After the Storm

by AvaMclean

Summary

Buffy was having a hell of a time finding anything supernatural—aside from herself—in this new and unfortunate world.
Chapter 1

Title: And After the Storm
Rating: FR13
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Note: dhfreak is to blame for this little vintage.

Synopsis: Buffy was having a hell of a time finding anything supernatural—aside from herself—in this new and unfortunate world.

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Sunlight streamed in through the tall windows, bathing the cubicle Buffy Summers occupied in warmth as her gaze studied the widescreen monitor and her fingers absently searched her knee high socks for hitchhikers. A small pile of them had accumulated on the corner of the desk housing the monitor as Buffy continued her fruitless search through local newspapers via the library database. The vent above her rumbled to life and her chin lifted, gaze leaving the screen to search the ceiling for her second, and welcomed, heat source to fight off the chill of an Ohio fall.

The main branch of the Cleveland Public Library was a large building, dominating its corner of the city’s real estate with ease and just a little regally, but since the building had been built before central air conditioning and insulation were the norm, certain areas tended to stay cold during winter and hot during summer. Buffy had found one such place in the computer room on the third floor and while she’d warmed enough to shed her leather jacket her hands, with their blue tinted nails, told a different story.

A sigh escaped past chapped lips, she needed her balm, and green eyes returned to the computer screen as her right hand rose from its search to downsize the program that allowed her to navigate the local newspapers and brought up the internet. Her left hand joined the right on the keyboard as she attempted to channel Willow’s old net-girl persona, or at the very least some Google-fu and locate someone that could actually help her. Why did she need help, why was Buffy stuck in a library on a beautiful, if cold, Thursday morning one might ask?

In a word: Dawn.

In four words: Willow teaching Dawn magic.

A simple transportation spell her ass.

She huffed and lifted her left hand to prop her chin on it as she scanned the results of her search for Willow Rosenberg. Her Willow had been the one to help send her to another dimension so perhaps this dimension’s Willow could help send her back. A dimension that didn’t have a Watcher’s Council building and since Dawn had been attempting to send her to the study Buffy had instead found herself in midair several stories above the ground. She’d had enough time to roll her eyes before she’d plummeted to the ground and landed, hard, in the middle of a vacant lot that hadn’t seen a good mowing in months, if not years, hence the hitchhikers.

Green eyes glared at the website offering to find any Willow Rosenberg she wanted for the lowlow price of twenty-nine, ninety-nine and her nostrils flared in irritation as she highlighted
Willow’s name, replacing it with Faith’s and she continued that routine until she’d exhausted all her friends, not that she had that many, before muttering, “What the hell,” and typing in Hank Summers and Los Angeles, California.

The screen in front of her filled with blue links and her brows rose beneath her bangs as she scanned the selection and brought the cursor to the first link. Hank Summers’ image, which looked remarkably like her dad, filled the screen and she scrolled down, scanning more than reading, an article about this dimension’s version of Hank and his accomplishments over the last decade. Buffy gnawed at the inside of her mouth as she learned this Hank Summers was a good man, great even, helping to bring down corrupt corporations, was active in several charities and was also a lifelong bachelor.

Her brows dropped, tugging together before she brought Google back up and typed in Joyce before staring blankly at the blinking cursor. Feeling oddly like it was mocking her Buffy’s gaze dropped and she noticed a hitchhiker on the hem of her white tee and absently tugged it off as she struggled to recall her mother’s maiden name. Buffy knew it started with the word ‘lock’ and she continued to roll the hitchhiker between her fingers. She brought it up and stared at it as she squished the soft exterior until the harder, brighter seed was released and she realized why the plant was so easily distracting her. Her mother’s maiden name ended with something plant-like!

Green eyes narrowed in determination and she dropped her hand, wiping the remnants of the seed on the table as she leaned forward and typed in lock and added tree before deleting it. She took a breath and typed root, but then shook her head, blonde hair slipping from behind her shoulders. The word sapling just didn’t sound right and Buffy’s eyes widened before she added wood to the end of lock and typed in Virginia, the state her mother had been born in.

Her stomach dropped when the third link was to a newspaper article from Mystic Falls, Virginia and in the summary it listed her mother’s name and the phrase ‘animal attack.’ Dread filled her even as she clicked on the link and scanned the short article giving a brief description of Joyce being the member of a founding family and her tragic death in the local woods. Buffy’s gaze flicked up, finding and calculating the date of the article and realized it had happened nearly two decades prior before she continued scrolling down and found several pictures of a woman that was definitely her mom, but not her mom. The dropping sensation was back and it filled her cheeks with a tingle that told her she was paling as she reread the short article.

A rustling drew Buffy’s head up and to the side, her eyes narrowing in confusion as she watched a teenager, not particularly dressed well for the cool weather, rummage through a backpack two cubicles behind her. She could have sworn a guy had been sitting there, but a shrug lifted her shoulders, guessing since she’d been well and truly distracted and he’d probably already left without her knowing, and went back to her search.

The floor compressed behind her and something brushed her back, bringing Buffy to her feet and around before she’d even processed what had happened. Her eyes widened and then narrowed on the girl that had just swiped her leather jacket from the back of her chair and was tugging it up her arms even as she was booking it between the cubicles. “Hey!”

Blue eyes glanced back and then the teenager put on a burst of speed before Buffy muttered, “Son of a bitch,” and sprinted after the little bitch that had her jacket, her jacket with her only stake and last bit of cash stashed in it, and Buffy quickly came to the realization, in that moment, that she was the dead horse and the universe, regardless of dimension, was never going to be done beating her.

