

Several heads bow - not the news they wanted to hear.

FITZGERALD (cont'd)

Sorry to have to lead with that news, but that's the closest to a silver lining I could manage today.

(beat)

Furthermore, I've made the arrangements for a memorial to Alison to be set up in our gardens. She spent most of her off duty hours keeping the place in order - I think we can all agree it's what she would have wanted.

She SIGHS, already deflated enough to want to turn the lights out and curl up into a ball under the table.

FITZGERALD

Manu?

Manu rises, replacing her before the projector screen.

MANU

Thank you, Grace.

He CLICKS the mouse - a screen comes up displaying a map of the world, with charts, graphs and numbers pointing at various countries and continents.

MANU (cont'd)

Here we can see an overlay of the known Slayer population as of two years ago.

He clicks again - the colour-coded graphs and charts take a sudden dip across the board.

(CONTINUED)

MANU (cont'd)

And this is as of two months ago.

(beat)

As we know, the Chosen Virus decimated the global Slayer population, killing hundreds of girls outright, hastening the depowerment of scores more and leaving many of the survivors with permanent physical side effects in the form of reduced aspects of their Slayer abilities.

GREG

(to Fitzgerald)

That 'silver lining' is starting to lose its sheen already...

MANU

As we're all aware, the ever-advancing scale of depowerment remains a critical issue, and as the weeks and months roll on we still can't say with any certainty how long it'll be before our currently active crop of Slayers revert to Potentials or lose their powers completely.

HAROLD

Ballpark figure?

MANU

If I were to hazard a guess... twelve months. And that's being optimistic.

There's a buzz of concerned chatter amongst the staff.

FITZGERALD

Alright, settle down, everyone. We're not going to improve the situation by gossiping.

MANU

I'll know more within the next few months, but for now it's safe to assume we're going to find our ranks thinning considerably over the coming term.

He takes a seat, Grace half-rising.

FITZGERALD

Thank you, Manu.

(CONTINUED)

MANU

That's not news I'd like to be thanked for.

(beat; off look)

Sorry.

FITZGERALD

Harold? Are you ready next?

He nods, getting up and approaching the laptop. A few mouse CLICKS advances Manu's charts to screens showing registers of names, along with date stamps and numbers.

HAROLD

Whenever we've attempted to take a census of the exact number of Slayers activated in the wake of the Sunnydale Incident in May 2003, we've always had to include an element of guesswork.

He CLICKS again - the figures fade to show a global map, with lines of information scrolling down next to each continent.

HAROLD (cont'd)

By taking into account the distribution and frequency of Slayer activations that we know of, cross-referencing that with official census figures and applying a little creative work with modal numbers and averages, we eventually came to the figure of eighteen hundred seventy-eight as of mid-2007.

Another CLICK and the statistics begin to decrease, the animation continuing as he speaks:

HAROLD (cont'd)

Based on the casualty rate here at the Academy, as per Manu's research and findings, and the attrition we can lay at the feet of Victory's 'crusade' to sire as many of our girls as possible...

He pauses. The room holds its collective breath.

HAROLD (cont'd)

... then it's with a heavy heart that our best estimate puts the number of Slayers worldwide at less than two hundred.

(beat)

In total.

(CONTINUED)

GREG

Oh, my God...

FITZGERALD

(bows head)

Harold...

HAROLD

That's a conservative but optimistic estimate.

(beat)

Less than half of that number is currently affiliated with the Academy.

GREG

So if we factor in the rate of depowerment...

MANU

That's how I reached my conclusion of twelve months before we're left with a mere handful of Slayers.

FITZGERALD

And something in my bones tells me we're not exactly going to have a quiet twelve months, either.

GREG

What, you mean apart from the international media feeding frenzy currently attempting to throttle the life out of us?

HAROLD

Good to know your gallows humour hasn't taken a knock in recent months, Gregory.

Greg shoots Harold a look at the scolding comment.

FITZGERALD

(snaps)

Boys!

(serious)

We can't let this information leave this room.

GREG

We won't have to. The girls are smart. They'll figure it out.

MANU

We're hardly concealing something they won't half know already.

HAROLD

But the press can't know. Not if we're sticking to our cover story of being a kind of international peace-keeping force.

MANU

Albeit one with no ties to any government or military ruling body.

FITZGERALD

The Initiative would disagree with that.

GREG

They disagree with most things we do!

