

Road's End

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For the 2002 Secret Slasha. Spoilers up to the end of Buffy season five. Dark was asked for. I'm no good at that, but I think I at least managed a fairly solid gloom.

Featured fandoms: Buffy the Vampire Slayer

Featured pairings: Drusilla/Faith

A.S.S Story codes: ff

Story rating: NC17

Faith tore around the corner into the alley as fast as her legs could carry her. Darkness and rain stole away all visibility, and she was in a part of the city she didn't know. Flashes of blue and red light from behind scattered against wet surfaces, telling her that the NYPD police car was still after her. She jumped over an overturned dumpster, not even slowing down.

"She's in here! After her!" she heard someone yell. She didn't even bother swearing to herself, she just ran on. Sooner or later she'd lose them. There was no way that normal humans could keep up with a Slayer in the long run.

Reflections of red and blue from straight above. A shadow in the rain. Before the thought had consciously formed in her mind, her legs had already jumped and her hands were stretching out to grab the lowest rung of the fire escape ladder. She pulled herself up with her arms, got a knee on it. Kept going upwards, more like running vertically on all fours than climbing.

On the roof, she stopped. She carefully glanced over the edge down into the alley. She could see the police car and the bright spots of the policemen's flashlights through the rain. They didn't seem to look upwards at all, which was a relief.

She had no idea why they thought they were after her. She'd been doing the whole social responsibility thing, doing her jail time, paying her debt to society and all that crap. She'd been on the straight and narrow, working in a fucking Taco Bell to get money for room and booze, when she suddenly found out that she was a wanted fugitive. A cop car had stopped next to her, and the two cops in it had jumped out with their guns drawn.

She was a little bit proud that she'd ran away instead of beating them senseless. It was the right thing to do. The Giles thing to do. Anyway, she'd asked around and found out that she was wanted. Bad. Multiple homicide, robbery, grand theft auto, stealing lollipops from kids, they'd thrown the works at her. Who "they" were she didn't much care, although she was sure it must be either Wolfram&Hart or the Council of Wankers.

And now she was lying on a roof somewhere, waiting for the police to give up and leave for this time, rain beating on her back.

When she was sure they had given up and gone away, she broke a skylight open and climbed inside, just to get somewhere dry. She did her best to protect the people of this city, surely they could sacrifice a nearly rusted-through padlock to make her feel a bit better. This wasn't even a nice part of town, the buildings looked like they'd been abandoned and left to rot. Probably to be torn down and something new and expensive built in a few years, making lots of money for some fat-ass politician somewhere.

The attic was full of old crap, the boxed kind that gets "forgotten" and left behind when people move. It was all covered with dust, and it smelled like something had died and rotted in a corner. Never mind. She'd stayed in worse places. She'd *lived* in worse places. This was dry, reasonably warm and she was alone. All things she'd learned to appreciate. For a while she tore through old boxes, until she found a clean old t-shirt to use as a towel. It wasn't much, but she was used to that too. You didn't get much in prison. Not even when you could beat up everybody else in it.

She sat down on a crate, slowly drying her hair. Her leather pants and jacket had protected most of her from the water, so she wasn't so badly off. She didn't feel like going out into it again, though. Better to stay inside until it stopped. Maybe sleep a bit. She threw the t-shirt away and closed her eyes, kinda trying the sleep thing out a little.

There was a vampire in the building, her Slayer sense told her, loud and clear. A pretty powerful one, too. Not one she should take on by herself, really. Particularly not when she was a bit tired from running from the cops.

She got up from the crate and started looking for the critter.

The entire building was as uninhabited and run down as the attic. In several places she saw signs of squatters who had come and gone, leaving little behind but scorch marks and graffiti. It smelled of mildew and dried-up urine.

A bit like the nastier parts of the prison.

As she got further down her vampire feeling got stronger. She'd expected to find it several floors up, from the feeling. The way it felt now, it must be a pretty impressive leech. Nearly as strong as Angel. Still, she could take it. She could've taken Angel if she hadn't been bent on suicide-by-vampire at the time.

Rain gusted in through the empty windows.

"It dances," a voice said some way behind her. She spun around, whipped out her stake and held it at the ready.

"It dances with the wind, like a lover slashing its back," the pale and dark-haired woman went on. Faith frowned. There was something wrong about her, wrong but familiar.

"Do I know you?" she asked.

The vampire looked at her with a penetrating gaze and smiled. "I know *you*," she said. "I killed you once. You were dark then. Dark and pretty pretty pretty..."

She was dressed as something out of an old movie, in a flowing curvy dark red gown. "Yeah? You're right about the pretty, but I'm not dead."

