BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER

"Prelude To A Kiss"

by

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In a small clearing within what appears to be a vast wooded area stands a man -- a watcher named MAX along with his slayer -- SIERRA. Max is a tall, slender man in his late thirties and dresses in typical watcher fashion.

He is preparing a circle on the shadowed ground as Sierra is lighting a series of candles at his side. She looks somewhere around sixteen -- definitely not of age yet. She places the candles, one by one, within the circle's circumference. The candles are placed strategically in the circle with precise distance from one another.

As she finishes and the last candle is in its place, Max kneels down within the circle and places a book on the ground by his side. Though he appears utterly calm, his slayer doesn't appear to be nearly as confident and he takes note; speaking with a British accent.

MAX
Things are going to be okay,
Sierra.

SIERRA
I know.

MAX
You're nervous?

SIERRA
(quickly)
No...

Her watcher is obviously not buying it.

SIERRA (cont’d)
Okay. A little bit.

MAX
That's perfectly understandable, but you have nothing to fear. This is just one of the many trials that you'll have to face as a slayer and it will be by no means the worst.

SIERRA
(hesitantly)
Is this thing worse than a vampire?
MAX
Considerably. But you are an extremely capable slayer and I'm fully optimistic that you will reign victorious.

SIERRA
(nervous)
Okay...

MAX
Now, if you'll hand me the talisman?

Sierra hands him a small talisman from within her pocket. He holds it tightly within his hand as begins the ritual.

MAX (cont’d)
Lokane, I beseech thee. Please hear my plea. I humbly beg you to appear before me.

He pulls a small container from within a nearby bag and pours its contents - blood - upon the ground. Sierra watches with fear as Max continues the ritual.

MAX (O.S.) (cont’d)
I offer you blood. I offer that your will may be done. Lokane... now you will come.

Max stops and Sierra looks nervously at her surroundings, clenching the swords in her hands more tightly -- nothing. She spins several times around, but still nothing.

SIERRA
(fearfully)
Max?

(BEAT)
Is it here?

LOKANE (O.S.)
Fools!

Sierra quickly whips around to see her watcher lying unconscious on the ground.

Above him hovers LOKANE -- a hideously vile demon with a severely disfigured face. What could almost be mistaken as scars on its face seem to possess more of an ornate value. He stands well over six feet tall and is wearing a sort of black battle gear over his muscled body.

He stands, glaring at Sierra.

(CONTINUED)
LOKANE
You've summoned me for a training exhibition?

SIERRA
I... we...

LOKANE
(walking towards her)
Do you even know what I am, little girl?

SIERRA
You're Lo... I mean I know that...

Lokane smiles boldly, revealing a set of exquisitely horrific fangs.

LOKANE
I'm going to have fun with you...

Max is slowly beginning to come around as we hear the beginning of Sierra's fight. Several scrapes of the sword and a hiss later -- a SCREAM rings out.

Max's eyes quickly burst open and he watches in horror.

From Max's ground level and sideways view, all we see is Lokane's massive feet.

Several seconds later, however, Sierra's body lands on the ground with a THUD. She lays motionless -- dead.

Lokane stands, licking his fingers and chuckling merrily to himself.

LOKANE (cont’d)
I love the taste of innocence.
(turning to Max)
Don't you?

As he turns back, however, the circle is empty. Max is gone. Lokane scowls and mutters some curse under his breath -- this is far from over.

BLACK OUT:

END OF TEASER
ACT ONE

INT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE - LOUNGE - MORNING

XANDER, ANYA, and ANDREW lounge around the lounge in the early morning hours. Xander and Anya sit together on the couch with Andrew laid out across the floor, watching television. Xander appears to have dozed off.

ANYA

Honey? (beat) Xander?

No response. Anya sighs and takes a deep breath.

ANYA (cont’d) (yelling) Xander!!

Xander jumps from his place on the couch.

XANDER

Wh-what? Is it the baby? Are you okay? Are you in labor?!

ANYA (holds up an empty jar)

No, but now that you're up, I would like an extra pillow, and that glamour magazine I caught Andrew reading earlier, so I can try and curse all the people in it who look prettier than I do.

XANDER

Magazine?

Anya gives him the look of a vengeance demon and he realizes that now is not the time to ask questions.

XANDER (cont’d) (forcing a smile)

Yes, dear...

As Anya’s face clicks unnervingly quickly back into sweetness and love, Xander begins to walk toward the kitchen, before having a pearl of wisdom for Andrew.

XANDER (cont’d) (to Andrew)

You should thank God daily for the gift of homosexuality.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

ANYA (O.S.)
Xander? Still a definite pillow shortage in here!

Xander sighs again and exits the room.

INT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE - BUFFY'S ROOM

BUFFY and WILLOW sit quietly on Buffy's bed, meditating. They sit, legs crossed and hands held, as Willow works to help heal the still-injured Buffy.

BUFFY
(mock war movie speak)
Give it to me straight, Doc... How bad is it?

WILLOW
(playing along)
I'm sorry, son - the leg's gonna have to go.

The girls share a laugh for a moment - but the moment soon fades. Willow picks up on Buffy's defeated expression and lets go of her hands, looking sympathetically back at her.

WILLOW (cont’d)
Are you okay?

BUFFY
Huh? Oh, yeah, 'course I am. I just got my little behind kicked around by a new and possibly unstoppable demon that we have to stop, and to cap it all I keep running into my ex.

(sighs)
Yup, things are sure looking up here on Walton's Mountain.

WILLOW
Hey, this is just a temporary setback, right? I mean, we've bounced back after you getting much bigger beatings than this before, no reason we can't do it this time with a hundred per cent more success.

Willow closes her eyes with a smile and reaches out for Buffy's hands again to carry on the meditation.

Buffy takes her hands - but doesn't share Willow's look of quiet confidence one bit.
INT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE - KITCHEN

GILES and MARIE are sitting at the kitchen table, doing research, as XANDER walks in from the lounge.