An alarmed exit appeared before the teenager as Buffy put on a burst of speed as the kid palm slapped it, opening the door sans alarm, and disappeared through it. Buffy hit the door with her shoulder and paused, glancing around the stairwell in front of her before hearing footfalls above
and frowned, head falling back as she glared upward and groused, “Up instead of down? Is this a freakin’ horror movie?”

With a shake of her head she lengthened her stride and took the stairs two at a time, gaining on the teenager even as she broke free of the stairwell and, Buffy guessed, onto the roof. She reached the top landing and the door slammed closed behind the little thief and Buffy rushed forward, catching the handle and yanking the door open. She spilled onto the rooftop a step or three behind the wide-eyed teenager.

“Seriously?” Buffy questioned as she watched the other girl dart across the flat roof toward the other side and her eyes widened as she watched her pick up speed. “Nononononono!” Buffy chanted as the girl hit the waist high ledge of the roof and put one foot on it before diving for the building across the alley.

Buffy followed her lead, but stopped at the ledge, leaning over to see the kid hadn’t quite made it and was now hanging onto the edge of the adjacent building with her boot-covered feet scrambling for purchase against the brick. She took in the ten foot wide gap and a story drop with narrowed eyes before sighing and climbing onto the ledge. “Hold on!” was shouted in the kid’s general direction.

The out of breath response of, “Kinda hafta,” made her smile and Buffy took her own breath before leaping.

She hit the other roof and rolled forward, taking the impact in her shoulder and back rather than risking an ankle in heels before she rolled onto her hands and knees. The fingers, with bloody nails, grasping the brick slipped from view and Buffy’s eyes widened as she lunged forward, stomach catching the roof’s edged as her left hand caught the teenager’s wrist and her right braced herself against the building.

Blue eyes stared up at Buffy stunned and a pretty face, currently ugly with terror, was turned up towards her. She shifted, spreading her legs, jeans catching against the brick as she anchored her stomach against the building’s edge before lowering her right arm and ordering, “Give me your other hand.” The teenager dropped their gaze toward the backpack she held and Buffy snapped, “Forget the damn bag and give me your damn hand!”

Pale brows tugged together and Buffy glared at the frown the kid sent at her and then Buffy flinched when the dead weight of the kid’s body rocked as she rolled her arm up and around, forcing the bag into an upward arch. Buffy lost track of it as the kid impacted the side of the building and her grip on her wrist slipped and blunt nails cut bloody trails through her skin.

Her hand fisted, trying to catch the kid’s fingers but the blood made her skin slick and her fingers slipped away. The look of confusion on that pretty face was quickly replaced by finality. It was then that she screamed.

A scream that was abruptly cut short and Buffy stared down, horrified before she took in the sounds of sirens in the distance and her bloody hands.

Buffy then did what she did best in police-type situations.

She ran.

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Thunder shook the few inspiring posters that were framed and mounted on the brick walls of the shelter and Buffy lifted her head from her study of the day old newspaper to glance around the
overly heated room. The rusted springs of the cot squeaked in protest with her shift in weight as she brought a hand up to fan herself and her eyes rolled towards the ceiling currently being pounded with rain. Her gaze returned to the paper and a frown creased her brow as she realized the streets would be covered in frost by morning and her boots, while stylish, just weren’t meant for slick surfaces.

A hand came to her stomach as a cramp, not the first of the evening, halted her breath and she ignored it, hoping it wasn’t the beginning of her monthly friend arriving early as she scanned the paper for mentions of the girl she’d tried, and failed, to save twenty-three days before. Buffy knew the police sought her for questioning, but the article that had detailed the death of Nora Martin had only been a small blurb and there was something terribly sad about that.

“Buffy?”

Green eyes rose from their search and her head followed as Buffy offered the woman in the cot next to her an easy, if sad, smile. “Hey, Molly.”

The mother of two returned the smile and asked, “Can I have that paper when you’re done?”

Another cramp, deeper and sharper than the first dragged a gasp from her and she flinched before directing her attention to the paper and folding it in half. “Here,” her response came out breathy as the pain doubled and she rose, offering the paper to Molly as her son gazed up at her from his place beside his mother’s cot.

Molly’s eyes widened, bringing attention to the fading bruises around her left eye, as she accepted the paper with a startled, “Thank you.” Her head inclined, dark hair spilling to the side as brown eyes narrowed on the hand Buffy had fisted over her stomach. “Are you alright? You look a little feverish.”

“Peachy,” Buffy frowned and absently pressed her free hand to a flushed cheek before she sighed. “Mind watching my stuff? I think I need to use the ladies.”

A knowing look spread across Molly’s face and she quickly agreed, “Of course. Take a shower. Those always helped me.”

“Maybe I will.” Buffy nodded to her and made her way past Molly’s son and sleeping daughter, heading towards the locker rooms set up along the far side of the building. A building she’d had to take a drug test to be allowed into and provide a copy of her driver’s license. Thank God she’d had her wallet on her when Dawn performed her spell and it was a shame she had only managed to spend seventeen nights in due to overcrowding. She understood the families with small children first rule, hell she supported it, but sleeping under an overpass the other nights was starting to leave a bitter taste in her mouth and in her heart.

A bead of sweat escaped her hairline to travel down her forehead and she brushed at it with her right hand. It tensed with the movement, hand cramping until she could see the tendons pressed tight against her skin and she swallowed her grunt of pain before she finished the few yards to the locker in a steady jog. She slowed her stride as she passed the security desk, not wanting to arouse suspicion and get herself kicked out, and then sprinted once she hit the hallway. The sounds of her bare feet slapping against the brushed concert made her flinch since shoes were supposed to be worn when not on your cot.