The vampire slowly came closer. "You weren't you then," she said. "You were the blonde girl, then you were the dark girl and now you are... you!"

She punctuated the final word by stabbing her finger in Faith's direction. Faith frowned. Blonde then dark then herself?

"Drusilla?" she asked.

The vampire smiled. "I told you you knew me."

No wonder she felt almost as strong as Angel. And she *had* killed a Slayer before. Not to mention got out of Sunnydale alive. Definitely not a common fate for a vampire, particularly not for one who'd gunned for the blonde bitch herself.

"She loved you, you know," the vampire said.

"What?"

"And you want to hurt her so *much*."

Drusilla came closer as she talked, the hem of her gown dragging in the dirt. On a closer look, the gown was in a pretty bad shape, dirty and with several tears in it.

"Hurt who? Who are you talking about?"

"She ate my Spike's brain," Drusilla said. "Like popcorn. And her hair was the *butter*."

Hair like butter? "Buffy? Are you talking about Buffy?"

Drusilla leaned forward and put a finger to her lips. "Sssh!" she admonished. "Don't say her name! The little mousies will hear, and tell her."

"All right... So what's with Superbitch and Spike? And why am I talking to you instead of shoving a stake through your heart anyway?"

"You will help me," Drusilla said. "You will help me hurt my little Spike."

"Yeah? Did your little mousies tell you that?"

"No, silly. The *stars* did."

She found herself lowering her stake from attack position. Angel had said once that Drusilla was psychic, a seer. Sure, she was also an insane vampire, but if she'd seen something about Faith, Buffy and Spike that was reason enough to worry. After all, there was some kind of freaky supernatural connection between herself and the elder Slayer.

"Well, Spike's a vamp, so hurting him would be in my job description. What's your plan? We go to Sunnydale?"

"Yes. In a carriage. With eight black horses and a tiny little bell."

Carriages and horses were pretty rare around where Faith lived, and the only bell she knew of nearby was the Taco Bell where she worked. Rather than look for them, she assumed that Drusilla was being nuts and simply traded the keys to her apartment for an old Ford that was about worth the apartment's deposit. Come nightfall, she threw the few possessions she wanted to keep in the back seat of the car and left. She didn't even bother to go pick up the measly few dollars she'd earned since her last paycheck. She picked up Drusilla from the house where they'd met the night before, and headed west. She should've known that she couldn't run away. She'd hoped that New York City would be far enough from Sunnydale that she could leave it all behind, but she'd been deluding herself. For all that distance mattered, she could've hid in some valley in Tibet and her blonde bouncy cheerleader destiny would still have reached her. So, really, she shouldn't be surprised. The messenger might be a bit odd, but she should have expected the message. Slayer, meet Hellmouth. Better learn to like it, 'cause you can never leave.

She wondered what would happen when they got there. She tried to convince herself that it'd be all right, that it'd work out.

"I used to have a doll," Drusilla said. "She was very pretty. But she wouldn't sing, so I had to poke her eyes out. They went pop, and all the goo ran down her cheeks and she sang and sang for me until Spike ate her."

They were cruising down the Interstate, doing pretty good time. Faith was driving, of course. It'd have surprised her if Drusilla knew how to drive, and even if she did there was no way Faith'd get into a car with *her* behind the wheel. No, she'd have to drive all the way to California herself. Which meant that they'd be four maybe five nights on the road. She was going to take it easy, stop when she got tired and stay at a reasonable speed. There was no hurry. Best avoid accidents and cops. Driving during the day was out, since that'd require blackening the car's windows, which she felt was a sure way to attract the attention of the not so friendly guys with the firearms. That, or stuffing Drusilla in the trunk, which she strongly doubted she'd put up with.

"That wasn't a doll, Dru," she said. "If Spike ate her, she was a girl, not a doll."

"But I put nice dresses on her and made her sing..."

"Whatever."

Or maybe she should just drive until she couldn't stay awake any longer. That way she might get so tired that she'd get some dreamless sleep, which would be a nice change. She'd had the strangest dreams lately, vividly clear yet slightly out of focus, and full of light and Buffy. She didn't want to dream about Buffy. She'd had enough of Buffy for at least one lifetime. Maybe more.

"I'm hungry," Drusilla said.

"Well, you're not eating me," Faith replied. "So you'll just have to deal until it's time to find somewhere to stay during the day."

"I bet you would taste lovely. I wish I'd had the time to taste you when I killed you."

The Buffy in her dreams wasn't like the Buffy she'd last met. Rather than the cocky, self-assured, holier-than-thou protector of the weak and pointless, the Buffy in her dreams looked tired and worn. As if she'd been working for a long, long time and wasn't allowed to stop. She'd said things that Faith didn't understand, things about the first Slayer and fires in the desert and death being a gift.

