

Miss Rosenberg, I presume?

Annals of the Librarian Attack Force, part 3.5

written by Calle Dybedahl

Meanwhile, an L-Space reconnaissance team from the Librarian Attack Force tries to re-establish contact with the Buffyverse.

Featured fandoms: Star Trek: Voyager, Buffy the Vampire Slayer

Featured pairings: Jenny Calendar/Kendra, 7of9/Kendra

A.S.S Story codes: ff

Story rating: NC17

The journal of Jenny Calendar, Research Associate to the Librarian Attack Force, Mission Day One.

*I swear, all attack librarians are insane. They must chose them for it. There is no other explanation. It's not reasonable that **all** the attack librarians I've ever met should be more than a little bit excentric if there wasn't some systematic reason behind it. They must be chosen. Which says something about the LAF, but I'm not sure what.*

*To be completely honest, I'm not sure why I'm here. Well, they're paying me to be, but I mean apart from that. Why they're paying me. Sure, I'm from the fiction line they're trying to contact -- but so is one of the attack librarians that are going. I even met her back in Sunnydale. Kendra, the Slayer that was activated after Buffy died. A good little Slayer of exactly the kind the Watchers' Council likes. She was killed by Drusilla, she tells me. Heck, **I** did better than that, at least I got to be killed by Angelus.*

So Kendra is a narrow-minded little warrior babe with no life at all outside the fighting. I can deal with that.

*I'm not sure if I can deal with the third and last member of our little party. According to herself, her designation is Seven of Nine, Tertiary Adjunct of Unimatrix Zero-One. I'm not even sure I **want** to know what all that means. And it's "designation", not "name".*

People usually call her Seven, she informs us, without a hint of emotion. Apparently she comes from a Star Trek fiction line, which should be enough weirdness for anyone right there. But she's not only that, she grew up with some sort of machine-species that uses biological individuals as components. She tends to be strictly logical, and she has a hard time dealing with humans. Still, after a few years with what passes for humans in the Trek line and a few months with the LAF.

Together, we're going to find Sunnydale. Again. The LAF lost contact with it when the school library was blown up. At the time they didn't much care, but now for some reason they urgently want information on Faith, the Slayer who was activated when Kendra died. The most likely source of the needed information is, according to them, Willow Rosenberg. Who has not yet been written out of the series, so we have to go to her. Ergo, we have to go to Sunnydale. And in order to do that we have to find a path through L-Space that leads from the LAF Compound to somewhere there. With the High School library gone, Kendra and I have agreed that the most likely egress point will be the book section of the Sunnydale Magic Shop. Giles is knowledgeable in magic, and Kendra tells me that Willow started dabbling in it after I left, so we're guessing that the shop still has some part in the series. In any case, we can't think of anywhere better.

Today, we have entered L-Space via the Gateway Complex at the LAF Compound. We've gone some way into it and found a suitable place to set up a base camp. The surrounding shelves are mostly full of slightly out of date encyclopedias and books with mathematical tables. The latter may be a bit dodgy, since there are some formulas in there, but it should be all right. At least it's not something really awful, like children's stories or political theory.

"What are you writing?" Kendra asked in her vaguely Caribbean accent.

Jenny looked up. "Diary," she said. "Mission log, sort of. Why?"

"Nothing. I am only trying to be companionable. Since we are going into danger together, we should get to know each other. This I have learned in the Librarian At-

tack Force. If we know each other, we know better how the others will react in a crisis, and we will make a better team. I want us to be a very good team."

"Ah," Jenny said.

They'd set up camp in a largish clear spot where several aisles came together. The center of the clearing was occupied by a huge old table, easily enough for them to sleep on, should they so wish. They hadn't yet decided if that was a good idea or not. They'd wait for a while, see what sort of wildlife this section held before making up their minds. Sleeping on the table would be protection from ground critters, sleeping under it from things living in light fixtures.

"An excellent idea," Seven said. "I concur. We should get to know each other. If possible, we should become friends."

They were sitting in large old wooden chairs, clustered around one end of the rectangular table. Jenny had sat down at the top of it to write, and as they finished setting up the camp Kendra and Seven had sat down to each side of her.

"So, how do you librarians get to be friends?" Jenny asked, only realising the split second after it was out her mouth that she probably didn't want to know.

"We go dancing," Kendra said. "And we drink large amounts of alcohol. Sometimes too large, and then we throw up."

"Also," Seven added, "we engage in team sports. Something called 'rugby' is very popular, as is hand-to-hand combat."

Jenny looked at Seven's ample bosom, thinly covered by a kind of silver jumpsuit. "Let me guess," she said. "A lot of them want to practice wrestling with you."

Seven looked unperturbed. "That is indeed correct," she said. "It is a safe way for them to feel me up. I rather enjoy it."

