

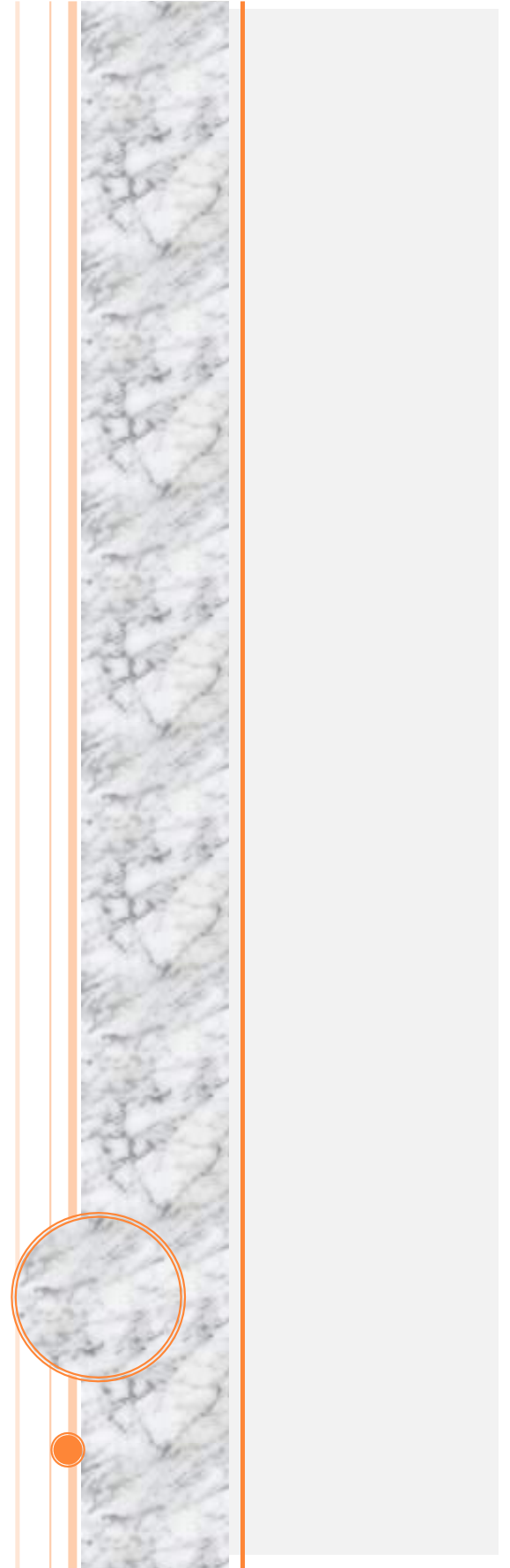
Buffy the Vampire Slayer

#04 WELCOMING COMMITTEE

Edmonsville Saga

Buffy and her friends are living in the South Californian town of Edmonsville. They've finally completed work on their new house and are ready to start up new social lives and to get back into the Slaying game.

Written by Allycat



An empty graveyard in the middle of the night was not quite the most popular place for people to spend their midsummer nights, but a small group of four women and one guy had chosen that place on purpose. On their first night of patrolling Buffy had suggested the Scoobies would just take whatever cemetery was closest to their house. So there they were: the whole gang, Willow, Kennedy, Buffy, Dawn, and Xander, walking down endless rows of tombstones that look entirely unfamiliar to them. "Look, I think we had one of those back in Sunnydale!" Dawn pointed at one of the tombstones that read "Maria McKenzie, 1902-1985." "You mean the Dylan Jackson one on the Catholic ground? No, that was much more rectangular," said Buffy, expression therewith her intense familiarity with all the graveyards in her former town, which would've been all too morbid if it had not been for her unique line of work. "No, the little Presbyterian one, over at the crossing of Wilkins and third." Dawn corrected her, "can't remember whose grave it was, but I was near that one with the statue of the Angel on it." Xander turned to look at the grave, "yeah, I think Dawn's right, it does look the same." "Oh," Willow suddenly joined the conversation, "I think it was Philip Burgessen and his wife, wasn't it?" At the sound of his name, the others now recognised it and affirmed Willow's suspicion. "You guy know," Kennedy concluded, "that you're a bunch of freaks, right?"