It worried her. It made her want not to sleep. It almost made her want to call Buffy and ask her what the Hell was going on.

That morning they stopped at a run-down motel with an all-night diner next to it. Faith had a burger at the diner, and Drusilla had an old drunk they found sleeping behind the building. He didn't look like he would've lasted long anyway, and Drusilla needed to eat. Too long and she'd try to go after Faith and, well, no good either way.

Faith leaned against the wall, looking at the vampire and her victim. The monochromatic yellow from the streetlights gave the scene an unreal, otherworldly quality. It looked almost serene, a beautiful woman gently cradling an ill man in her arms and kissing his neck. Only the smacking sounds of her drinking and the intense stench of urine and unwashed human broke the illusion. She wondered who he was. Who he had been, and how he had ended up here, dying in his own filth behind a roadside diner. She wondered if he had children, a wife. If they'd left him, or he them.

He was about the right age to be her own father.

Abruptly, she stood up straight. "Are you done yet?" she asked.

Drusilla raised her head from his neck. "Just a moment," she said, smiling, a thin rivulet of blood descending from the corner of her mouth. In the sodium light, it looked dark grey. Carefully, she laid the dead man down on the asphalt, face up. She gently closed his staring eyes.

"Now," she said, standing up.

"It'll be light soon," Faith said, her back carefully not looking at the corpse. "Let's get you indoors."

In another nondescript motel, she woke up to the sound of crying.

The room was worn and none too clean. It looked like it had been built a long time ago, and not much done in the way of upkeep since. On one wall hung a poster urging her to vote for Jimmy Carter. She didn't know who that was, nor did she care.

The crying came from the couch, where Dru was sleeping. Or was supposed to sleep, anyway. Faith had taken the bed as a matter of course, and Drusilla hadn't argued. The linen looked clean enough, so Faith'd opted to sleep in nothing more than panties and an old t-shirt. Dru hadn't bothered to undress at all.

"Hey, what's the problem?" Faith asked, her voice hoarse with sleep. "Dru?" she added when she got no reply.

"It hates me...", a thin whisper came. "It burns..."

The vampire had pulled a blanket over her head, as if hiding. Faith looked around the room for a moment, trying to figure out what was scaring her. There was a bed. Two chairs. A threadbare carpet. A couch. A small desk. The door to the bathroom. The window.

The window.

Daylight.

Even with the drapes drawn, some light managed to steal in around the edges. None of it fell near Drusilla, but apparently it was enough. Faith got up and walked quickly over to the couch.

"Hey," she said, putting her hand on what she thought was Drusilla's shoulder under the blanket. "It's all right. It'll go away soon."

"It hates me," Dru said. "It's so pretty and it will *always* hate me."

Faith stroked her arm. "Sssh," she said. "It doesn't hate you. It burns you and stuff, but, well, that's the vampire thing. It's nothing you did. It's something Angelus did."

The blanket was abruptly pulled away. "Daddy said I was bad," she said. "He said I was so bad he wanted to have me with him *forever*. But he left..."

A new bout of tears ensued. Faith didn't know what to do. Sure, she'd met her share of fucked-up girls while in prison, and she'd done her best to comfort some of them. Sometimes without intending to get them into her bed, even. But this was something else. How do you comfort a twohundred year old undead monster?

Not having any better ideas, she tried putting her arms around the crying girl. "I'm here," she whispered. "I'm here."

Drusilla grabbed her t-shirt, pushed her face against her chest and held on as if her life depended on it, crying hysterically. Faith held one arm around her, freeing the other so she could stroke the vampire's head. She kept mumbling reassuring nothings, hoping it would somehow help.

After a while, the crying receded. She was about to draw a sigh of relief and let go when she felt a cold pair of hands slide under her shirt and cup her breasts.

"Hey!" she yelled. Abruptly she pushed Dru away, dumping her on the floor. She was smiling again, her usual insane half-smile.

"Grand-mum used to play with me when I was scared," she said. "Naughty games, we'd play. And daddy would watch."

Faith got up from the couch. "Well, I won't play that sort of game. Not with you, at least. Boinking the undead, that's B's kink, not mine."

She got into her bed without looking at Dru, and lay awake until the sun set.

Another night, another highway. Or the same one, depending on how you looked at it. More darkness, more bright lights flying past outside. More stories from Dru that made her skin crawl. Stories about all the things she, Spike, Angelus and Darla had

done back in the nineteenth century. Stories that made her pretty damn glad she'd never met the four of them while they were in their heyday. They were quite bad enough one at a time.