Kendra crossed her arms. "Where you live, miss Calendar, how do people get to know each other there?" she asked.

"It just happens," Jenny said.

"Really?" Seven said. "How disorganized."

"Yeah, well, that's how we are. Speaking of disorganized, shouldn't the two of you check for wildlife or something?"

"Yes. We should," Seven said.

"Good," Jenny said. "You two do that and I'll cook dinner. And if you don't mind, I think I'll want to go to sleep after that. It's been a long day."

The journal of Jenny Calendar, Research Associate to the Librarian Attack Force, Mission Day Two.

Let me tell you about L-Space.

*L-Space, or, as is the more formal name, Library Space, is the sum total of all libraries in a multitude of universes. If it reaches all possible universes or just some of them remains unknown, although the prevailing opinion at the moment is that the question is of very little practical relevance and should be left to the philosophers. What does matter is if we can **reach** a given universe or not.*

For a universe to be reachable, it must have at least one library. A library is a collection of books greater than a certain size. Exactly what constitutes a collection, what counts as a book and how large the certain size is varies from universe to universe. In a universe where books are a valued rarity, one or two shelves may be enough to form a library in the L-Space sense (which is the only sense the LAF cares about). There seems to be some connection between the minimum size needed and the locally perceived value of the books, but the connection isn't simple and not well un-

derstood.

When a collection passes the critical threshold and becomes a library, a gateway to L-Space forms. This gateway is only semi-physical, and is for the most part not directly observable from the outside. An experienced L-Space traveller can often guess where it should be, but even for them it usually takes a few tries to enter L-Space from an unfamiliar library.

Once in L-Space, one can go elsewhere. One can reach all other L-Space gateways leading to the universe one came from, or one can go to another universe entirely. And here comes one of the main peculiarities of L-Space: from all universes except one, one can only go back to the one one came from or proceed to one specific other universe. This special universe is called Mainline. If one enters L-Space from Mainline, one can go to any other L-connected universe -- if one knows the way. All those universes that aren't Mainline are known as fiction lines. This is just a name, it isn't meant to imply that those universes are in any way less real or important than Mainline.

All known gateways to Mainline lead to the Gateway Complex at the LAF Compound. Which, in essence, means that the LAF has a monopoly on inter-universe travel. They do let other organisations use their gateways to some extent, but they keep a very sharp eye on what those other organisations transport.

Build a library of your own on Mainline, and you can expect a visit from some seriously nasty Attack Librarians.

So anyway, L-Space.

Internally, L-Space is not surprisingly an insanely huge (possibly infinite) library. In spite of this, there is far more variation than you might think. When I say "library", you may think of the well-lit place with neatly spaced shelves full of gaily colored books that was in your old school. Or you may think of one or two old rooms with the walls entirely covered in leather-bound old tomes behind glass doors, three huge overstuffed chairs facing a small round table, the floor covered with a dark carpet so thick small dogs could get lost in it and dimly lit by arm-thick candles.

Both of those are in there.

*As are medieval rooms with a handful of shelves full of tomes handwritten on baby-lamb parchment by nuns high on **Amanita Muscaria** mushrooms. There are warehouses, ceilings so high they just vanish into the darkness, full of thousands and thousands of copies of Harlequin romances. There are vaults full of CD-ROMs. There are old cellars, with stalactites hanging from their ceilings and the walls full of painted symbols. There are hot and dry caves with hundreds and hundreds of stone tablets stacked against the walls.*

All these are libraries. All these are in L-Space.

In all of these things live.

Seven jumped down from the top of the bookcase. It was a little higher than she was, and the books in it were bound in cloth and well worn.

"Paperbats," she said. "Three or four families, that I could see. They should stay away from three large moving things like us. Let's proceed."

They were investigating the second aisle clockwise from the base camp. The first one had turned into a dead end after only a kilometer or so, without any sign of a gateway. This second one had branched several times, and the books and aisles seemed to be transforming into a more modern look, which was good in one way and bad in another.

"Paperbats?" Jenny said. "How large do those get? The thing I saw was easily as long as my arm."

"They normally have a wingspan of between 0.3 and 1.2 meters," Seven said. "Your arm is well within that range."

Jenny grimaced. "All right, then. Paperbats. As long as I don't have to fight them."

Kendra looked back over her shoulder. "Do not worry, miss Calendar," she said. "We do the fighting, you do the clever thinking."

She turned back, looking forward. She was taking point, walking first and watching out for anything dangerous that might lurk in or under the shelves. After her came Jenny, keeping notes of which branches they took and making a rough subject-matter map of the area. At the moment, they were passing through a section of mid-twentieth century printings of late nineteenth century horror fiction, which explained the presence of the paperbats.

Last in line came Seven, guarding their backs. Every hour or so, she and Kendra swapped places, to keep their attention fresh. It was easy to slip into complacency among the long, silent rows of books.