As the gang laughed and walked on into a different isle and a different direction, a skulking figure emerged from behind a crypt, looking at the group of people like a predator at his prey. The light of the moon and the stars twinkled in his eyes and reflected on his shiny white fangs which were lusting for some fresh blood. He turned around and looked behind him. Four more vampires were waiting right behind him: all of them thirsty, all of them ready, all of them waiting for the signal. "What are they doing here at this time of night anyway?" a tall and fearsome-looking vampire asked at full volume. "Sssshh!" The leader of the group hissed. In the distance he saw that Buffy looked around her shoulder as the Scoobie gang moved on. "Idiot," hissed the leader again and at his signal the smallest of the group hit the big vampire over the head. "Now, keep your voices down," the leader commanded, "I'm really hungry tonight so I don't want any of them to get away." He looked at the duo of the tall and the small vampire and said, "Jeremy, you take Big Teeth with you and approach them from the left," he turned to the other two, "you two take the right. I'll creep up on them from behind. Alright go!" And as their leader had ordered the four vampires began to move through the darkness closing in on the sheep in wolfs clothing they thought would be their dinner.

Meanwhile, the gang was moving on through the next part of the as of yet unexplored graveyard. Buffy was as vigilant as ever, even though she knew that she had another Slayer on her side again. Always checking over her shoulder, listening to the leaves in the wind for the slightest movement, seeing the darkness move, it was a part of her every being and not another Slayer, or thousand of them would change that. So, Buffy was already expecting company. She'd spotted the bumbling gang of misfit vampires as soon as they'd entered the cemetery and had kept a watchful eye out over them ever since, and she knew they were on the move; they would strike any second now. Buffy could of course warn the others, but she decided instead to see just how sharp the others were after all these weeks without patrol. And now that they had of course another Slayer on the team, it would be interesting to see how well she held up. Was her Slayer-sense be tingling too right about now? From the looks of it though, Buffy suspected it wasn't, as the other Slayer, who has walking half entangled

in Willow, had all her eyes on her girlfriend. It was something she still had to learn, but she probably would, Buffy thought and right that second the vampires jumped from the shadows.

Two on the right, two on the left, and one from behind: vampires, creeping through the shadows, leapt up into the full light of the moon and showing themselves to their would-be prey. Striking sensational poses that would have scared the average Edmonsville citizen silly, the vampires revealed themselves. The very second they did, or in all honesty, half a second before, Buffy already had her stake in hand. The reaction-time of the others was not quite as impressive, but Kennedy was quick to arm herself too. Willow of course didn't need a weapon: she was one. The vampires were already storming toward the Scoobies yelling all sorts of scary war cries and realised too late that the gang was fully armed. So a fight ensued. Kennedy quickly moved in on the two targets on their right and was joined by Willow, after which the two of them proceeded to show the vampires all the little decorative details on a set of tombstones. Buffy took the two on the right, the small and the tall ones, known as Jeremy and Big Teeth. Though the big vampire possessed a lot of raw strength, he could not manage to use it against the Slayer, whose speed was much too great for him. His partner however proved useful in this department as, though his speed could not match Buffy's, he was significantly faster than his bigger counterpart and thus managed to save the big guy from Buffy's lightning fast attacks. The tactically sound combination of the two proved to be successful at least to the extent of the two not being the first to turn to dust, which was one of the vampires that Kennedy and Willow had taken upon themselves. Xander and Dawn were having more trouble it seemed. Although Dawn had had her stake ready and was trying to fend off the leader of the little pack, Xander had found he had lost his stake so his input in the fight was mostly limited to surgical strikes when the vampire got too close to Dawn.

Buffy was not blind to the troubles of her little sister and best friend, but she had her own problems right this minute. Not that the two dumb vampires that were teaming up against her were stronger than usual by any standard, but the combination just required her to put in a little extra effort she hadn't expected to be needing here in Edmonsville. On the other hand, it kind of made sense to her. There was probably a gang of stronger vampires in charge of this town and they would just have to wipe them out in the first week or so and then after that everything would probably be lots and lots easier. It was more than likely wishful thinking on her part, rather than rational logics, Buffy realised that, but it helped her get through the fight. She doubled her efforts and this had a noticeable effect. "Don't you know not to mess with the Slayer!" she yelled as her attacks began landing on both her targets and their ability to fight her off effectively diminished with every blow that hit. As Buffy fought them off, they backed up into the wall of a crypt. She had them right where she wanted them, but just when she was about to plant her stake in the big fellow she noticed Dawn and Xander's situation was getting more and more precarious. She doubted for a second as to what to do, but in the end she decided that it would be the two vampire's lucky day and she hurried back to her friends, leaving the two vampires able to flee the scene.

Dawn lay with her back on the grass with the vampire right on top of her trying to impale her with her own stake. Xander was attempting to pull him off, but with his free hand the vampire managed to quite simply stop him. With all her might Dawn tried to push away the stake that was aimed at her heart, but the vampire was much stronger and she

wouldn't be able to hold out much longer. She looked over to where Willow and Kennedy had been earlier, but there was no sign of them anywhere and she couldn't see Buffy anywhere anymore either. She was getting genuinely frightened now. But suddenly, the heavy weight of the vampire's body pressing against her own was lifted, literally, as Buffy lifted the guy up with ease. She threw him into a nearby headstone and helped her sister up. "Stake?" asked the Slayer and Dawn handed hers over to the Slayer, who then with a sense of professionalism stepped up to the vampire and dragged him up. He was barely able to avoid getting staked right on the spot and tried to put up a bit of a fight, but with a few quick blocks and a punch that could knock one's lights out faster than a bottle of tequila, she stopped his resistance and equally fast as it had begun the struggle was over. Buffy quickly staked him and returned to her friends, knowing that the two other vampires would surely have run for their non-lives by now.