XANDER
(sarcastic)
Have you ever felt the uncontrollable urge to kill your fiancée and eat your young?

Giles and Marie share a look, before Marie chuckles and pats Xander on the head.

MARIE
It does get easier, Xander, trust me.

XANDER
You got kids of your own?

MARIE
Me? Oh, goodness, no, can’t stand the little monsters, but I raised plenty of them. My sister’s a one woman baby factory, I’ve got five nieces and nephews back in England, last time I checked.

GILES
I’m sure Xander’s choice of sarcastic comment was just for effect. This time, anyway.

XANDER
(sarcastically)
I'll try to control myself in future.

Xander begins rummaging through the cabinets.

GILES
(cleaning his glasses)
How are Buffy and Willow getting on upstairs?

XANDER
I think she's getting better. Willow's using a healing spell to try and coax out some of the left over badness from her little Caretaker incident.

(beat)
Hey, do you guys know if there are any more pickles, or any more yams for that matter?
CONTINUED:

GILES
I know for a fact that there are no yams, and as far as pickles, your guess is as good as mine.

MARIE
There are no pickles.

Xander turns around with a look of fear placed firmly upon his face.

XANDER
(direly)
You guys have got to be kidding...

GILES
Xander, there is an entire refrigerator full of food! I’m sure you can find something else!

XANDER
No. It wasn't for me. It was for Anya. See, I’m trying this new thing where I anticipate her food cravings, and tonight’s experiments rests solely on me having pickles and yams in the next ten minutes...

GILES
Oh, dear...

XANDER
(solemnly)
Yeah. That's right. I can't go back in there without one or the other readily available. She'll have the uncontrollable urge to curse her fiancée. - and for once, that is not sarcasm.

Xander peers back around the corner and into the lounge.

INT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE - LOUNGE

Anya sits with Andrew at her side. They appear to be going over plans for the wedding. She laughs heartily at something that Andrew says.

INT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE - KITCHEN

Xander pulls back from the corner and presses his back up against the wall -- petrified.

XANDER
And she's looking at wedding plans!
You guys haven't seen me, okay?
CONTINUED:

Xander rushes towards the back door and makes his escape.

MARIE
(smiling to Giles)
To be young again, eh, Rupert? Makes me wonder why we made such a fuss of it all when we were their age.

GILES
(grins)
It wasn’t that long ago, was it?

They share a reciprocal smile.

GILES (cont’d)
Yes, well... back to research?

MARIE
Of course.

Marie gets back into her books, but Giles takes another long look at her - his attraction to her as clearly on show as a big old flag waving over his head.

INT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE - BUFFY'S ROOM

Buffy and Willow still sit motionless on the bed. Finally Willow opens her eyes while Buffy's remain closed. She appears to be almost in a state of euphoria.

WILLOW
Feel better?

BUFFY
(sly grin)
Does a girl enjoy sex after slaying?

Buffy quickly opens her eyes to see Willow staring back with her eyebrows intriguingly raised. She squirms.

BUFFY (cont’d)
Did I just say that out loud?

WILLOW
'Fraid so.

BUFFY
Well, not that it's out, the answer to that question is yes.

WILLOW
(smiling promiscuously)
Good to know.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

BUFFY
You should open up shop, Will.
People would pay good money for...

She begins to stand, but winces and quickly sits back down.

BUFFY (cont’d)
... pain!

WILLOW
(helping her back down)
You're not totally healed yet.

BUFFY
I noticed.

WILLOW
It's not a miracle. It's magic.
It'll help, but it won't cure it altogether without pulling power from some high up forces and I don't really feel like having a snake slither from my mouth this morning, so... this is the best you'll get for now. But, still, better than a kick to the ass!

BUFFY
Agreed. It beats being in a lie induced coma.
(beat)
I'm still hurting from the Caretaker, obviously, but... I'm gonna be fine.

Willow senses the lack of sincerity in Buffy's voice towards the end.

WILLOW
But...?

BUFFY
(forcing a smile)
But I'm kind of freaked.
(beat)
You know that after I woke up, I was going to leave.

WILLOW
(understanding)
Yeah?

BUFFY
I just wanted to leave this life behind. I'm just sick and tired of feeling sick and tired. You know?
Willow nods.

BUFFY (cont’d)
I thought that it would be great to maybe be able to lead a quasi-normal life for once.
(beat)
And I almost did. The only thing that kept me from doing so, was you guys...and that almost wasn't even enough. I know that sounds terrible...
(motioning to a bruise on her face)
... but it was because of things just like this. This Caretaker came along just like the rest of the Big Bads always have. And after I kill him there will be another, and another. I just...
(tearing up)
I don't know that I can handle this again!

Breaking Benjamin's 'Rain' begins playing in the background as Buffy breaks into tears. Willow takes Buffy into her arms and begins trying to console her.

WILLOW
Ssh... It’s okay. Everything's going to be okay.

Though unbeknownst to Buffy, tears begin to slowly roll down Willow's face as well.

We linger around for several seconds watching Buffy and Willow share an outpour of emotions before we cut to:

INT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE - LOUNGE - AFTERNOON

Buffy enters the lounge to find most everyone pitching in for research mode. She pauses for a moment to make sure there are no tears showing on her face before she steps into everyone’s view.

BUFFY
Any luck?

ANYA
(mouth full of food)
Be int bind nthng. norry.

Buffy stares at her in confusion.
CONTINUED:

XANDER
Roughly translated... that means 'we ain't found crap.'

BUFFY
(disbelief)
Nothing?

GILES
Sorry, Buffy. I'm afraid not.

MARIE
While we’ve been able to start locating references to the Caretaker in our books, now we know who we’re looking for, we’ve turned up nothing on how to stop or even wound him.
(sighs)
I’d settle for giving him a limp or a bloody headache at the moment...

BUFFY
Why is it that every time something big comes along, we have no idea what it is? We need to write this stuff down for future generations.

ANDREW
(raising his hand)
I could-

BUFFY
No.

ANDREW
You don't even know what I was going to say!