"Crossway up ahead," Kendra said.

They approached it carefully. Sometimes, the larger things living in L-Space, the ones that weren't connected to particular sections of it, would lurk behind corners to ambush careless travellers. Jenny had heard stories of people being attacked by book-worms the size of Greyhound busses, something she'd rather not experience firsthand.

Kendra peeked around the corner, quickly, both ways.

"It seems to be clear," she whispered. "I will go in. Be ready to assist me."

Holding her assault rifle at the ready, she bent down and prepared herself to dash around the corner.

Jenny couldn't help admiring her jeans-covered ass and powerful thighs. Forcing her mind back to the task at hand, she started taking notes on the crossway.

"It is clear," Kendra shouted from down the left-hand branch after a little while. "I'm coming back."

"Wait a moment," Jenny shouted back. "What are the books there like?"

"Like before, only... the backs have been covered with plastic, which is turning yellow and cracking up."

"Thank's, you can come back now."

Moments later, Kendra returned.

"Do you suggest we turn left, proceed straight forward or turn right?" Seven asked.

"Actually, I suggest we rest and then return," Jenny said. "We're twelve hours down this branch and it looks promising, but we have five more aisles going out from the base camp to investigate. I'd like to have a look at them and see if we can rule out more of them before we go down any one aisle for more than a day."

"Your plan is sensible," Seven said. "We will make camp here, and return to base camp once we have rested."

"We still aren't friends," Kendra said.

Jenny looked up from her writing. "We'll, we don't have any music to dance to, and we didn't bring any booze," she said.

"We could sing songs," Seven said. She was sitting by a portable propane burner, waiting for a pot of water to boil. "I have been told that that is something humans do by campfires. This is our camp, and we do have some fire."

"I do not sing," Kendra said, forcefully. She had a taken-apart assault rifle in front

of her, and was meticulously cleaning its parts.

"Why not?" Jenny said. "It's the best bonding activity anyone's suggested so far, I think."

Kendra blushed, which turned her coffee-with-milk-colored face a darker shade of brown. "I do not do... *that* either," she said.

For a moment, Jenny looked puzzled, then she laughed.

"Bonding," she said. "Not bondage. It means getting closer to each other, in a friends sort of way."

"Oh," Kendra said and blushed even deeper.

Seven ripped open a couple of packets of freeze-dried beef stew. "The food will be ready in four minutes," she said as she stirred the contents of the packets into the boiling water. "Taking out and preparing bowls for eating would be a suitable activity at this time."

Jenny did so, while Kendra quickly reassembled her assault rifle.

"So, Seven, how do you feel about it?" Jenny said as the tall blonde filled the bowls with steaming hot stew.

"I rather enjoy it," Seven said. "Although I must admit that my knowledge of campfire songs is limited, and this is neither the place nor the time for bondage."

Jenny almost choked on her stew.

"Um," she said when she'd regained her voice. "That sentence seems to imply that you are quite knowledgeable about bondage."

"I am," Seven said. "My time in the Librarian Attack Force has given me ample opportunity to explore my sexuality. While sex is not formally on the Attack Librarian curriculum, most Attack Librarians practice it vigorously and extensively."

Out of the corner of her eye, Jenny could see Kendra's face turning alternately dark and pale while Seven spoke.

"I'll go check the perimeter," the young woman said and quickly vanished into the darkness between the shelves.

Jenny and Seven looked after her vanished back.

"Kendra does not appreciate that part of life at the LAF Compound," Seven said.

The journal of Jenny Calendar, Research Associate to the Librarian Attack Force, Mission Day Twelve.

Finding a gateway out of L-Space is hard. Finding a gateway to a particular fiction line is very hard. One must know the exact library one is aiming for, in great detail. One must then find a portion of L-Space that matches that library, exactly. It's the latter part that is the hard one. The geography of L-Space is not understood. We don't know why one particular part of it borders on another part. It almost always changes gradually, so that one only very rarely finds trade paperbacks next to stone tablets. But it's not all that rare to find the alphabet of the trade paperbacks changing from, say, arabic to cuneiform, and then the material of the book from paper to some sort of soft ceramic and after that to stone tablets. One step at a time, it changes, and we can only rarely tell which way it'll go. Which is why we, when we want to find a gateway to a certain place, have to look all over the place to find it.

We have been looking for twelve days now. I don't expect us to find our gateway for a good long while yet. The shelves of the Sunnydale magic shop may not even be enough for a gateway, although I think they are. But even if we are so lucky, their contents are highly unusual. It's a wild mixture of modern New Age claptrap and ancient tomes of power, all thrown together more or less at random. It's not going to be

easy to find a portion of L-Space that matches that. But we will keep looking until we find it, or until the LAF decides that it's time for us to give up. We have supplies for many months, although most of it remains back at base camp. Fortunately, both Seven and Kendra are superhumanly strong, and can carry incredible amounts of food and water. This is very convenient.