Drusilla was well into a tale about a convent in France that they'd slaughtered, when flashing lights appeared in Faith's rear view mirror and a siren begun to wail. From behind, a police car materialized from the darkness, signaling to Faith to pull over.

Her first reaction was to floor the accelerator and try to lose them. She was long used to seeing police as nothing but bad news. With an effort, she calmed down. It could be innocent. Maybe she'd been speeding a little without thinking about it. Maybe there was a broken light on their car. There was no reason to think that whatever forces had made her life hell in New York would bother to harass her here where she was only passing by. Surely they'd wait for her to reach Sunnydale. She pulled in to the side of the road and stopped, rolled down her window when the policeman walked up to it.

"Evening," she heard him say. "Can I see your license, please?"

"Yeah, sure." She fumbled it out of her pocket, handed it over to him.

"Do you know how fast you were going back there?" he said.

So. Speeding. Harmless, just as she'd told herself. She was just about to draw a sigh of relief when she caught a movement in the rear view mirror. The second cop was on his way out of their car, moving slowly and in the dark as if to hide from her. He was carrying a shotgun.

For a split second she allowed herself the luxury of closing her eyes and letting despair flow through her. Even here they reached her. Even here. And no matter how much she wished otherwise, she knew it would *never end*, not until the day she died.

As fast as she could, she started the engine and accelerated away. Never mind that the cop still had her license, never mind that she ran over his foot. Just get away. Fast. She swerved back and forth, trying to make it hard for the other cop to shoot at them. In the passenger seat, Drusilla squealed in delight as she got pressed back into her seat. There was a muzzle flash, a bang and something hit the side of the car. A few cracks appeared in the rear window, and a little warning light on the dashboard told her that one of the rear lights had ceased to function.

Big fucking deal. She drove on, still accelerating. She wanted every second's head start that she could get. If she'd really managed to get the first cop's foot, that'd help.

Even so, she'd have to get off the highway soon, and probably get a new car. The cops would call in. Reinforcements would arrive, roadblocks would get set up, helicopters would chase her. Slayer reflexes might help a lot when driving, but she couldn't win over all that. So, hide.

About twenty minutes down a side road, they found a motel. It was, of course, old and shabby. It had a big neon sign on a pole by the road, proudly proclaiming that it was the "estful M adows Motel", and that it did indeed have vacancies.

The motel also had a bunch of large trees by the parking lot. Which meant that if she parked near the far end of it, their car would be pretty hard to spot both from the road and from passing helicopters.

"We're spending the day here," she said. "If you've got anything in the car that you want to keep, bring it, because I doubt we'll be returning to it."

"Can I take that?" Drusilla said, pointing at the Christmas tree-shaped air-freshener hanging from the rear view mirror.

"No", Faith said.

"Then I'm done."

"Swell."

She got out, taking the car keys with her just in case she changed her mind about keeping it. You never knew, and it'd be stupid to throw away a getaway possibility even if it was far less than optimal.

"Are we going to eat soon?" Dru said.

"You're not," Faith said. "You ate last night, you can wait a while. We need to leave as few traces as possible, and corpses tend to get noticed a lot."

The room smelled as it had been used for seriously carnal purposes a lot. The fat guy behind the reception desk had smirked at them like he thought they were here for a clandestine tryst, when she accepted his claim that they only had rooms with double beds without argument. It didn't bother Faith any, as far as she was concerned Dru could spend the night in the closet. Might be better, even. Couldn't see any sunlight in there.

She threw her bag on the ugly puke-green bedspread.

"I'm going to get something to eat from the vending machines in the lobby," she said. "Don't do anything stupid while I'm gone, all right?"

Before Drusilla had had time to answer, Faith was out the door. The night was fairly warm, and she could hear the high-pitched squeaking of bats. A huge near-full moon hung in the sky, drowning out the stars near it. A few cars could be heard in the distance, but otherwise it was quiet. Under different circumstances, it would have been a night she liked. But now she was mostly tired and worn out. Well, that and horny and hungry. Not only slaying made her adrenaline levels soar.

In the smoke-stinking lobby, the sleazy guy was watching TV. She ignored him, and went straight for the vending machines. Not that there was anything like actual food in them, but at least she could trust that the twinkies hadn't gone bad. Good old reliable twinkies. Even if everything else changed, they remained the same. The cornerstone of her turbulent life.

"Hey, that's you," the sleazy guy said.

Faith turned around. "What?"

"There," he said, pointing at the TV. "It's you and your girlfriend."

She was about to protest that Drusilla wasn't her girlfriend when she saw what was on the TV. Flashing blue and red light, yellow and black police tape, an ambulance.

Two policemen being put into body bags.