BUFFY
You were going to try to break out your skeezy little camcorder and play documentary time with the slayer again.

ANDREW
Hey! That's a very expensive and well crafted camcorder. But aside from that, yeah... that's what I was going to say.
(thinking)
Do you have ESP?

BUFFY
(ignoring Andrew)
So what's the plan?
CONTINUED: (2)

XANDER
Plan?

BUFFY
Okay. What's not the plan?

XANDER
We do have a lot of those.

ANYA
(mouth still full)
Abey ee cud ooz a dentinl mrtal oo kill t.

Everyone stares at her for several seconds before she swallows her food.

ANYA (cont’d)
What I said, was that maybe we could use a dimensional portal to kill it, or to trap it anyway.

GILES
That's actually not a bad idea!

Anya has already gotten another bite of food before answering.

ANYA
(nodding)
Ank oo.

XANDER
That is a great idea, hon, but we still don't know where to find it.

MARIE
Or any of its weaknesses.

BUFFY
So we're still planless?

WILLOW
Well, we've got an outline of a plan. That’s a start, right?

GILES
It's a start. We'll keep searching. I'm confident we'll find something before long.

Buffy looks like she wishes she could share their optimism, and leaves the room again.
EXT. STREETS OF CLEVELAND - NIGHT

Max steps into the crowded streets of Cleveland from the depths of your typical taxi cab. He cautiously inspects his surroundings as he takes his bag from the trunk and tips the cabbie.

Satisfied that no imminent danger is present, he starts his trek across the street and disappears into the sea of people.

EXT. ALLEYWAY

As the taxi pulls away, we can barely make out a FIGURE standing in the alleyway just across the street. The eyes quickly glow red and fade slowly away as the figure fades into the shadows.

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - MORNING

The gang huddles around the kitchen counter, trying to get breakfast before going about their Monday morning business. Buffy and Giles stand alongside one another at the counter, preparing their respective plates.

BUFFY
So I guess you didn't find anything more after I went to bed?

GILES
Nothing, I'm afraid. And I've exhausted every resource that this particular Head Watcher has at his disposal.

BUFFY
So it's hopeless?

GILES
Not hopeless. Just frustrating. Something will come about, I'm certain.

BUFFY
(doubtful)
Yeah, because we're just lucky like that. The Caretaker is more likely to show up again before any information on him does!

Giles acknowledges her statement with a subtle look of disclosure.

MARIE (O.S.)
Hello?

BUFFY
In here!

Marie enters the kitchen.

MARIE
I should have known that you would all be in the kitchen.

XANDER
You know us. We can't get through a day without-

The doorbell RINGS. Everyone looks to one another curiously -- who could it be? Buffy exits the room to answer the door.

(CONTINUED)
Max is waiting on the doorstep for her and she blinks in surprise at him as he nods a greeting to her.

MAX
Buffy Summers? Maxwell Sherman. I was hoping that I might have a word with you.

BUFFY
(untrusting)
About what?

MAX
You are Miss Buffy Summers, I presume?

BUFFY
It really depends on who's asking. What is this about? Because if you're here about the phone bill, we paid it yesterday.

MAX
No, no. You've got me confused. I'm here on professional business, but not that of a phone company. More along the supernatural lines.

BUFFY
Okay. I'm not so good with riddles or euphemisms, so if you've got something to say you should just come out and say it.

MAX
I'm a Watcher.

BUFFY
Oh. Why didn't you just say so?
(stepping aside)
Giles! There's a Watcher here.

MAX
(impressed)
Giles? Rupert Giles is here?

BUFFY
(confused)
Yeah. He stays here when he's in town. I know, he sounds pushy, but it's kind of the watcher-slayer code of conduct. Teach you to slay... stay in your house. I'm sure you know all about that, though, being a Watcher, you're... wait.
(beat)

(MORE)
CONTINUED: (2)  

BUFFY (cont'd)
You're not another evil Watcher, are you?

MAX
I assure you, my intentions are honorable.

Giles comes to stand alongside Buffy at the door.

GILES
Yes?

MAX
Mr. Giles! It's an honor to meet you. My name is Maxwell Sherman.

GILES
Maxwell... oh, you're in South Dakota. You're Sierra Goldman's Watcher.

MAX
(beat; smiling boldly)
Yes. I am. I'm honored that you know who I am!

GILES
Yes, well, I've tried to make certain that I familiarize myself with most every Watcher-Slayer relationship. With the overwhelming number of girls there now are, however, it's proven to be quite difficult.

MAX
Yes. I suppose it has.

There is an awkward beat - Giles looks the new arrival up and down, and Max shifts nervously from foot to foot before Buffy interrupts.

BUFFY
I really hate to break up the old people party here, but is this just a social call or are we in some kind of grave danger?
(looking out the door)
And where is your Slayer?

MAX
(hesitantly)
That's why I've come. I fear the worst has happened Mr. Giles. Sierra was killed last night.

Buffy and Giles trade troubled looks before we cut to:
The entire group is now together in the kitchen, gathered around the table -- waiting for story hour. Max is seated at the head of the table, but seems reluctant to tell of the happenings with so many people around.

MAX  
(quietly)  
Mr. Giles, are you sure that we should discuss such private matters in front of such a large group?

Giles, who was talking softly to Marie, pops his head up.

GILES  
Pardon? Oh, yes, by all means. I trust everyone at this table with my life.  
(pointing to Andrew)  
Except, perhaps, for him. But he's mostly harmless.

ANYA  
He is?  
(to Max)  
Don't mind me. I'm pregnant. Hormones are popping in and out of places that they shouldn't be. Yesterday morning, I found myself--

Anya stops her story abruptly and springs from the table as fast as a pregnant woman can and thunders up the stairs.

XANDER  
(to Max)  
And the answer to that story was morning sickness.

XANDER (cont’d)  
(to everyone else)  
I'd better go check on her.

Xander exits the room behind his fiancée.

GILES  
(to Max)  
Please continue.