We still haven't had any campfire singing. Since that second night's discussion, Kendra goes all strange as soon as I or Seven bring the subject up. As far as I remember from when we met back in Sunnydale, she had a very sheltered upbringing. It seems she hasn't got over it, in spite of several years as an Attack Librarian. We're quite sure she is interested, though. I've seen her give Seven's gorgeous body a kind of look I know well, from looking at her exactly the same way myself. Seven assures me that Kendra looks pretty much the same way at me, except that when she does she blushes and looks away. I'm not sure how to interpret that. Possibly I shall have to do something about it.

Seven stalked forward, followed by Kendra and then Jenny. They were in a fairly peculiar part of L-Space. It was a cave, as far as Jenny could tell from looking at it an old water-carved limestone cave. From the floor rose stone formations that made excellent bookcases. They looked exactly like they were natural formations, except that there was no way nature would have formed such straight and level shelves. The bookcases were full of books, mostly quite modern hardbacks with dustjackets, but occasionally a leather-bound or even handwritten volume. This last mixture seemed hopeful, as it approached what they needed to reach Sunnydale.

They'd been following the cave, trying to keep the books the same while finding more reasonable bookcases, when they first heard the voices. Human voices, chanting. It wasn't in any language either of them had ever heard, and for some reason it made them feel uncomfortable. After a brief, whispered conference they turned off their flashlights and approached, doing their best not to be noticed. A handful of bookcases along, a large opening became visible in the darkness. It was, as far as they could see, about twice as high as Seven was tall, three times as wide as high at the base and more or less arch-shaped. Through it a flickering light could be seen. The sound of the voices bounced around the stone walls of the cave, making it nearly impossible to place, but it seemed to grow stronger near the opening.

Seven stopped by the side of the opening, waited for the others to reach her.

"Look," she whispered and pointed through it.

On the other side of the opening, a stairway sloped sharply down into the bowl-shaped bottom of a cave large enough that the far end vanished in darkness. The floor of the cave was purely limestone cave, full of small stalagmites and glittering in millions of colors when the flickering torchlight hit them. Stacks of books lay here and there. Some of them were fresh-looking, some of them were half-covered by limestone sedimentation.

The flickering light, and the eerie chanting, came from the center of the bowl-like floor. A circle of braziers had been set up, and inside that circle figures kneeled and chanted. There were many of them, more than Jenny could easily count. Fifty, maybe a hundred. They were dressed in loose black robes, hiding any distinguishing marks. They formed a rough and thick circle, leaving a spot empty in the middle for a brazier and a standing red-robed figure. The middle figure held a book, and was steadily tearing pages from it and feeding them to the fire.

"Book-burners!" Kendra said. "I thought they were a myth!"

"They are," Seven said. "Apparently the myth is based on truth."

"What are book-burners?" Jenny asked. "I never heard of them."

They backed off a bit from the opening.

"Book-burners are a part of a story that is told among those who have travelled in L-Space a lot," Seven said. "It is said that occasionally, in the least expected places, one will find a number of strange robed individuals, standing in a circle chanting and slowly burning books page by page. Some claim that they live on the flesh of L-Space travellers, others claim that they get their sustenance from the destruction of works of literature. All agree that they are dangerous and should be avoided. I have never seen them myself. Until now."

"Well, we have to pass them," Jenny said. "This is the best lead towards a Sunnydale gateway we've had since we started."

"I concur," Seven said.

"I have heard that if they catch you they turn you into one of them," Kendra said. "I do not want to become one of them."

"You will not. If you get caught, we will rescue or kill you," Seven said.

"Thank you," Kendra replied. "You are indeed a friend."

The cave floor was wet and slippery. Water slowly dripped from the ceiling, depositing infinitesimally thin layers of stone where it landed. The resulting surface was often very smooth, and easy to slip on. Particularly in the dark, with a source of light off to your left that messed up your nightvision. Jenny did her best not to slip, and not to make any noises. It went quite well, although she was not nearly as agile or silent as the two Librarians.

They'd lowered themselves off the side of the stairway, staying as high on the cave floor as possible, far out of the light. They progressed slowly but steadily, and it was beginning to look like they'd make it across the cave without incident.

While she half-walked half-climbed, Jenny kept one eye on the books they passed. There were only an occasional volume as close to the cave wall as they were, but she could see the stacks further in well enough to get a reasonable idea of what they were passing. It was looking good so far, the mixture of volumes was approaching what she remembered from the Sunnydale magic shop. There were the modern classics in the genre, like Starhawk and Margot Adler. There were the slightly older classics, like Graves and Crowley. There were the modern crap, by various writers with taken pseudo-Indian names. There were the occasional truly old and valuable volume, hard to identify at a distance.