"Earlier tonight," a reporter said, "these brave policemen tried to apprehend two wanted criminals and met with a bloody end. The wanted pair, two women, were originally wanted for drug trafficking, but the charges now also include the killing of two officers of the law. Since they are believed to have come from outside the state, the Federal Bureau of Investigation has been contacted. The public is urged to keep their eyes open for these two..."

Pictures appeared on the screen, one of her from when she was released from prison and one of Dru that she had no idea where it came from. Hell, she hadn't even known vampires could be photographed.

"...If you see them," the reported went on, "immediately inform the authorities but do *not* approach. They are believed to be armed and extremely dangerous."

The sleazebag cut the sound. "You don't look so dangerous to me," he said, giving her a good, long looking-over.

"Well, you know," she said, intending to tell him that appearances can be deceiving, but her brain kicked in halfway there.

"They always exaggerate on TV," she finished the sentence. "We're just a couple of girls, and did you see any guns or anything?"

"Maybe I didn't," he said while ogling her breasts, "I really should call the police anyway."

"So why don't you?"

"Oh, I will," he said. "In a little while. Unless I get some... *incentive* to have you around."

She smiled at him, thanking him internally for not burdening her conscience. "Why don't we discuss that in our room?" she said, pushing her tits forward.

With great effort, he leveraged himself out of his chair. "After you," he said.

Faith could feel his gaze on her ass all the way back to the room. A small voice somewhere inside her kept telling her that she was fast moving towards a place where she didn't really want to be, but she didn't listen to it. *They* had forced her here. She'd tried to do the straight and narrow, but the world wouldn't let her stay there. No matter how hard she tried to be something else, she would always be the Slayer who went bad.

"Hey, Dru," she said as she walked through the door to their room. When she heard the door close, she turned around and put her hands on the guy's shoulders. His hands had started moving towards her breasts when she snapped both his collarbones. His arms fell to his sides again and shock started to spread across his face as she pulled him around and threw him to the floor. Drusilla stood in the door to the bathroom, smiling gently.

"Dinnertime," Faith said.

At sunset, they took the dead guy's car and left. It'd be trivial for the cops to trace as soon as they found the corpse, of course, but at least the car wasn't shot-up and it hadn't been posted as wanted on TV.

Rather than head back to the Interstate, she kept to the smaller roads, on the guess that they'd have less of a chance to run into a police checkpoint there. Still, they'd said on the TV that the FBI was involved, which might bring difficulties for them all the way to California.

"Dru," she said. "When do we have to be in Sunnydale?"

"She is in Sunnydale," Drusilla said. "And she will bring the end of the world."

That sounded like Sunnydale, all right.

"Yeah, that's fine, but *when*? When do we have to be there?"

"When she's found the Key. The shiny, pretty Key."

"Great... Look, I'd like to lay low for a couple of days. Will that be all right?"

"Oh, hiding. We had to hide once before. There were people with torches and crosses and pointy things trying to kill me, and I was so weak but my Spike saved me and made me get all better."

"Swell," she muttered under her breath. The apocalypse would just have to wait for them. She didn't fancy trying to drive a gauntlet across several states.

A ways outside a small town surrounded by cornfields they found a house standing all by itself near an abandoned farm. It was a pretty house, all white with lots of frilly wooden stuff on it. There was a car on the driveway, a fairly neat pickup truck. There were no visible lights, which wasn't so strange since it was about three in the morning. Normal people, those who weren't creatures of the night, usually slept then.

"We'll stay here," she said to Drusilla, who had been singing children's rhymes for the past several hours. "Come along unless you want to hide in the car all day."

Drusilla stopped singing. "Ooh, can I?" she said.

"No."

There were two women living in the house. One looked like she was about fortyish, with dark hair and a not at all shabby body for her age. The other was maybe a year or two younger than Faith. Her hair too was dark, and she was stunningly beautiful.

Faith duct-taped their hands and feet to the corners of their beds and told Dru not to eat them yet. She also put strips of duct-tape over their mouths, just in case someone passed by close enough to the house to hear them scream. They both woke up while she was working on them, but, well. Slayer strength. Not much of a fight.

"She's pretty," Drusilla said, staring at the young girl.

"Won't argue with that," Faith said. Muffled protests came from the girl on the bed. She looked more angry than scared, which made Faith feel a certain amount of respect for her.

"I'll go hide the car," she said. "Don't kill either of them. If you have to eat, try to just take a little from the older one. We don't know how long we'll be staying, and you're not going out to hunt."

"She's like a little doll." Drusilla looked pleadingly at Faith. "Can I play with her?"

Faith shrugged. "Just don't kill her."