MAX  
Sierra and I were attacked last night by a demon called Lokane.

MARIE  
Lokane?
MAX
You've heard of him?

Giles and Marie share bemused looks.

GILES
Yes, of course. A particularly ruthless warrior demon, known to hold quite severe grudges.

MARIE
Not overly powerful as far as supernatural powers are concerned, but an exceptional fighter.

GILES
And if he were to perish in body, he is able to possess anyone in the near vicinity.

MAX
(confused)
I didn't find that in all of my readings...

GILES
Yes, well... you wouldn't. Lokane is almost comparable to a cult classic in cinema. He's part of the underground lore in demonology. He is only referred to in a few obscure texts. The rest has been passed down by way of mouth throughout the ages.

WILLOW
So, long story short, he's bad news?

MARIE
Extremely bad news. I have no doubt that Buffy can defeat him, but even then we have to be extremely careful that he she's not possessed.

MAX
(warmly to Marie)
You seem to really know your demonology.

MARIE
(flattered)
Thank you.

Giles stares uneasily at Max for a moment.
BUFFY
Why can't we ever just focus on just one Big Bad at a time? Every time we get knee deep into a new one, here comes another to kill!

ANDREW
Luck of the draw.

BUFFY
(sarcastically)
Thank you, Captain Motivator.

ANDREW
Glad to be of service.

BUFFY
So where do we find this guy?

MAX
I think he's following me.

GILES
Following you? That's extraordinary. What would he want with you?

MAX
(evasive)
I don't know, but I think the fact that I survived our encounter means he wants to finish the job.

MARIE
How did you come across Lokane anyhow?
(looking to Giles)
As far as I know, his presence in this dimension has been nonexistent for the past three hundred years.

GILES
No, I concur. That's the general presumption.

MAX
We were on a routine training mission last night, and he came out of nowhere... directly out of the forest.

GILES
(shaking his head)
Simply amazing.
BUFFY
Well, if he's after you like you say he is, we caught a break.

MAX
A break?

BUFFY
Yeah. We won't have to find him. He'll find us.

Buffy gets up and leaves the table. Max watches in confusion.

MAX
(to Buffy)
Where are you going?

BUFFY
To work.

MAX
(confused)
Work? You have a job?

BUFFY
I do. I'm a Slayer and I have a job. What a happy, happy life.

WILLOW
(smiling)
Some would say.

Buffy and Willow walk out of the room leaving Andrew an open seat around the table. He begins trying to hit on Max.

ANDREW
(to Max)
So I couldn't help, but notice that you're British...

GILES
Andrew!

ANDREW
(leafing the table)
Sorry.

Giles and Marie exchange embarrassed looks.

GILES
I'm terribly sorry. He's... different.

MAX
(confused)
I see.
Buffy has made her way from upstairs and adorns a nice, professional businesswoman's suit. She apathetically opens the door as she searches her purse for her keys.

She starts to step out the door, but stops abruptly as she feels as though she's hit a brick wall.

JACKSON stands steadily in the doorway as Buffy jumps backwards -- startled.

BUFFY
Jackson! Holy crap, you scared me!

JACKSON
I'm sorry, I wasn't aware that standing innocently in the open could be taken as a threat…

BUFFY
And I see you've got your wit about you this morning.

JACKSON
As always.

BUFFY
What are you doing here?

JACKSON
(nervously)
Uh… I was actually headed out towards the station.

BUFFY
(sarcastic)
You didn't come to take me in did you? I swear, he said he was eighteen!

JACKSON
(smiling)
I see I'm not the only one with his wit about him this morning.

BUFFY
(not smiling back)
See, I'd find that funny, if I wasn't wondering how in the world the police station moved overnight so it’s now between my house and your house.
Jackson stutters - he’s been caught out. Buffy steps past him and starts to walk down the street. Jackson jogs to catch up with her.

JACKSON
There was a reason for my visit.

BUFFY
(tetchy)
I was beginning to wonder.

JACKSON
I was hoping that maybe... we could hang out later on today. That is, unless you have something planned?

BUFFY
Nothing's planned. I'm completely free.
(sarcastic)
Oh, well I wouldn't say completely, there's this demon that's supposed to stop by sometime in the next few days to kill us all. We're not really sure when. You're welcome to hang though!

JACKSON
And aren’t you just full of razor sharpness this morning! Let me guess, last night was another of Andrew’s ‘Will & Grace’ marathons?

Buffy stops and takes a breath, and Jackson braces himself for Buffy to take out whatever’s on her mind on him.

BUFFY
Look, Jackson. A few days ago, we fought that demon, remember? The big guy, knocked me cold? I’m still kinda sore about that, so yes, I am feeling kind of tetchy today.
Second thing, how am I supposed to react when you just show up on my doorstep first thing in the morning, like a lost puppy or something?

JACKSON
I was just trying to-

BUFFY
Yeah, I get it, you know? Just trying to take things one step at a time. Well, today I don’t want to take any steps.
(MORE)
BUFFY (cont’d)
I just want to go to work, get through the day, come home and hope that Giles and the others have found me a way to kill that damn thing before I run into it again. And you showing up is really not helping that!

Jackson watches her, half braced against her outburst, but still a little hurt by it. Buffy sighs and runs a hand through her hair, obviously frustrated.

BUFFY (cont’d)
Look, I’m sorry. Today’s just not a good day for us to try and do our dance around each other.

JACKSON
So I see. Maybe I’ll take the long way round to work today.

BUFFY
Yeah. Listen, Jackson, it’s not that I don’t-

XANDER (O.S.)
So this is where you keep rushing off to so early! And here was me thinking it was work related...

Xander walks into frame, two brown paper grocery bags under his arm. Buffy groans as she realises how her meeting with Jackson must look, while Jackson just scratches the back of his head awkwardly.

BUFFY (cont’d)
Glad I caught you two together at last, we were starting to take bets on whether it’d snow again before we saw you speaking.

BUFFY (looking to Jackson)
We're standing innocently in the open. Not doing anything.