It was when trying to get closer look at one of those, one that looked like an 18th century edition of Agrippa, that Jenny slipped, fell, slid over the slippery rocks down to the center of the cave and careened into the circle of robed figures like a bowling ball into a bunch of pins.

She woke to one of the most blindingly intense headaches she'd ever had. It felt as if sheets of metal repeatedly sheared through her brain, while the skin of her head was constantly shrinking. She tried to throw up, but there didn't seem to be anything left in her stomach.

Some moments passed, and her head cleared somewhat. Other sensations than the pain in her head made themselves known. First, her ears told her that there was chanting all around her. It sounded faster, more agitated than it had before.

Secondly, her arms and legs complained that they couldn't move and that there

were constricting things around her wrists and ankles. She was sitting down, with her legs spread before her and her arms out to the sides.

Thirdly, her skin told her that it felt warm air move against it, or, differently put, that she was naked.

All in all, it added up to a good situation not to be in. Slowly, she opened her eyes.

As she had guessed, she was at the center of the circle of chanters. Her hands and feet had been tied to small stalagmites, and she supposed she was leaning against a larger one. She didn't have a shred of clothing on her, and she could see big bruises in the process of forming here and there on her body. Which, on the good side, meant that she hadn't been captured for very long.

The red-robed chanter was kneeling in front of her. Beneath the robe's cowl, she could see the gaunt, angry face of an old woman. Or, at least, a woman who hadn't had access to a decent diet or regular hygiene for a very long time. She was screaming more than chanting, and waving a closed fist at Jenny. On the ground near her, a closed book lay next to a burning brazier. Out of some strange compulsion, she tried to see which book it was. Jean M. Auel's *The Mammoth Hunters*, it was.

"Um, look," she tried to say, but it only came out a cough. "Hey," she tried again. "What do you think you're doing?"

There was no reaction from the robed ones, not even a change of expression from the one right in front of her. She kept ranting and waving for a while, before the chanting changed tone slightly and she grabbed the book in a claw-like hand. Carefully, she tore out the title page of the book. She put the book down, took hold of Jenny's ankle with one hand and cut it shallowly with the torn-off page.

"Ow!" Jenny said. "That hurt! Stop it!"

She tried to pull her leg away, but it was too securely tied to the stalagmite. She watched with growing fear as the old woman fed the bloodied page to the fire and tore out the book's second page. Grinning insanely at the expression in Jenny's face, the old woman cut her other ankle. As she leaned forward to reach properly, Jenny saw a long line of thin little scars on her arm. Her gaze went from the scars to the book.

There were very many pages left.

By the sixteenth page, when Jenny had four shallow but bleeding and painful cuts at each ankle and each wrist, she was seriously wondering where her two warlike companions were. What were they along for anyway, if not to rescue her from things like this? Mentally, she cursed them comprehensively.

As the grinning old woman leaned forward to give her the seventeenth cut, a shot rang out, a hole appeared in her forehead and her cowl extended backward for a moment, as if a strong wind had filled. Briefly, she looked surprised, and then she collapsed face forward.

More shots came, and more cowed insane women fell to the ground. The rest rose up, furious, and produced wicked-looking daggers seemingly out of nowhere. They charged, towards Jenny and then passing her. She turned and tried to see what was going on.

Behind her, Seven and Kendra were attacking. Seven led the way, chopping through the demented cultists with a double-headed battleaxe in each hand. Heads and arms flew, blood spurted and it looked to Jenny a bit like she was pruning a garden out of a Gigeresque nightmare. Behind Seven came Kendra, brandishing two large automatic pistols. Noises like coughs from a giant with bronchitis filled the cav-

ern and arm-long muzzle flashes singed the cultists before they died.

Slowly but furiously, the two Libraiians massacred their way through the crowd, leaving a path of blood and gore behind them. More cultists came out of the darkness to replace the ones that had fallen, but none of them came close enough to hurt the intruders. Body by body, they closed in on Jenny, until finally they reached her.

"Are you all right, miss Calendar?" Kendra asked, shouting to be heard above her own gunfire and the keening howls of the cultists.

"Of course I'm not fucking all right!" Jenny shouted back. "Get me away from here!"

Kendra put one gun in a holster at her hip and picked up a dagger from a dead cultist.

"Cover me!" she shouted to Seven, simultaneously shooting a black-robed madwoman in the face. Seven somersaulted over two cultists, striking downwards with both axes and splitting their heads like ripe watermelons on the way. She landed next to Kendra.

"I will cover your back," she said. She spun around, putting both axes into the chest of a cultist, quickly pulling them out again. "Please hurry," she said over her shoulder. "There are rather a lot of them."