The curious looks she got were ignored and she hit the door as the lights dimmed, signaling it was nine o’clock and time to sleep. She pushed her way inside as her throat constricted and she coughed, the cramp in her hand forgotten as she struggled for air and collapsed against the row of lockers with enough force to rock them and the rattling bang echoed across the tiled walls. Green
eyes scanned the room for help, found none and the tension melted from her throat suddenly, leaving her gasping for air and Buffy stumbled away from the lockers.

She turned back towards the locker room door and the muscles in her left leg fell into spasm. Her mouth opened, but she swallowed the urge to cry out as she fell backwards, landing hard on her ass, but that pain was overshadowed by her knee contorting. It popped and shifted, her leg tearing through her jeans as her knee bent in a way it was never supposed to move and her startled shriek of pain intensified when her leg realigned.

Terrified, not for herself, but the people beyond the door, Buffy shoved herself back onto her feet and her knee protested the movement even as she lunged for the door and flicked the lock. Someone pushed against the door and she stumbled back from it as pounding replaced the pushing and she was ordered to unlock the door. Buffy shook her head and then cried out, falling to her knees as her back arched and several wet pops reverberated off the tiles surrounding her.

She pushed herself up and stumbled forward even as a heaviness filled her limbs, weakening her, but a sharp pain in her jaw drove her towards the sinks along the far wall. Her vision blurred before sharpening and she paused, posture stiffening as the pounding on the door intensified and she stared at her reflection. Her eyes burned a fierce and frightening yellow that reminded her sharply of the vampire’s from her home dimension.

Tears blurred her vision and the thudding beat of her heart intensified, filling her head and her chest constricted before it pushed outward. She screamed, falling back to her knees as her chest narrowed and lengthened, ribs cracking and shirt ripping, falling in tatters from her body as she fell forward. The smell of disinfectant and urine suddenly overwhelmed her as her face contorted; stretching forward until she could see her nose lengthening, flattening and her screams became a snarl.

She collapsed, fur spilling across her exposed skin as her legs contorted, reshaping and her jeans fell from her body followed quickly by her underwear. The heartbeats outside the pounding door across the narrow room swiveled her head and she huffed, lifted a face that was narrowed and furry and the smell of sweat was sweet on the air and her stomach tightened with hunger.

A snarl peeled thin lips back, exposing her teeth and she took a halting step forward before the pounding stopped, replaced by the softly hesitant voice of Molly. “Buffy? Buffy, are you alright? Open the door.”

She jerked back, graceless for a moment on four legs, before she turned and leapt atop the lockers. Sharp claws scrambling against the metal before she pushed herself through one of the narrow windows lining the wall, the glass giving surprisingly easy beneath her strength, but the scent of her own blood had her heart beating quicker and her thoughts jumbled as the rain struck her, stinging needles of cold against her furred back.

The scents of the alley were distracting and she pushed herself up from where she’d landed and did the only thing she could.

The only thing she wanted to do.

She ran.

+ Wind swept down the narrow road, inviting the layer of fallen leaves into a rustling dance and Buffy ducked her chin as her hair swept forward, a mass of loose waves that crowded her face and blocked her view. Green eyes narrowed as she gave up attempting to manage it and just
hoped she didn’t look like something small and furry was nesting in it by the time the wind was
done having its fun. She wasn’t entirely sure she’d be welcome, but she was certain looking like a
street urchin, regardless of the fact that it was closer to the truth than anything else, was not going
to be the best of first impressions.

Winter had well and truly come and while the state of Virginia was mild compared to Ohio none
of the clothing she’d managed to commandeer for herself was made for harsh weather. Thankfully
Molly had gathered her things and kept them safe for her four full moons ago even after Buffy had
found herself thrown out of the shelter, but thankful they hadn’t called the police. Full moons—
her head shook—that was how she kept track of time in this world and, not for the first time,
Buffy wished, sometimes out loud, that there was an Oz in this world to help her through her
transition from less than human to completely other.

She redirected her hands to the pockets of her cotton jacket, shoulders hunching and her army
duffle, that looked like it had been through an actual war, shifted against her back. Her head lifted
as she continued her steady stride towards the address she’d found in the town’s directory and
what town had a directory nowadays? Apparently the Lockwoods were well-to-do as her mom
would’ve said and Buffy wondered absently if this world’s version of Joyce would have been
anything like her mom.

The ‘animal attack’ that had killed Joyce Lockwood and the sudden increase in them over the last
year had brought Buffy to Mystic Falls in the hopes that there were others like her. She hadn’t
found another werewolf since her first change, not that she had been looking at first, but once she
started she found it remarkably hard to locate anything supernatural.

A mailbox held aloft by brickwork and wrought iron appeared in the distance and Buffy increased
her speed and stumbled when she was nearly rammed into the damn thing. Her boot heels skidded
in the grass and she took a deep breath before turning in a slow circle and exhaled with a sigh
when she realized she was alone and still not entirely in control of her new and, not always,
improved abilities. Seeing the numbers twenty-one and twenty-nine in iron on the side of the small
pedestal had Buffy stepping onto the driveway and making her way up it and through a beautiful
estate.

Her brows rose after several minutes of secluded walking as she escaped the canopy of trees
covering the gravel drive and she found herself before a home that was larger than the Council’s
building in Cleveland. “Wow,” was whispered softly as she took in the multi-columned mansion
done in brickwork that matched the mailbox perfectly and left Buffy mildly intimidated. Her hands
rose to tangle with her hair and bring it under some semblance of control as she finished making
her way towards the porch that spanned the front of the house and wrapped around to the left.