Buffy looked all around but Kennedy and Willow seemed to be gone. Just when she was about to ask about them to her panting friends, obviously tired from the fight, the couple emerged a bit further away from the bushes. Upon noticing the Slayer's accusatory face, Willow started explaining, "It's not what you think; he fled in there, we just followed him." "Dust now?" Willow nodded, "Big pile of it." "I think we should call it a night," Buffy suggested. "Already?" Kennedy sounded peeved at the thought of not getting to kill anything else, but one look of Buffy at Xander and Dawn, who still looked pretty beat from their fight, was enough to convince Kennedy that it was probably for the best. "Maybe we shouldn't rush into the slaying right away, but more sort of ease back into it," was Buffy's plan and everyone agreed, so they went on their way back to the car, which was parked just outside the cemetery. While the other girls started on their way, Buffy held back a little and walked beside Xander. He instantly recognised the look on her face as meaning she had something on her mind, "something wrong?" "Nah, maybe, I don't know..." Buffy started vaguely, "It's just different... from what I expect, you know the slaying. Tonight was kind of sloppy." "Maybe, I'd say we're just a little out of it, you know. We haven't fought in weeks," Xander said and he rubbed his somewhat painful side, "and I'm still sore from our last fight against the First." "I'm not sure that's all there is too it though." Xander tried to think of what else there kind be, but his brain turned up with nothing so he asked Buffy what else she thought. "Complacency: I think maybe we're all feeling like we don't have to try our best anymore." "Well, don't we?" Xander asked a fair enough question. There were nearly two-thousand other Slayers in the world now; surely, they could work a little less hard. "That's just it though," Buffy said, "we do. We still have to try our best and not because if we don't do it, someone else will, but because if we don't do it correctly, we might get hurt."

They walked on in silence for a bit while Xander mulled it over. "Hmm, I see your point," he finally said, with extra emphasis on the seeing, as a reminder that getting hurt was indeed a real possibility. "So, what are you suggesting?" he asked her. "I don't know," Buffy said in a way only she could, "I suppose nothing. Maybe we ought to train a little bit at home first, you know, before going out there," Buffy suggested, "but then training isn't really the same as the real thing though and it doesn't help with the complacency-thing either." "So..." Xander started, already suspecting he might not like what she would say next, "what else would you suggest?" "Maybe, just for a while, it'd be better if not everyone came along. Just until the area's cleared up a bit, you know?" "Yeah," Xander answered reluctantly and he continued, "And by not everyone, you mean me and Dawn, right?" He looked at her and

she gave him a meaningful look back that confirmed his suspicions. "You think I shouldn't?" "I think you might just break her heart," Xander said, avoiding answering the question. "But see, the thing is, seeing how tough tonight was on you guys, I'm just afraid that she... or you, might break something other than your heart." "You didn't seem all that concerned back in Sunnydale when we were fighting the First," Xander replied and the moment he said it, he already regret it, "I'm sorry, that was uncalled for." "No, it's alright," said Buffy, whose sense of guilt of her friend's lost eye was something she knew would never go away, "You're right, but that was then and this is now. That was..." she was going to say unavoidable, but she realised the attack on the vineyard in which Xander lost his eye was not a fight that had been forced on them, but rather one they, or rather she, had instigated. So, she corrected herself, "That was General Summers, you know? This, here and now, is just me, Buffy; your friend being worried about you. I'm probably not making much sense, am I?" "On the whole..." Xander paused for a second, "Not a whole lot, no, but I think that I understand what you're trying to say anyway."

They'd nearly reached the car; Xander had bought an old second-hand model. Brown with rust on the sides and with a faded green paint job, the former American muscle car looked sort of pathetic, but it had been a bargain and served its purpose until Xander would decide to buy a new one. While Kennedy, Willow, and Dawn bickered about who got to sit in front and who would be crammed into the back seat, Xander and Buffy held back a little to finish up their conversation before they joined the others. "You know," Buffy started, "maybe I'm just over concerned for your well-being out of guilt. For now, we should probably just see how it goes." And so it was agreed between the two that Xander and Dawn would still come along patrolling, even though the Slayer had her concerns about her friend's and sister's safety. As soon as everyone had crammed themselves into the car that was a little bit too small for five people, they headed back home for a well deserved sleep.