The car hidden, she opted for watching stupid shit on TV with the volume turned up high enough that she couldn't hear the noises from upstairs. Not that she really had that much against doing nasty things to people, but there was something about the way the vampire went about it that disturbed her. Or maybe she did mind doing nasty things to people. After all, that was what she was supposed to devote her life to preventing. No matter that she sucked at it and it only ever brought her grief.

In any case, she couldn't stop thinking about it. Time after time, she found that she had no idea what she was watching, that her thoughts had drifted upstairs, imagining what Drusilla was doing to the gorgeous girl. Imagining Drusilla.

She screwed her eyes shut and rubbed them with the heels of her hands. Get a grip, girl. A Slayer having erotic fantasies about a vampire? *Way way* wrong.

Unless you were Buffy, that is.

Maybe all Slayers really had fantasies like that. For a fleeting moment, she wished she could call Giles and ask. It'd either freak him out so bad he couldn't talk, or he'd give her a long lecture on the erotic pursuits of past Slayers that was so dry it'd make her want to become a nun.

Or maybe it'd turn him on. Make him all hot and bothered in his stuffy library, or whatever he had since B blew the school up. She could call him, giving him a long and detailed description of how she kept having these fantasies about taking Dru's dress off and running her hands all over her cold and shapely body. How she

dreamed about holding Dru down and forcing her to lick her pussy, how she ached to know what that chilly tongue and sharp teeth would feel like. How she wondered if the vampire's cunt would get wet when she ate her out, and what she would taste like.

Never mind Giles, *she* was getting hot and bothered thinking about it. Before she knew what she was doing, she was halfway up the stairs. What reason did she have not to try out her fantasies, anyway? It wasn't as if anyone would like her any less if they learned about it. And it might give her and B something to talk about if they ever met again. The ins and outs of vampire sex. Maybe they could write a book together. Vampire Sex for Dummies.

Drusilla had ripped the girl's oversize t-shirt and panties off, leaving her naked and tied spread-eagle to the bed. She'd also undressed herself, and stood nude on hands and knees over the girl. Faith's gaze travelled over her slim, pale body. Watched her long, dark hair and firm breasts swing gently under her as she moved a little.

She found herself at a loss about what to do now. Despite her recent fantasies, she hadn't actually thought about how to get from the present state of affairs to the sex with Dru one. How to begin? How do you seduce the insane?

Drusilla looked up at her. "Want to play with my doll?" she said.

"No," she answered, opting for directness. It wasn't like there was much chance of embarrassment anyway. No matter what happened, chances were that Dru would've forgotten all about it in the morning.

"I want to play with you," she continued.

"Yes," Drusilla hissed. "And doll can *watch*."

Faith had plain forgotten about the girl, who was now looking back and forth at them. She still looked scared half to death.

"Yeah," Faith said. "That she can."

They ended up fucking on a couple of blankets onto the floor, hastily pulled down from the bed by Faith when Drusilla seemed about to start doing it right on the bare wooden floor. It was a strange feeling, touching her. Not as cold as a corpse, really, but colder than any live being would ever be. Yet she still moved. She felt good to touch, and she touched very nicely too. Faith didn't know how long they went at it, nor did she care. Once they stopped, Drusilla fell asleep, leaving Faith lying naked on the blankets, resting her head on Dru's thigh.

"What are you?"

The girl on the bed half-whispered the words.

"What?"

"You're not human, are you? Your... friend... she's not breathing. I felt it when she..."

"She's a vampire," Faith said.

The girl was silent. Probably digesting the information.

"And you?" she said, after a while.

"What do you mean and I?"

"You're not human. I felt it when you tied me here. People aren't that strong."

It wasn't as if she'd never thought about that herself.

"No," she mumbled. "They aren't, are they?"

She got up from the floor. Somewhere inside an old familiar anger sprung to life. She sat down at the edge of the bed and bent down over the girl. There was confusion in her face now, in addition to the fear.

"So tell me, girl. Why should I spend my life protecting you?"

"What...? Protect? You don't..."

The girl started to cry and Faith turned away in disgust.

"Oh shut up," she muttered, not caring if the girl heard her or not. She picked up her clothes and set off towards the TV.

During the third day, Faith dreamed again. She'd fallen asleep while watching Drusilla sing songs to the girl, and not really noticed that she did so. In her dream, she was still in the girl's bedroom, only now she was alone there and it was full of sunlight and warmth. She got up from the bed, stark naked.

"It's too much," a voice said. A voice she knew. Faith spun around.

"Buffy?" she said.

And it was Buffy. The elder Slayer stood there, all lit up by the sunshine. Her hair looked like a halo around her head, and she was dressed neatly and primly as a good girl should. Her eyes looked in Faith's direction, but didn't focus on her.

"It's too much for me," Buffy said. "I can't take it any more. The weight of the world is bringing me down."