Xander stares inquisitively at the two for a moment before splitting them with his hands and walking though them.

XANDER
Anyway... I'm running late for work, and I've still got to run to the grocery store and back here again before I can even go. I know I’m the boss, but if I keep this up, I’ll have to let myself go!
CONTINUED: (3)

JACKSON
(to Xander)
Not that it's any of my business, but don't you and Anya have a house of your own?

XANDER
I don't like leaving An alone, what with the being insanely insane from the pregnancy and all.
(beat)
And on that note, I'm off to get the biggest tub of mustard known to man.

Xander heads back towards the house. Jackson chuckles and starts to turn to make a comment to Buffy - but she's already walked off screen. Jackson slaps his forehead and mutters.

JACKSON
Smooth as ever, Shaw...

Jackson takes a breath and walks off screen in a different direction, before we:

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT TWO
CONTINUED: (4)

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

EXT. CLEVELAND - PARK. NIGHT.

Buffy, Giles, Max and Willow are all out on patrol, keeping an eye out for Lokane.

Everyone but Willow is armed, and the redhead herself is carrying what looks like a small pendant, holding it out in front of her like a pendulum. It pulses a faint yellow, and she frowns, holding it out to her left and then her right.

BUFFY

Anything?

WILLOW

Not yet, I’m picking up his aura but he could be anywhere between here and two miles away at the moment.

The girls lead on as Max hangs back with Giles.

MAX

Look, I’m really sorry about all of this, Rupert, I didn’t think he’d follow me as far as-

GILES

You didn’t think he’d follow you? Max, let me ask you something - do you know anything about Lokane at all?

MAX

Well, I know a little, enough to know that he’s danger-

GILES

Lokane once spent four years tracking a man who’d wounded him in battle, then crept into his house while he slept, murdered every living thing inside except his victim and then left - and then waited four more years before coming back to finish the job, just so his target would spend as long as possible at the edge of despair, never knowing when his end would come.

Max GULPS - that wasn’t something he wanted to hear.

(CONTINUED)
MAX
So what are you saying, should we-

GILES
I’m saying we’d better hope Buffy finds and kills this creature quickly, because otherwise we’re all in a very great deal of danger!

Giles throws a cursive glance at Max and jogs to catch up to the girls. Willow has stopped, and is holding the pendulum over her hand as it pulses more rapidly. She looks alarmed, and Buffy is looking round anxiously.

BUFFY
Don’t tell me, that means he’s close, right?

WILLOW
Yeah, only it just went from nothing to happy firefly in a second, like he just popped in out of nowhere!

GILES
Lokane was said to have some kind of limited teleportation skill, he’s quite likely spotted us and-

LOKANE (O.S.)
(chuckles)
So, the cowardly insect brings some friends along to help do its dirty work?

Everyone freezes, looking around. The park is deadly still and silent, but Lokane’s booming voice seems to echo from several places around them.

LOKANE (O.S.) (cont’d)
I might have expected such action from one who let his charge die so easily by my hands...

MAX
(defiant)
Show yourself! This is something we must finish!

LOKANE (O.S.)
Oh, I will, mortal, I will... I spent a good night feasting on the marrow of that young whelp’s bones after you’d fled, and I trust your companions will bring me the same enjoyment!

(CONTINUED)
Willow nudges Buffy and points to a huge old tree about twenty feet away, and Buffy nods as Willow aims the pendulum towards the tree - it pulses more rapidly when she does so. Target acquired. The girls pace forwards as Lokane continues his ‘Hulk Smash!’ Speech.

LOKANE (O.S.) (cont’d)
It has taken me some time to track you to this gaudy land of artificial light, but I see now I will have plenty of sport to make up for my efforts...

Buffy and Willow pause a few feet away from the tree. Buffy grips her scythe, but tenses when she realises Lokane has stopped talking. She glances at Willow.

WILLOW
Buffy? What’s wr-

CRASH! The tree is uprooted, torn clean in two, and smashes to the floor, Buffy and Willow diving out of the way on one side, as Giles pulls Max to the floor, out of sight.

As the gang stand to catch their breath, Lokane strolls confidently out from behind the still-rooted half of the tree. The demon eyes Buffy and Willow up and down and snorts derisively.

LOKANE
Where is he?

BUFFY
Let me guess… Lokane?

LOKANE
Where is he?!

BUFFY
Look we were trying to have a nice quiet walk here, so if you could just...

Lokane SMASHES his hand into the tree, sending a shower of chunks of bark into the air.

LOKANE
I'll ask you one more time, little girl! Where is he?

BUFFY
I can’t tell you if you don’t say-

MAX (O.S.)
Lokane? I’m here!
Buffy and Lokane look round - Max has stood from behind the tree and is walking slowly over towards the demon, gripping his sword tightly.

Buffy rolls her eyes - this wasn’t part of her plan. She takes a step back, waiting for Lokane to give her an opening, but the burly demon keeps both of them in his sights.

MAX (cont’d)
I’s me you want, not these others. Let’s settle this in the only way you understand.

Max raises his sword, and Lokane grunts and starts to laugh. Max’s eyes flit across to look at Buffy.

LOKANE
Commendable attitude. When I crack open your skull to find out what your brain tastes like, I’ll have to remember to make it into a mug afterwards, in your honour.

BUFFY
Max, what are you-

MAX
No, Buffy! I have to do this. It’s only right, so I can-

THWACK! A huge punch from Lokane catches them off guard and sends Max flying back through the air.

Willow watches him land, then raises her hands to try and get a spell working to stop the demon, but as she murmurs an incantation, runes on Lokane’s black armour GLOW a fierce red, and with a YELP Willow is knocked off her feet by some invisible wicca repellent force.

Max recovers and takes to his heels, waving his arms and shouting.

MAX (cont’d)
Follow me! Leave them, it’s me you want!

Lokane growls and starts to race after Max, his heavy frame shuddering the ground as he runs after the retreating Watcher.

Buffy dashes into frame as Giles helps a stunned Willow to her feet.