Across town, two other people were just arriving back home. They were the two vampires that had gotten away from Buffy and the others and the place they called home was a big empty drainage room in the sewers with many tunnels leading off into different directions, the exits to most of which had been blocked off by furniture. About ten to fifteen vampires were gathered in the room. Some of them were asleep, but most of them were just hanging around, talking. When they spotted Jeremy and Big Teeth come in the group grew silent as they noticed the other three vampires weren't with them. One vampire continued talking though. He was sitting in the middle of the room on a big adorned chair that was like a throne. The frail vampire he was talking with alerted him to the two beat up characters that had just walked in. The leader of the group got up from his seat and rose to his feet. He turned around and looked at the two vampires stepped forward shamefully. The leader of the pack was in no way impressive looking. He was about six feet with spiky dark blond hair and a goatee. He wore a torn brown leather jacket that had gone out of style in the eighties. Regardless, he commanded respect from his undead minions. "What's going on here? Where are Ben and Jacob... and DJ?" He asked them with a slightly accusatory tone. The big guy just shuffled his feet in silence and after a moment's pause Jeremy began to explain about their unfortunate encounter earlier that night. After the mostly inaccurate explanation in which Jeremy had painted the picture in such a way that he and Big Teeth came across a lot

more glorious and braver than they had been, their leader had only one question remaining. “So, you mean to say this group of five girls just beat you?”

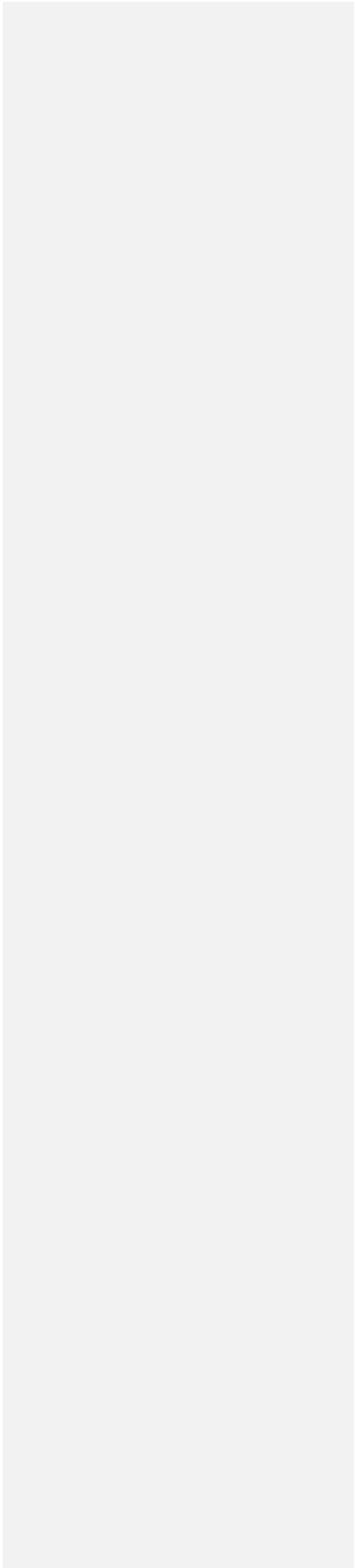
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“But Jack... they weren’t just girls,” the short vampire defended himself; “one of them said she was the Slayer.” This revelation sent a shockwave through the room. “The Slayer? Here?” Jack, the leader, had a hard time believing that the Slayer would come all the way to his neck of the woods. He started pacing up and down, “are you sure?” “Absolutely, that’s what she said Jack,” he looked at his tall companion, “tell him Big Teeth.” The big vampire silently nodded. “And she killed the others? Just like that?” “With her four little friends, yes.” The pacing of the leader became more frantic as he tried to wrap his head around his new very much unexpected adversary.

After a minute or so he stopped. All the other vampires in the gang looked at him in anticipation. “I know what we must do,” he said, raising the anticipation even higher as everyone was now hoping he would have come up with some kind of brilliant master plan to get rid of the Slayer, “we must destroy her!” The plan, since it lacked in the “how do we go about defeating a Slayer”-department, met with a lukewarm welcome at best. “What?” Jack asked his subordinates. The gathered undead murmured a little and Jack could just barely make out a suppressed “How?” from it. “How do we go about it?” he asked himself out loud. He began pacing to and fro again and before long

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With regular characters based on the likeness of:

- Sarah Michelle Gellar (Buffy)
- Iyari Limon (Kennedy)
- Nicholas Brendon (Xander)
- Michelle Trachtenberg (Dawn)
- And Alyson Hannigan as Willow Rosenberg.

This story was produced as part of the on-going Buffy the Vampire Slayer series for VirtualSlayer, created by Allycat, produced by Allycat.

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