Quickly, Kendra cut the ropes that held Jenny to the stalagmites. "This will be faster," she said and slung the naked woman over her shoulder.

"Ready," she shouted to Seven. "Let us get out of here!"

They fled in the direction they'd been heading, where they hoped they'd find a gateway to Sunnydale. While Jenny had been held captive, Seven and Kendra had ran ahead to the cavern's exit and left all their gear there before returning to free her. On the way out, they picked it all up and proceeded into unknown but hopefully safer territory.

"I'll have to stop soon," the still-naked Jenny said. "The floor here is killing my feet, and I've got quite a bit of gore to wash away."

"I would like to find a source of water before we stop," Seven said. "I, too, have some unpleasant substances to remove from my body."

Jenny looked at her. The tall blonde was almost completely covered in blood. Her face had been hastily scraped free of it, and most of her back was still the matte silver of her bodysuit. Everywhere else, she was covered in clotting blood.

"Point taken," Jenny said. She looked around. "Sounds like water that way," she said and pointed to the side.

Seven listened. "Indeed," she said and headed off that way.

Kendra and Jenny followed.

There was indeed water. In between a handful of reading pulpets and a stand of bookcases, a stream had worn a channel a couple of meters wide into the rock floor. Quickly, with little attention to preserving the environment, they made a camp, using the reading pulpets for firewood. That done, Seven stripped out of her bodysuit and entered the water with obvious relish. Jenny soon followed her.

Kendra remained on land, her back stiffly turned to her unclad companions.

"Hey, Kendra," Jenny called out once she'd got the dead cultists out of her hair. "Don't you want to wash up?"

"I am keeping guard," the young Slayer said, her voice every bit as tense as her back.

Seven climbed out of the stream, carrying her wet silver suit. "I will keep watch," she said. "You can relax now."

"If you don't mind," Jenny said, "I could use some help cleaning a bunch of paper cuts."

Kendra hesitated. "Very well," she said. "I will clean myself now." Hastily, trying to hide herself, she stripped out of her formerly white tank top and her flared blue jeans. She took a first-aid kit and walked to the side of the stream, looking very self-conscious.

"Here is the wound-cleaning kit," she said, offering the box to Jenny.

The latter held out her arms, undersides up and held close to each other, showing Kendra her two sets of cuts as well as pushing her breasts together and up a bit. In the aftermath of her brush with death, she felt so burningly alive that it was almost like being drunk. She also felt incredibly horny.

"Please clean them for me?" she said.

She could see Kendra trying hard not to ogle her breasts.

"It's OK," Jenny said. "You can look at me as much as you like."

Kendra blushed heavily, all the way down to the tops of her own breasts.

"You saved me," Jenny went on. "Having the rescued maiden is the hero's traditional reward. Don't you want it? I know I do."

Kendra looked away. "You are like a Watcher to me!" she said.

Jenny rose from the water and stood in front of Kendra. She reached out, put her hands on the young woman's hips. "Weren't you taught to obey your Watcher?" she asked.

"I was."

"Well, then. I order you to do whatever you want to me."

She could see Kendra's nipples stiffen. After a slight hesitation, she turned back and looked directly at her, letting her gaze roam up and down her body.

"Whatever I want?" she asked.

"Well, I don't like to be hurt," Jenny answered. "I'll let you know if you do anything that hurts."

Kendra dropped the first-aid box. Gingerly at first, as if they might burn, she put her hands on Jenny's breasts. She squeezed them gently, licked her lips.

"What if I do it wrong?" she asked.

"Then you'll have a reason to try it again," Jenny said.

Kendra sat down on her haunches, kissed Jenny's nipples and gently sucked at them, one after the other.

"Not wrong so far," Jenny said, getting all warm inside. Kendra moved down, caressing and kissing her way from the bosom towards the thighs. Somewhere around the navel, Jenny stopped paying attention to anything but Kendra's hands and lips. As she ventured onto her venus mound, keeping her knees locked became a problem. Somehow she managed, even as Kendra's fingers slid in between her labia.

And suddenly stopped dead.

"Miss Calendar?" came a confused voice from below.

"Yes?" she said, pretty confused herself.

"You have a piece of metal stuck in your... down there."

Jenny laughed. "Play with it all you like, dear," she said. "That's what it's there for."

The journal of Jenny Calendar, Research Associate to the Librarian Attack Force,

Mission Day Sixteen.

Things live in L-Space. How, exactly, I don't know. There is no basis for an ecosystem there. In a real universe, the food chain has a first link, that takes its sustenance directly from the sun or an equivalent source. But L-Space has no sun, and no such primal ecological layer. Everything seems to feed on everything else. All living things in L-Space are predators. There is a theory that the basis of the ecology is things that leak in from the universes that attach to L-Space. I tend to doubt that, there aren't enough gateways for it. While the things in L-Space certainly like to eat most whatever comes through the gateways, they must also live on something else.