Buffy made her way slowly up the six steps that lead onto that porch and gazed through the
paneled glass that made up most of the front door into a wide expansion of home covered in wood
floors. Her shoulder rolled, duffle sliding down her arm to be propped against her leg and she took
a breath before leaning forward to hit the small doorbell that was adjacent to the door handle. A
tinkering of bells could be heard deeper in the home and Buffy flinched as the sound of pounding
feet beat their way down a flight of stairs and towards the door.

She shook her head, attempting to ignore the fact that she shouldn’t be able to hear that well, and
instead focused on trying to bring a genuine smile to her face. The deadbolt unlatched, the front
doors opening inward and the entry was filled with a guy, barely older than Nora Martin, and
thinking of her was like a stab to the gut and Buffy’s smile slipped.

Brown eyes studied her intently before his head inclined, nostrils flaring and Buffy found herself
mimicking him. Her own eyes widened with the scent of fur and dark soil and something sharper,
deeper that reminded her faintly of death. Those dark eyes narrowed and his head tilted, chin
coming to the side as his gaze swept past her to take in the porch and what lay beyond it. Eventually the silence stretched beyond what was comfortable and his gaze traveled back to her and he asked, “Can I help you?”

Buffy’s chin dipped into a nod even as she contradicted herself with, “I hope so.”

His gaze shifted back to her, a brow arching in a way that was oddly familiar before he asked, voice entirely too calm, “How long you been a werewolf?”

“Wow,” Buffy whispered again, but with far less enthusiasm and asked, “You’re going to lead with that?”

A small laugh escaped him and his head ducked, right arm coming up to catch the back of his neck and absently rub at it as he offered, “I’m not big on small talk.”

“Good to know.” Buffy’s gaze slipped down, frowned at the fact that her hands were clasped together in front of her and her fingers were starting to pale with how hard she was wringing them. She forced them apart and into the back pockets of her jeans, making her jacket gap around her small frame as she replied, “Four full moons and counting.”

His brows tugged together and a flinch worked its way across his features. “Yeah, I remember counting by moons.” He took a step back and opened the door wider, but the invitation remained unsaid which caused Buffy’s brows to tug together, but before she could comment he was speaking, “I’m Tyler, but I’m pretty sure you already knew that or you wouldn’t be here.”

“Yeah,” Buffy agreed as she lifted her bag and made her way over the threshold, glancing around the vaulted ceiling before her gaze slipped to Tyler and she settled for honesty, or as much as she could share without appearing all thundering loony, as she explained, “We share a common ancestor.”

“I kinda figured,” he replied with an enigmatic grin and finished, “And now we’re going to share a common friend.”

“How did you figure?” Buffy questioned, turning back to him.

A line appeared between his brows. “The curse,” he stated as if that explained everything, which it so did not, and that thought must has been written all over her face because he quickly explained, “The fact that we’re werewolves is a curse.”

“Well yeah, but how does that explain the ancestry link?”

Tyler nodded, as if the question made sense, before he clarified, “The curse is on a bloodline.”

Green eyes widened and understanding began to dawn as Buffy stated, “That explains some things,” but she kept the fact that if confirmed her assumptions to herself. A sheepish smile spread across her face, brought color to her checks as she opted for honesty, at least most of it, “You’re the first werewolf I’ve come across.”

“That does explain things.” Tyler mimicked and motioned for her to follow him. “So what’s your name?”

“Buffy.” He stopped and she nearly ran into him and she rolled her eyes at his smirk. “Yes, Buffy,” she groused and flicked a hand at him to continue. Tyler shook his head and resumed walking and Buffy studied the immaculate house he was leading her through even as she asked, “So who’s the common friend?”
“What?” His head inclined, but he kept his stride.

“The friend you said we’d be sharing?”

“Oh,” he stopped then and turned to her, the smile he wore was nearly contagious as he explained, “He helped me to be okay with being a werewolf. He made my life better and I know he can help you too.” Tyler caught her gaze, held it as he stated, voice terribly sincere, “I know Klaus would want to.”

Buffy returned his smile with one of her own, relieved she wouldn’t have to run anymore and wondered if the universe had finally moved onto another dead horse as she nodded and asked, “How soon can he get here?”

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The end (… for now).
Title: Winter Winds
Word Count: 3430
Prompt: #355 dust you are and dust you will return
Warning: none
Rating: FR13
Disclaimer: Buffy the Vampire Slayer and all related characters are copyright of Joss Whedon and ME. Vampire Diaries and all related characters are copyright of L.J. Smith, Kevin Williams and the CW. No infringement intended.
Note: Apparently there's more to this concept. I intend for this 'story' to be a series of shorts, much like the others, and it will be updated when a prompt inspires or the muse feels like it.

Synopsis: Buffy was having a hell of a time finding anything supernatural—aside from herself—in this new and unfortunate world. Buffy has found the supernatural and they're kinda sketchy.

Herringbone tile stretched out beneath her boot heels, it covered the floor of the bathroom that was larger than any motel room Buffy Summers had commandeered (stolen just sounded cliché) since her sister’s transportation mishap nearly half a year before. She’d been thrust into a world with only the clothes on her back and what little money she’d had on her at the time of the spell. Money that had been lifted from her person by a teenage pickpocket during Buffy’s search for a way home, back to her own dimension, and her chase of said thief had ended in tragedy—with blood on her hands and another life on her conscience.