BUFFY
Will, are you okay? What happened?

(CONTINUED)
WILLOW
I don’t know... Some kinda antiwicca spell... In his armour...

GILES
You must hurry, Buffy, Max won’t last five seconds against Lokane. He’s brave now, but that won’t last him long.

BUFFY
I’m on it. Get Willow somewhere safe then follow me with some backup.

Giles starts to carry Willow away as Buffy runs after Max and Lokane, but pauses as Giles calls out to her.

GILES
Who should I bring?

BUFFY
I don’t know! What about... (beat; sighs) Call Jackson, okay?

Giles nods and helps Willow away as Buffy runs again.

15
EXT. ABANDONED CONSTRUCTION SITE - NIGHT

Buffy runs into frame and skids to a halt, catching her breath and looking round. Scattered equipment and large machinery line the whole of the lot and make the search just that much more difficult.

She paces carefully through the darkness, alert for any sound, and freezes when she hears footsteps.

Seeing a shadow approaching from round a dirt lifter, she raises her scythe and gets ready to attack...

And as the figure rounds the corner she LUNGES forward with a yell, narrowly missing Jackson, who shouts as he dives out of the way, an axe in one hand.

JACKSON
Woah! You greet all your reinforcements like that?

BUFFY
Jackson? How did... How did you get here so fast?

Without taking his eyes off her, Jackson holds up his cell phone and waggles it for her to see.

(continues)
CONTINUED:

JACKSON
I was already out. Giles called, said which way you were headed, I thought I’d see if I could catch you first.

BUFFY
Oh... Well, good. Come on.

She walks on, clicking back to Business Mode, and Jackson allows himself a bemused smile. The duo pace through the construction yard, still deathly silent, their eyes scanning the darkness.

JACKSON
So... I don't see anything.

BUFFY
Me neither.

JACKSON
Do you think it could have doubled back?

BUFFY
Could have.

JACKSON
(beat)
Buffy...?

BUFFY
Yeah?

JACKSON
Why is this so awkward?

BUFFY
(sighs)
I don't know.

JACKSON
Is it because we’re trying not to talk about all the things we should have gotten out of the way by now?

BUFFY
Maybe. I don't know.
(beat)
Okay, yeah... it is.

JACKSON
That's what I thought. But why?

BUFFY
Why?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: (2)

JACKSON
Yeah. Why?

BUFFY
I guess...

JACKSON
Maybe we're just waiting for the right moment to do it, when you and I know that there is no right moment.

Buffy looks understandingly at him.

JACKSON (cont’d)
(stepping closer)
So I was thinking... that maybe we should stop waiting for time to work its magic and take matters into our own hands.

BUFFY
Maybe...

Their eyes meet - and suddenly the mood changes between them. Buffy looks like some old feelings are starting to return, and Jackson smiles warmly at her.

He opens his mouth to speak - but Buffy’s eyes widen, and she suddenly SHOVES him out of the way as Max sails through the air, slamming into Buffy and knocking them both to the floor.

JACKSON
What the...

He looks up as Lokane strides into frame, not a scratch on him and still in the mood for a fight.

LOKANE
Fools! You're all fools! After I'm done with you, I'll follow your stench back to your dwelling, and take back what's rightfully mine!

He raises both hands into the air to begin a great double fisted attack, but, Buffy rolls her and Max over and Lokane hits the ground - hard.

Buffy swings the scythe at him, but it just DINGS off Lokane’s armour with a flash of sparks, and she leaps back out of the way as he takes a swing at her.

Buffy awaits the next attack as Max drags himself to his feet, panting with exertion.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: (3)

MAX
Be careful, the armor that covers his body is impenetrable!

BUFFY
Yeah, I noticed, what with the stabbing and all...

MAX
Aim for the head!

BUFFY
That was plan ‘B’!

Lokane takes a step forward but pauses as we hear a soft ‘thud’ sound. Lokane blinks, reaches over his shoulder and pulls Jackson's axe from within his back.

He turns around to see Jackson standing there. Jackson peers around the demon at Buffy in confusion.

With a low growl, Lokane drops the axe on the ground and starts towards Jackson. He gets an arm raised in the air, prepared to strike, but out of nowhere comes a chain. The chain wraps around him and Buffy grabs the hook and completes a circle around his legs.

BUFFY (cont’d)
(shouts)
Max, now!!

Before Lokane can turn around and fight, a machine quickly pulls the chain tight and drags him from his feet -- leaving him dangling upside down in the air.

Buffy stands, smiling, and looks across to the bruised and battered Max, who is holding a wired remote control.

BUFFY (cont’d)
Guess you didn't see that coming did you? You know what they say, the dumber the beast...

Before Buffy can finish her pun, Jackson comes flying in with his axe and LOPS Lokane's head off.

BUFFY (cont’d)
No!

Lokane's head falls lifelessly to the ground. Buffy rushes over to Jackson as Max drops the remote and hurries over.

JACKSON
What?!

(CONTINUED)
You weren't supposed to kill him! He's supposed to be able to possess someone if they're around when he dies!

Buffy and Jackson both turn and look curiously at their surroundings.

BUFFY (suspicious)
Are you possessed?

JACKSON
What? No!

BUFFY
Prove it.

JACKSON
What do you want me to do? Buffy... we were about to kiss and this demon pops out of nowhere! What do you want me to say to prove that it's me?

BUFFY (walking away)
Okay.

JACKSON
Okay?

BUFFY
That works for me. Hurry up. Let's get back to the house. They'll be worried.

Buffy turns to Max, who winces as he presses a hand to his side - there’s a lot of blood on his shirt.

BUFFY (cont’d)
How are you doing?

MAX
Well, that’s easily the worst beating I’ve ever had in the line of duty, but I’ll survive.

Max looks round the yard, spooked.
MAX (cont’d)
We should go. I don’t know how his ability to possess people works, but demons normally need time to gather their essence before they can attempt something like that, so-

BUFFY
So point taken, Columbo, let’s split. Come on, Jackson.