Another theory is that they live on plain malevolence and bad temper. While I'm actually in L-Space, I usually believe that one.

The book-burner cult we encountered a few days ago is a perfect example of the way L-Space inhabitants don't make sense. A group of humans that size needs a whole lot of food and water to stay alive -- yet we found nothing of the kind. Not that we stayed to look, mind you, but something should have been apparent. There should have been something besides robed nuns chanting and burning paper. Perhaps there is something to the theory Seven mentioned, that they live on mystical energies released when the pages burn. It might be an interesting (and dangerous) research project to find out.

There still hasn't been any singing by the campfire, but at least Kendra no longer blushes at the slightest hint at sex. Quite the opposite; having broken through a lifetime of inhibitions she now grabs at every opportunity to discuss it. Or to do it. It's probably just a reaction to all her years of more or less self-enforced chastity, but she now seems insatiable. I and Seven have started taking turns fucking her, so that at least one of us can get some actual rest at night. Kendra, of course, seems to get by just fine on a diet of sex and youthful energy. Oh, to be twenty again. At least if I got to keep all my later experience...

In a way, it is quite sad. Kendra shouldn't have come into her sexually active life like this, seduced by an older woman high on just having been rescued from mortal peril. She should've met a nice girl her own age, gone through all the normal rites of courtship. Dates. Worrying if you look good enough. Movies you know you've been to see but can't remember anything of. Giving flowers. Receiving flowers. A gentle first kiss under a full moon.

*Of course, nobody gets that in real life. And I guess, as first partners go, she could do worse than me and Seven. I may be flattering myself, but I think I'm a reasonable role model for her. And while Seven may be a very strange person, she is always perfectly honest. Shockingly so, at times. You never need doubt if she means what she says, because she **always** does.*

*And she's got a body that's just **so** hot.*

After the limestone caves, they followed an upwards branch into a drier cave system that turned into an attic, which in turn became the upper reaches of a library with sturdy warehouse-like bookcases so high they couldn't see the floor. Using ropes, some shelves they unscrewed from a bookcase and a lot of patience, they moved from bookcase to bookcase. Jenny regularly checked and kept careful record of the books they passed, and reported steady, if slow, progress to the others. At night, the fluorescent lights in the ceiling went out and it became too dangerous trying to cross from one bookcase to the next. Instead, they cleared out a shelf and set up camp. They'd care for their equipment. They'd cook, and eat. They'd talk a little. And, on the insist-

ence of Kendra, they'd have sex.

The day after they'd rescued Jenny from the book burners, Kendra cut off her jeans about a millimeter below the crotch, claiming that she could move much more freely in a pair of shorts. She also stopped wearing panties, which she didn't explain or even comment on. She'd take every opportunity she could think of to get naked, and she'd do her best to get either Jenny or Seven into bed with her every night. Mostly, she succeeded. Seven could see no reason not to make love to the eager young Librarian, and while Jenny certainly could see several such reasons she didn't have the strength of will to resist the tanned, athletic and oh-so-very-willing Kendra. Their nights turned to orgies.

It took them a full two days to cross the high-rise library and find a floor again. After all the climbing, it almost felt strange to walk normally again. The feeling soon passed, as did the steel bookcases. Aisle crossed aisle, shelf gave way to shelf, fluorescent lights turned to gaslights and back again. It was a calm part of L-Space, the parts near Sunnydale. Jenny guessed that most nasty things were naturally drawn to the Hellmouth, and thus left L-Space altogether. Kendra left the thinking to her Watcher -- as she now considered Jenny -- and Seven refused to comment, on the grounds of not having enough data to form an opinion. So Jenny's theory was left to stand unopposed.

And so, twenty-one days after they left the LAF Compound, Jenny declared that they had reached an area that was so close to the Sunnydale magic shop's book collection that she couldn't tell the difference. All that remained was to find a gateway, she said, and considering what sort of place Sunnydale was, going there was probably best done well rested and heavily armed. So they cleared a spot of floor, as they now had much practice doing, and made camp.

With a sigh Jenny poured water into the pot on the propane stove. She was so tired of the freeze-dried foods they carried with them. They were supposed to be different things like beef stew, chicken curry and pasta Bolognese, but in the end they all looked and tasted pretty much the same. The first thing she'd do once they got out into the Buffyverse was to go for pizza. Then she'd have a very large cup of coffee, and then, but only then, would she try to contact Willow. Mission and all, important things still had to come first.

"Miss Calendar?"

Kendra looked at her from across the stove.

"Yes?" Jenny said. For some reason, she couldn't get either of the Attack Librarians to call her by her first name. Kendra didn't even do it in the throes of passion. Jenny wondered if Seven would. It'd be interesting to see. Hear. Whatever. Possibly a project for a dull night on the way back, if it took them long to find a gateway. Except she'd probably have to drug Kendra first to keep her from joining in, and most likely the return trip would take less than a day.