A death that had, apparently, activated a dormant curse placed on her bloodline in this new world and Buffy had found herself with a slight case of werewolf. A curse that had nothing to do with Slayers and everything to do with her mother being a Lockwood. A woman, who in this dimension wasn’t a mother, had never married and had died several years before Buffy’s arrival under mysterious animal attack circumstances.

She resisted the urge to air quote at her own reflection in the mirror regarding animal attacks and what little they usually had to do with animals when she, and apparently her bloodline, were involved. Instead she brought those hands up to push her jacket off her shoulders before letting her arms drop. The jacket followed the movement, sliding down and she caught the collar, sweeping it up to be laid across the marble countertop beside a beaten down duffle. Turning from the mirror she grabbed the back of her shirt in her left hand and tugged it upward, dragging it up and over her head to leave her windblown hair in even worse disarray as she made her way towards a complicated looking shower.

Tyler Lockwood, who would have been her mother’s brother’s son if her mother had a brother(say that three times fast), had spent the better part of the last few hours talking with her about his experiences and she, in turn, had spoke of her own. Understanding and sympathy had been his response when she’d told him about being completely unaware in regards her condition until her first change and he’d fed Buffy her first full meal, outside her time as a wolf, in months after hearing her stomach rumble for the third time and ignoring her, “I’m peachy,” protests.

Buffy learned that her almostcousin was still in high school, a football player and, if she was being honest, kind of an ass, but he seemed to care. He had let a complete stranger, which he knew to be supernatural, into his home and offered to help her as best he could. The ass happened when she’d been informed that she smelled like gasoline and livestock, which was the haul of the two truckers that had been kind enough to drive her through the last few states, and she should probably clean
up before Klaus got there and, if she was being honest a shower did sound just this side of lovely.

An offer to wash away the dust that had accumulated during her journey wasn’t something she could decline, regardless of the offerer’s lack of tact, and Buffy’s head inclined as she recalled that according to Giles mankind had come from dust. Though Willow had countered that explanation and expanded on it by referencing a different type of dust and stars. It was all very dusty as far as Buffy was concerned, herself included, which was what led to her standing in front of one massive shower without a clue how to operate it.

Her head cocked, frown becoming more prominent before she shrugged and turned back to the counter. The shirt joined her jacket and she tugged the duffle towards her before unzipping it to retrieve a pair of jeans and a shirt before grabbing the smaller backpack from deeper within that contained her toiletries and clean underwear and socks. Grimy jeans she could handle but dirty underwear she could not and that had led to her thievery of commonplace things like detergent on more than one occasion—her mockery of Dawn’s toothpaste heist from way back when seemed less than funny these days.

The items she pulled out were simple and white and a far cry from the lace and nylon in every color and pattern under the rainbow she had back home. Her jean-covered ass hit that pretty floor so she could unzip her boots that had faded from stylish to worn and tug them down her legs and off her feet. She place them upright and heels together against the cabinet with careful precision, the time of being careless with her possessions and Council spending account had long passed and Buffy missed that spending account something fierce. Her jeans were next as she stood and folded them neatly before adding them to the counter followed by her bra and underwear until she was standing nude and relatively comfortable in an almost stranger’s home.

Staying in shelters were privacy was near to impossible had taken its toll on her modesty and hopefully her regular workings of unknown showers would aid her in this newest endeavor as Buffy rolled her shoulders back and turned around. The glass door was opened and she stepped onto the cool tile, brows tugging down with the slight temperature change before she made her way deeper into the shower.

Green eyes taking in the ceiling that was lower than the rest of the bathroom and the metal square in the middle of it that had four sections with small holes that had her guessing that was the shower head. She stepped forward to place herself directly beneath it and her tongue slipped forward to roll over her front teeth as Buffy stared at the three metal plates in front of her. With a sigh and a prayer she hit the plate in the middle and water sprayed down—cold, very cold water.

“Dammit!” She hit the middle plate again which only increased the pressure and not the temperature. “Dammit. Dammit. Dammit,” was chanted in rapid succession as she stepped forward and still found herself well within the range of the shower’s spray. In the next moment Buffy guessed left and hit the plate several times for good measure.

Another, more pleased, sigh escaped her as the water warmed and she continued to hit the plate until the water reached the desired temperature and she could step fully under the spray without her teeth chattering. Buffy helped herself to the toiletries already present in the shower, hording her own had become habit, and ignored the fact that she could clearly hear her almostcousin’s laughter.

Definitely an ass or, at the very least, a pain in her own.

Hair, still damp from the towel dry, was draped over her shoulder and while Buffy would have loved to use the blow-dryer stored beneath the bathroom sink she’d heard the front door open and thought presence was more important than presentation at the moment. Though she had taken the
time to pinch her cheeks to give them some color and apply her lip balm, the only cosmetic she owned currently, before exiting the bathroom. The duffle hung from her shoulder, she’d learned to keep it within her sight at all times regardless of her location, as she made her way down the hallway towards the stairs.

Her boots thudded down the steps and the muffled conversation between Tyler and, who she assumed was, Klaus tampered off as she hit the main floor. She’d worn her best jeans, which meant her cleanest, and a flannel shirt that was a size to small—it had been a thrift store find—and only buttoned to just beneath her breasts, revealing the white tank top she wore beneath it. She self-consciously tugged at the hem of the blue material of the shirt and glanced up, past the checker-like design to the beautifully decorated home surrounding her and suddenly found her steps faltering and herself lacking.