Buffy lends an arm to Max as they head off screen.

As Jackson begins to follow Buffy, he pauses for a moment — and his eyes GLOW a quick red before they fade back to normal.

With a brief grin, Jackson follows Buffy out of frame.

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT THREE
ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE - LOUNGE

Buffy, Max and Jackson stroll back into the house. Giles and Marie quickly stand upon Buffy's entry, the two Watchers taking Max off Buffy and laying him carefully down onto the sofa. Xander clears some things off the sofa as Max is laid down.

BUFFY
Score one for Team Slayer at least...

GILES
You killed Lokane?

BUFFY
Of course. Piece of cake.
(beat)
Speaking of which, do I smell cake?

XANDER
Anya got a craving.

MARIE
What happened with Lokane?

BUFFY
(happily)
We killed him. I think you guys may have been wrong about the possession thing, though, because we were the only ones around, and nothing happened.

GILES
(confused)
Really?

BUFFY
Yep.

MARIE
This wouldn't be the first time that an ancient text was less than accurate, Rupert!

GILES
Yes, I suppose you're right...

Marie presses a hand against Max’s temple and turns to Giles, looking concerned.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

MARIE
He’s pretty banged up, Rupert, we should put him somewhere comfortable upstairs - perhaps Buffy’s room?

BUFFY
My room?!

GILES
You do have the largest bed, Buffy... Not to mention the most medical supplies in the house at the bottom of your wardrobe! Max has had a rough couple of days, I’m sure another night won’t-

BUFFY
He could have had a rough couple of days in one of the spare bedrooms!

MARIE
(scoolds)
Buffy, really!

Buffy pouts - but then nods and motions towards the stairs.

BUFFY
Alright, I guess. Does make sense to put him up there. Where’s Willow?

GILES
She’s in her own room, you’ll be glad to know. She just said she wanted to rest.

MARIE
(to Max)
Come on, Maxwell, up we get...

With a GROAN, Max is helped to his feet by Marie, and Giles joins in to help carry the wounded Watcher upstairs. Jackson watches them go, then turns to Buffy.

JACKSON
Uh... I’m gonna head home, then, I think that’s enough excitement for one night for me.

BUFFY
Okay, cool.

Jackson starts to leave, but Buffy reaches out and grabs his arm to stop him.

(CONTINUED)
BUFFY (cont’d)
Jackson, wait, I....

He turns and looks back at her, raising an eyebrow. Buffy manages a quick smile.

BUFFY (cont’d)
Thanks.

JACKSON
(beat; grins)
Don’t mention it!

He turns and leaves as Xander steps up next to Buffy.

XANDER
An evening in action with Captain ‘I Have A Mysterious Destiny’ then, huh? Just like old times.

BUFFY
Xander, I didn’t-

XANDER
Hey, nothing to do with me. Just glad to see you’re moving on at last.

Xander starts to head upstairs, leaving Buffy staring thoughtfully after Jackson.

XANDER (cont’d)
Oh, uh, Anya was feeling kinda fragile tonight, so I put her to bed upstairs. Is it alright if we spend the night here?

BUFFY
(distracted)
Huh? Oh, yeah... Sure.

Xander disappears upstairs as we stay with Buffy.

After a beat, she shakes her head and turns towards the stairs herself. It’s been a long night.

17
INT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE – BEDROOM. NIGHT.

Someone is asleep in the bed, the covers hiding them from view as the soft CREAK of a window opening and closing can be heard.

Jackson comes into view in front of the bed and stands, prepared to kill, over the body.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

JACKSON
(in Lokane's deep voice)
You foolish mortal. By summoning me, you've sealed not only your own doom, but your Slayer as well. I will take great pleasure in killing you... almost as much as I did with your precious Slayer!

Jackson leans in for the kill, his hands out to throttle the unfortunate victim in the bed - but as his hands grab them and start to squeeze, it’s not Max whose head pops up and starts thrashing around - it’s Xander!

XANDER
(gasping)
Guys! A little help... in... here!

The door SWINGS open and the room’s light flicks on.

BUFFY
What’s going on in-

Buffy freezes as Jackson turns to her, his eyes blazing an angry red and Xander rapidly turning blue, Jackson’s hands clamped round his throat.

In a flash, Buffy dives across the room towards Jackson, but he kicks out at her and knocks her to the ground.

Jackson turns back to Xander and notices at last he’s got the wrong guy, his face registering surprise.

JACKSON
Wrong... room?
(curses)
Confound these mortal brains, they muddle their thoughts like swamplands!

Buffy quickly spots a baseball bat lying on the floor of the room next to some other weapons, and scoops it up with one foot as she jumps to her feet again.

Jackson turns his head just in time to see a baseball bat flying toward him. We BLACK OUT just as we hear the CRACK!

INT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE - KITCHEN

In the middle of the kitchen floor, Jackson is tied up and unconscious. The Scoobies are huddled on the other side of the kitchen, just out of kicking distance.

His neck sore and red, Xander gratefully gulps down a glass of water that Buffy hands him, before she goes to stand by Giles and Marie, busy consulting their books.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

BUFFY
Quick question though, how do we get the demon out of my boyfriend?

ANYA
Jackson is your boyfriend again?

Everyone stops to stare at Buffy, as she blinks, realising her Freudian slip. She quickly goes on the defensive.

BUFFY
What? Oh, no. We're... I mean. Things are...
    (quickly to Giles)
Could we focus on more important things?

GILES
Right. How to go about getting Lokane out... we're not precisely sure how.

BUFFY
What?!!?

GILES
(uneasily)
We will hopefully know soon enough, however.

BUFFY
How? Twenty questions with the demon?

XANDER (O.S.)
Nope. Twenty questions with the watcher.

Xander comes through the hall, pushing Max in front of him. Max is far from recovered but his guilty expression tells half the story already.

BUFFY
Okay. I'm lost. Why do you guys always plot these little 'ol schemes while I'm not here?