"What do we do when we get to Sunnydale?"

"Rest a bit. Find Willow, ask her about Faith. Enter L-Space again. Find the nearest gateway, return to the LAF Compound. Let an assault team worry about the book burners and the Library Engineers about building a crossing over the high-rise library. Why?"

"I do not want this to end. I mean, being here with you and Seven. Not the part where you got hurt, I do not want that part."

Jenny smiled. "I'm glad you've enjoyed the trip," she said.

Kendra bit her lip, looked nervous.

"I do not want to leave you," she said. "Or Seven."

Jenny's heart sank. "I'm sorry about that," she said. "But I'm not part of the LAF, and I never will be. And I know you won't believe this, but what you're feeling now will fade once you get back to your own place and you see all the other pretty girls there."

"It will not," Kendra said with the deadly seriousness only a teenager can muster. "I will never forget you."

"And that's not what I'm saying. I'm just saying that your feelings will change. Once you have more women to chose from, you will find someone who fits your heart better. That's life."

"I do not believe you," Kendra stated.

"All right," Jenny said. "Then let's wait. If you're right, and what you're feeling is forever, then waiting six months won't be a problem. Right?"

Kendra grudgingly agreed.

"During those six months, you promise to date at least two girls, none of which are me or Seven. Girls who you actually, really like and think you can get along with. If someone else asks you out, you go, at least once. And, when the six months have passed, you come to my house for dinner and we talk."

"I do not want to go out with anyone else!"

"That's not negotiable. I *demand* that you have more experience, socially if not sexually, before you make any sort of commitment. The wankers in the Council of Watchers may have messed up your childhood and youth, but I'm not going to take advantage of that. Well, no more than I've already done, at least."

Kendra glowered. "You are not being reasonable!" she said.

"Maybe. What are you going to do about it?"

There was a long pause. Jenny could see Seven some way behind Kendra, returned from patrol but not wanting to interrupt their conversation.

"All right!" Kendra said. "I will wait six months, and I will date two other girls. But don't expect me to enjoy it!"

She got up and stormed off, not even bothering to make up an excuse. As soon as she was out of sight, Seven approached.

"You had a relationship talk," she said.

Jenny nodded. "Don't tell me you need one too," she said as she stirred the freeze-dried Rogan Josh into the water.

"Not as far as I know," Seven said. "My Kathryn taught me quite well. Sometimes I miss her."

"Keep an eye on her when we get back, will you?"

"Certainly. I like Kendra. I would not like her to be harmed in any way."

"Amen to that. Let's eat. She'll be back when she feels like it, no use in waiting."

They heard the gateway before they saw it. Around a corner, they heard a voice say "Thank you for your money. Please return soon and spend more," followed by the mild ringing of a bell. As they got closer, they heard two female voices whispering to each other and giggling.

"Not from L-Space," Jenny whispered. "Almost certainly a gateway. Seven, you take point. We don't want more locals than necessary to recognise me and Kendra. We're supposed to be dead, after all."

The other two nodded. Seven moved up in front, Kendra placed herself in the rear.

From the inside, the gateway looked like heat distorting the air. A piece of the aisle that sort of wavered, through which things didn't quite look like they should. As they crossed it, the aisle a bit further up ahead faded out and became a part of a shop. It had changed quite a bit since the last time Jenny was in it, but she recognised the room and, more importantly, the street outside. She made a thumbs up gesture to her companions.

Seven dared a short look around the corner of the last bookcase.

"Blonde girl behind the counter," she whispered. "Not one from your pictures. A man dusting shelves, looks like your drawing of Rupert Giles. Two girls sitting at a round table. One matches Willow Rosenberg except for the haircut, the other one is unknown."

"Well, isn't it a slow day," they heard Giles say. "Anya, let's unpack and catalogue those crates we got from Pakistan last week, shall we?"

"But what if there's a customer!" the first voice they'd heard whined. "If we're not here their money might leave!"

"Willow and Tara will take care of them," Giles said. "Won't you?"

"Sure, Giles," two voices said in unison. Jenny recognised one of them. Shortly afterward, there were receding steps and a closing door. She nodded to Seven. Now.

She looked magnificent, Jenny thought. Tall, curvy, with her beautiful blonde hair in the tight bun that strangely suited her. The figure-hugging silver jumpsuit that didn't really hide much glittered in the semi-dark, and the heads of her two double axes stuck out from the top of her equally silver backpack. She walked out into the shop, letting her high-heeled shoes audibly hit the wooden floor.

The two girls at the table look up at her, amazed and alarmed.

Seven stopped, put her hands at her hips.

"Miss Rosenberg, I presume?" she said.