That thought straightened her spine and brought her shoulders back, the duffle settling along her spine, as she pulled herself together and focused on the fact that, while she wasn’t flourishing, she was surviving. Her mental pep-talk derailed as the scent of something other distracted her internal musings and she paused in the foyer. Her nostrils flared, chest expanding as she scented the air and attempted to sift through the different smells. Disinfectant and lemon overpowered most others and were likely from the polish used on the hardwood beneath her boots and a woody acidic smell that reminded her of Spike came to her next. Someone had recently opened a bottle of Scotch and Buffy sniffed again, but the other scent was lost to the muddled smells of the Lockwood home.

A frown pulled her brows inward and Buffy shook her head for using a heightened sense that she still wasn’t entirely comfortable with yet before making her way out of the foyer. The conversation she’d heard earlier had held a faint echo and trusting her instincts she headed towards the kitchen at the back of the home. A hand rose to play with duffle strap, fingernails scraping over the nylon as she hit a break in the hallway and entered an area that could only be referred to as a ballroom.

High ceilings and panoramic windows managed to make her feel small as she made her way through it and to the door that led into the kitchen. Muttering a smile, she put her free hand against the swinging door and shoved; it opened with nary a sound and Buffy stepped through that opening. Her smile slipped and the hand holding the strap clenched as the door swung back, striking her in the shoulder. The scent of other was back. It was spicy and warm—which she wasn’t entirely sure how a scent could be warm, but this was—and it saturated the kitchen, but it wasn’t just the scent that gave her pause.

The air within the kitchen was thick with something, something intangible and heavy, and she could feel the weight of it against her skin. The hairs along her forearms and the back of her neck rose, the skin of her chest tightening with goosebumps and she’d only felt like this once before. When she’d been sixteen and fighting for her life in the catacombs beneath Sunnydale. The Master had made her bones ache and her breath catch and it hadn’t entirely been the mind-control.

She caught sight of Tyler first and he offered her an encouraging smile, motioning her forward, but across from him sat another—referring to him as a man, which implied human, felt wholly inaccurate. A granite island stood between them and she was thankful for it. Her throat tightened as she swallowed past the sudden dryness and the muscles in her thighs tensed in preparation of fight or flight as that nagging sense of wrongwrongwrong attempted to override all other responses and force her into flight and Slayers didn’t flee—at least not without good reason.

She was certain the part of herself that had been splintered four moons ago and given a snarling voice was the portion of her clanging the warning carillon and making her sense things she didn’t normally sense. Buffy watched him calmly lift a glass of amber liquid, the Scotch she’d smelled
just a moment ago, and take a sip before lowering it to the island. He stated, voice a mixture of
amusement and something else, “You’ve brought me an alpha, Tyler.”

Her almostcousin was giving her a concerned look as he replied, “How’s that?”

He ignored the question and absently rolled the bottom of the glass against the granite. His gaze
remained trained on the sloshing liquid, but his words were for her as he continued, “And here I
thought your kind had been hunted to extinction.”

“Rarity, thy name is me,” she countered as she stepped fully into the kitchen and allowed the door
to swing close behind her. His gaze lifted from his glass to her face and Buffy watched as he rose
from his seat at the island and made his way around it. Her chin lifted as he grew taller the closer
he came, he was taller than Spike, but shorter than Angel and currently giving her a once over that
was both annoying and expected as she stated, “I’m supposing you’re Klaus.”

His gaze lifted from his study of her attire to her face and he met her gaze. “You’d suppose
correctly,” he offered before tilting his glass in salute of her and taking another sip. “Tyler, be a
gentleman and get the lady a drink.”

Buffy let her gaze slide past Klaus to Tyler and she arched a brow. “If you don’t mind?”

He rose to do as she requested even as he questioned, “You’re a Scotch drinker?”

“Nowadays I’m not too picky.” She turned her gaze back to Klaus and shifted the duffle on her
shoulder. “Care if I set this down? We can have a drink and a chat.”

“By all means, make yourself comfortable.” He turned, giving her his back and Buffy narrowed
her eyes on it before she shrugged, letting the strap fall down her arm. She stepped forward and
propped the duffle against the chair she intended to claim as Tyler went to the cabinets set into the
far wall and retrieved a crystal tumbler and another highball glass. Klaus stood beside his own
chair and called her attention back to him by questioning, “So Tyler tells me you’re from
Cleveland.”

“Not originally, but I call it home,” she frowned, corrected, “Or I did.”

“The curse does make a habit of tearing one’s life apart.”

Buffy offered Klaus a tired smile. “I really won’t argue that.”

He smiled in return, just a minute twitch of his lips and no teeth, but it was there before he
questioned, “So you’ve no family?”

Her brows tugged together as she replied, voice tight, “I had a sister,” Buffy trailed off as Tyler
came forward and offered her a finger of Scotch. “Thanks.”

“How; I am assuming is the operative word in that sentence.”

“Klaus,” Tyler admonished and gave him a pointed look that had Buffy giving her own version of
a tightlipped smile at his slight show in chivalry and had Klaus frowning at him. Her almostcousin
turned back to her, his mouth quirking just a bit as he offered, “He’s not the most tactful of
people.”

Her teeth sank into the inside of her bottom lip, biting back the retort that would question the
validity of Klaus being referred to as people since she wasn’t exactly people herself— glass
houses and stones and shit—and instead brought the glass up to her lips. The Scotch tasted
nothing like the battery acid that Spike used to drink, which was a pleasant and welcomed
surprise, and Buffy swallowed the burn, enjoying the slight smoky taste that remained on her tongue before claiming her seat and watching Tyler do the same.

Green eyes narrowed when Klaus remained standing, his gaze trained on her and she took another sip of the Scotch before asking, voice pitched low from the burn, “So I’m an alpha?” His mouth quirked, that same thin smile as Buffy continued, “What exactly is that?”