XANDER
While Jackson, or...
    (confused)
... Jackson's shell, tried to kill me, he said that I'd summoned him. Doesn't take a genius to figure out he was talking about Max, and luckily for everyone, I am no genius.
GILES
(to Max)
Is this true?

MAX
(sighing reluctantly)
Yes, I’m afraid so, we were-

GILES
(angrily)
You idiotic fool! Why in the
heavens would you summon one of the
most ruthless demons of-

MAX
I didn't know! Just like you said.
There was no mention of him in
standard texts, so I assumed he was
low power and summoned him for
Sierra's training, and...

GILES
This is unacceptable. You should
consider yourself removed from the
Council. If you-

MARIE
How did you summon him?

GILES
What?

MARIE
Lokane, how did you summon him?

MAX
With his talisman.

GILES
Marie, what does any of this...

Giles stops and stares at Marie in realization.

GILES (cont’d)
Oh.

There’s a beat as Buffy looks from one to the other.

BUFFY
'Oh' what? We're not all Watchers
here. What does 'oh' mean?

ANYA
It means that his talisman is the
only thing that can be used to
exorcise his spirit from Jackson.

(CONTINUED)
MARIE
And can also be used to trap him in
an alternate dimension.

BUFFY
(beat)
Am I the only one here who doesn't
know random demon trivia?

XANDER
(raising his hand)
I don't.

ANYA
And you both should! You're a
Slayer, kind of goes with
territory.
(to Xander)
And you're marrying one!

XANDER
(to Anya)
An... not the time. Anya reluctantly
gives in.

GILES
(to Max)
The talisman. Where is it?

Max reaches into his pocket and retrieves the talisman and
hands it to Giles.

MAX
(grimly)
I didn't know.

GILES
I shouldn't expect so.
Carelessness, however, is no
substitute for ignorance.

Everyone follows Giles out of the room. Max sits down at the
table and suddenly breaks into tears -- saddened by the
thought of his deceased Slayer.

Giles watches him solemnly for a beat, before examining the
talisman carefully.

GILES (cont’d)
This will take a little while,
we’ll need to trap Lokane’s spirit
as we remove him, so it’s best if
everyone but Marie and myself leave
the room so we can make sure
everyone is protected.
XANDER
You heard the man, let’s close the blast doors and leave Dempsey and Makepeace to it.

Everyone files out of the kitchen – and Buffy throws a last look at the restrained Jackson before the kitchen door shuts, and with a sigh she turns and walks off frame.

BUFFY
And then, about an hour later, Giles comes out with the talisman wrapped up in two packets of clingfilm, saying that Lokane was stuck inside it – and that the clingfilm had been found to work great for stopping demons teleporting through things.
(beat)
You think Martha Stewart could use that as a selling point?

JACKSON
(rubbing his head)
I still wish you hadn’t used the baseball bat, though...

BUFFY
Hey, you didn’t leave me much choice, you were about to leave Anya without a fiancee! And anyway, I could have picked up something sharp instead, so you should be thanking me...

JACKSON
(sarcastic)
Yeah, thanks for the blunt trauma, Buffy, just what I always wanted.
(beat)
So is that the end of...

BUFFY
Lokane? Yep. After we got it out of the house, Giles and Willow busted the talisman up into tiny pieces and buried it with fresh blood, frog's eyes, and yak urine.
(beat)
And sadly enough, that's not an exaggeration.
(MORE)
CONTINUED:  

BUFFY (cont'd)  
But they said that it will keep him from being summoned ever again.  

JACKSON  
Good.  

BUFFY  
My thoughts exactly.  

JACKSON  
(beat)  
So...  

BUFFY  
(shakes head)  
Don't do it.  

JACKSON  
What?  

BUFFY  
Take us back into awkward mode again. Just because we're not kissing or trying to kiss doesn't mean that we should feel awkward around each other.  

JACKSON  
You're right. That's why I'm going to do this.  

Jackson suddenly leans in to kiss her, but as soon as he does -- BAM!  

Buffy and Jackson jump in shock, and look up to see Andrew has tried to sneak into the house without disturbing them, tripped over a table and landed face-first on the floor, spilling two full bags of groceries around him.  

ANDREW  
Um... I think we're gonna need some more kitchen roll.  

Buffy and Jackson look to each other and smile. It seems hopeless.  

20  
INT. SUMMERS RESIDENCE - FRONT PORCH  

Buffy opens the door and Jackson steps outside, turning back to face her again as he fishes out his car keys.  

BUFFY  
Maybe it just wasn't meant to be.  
(quickly)  
Not today, anyway.
CONTINUED:

JACKSON
Maybe we were supposed to wait for the perfect moment.

BUFFY
(smiles)
Yeah. Jackson, we’ve still got a lot to get through, I’ve got this new thing in town that I can tell is gonna cause me plenty of trouble, and-

Jackson presses a finger to her lips to stop her. To his relief, she doesn’t bite back, but closes her eyes and nods.

JACKSON
Nothing bad’s happening right now, is it? So just enjoy the sunshine for a minute. Morning like this’ll help keep you sane when you’re crawling through a catacomb somewhere later tonight.

Buffy manages a chuckle as Jackson smiles, turns and switches off his car’s alarm.

BUFFY
This isn’t going to happen overnight, you know. It’s gonna take us both a lot of time.

JACKSON
That, I have plenty of. I don’t want to see you get hurt again, by me or anybody. Willow said you had a ‘moment’ the other day, she sounded worried about you.

BUFFY
Oh, that. Listen, I’m fine, really. I was just having a rare girlie moment. In a way, it’s reassuring to know I can still have them now and again.

Jackson nods, smiles again and takes a step away before turning back to her.

JACKSON
You know where I am if you need me, right?

BUFFY
Sure do.
With a last look back at her, Jackson heads down the pavement and up to his car, as Buffy hangs in the doorway, starting to remember what she liked about him before everything came between them.

Jackson jumps into his car, and Buffy watches him leave before she heads back inside.

As the front door closes, we:

BLACK OUT:

END OF SHOW