"What are you talking about?" Faith said. "You're scaring me, B."

"It's your turn now," Buffy went on. "I've failed. This time, I can't save the world."

Her eyes suddenly focused on Faith's, and Faith saw only emptiness and despair in them. There was none of the strength and anger she'd known. There was -- nothing.

"I'm sorry, Faith," Buffy said. "I'm sorry to leave you this. But I have to go away now."

"Buffy!" Faith screamed in her dream, screamed as the Slayer became translucent and faded away into nothing. She screamed her name again, only this time it was into a dark and cold room where a vampire and an abused young woman slept.

"We have to leave," she told Drusilla. "We have to leave *now*. Something's wrong with Buffy, and the world's going to end."

"Yes," Drusilla smiled. "Lovely, isn't it?"

Faith looked at her vampire companion. "Are you crazy?" she said. "The world is going to *end*. For both of us."

"And all the little birdies will scream like a symphony," Dru said.

Faith gave up. "Oh, get dressed," she said.

"Can't I bring my doll?"

You're not human, are you?

The girl's words echoed through her mind.

"No," she said. "In fact, I think you'd better eat her. She might tell someone where we're going, and I don't think we'll have time to stop for you to hunt before we get to Sunnydale."

She left the room. She didn't want to see the girl get killed. Again, she turned up the sound on the TV until she couldn't hear the noises from upstairs. Seeing Buffy like that had scared her more than anything ever had before. There was no doubt in her mind that it had been real, that Buffy in the real world was not just in trouble but that she had stopped fighting. Which frightened Faith out of her wits. Buffy had

always been the strong one, the right one, the *real* Slayer. Unlike herself, who was the fuckup, the flawed and faulty one. If there was something that *Buffy* couldn't deal with, how the Hell was she going to do it?

Drusilla appeared at the top of the stairs, looking down. She had dressed in her pale brown dress, and she licked a few stray drops of blood from her lips.

"Ready?" Faith asked.

"She's not singing any more."

"Good." She pulled on her leather pants and white top. "Let's go."

It wasn't until they were several hours from the house that she remembered the middle-aged woman they'd taped to her bed when they arrived.

As she had hoped, the uproar had died down while they hid in the house, and any roadblocks had been removed. Assuming that it'd be several days at least before their pickup would be posted as stolen, she got up on the Interstate again and drove as fast as she dared towards California. It didn't feel like a nice trip any longer. Now she was afraid, and she just wanted to get there.

When day approached, she stopped at a reasonable-looking motel and got them a room. It was just as dull and impersonal as any other motel room she'd ever stayed in, but unlike their last one it was at least clean. She laid down to sleep at once, hoping to dream. Hoping that Buffy would return and tell her that it was all a mistake, that she was all better now and that she'd save the world as usual.

But there was no dream. There was no Buffy. There was only silence, and herself. She woke up with a loud gasp, desperate for air. She felt like she was being buried alive. Like she was drowning in darkness.

"Hush," Drusilla's voice came from just next to her. "Don't be afraid, dear. It'll be all right. Everything will burn, and it will be so pretty."

Faith reached out, and pulled Dru's chilly body close. She didn't want to be alone. When she felt Drusilla's hands reach in under her shirt, she pulled it off to give her free access to her body. As the vampire's hands roamed over her skin, her shoulders and back and ass, she welcomed the distraction with tears. She pulled Drusilla close, so close, and kissed her desperately. Faith parted her legs and slid up a bit, so her undead lover could reach between them and let her ride Dru's fingers to momentary oblivion. As she came, she bit down so hard on Drusilla's shoulder that she tasted blood.

More darkness. More lights flashing by outside the windows of the car. More miles passing under them. She kept the radio tuned to news, waiting to hear the brutal murder of two women reported. Since the murder would quickly be tied to her and Dru, she felt certain it'd be reported even as far as way as this. Whoever it was that kept setting the authorities after her would make sure that they guessed where she was going, too. They would know. Where else would she be going but the Hellmouth?

Drusilla had stopped telling her stories about her days as one fourth of a scourge traveling the world. Instead, she was telling stories about how she had turned Spike and how wonderful it had been for her to become a Sire.

It crept Faith out much, much more than the horror stories had.

The next morning, Faith took the initiative. In yet another nondescript motel room, she roughly undressed Drusilla, threw her onto the bed and pushed her face between the vampire's legs. Not that she was really that horny, but it seemed an easy way to

keep herself distracted until she was exhausted enough to sleep. She used her mouth and hands on all parts of Drusilla's body that made her react, desperately losing herself in basic lust. The coldness of the vampire flesh spread through her to numb her mind, and on some half-conscious level she was glad of it. Eventually she fell asleep, with Drusilla's whispering in her ear, calling her pretty.