“I believe that is a story for another day,” Klaus countered, retaking his seat and saluting her with his drink, “Tyler and I currently have a party to plan.”

“Homecoming,” Buffy turned, her brows rising with Tyler’s clarification as he continued, “Our school gym was flooded and Klaus suggested I host it here.”

“Your house is big enough,” Buffy frowned, “Which also means I should probably make myself scarce,” she nodded, more to herself than them, and began to rise, looking to Klaus as she clarified, “We can meet up tomorrow—”

“Buffy,” Tyler interrupted her, stilling her movements and drawing her focus back to him, “You can stay here tonight.”

“High school dances really aren’t my thing,” Buffy argued, “They weren’t even my thing while I was in high school.”

Her almostcousin’s smile turned condescending—she mention he was ass-like—and he shook his head. “I wasn’t inviting you to Homecoming. I was suggesting you come back afterwards and crash in one of the many spare rooms we have around here.”

“Oh,” Buffy replied, feeling vaguely ass-like herself, before frowning, “I have camping gear,” she hesitated, amended, “Well a sleeping bag and I’m not afraid to use it—”

“You’re staying here.” Tyler interrupted, leaving no room for argument with his tone or the pinched frown he was shooting in her direction.

“Well,” Klaus stated, drawing both their attention back to him and Buffy frowned at the fact that she’d allowed herself to be distracted from the likely danger he posed. “Now that, that’s settled. Perhaps we can get back to making our arrangements.” He looked to Buffy, bared his teeth in a smile and offered, “I’ve a few friends with me who would love to make your acquaintance. They’ve been wolves a bit longer than Tyler here and perhaps could answer a few of your questions.”

Her brows tugged together with the odd sense that she was being moved around like a chess piece, but since this was her first chance to interact with other werewolves Buffy couldn’t find fault with the suggestion. She looked to Tyler and his reassuring smile had her lips pursing, but rather than voice her displeasure, at least at the moment, Buffy instead found herself nodding. “I guess I’ll just leave you boys to your planning.”

“Tony.” Klaus called, voice barely rising as he leaned back in his stool and the door at Buffy’s back swung inward and she turned, frowned at the man filling the entryway since she’d been completely unaware of Tony until he’d made himself known. She turned back to the others, eyes narrowing as she caught sight of Klaus’ smirk as if he knew his very presence had deadened her senses to all others.

His gaze slid from hers to beyond her shoulder as he addressed the newcomer, “Be a good fellow and take Buffy here into town for some dinner,” before Buffy could protest or question the motivation behind that request Klaus tacked on, “Answer any questions she has.”
“Of course, sir.” Buffy sighed, glancing behind her shoulder to find her escort smiling pleasantly down at her—as if someone had already drunk the Kool-Aid—and his head inclined before he inquired, “Ma’am?”

“It’s okay, Buffy.” She turned, met Tyler’s ‘oh so’ earnest gaze as he added, “You can trust us.” He inclined his head towards Tony. “Go, eat something other than a sandwich. I’ll take care of your bag and I’ll see you in a few hours.”

“Sure,” she offered him a tired smile, “Have fun at Homecoming.”

“I’ll see you in the morning, Buffy.” Klaus assured her, drawing her gaze to him and she resisted the urge to frown at him.

“Tyler said you can help me. That you helped him.”

“He helped us all,” Tony chimed in from behind her.

“I did,” Klaus agreed, “I’ll help you as well, but there’s some questions of my own I need answered first.”

“The alpha thing.” Buffy stated, her best hunch at what he’d need to chat with her about which earned her that same tightlipped smile that didn’t quite reach his eyes. With a shake of her head Buffy turned, addressed Tony with an easy, “Shall we?”

He smiled, lines gathering around the incredible blue of his eyes, and placed his age closer to her own than Tyler’s before he offered her his arm and Buffy rose to accept it. She kept her gaze forward, unwilling to show Klaus how very much she didn’t want him at her back, as she was led from the room and then the house. Her own unease increasing as she noticed the people now loitering on the Lockwood property, but she refrained from commenting as Tony directed her to a sleek looking car and opened her door for her.

She watched the people, for lack of a better word, watch them leave with the sinking knowledge that she’d well and truly found the supernatural in this world and hopefully it didn’t come back to bite her on the ass, but with her luck it most definitely would.

The end.
Green eyes opened to an unfamiliar ceiling, but Buffy Summers had become accustomed to the unfamiliar in recent months and, as ceilings went, this one was well above average and the bed, with its down comforter and pillow, was a far cry from the cots she’d been laying her head upon of late. She’d appreciated those cots, they had been leaps and bounds better than the overpass she’d slept under from time to time, but they weren’t nearly as welcoming as this particular bedroom.

Buffy rolled onto her side and brought the clean scented sheets up to tuck beneath her chin and shifted her head against the pillow, chin catching on the corner as she made herself comfortable. The sound of the forest, which edged the large expanse of lawn that made up the Lockwood Estate, was bustling just outside. The sun had yet to rise, but the birds were making themselves known as they called to one another in the predawn hours.

It was a comforting thing to hear, something she’d grown accustomed to after waking in the woods the mornings after a change. Buffy found she enjoyed the scent and sound of nature, but the feel of it against her nude form had been less than enthusing. Dirt and leaves in strange places were not high on her list of fun things to find. Though locating her stash of clothing the morning after had become somewhat of a ritual in the few short months she’d been a werewolf.