Fitzgerald stands, Harold taking his cue to close the presentation and sit back down. She resumes her position at the head of the room.

FITZGERALD

Starting tomorrow, we're going to locate and recover all the surviving Slayers - good or bad. We simply can't afford to leave any stone unturned now. If the press catch wind of any rogue Slayers operating outside our jurisdiction, it'll undermine our entire operation.

GREG

What should we tell the girls? If they ask us about what we've heard today?

HAROLD

As little as possible. Tell them we just don't know.

GREG

That won't wash with a lot of them.

FITZGERALD

We don't exactly have a choice, Greg. It's either that or cause widespread panic amongst what little resources we have left, and with the eyes of the world on us, waiting for us to slip up, that's a risk I'm not allowing us to take.

The faculty exchange concerned looks as we DISSOLVE TO:

2

EXT. CAMPUS - STAFF ROOM CORRIDOR - LATER

2

Grace emerges, several staff members still talking in the room behind her.

She takes a step and almost bumps into a SLAYER standing dutifully outside the door.

FITZGERALD

Oh!

(takes a moment)

Amelie. I didn't see you there.

AMELIE - a fresh-faced, slim blonde Finnish girl - nods respectfully.

AMELIE

That's alright, Miss Fitzgerald.

FITZGERALD

(smiles)

You've been here long enough to call me 'Grace' by now, Amelie. Everyone else does.

AMELIE

I'm not 'everyone else,' Miss Fitzgerald. I'm your personal bodyguard. That means I'm supposed to show a level of formality and respect at all times.

FITZGERALD

No, I suppose you're not.

(beat; narrows eyes)

What were you doing out here?

AMELIE

Waiting for you to finish your meeting. I mean, it's kind of my job to be close by for whenever you need me. Right?

FITZGERALD

Yes, yes...

(sighs)

Come on, then. We're done here for the afternoon.

She heads for her office, Amelie following:

3

INT. CAMPUS - FITZGERALD'S OFFICE - NEXT

3

Fitzgerald enters and takes a seat behind her desk. Amelie steps in, shuts the door then stands smartly beside it.

(CONTINUED)

FITZGERALD

You can sit down, Amelie.

AMELIE

Thank you, but I'll stand.

Fitzgerald eyes her for a beat, then reaches over to switch her PC on and start absently sorting through various piles of paperwork on her desk.

She looks up, realising Amelie is still standing half to attention by the door.

FITZGERALD

You'll have to forgive me still not quite knowing what to do with you - I haven't had a bodyguard since Tsula, and to be perfectly honest I've gotten rather used to managing without the last few years.

AMELIE

Times have changed, Miss Fitzgerald. We all need an extra level of protection, especially out there in the real world.

FITZGERALD

(dry)

Funny how I keep forgetting that.

She leans back, opening her e-mail program.

FITZGERALD (cont'd)

I just wish I had somebody neutral I could talk to about... well, just about what's on my mind generally.

AMELIE

I can listen, Miss Fitzgerald.

FITZGERALD

(smiles)

There are some things I probably shouldn't be discussing with a member of the student body, is my only concern.

AMELIE

I don't talk all that much. With the other girls, I mean. And anyway, whatever's said between us behind closed doors is strictly confidential.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

AMELIE (cont'd)

I mean, you could tell me you had a terminal illness, or that the world was ending next week, and I'd still keep it all to myself while I was with the others.

(beat)

Although if the world was ending next week, I'd probably ask for permission to call my parents.

She grins - but then realises Grace is staring at something on her screen.

AMELIE (cont'd)

Miss Fitzgerald?

Grace blinks - she was reading an e-mail, seemingly mesmerised by it. She quickly CLOSES it as Amelie takes a step forward.

AMELIE (cont'd)

Is everything alright?

FITZGERALD

Yes, yes, of course. Long day, that's all.

AMELIE

Shall I get you a coffee? Something to eat?

FITZGERALD

You're not my butler, Amelie.

AMELIE

No, but I'm hungry too so I was going to ask if I could get a sandwich anyway.

FITZGERALD

(grins)

Very well. Dismissed.

Amelie nods, slipping out of the office. Grace waits a few beats - then opens the e-mail again.

ON SCREEN, there's just one word.

'Soon.'

Fitzgerald stares at this, reading something much more serious into it before we:

BLACK OUT:

END OF WEBISODE