In spite of her efforts not to, she dreamed that night.

Again, she dreamed that she was in a well-lit and warm version of the room where she slept. Again, she was naked. Again, Buffy appeared before her, dressed in her neat little jacket and her neat little pants and her neat little shoes.

"It never ends," Buffy said. "No matter how hard you try, it never ends."

"Don't go," Faith said. "Wait for me. Let me help you. Let us help each other. I can't be alone in this. I can't be the Slayer. Not by myself."

"It's the only way," Buffy said. She held out her arms towards Faith. At first she thought that the elder Slayer wanted to hold her, hug her. But as she rose from the bed to approach her, she saw the drops falling from the sleeves. Drops of rich, red blood. Blood falling from the long, deep gashes in Buffy's wrists.

"It is the only way," Buffy repeated. "The only way..."

As Buffy began to collapse, Faith woke up, screaming into the dimly sunlit room. Gently, Drusilla pulled her to her bosom, held her cradled there and slowly rocked her back to sleep.

"Hush, dear," the vampire said. "It'll be all right. Just you wait and see."

Faith was out the door as soon as the sun was below the horizon. It was just a couple of hours left to Sunnydale, and she desperately needed to see Buffy. She'd expected Drusilla to be reluctant to leave so early, while there was still a little daylight in the air. But she followed without hesitation, without a word.

Once in the car, she drove like a maniac. She didn't bother to turn on the radio. She just wanted to get there as soon as possible, and she didn't much care if she arrived at the head of a car chase.

After an hour or so Faith realized that Drusilla was silent. That she had, in fact, not said a word since they left the motel. That she had been sitting there, gently smiling at Faith all the time.

"What?" she said, feeling somewhat irritated.

"She'll be at the tower," Drusilla said. "She'll be at the tower, protecting the Key."

She didn't remember any tower in Sunnydale. There used to be a little clock tower at the high school, but that had gone up in rubble with the rest of the place.

"What tower?" she said.

Drusilla put a finger to her lips. "Hush, precious," she said. "You'll see."

She saw.

At the outskirts of the town, a tall ugly framework tower had appeared. It was all lit up by floodlights, and the area around it was crawling with people. Not all of them human. She parked the pickup outside the lit-up area, behind a bunch of bushes.

Looking carefully, she could see that someone was standing on a gangway sticking out over nothing in particular at the top of the tower. Not only was someone standing there, she seemed to be dressed in a ceremonial robe and tied there.

At the foot of the tower, fighting was going on.

Buffy.

She saw the thin, blonde figure claw her way up the tower, fought by another blonde all the way up. But she got to the top, where she threw someone off and freed and hugged the bound girl.

Relief had just started to spread through Faith when all Hell broke loose. A big, glowing gateway formed in the air between the tower's gangway and the ground, and horror and torment streamed out of it. It felt as if reality tore, as if a million dimensions of pain melded with the Earth. Around Faith, the bushes began to move, to slash at everything near them. Hundreds of sleeping birds took off in fear, and burst into flame in the air, like screaming stars.

Behind her, Drusilla squealed in delight.

Through the fear, there was still relief. The world had ended. It was the end. It was *over*.

Except it stopped. Just like that. The gateway blinked out of existence, the bushes stopped and the burning birds were still dead.

From where the gateway had been, a body fell. A body she knew.

"NO!" she screamed, and she ran. She could feel her. She could feel the life rapidly draining out of her. She could feel all the power, all the responsibility settle on her own shoulder like an unbearable weight. The weight of the world.

As Buffy's body hit the ground and bounced, lifeless, Faith fell to her knees in the grass. "No," she whispered. "No..."

Her job now. Her fault if the world ended. Hers. Only hers. Nobody else's.

She couldn't bear the thought of it. It was too much. She wanted to scream, but the scream refused to leave her mouth. It echoed in her mind, over and over and over again. She *couldn't* fight it all. Not all at once. The monsters and the cops and the lawyers and the Council and herself and her fucking destiny and all the rest of the world, she just couldn't deal with it all.

A hand fell on her shoulder.

She looked up, saw Drusilla's smiling face.

"Help me?" she whispered, not sure what kind of help the undead woman could give her.

Drusilla knelt down next to her, and gently took her in her arms. Faith hugged her back, seeking some tiny morsel of comfort from her presence.

"Don't cry, my pretty," Drusilla said. She slowly stroked Faith's hair, and her face changed into its predatorial form. "Mommy will bite it all better."

For an eternal moment, Faith looked into her eyes. Then she closed her eyes, leaned her head far to the side and carefully brushed her hair away from her neck.