Dawn’s spell had accidently transported her into an alternate dimension in which their family had been cursed—surprising that was not—and Buffy had, of course, activated that curse. She was pretty certain she could have flourished if it was only a slight case of werewolf she had to contend with, but her inability to provide for herself had knocked her self-confidence down numerous pegs. Buffy knew the meeting of ends just wasn’t going to happen when one was jobless, homeless and newly furry, but that didn’t seem to stop the mockery filled voice in the back of her head.

Regardless or not of the fact that it sounded suspiciously like Cordelia and, for the most part, Buffy had discovered just how damn good she become at surviving. She’d known she could survive against the biggest and nastiest of hell beasts, but now she knew she could maneuver her way through the inner most workings of large cities and that most homeless communities helped out their own.

She’d learned, through them, which restaurants gave out free portions to those struggling and on what days and which stores threw out their ‘lightly’ damaged clothing that could be reused or repurposed. She had more than one set of sweater sleeves being used as boot-socks—see—legwarmers. They’d also helped her find work that paid under the table and her time on construction sites had always managed to remind her of Xander.

Thoughts of her best friend tugged her brows together as the familiar pang of homesickness made itself known in her gut and Buffy decided to pull herself from the comfort and warmth of the borrowed bed. Her toes curled into the plush rug that sat beneath that bed and she ignored the fact she was in desperate need of a pedicure and instead enjoyed the small pleasure before stepping
onto cool wooden floors. She made her way between the edge of the bed and the dresser that Tyler had unpacked her meager positions into and she knew it been him by scent.

He smelled familiar because, Buffy assumed, he was family and more than likely Dawn would have a similar scent to her—if she ever got to see or smell her sister again. That thought turned the pang of homesickness into a hollow feeling in her bones and tears blurred her vision. She blinked and forced herself to focus on settling the pair of draw string shorts more comfortably on her hips. They, and the shirt she wore, were new and made of soft cotton and had been left on bed for her when she got in the previous night.

She returned to a mostly empty home and an exhausted almostcousin who’d taken the time to show here to a spare bedroom before heading to bed himself. He hadn’t questioned where she’d been for nearly seven hours and Buffy thought, perhaps, he hadn’t cared. She spent the entire evening with Tony, the werewolf Klaus has sent her off with, and he’d been been helpful in his explanations of their abilities and of the supernatural community as whole in this new world.

While the knowledge that vampires were completely different here and had they pretty much infested Mystic Falls was unsettling he’d also supplied her with the nagging tidbit that werewolves were the only known predators of vampires. Buffy found that information suspect because she was certain Slayers had been the only know predators of vampires in her reality. Suddenly she had the feeling that higher powers were meddling in her life again and they really needed something better to do with their time.

Buffy chose to ignore the possible hand of fate and instead focused on exiting the bedroom. Her head shook at that thought as she made her way past the dresser and towards the white door with gold molding. She found the wood floors of the hallway were even colder against her bare feet as she hurried down the hall towards the bathroom she’d used the previous day to shower since relieving herself sounded like a splendid idea.

“Good morning.” The unfamiliar voice turned Buffy around and towards the opposite end of the hallway. She found a woman closer to her mother’s age than her own wrapped in a robe that cost more than all of Buffy’s current possession combined.

“Morning,” Buffy offered in reply.

A smile curved the corners of her mouth upwards, brows rising as the corners of her eyes gathered, but something about it felt forced as she finished the space between them. “Buffy, is it?”

Nodding Buffy moved to meet her halfway, offering her hand in greeting. “Yes, it is. And you must be Mrs. Lockwood.”

Blue eyes studied first her hand and then her face before the handshake was accepted. Mrs. Lockwood’s palm was cool and smooth to the touch, the smile still forced as she replied, “Please, call me Carol.”

“Carol,” Buffy agreed and gave that smooth hand a firm shake before extracting her own. “Thank you for letting me stay here last night.”

“Thank Tyler,” she corrected.

“Believe me, I did.” Her head cocked as she recalled how annoyed she’d become with the minislayers as they invaded her home without so much as a ‘thanks’ and that forced her to clarify. “Regardless of who invited me, this is still your home.” She caught Carol’s gaze and held it before stating, with great feeling, “Thank you.”
The smile slipped and became a little more real and a lot more tired before her host nodded. “You’re welcome, Buffy, but something tells me it will be for longer than a night.”

Warmth filled her cheeks and Buffy shook her head, assuring her, “It doesn’t have to be. I told Tyler—”

A hand rose, palm up and nearly commanding as she corrected, “That’s not how I meant that to come out. You’re welcome to stay here for as long as you need.” Buffy arched a brow and Carol hastily tacked on, “Within reason of course.”

Buffy finally returned her half sincere smile with one of her own. “Of course.”

“I think I’m going to go make breakfast.”

“Need any help?” Carol’s head inclined and Buffy quickly added, “I make a mean French Toast if you like cinnamon.” Her eyes widened as she suddenly realized she’d invited herself to invade not only Carol’s kitchen and eat her food, but join her as well and Buffy hastily added, “Or if you prefer to eat alone I completely—”

“I do,” Carol interrupted Buffy’s backpedal before finishing, “like French Toast and cinnamon.”

“So I’ll meet you downstairs in the kitchen in a few?” Buffy took a step back and explained. “I just need to freshen up a bit first.”

“I’ll get the coffee started.”

“Coffee is the only way to start the day.”

Her smile spread, becoming almost welcoming. “I think we might just get along.”

“I hope so.”

Buffy flinched at the sincerity of her own words, but Carol stopped her internal musings by assuring her, “Me too.”

The end.

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