

Sounds of Silence

written by Calle Dybedahl

For teanna's "writing sound" challenge.

Featured fandoms: Buffy the Vampire Slayer

Featured pairings:

A.S.S Story codes: gen

Story rating: R

The sound of her not being there thunders through the room. It echoes off the walls, fills the air until Willow cannot breathe. She feels like it ought to drown out the ticking of the clock and the roar of cars outside, but how could it? It is no sound. It is silence. It is the lack of the gentle hiss of her breath, the missing sound of her turning in her sleep. It is not.

Sleep, little girl, a soundless voice says. *Sleep, and forget we were ever here. Sleep, and do not dream.*

In her protective circle, Willow sleeps.

Carefully, she laid out her equipment on the floor before her. The thick, leatherbound and strangely new-looking book glinted in the sunlight shining in through the window. To the sides of it, she placed an athame, a bowl of flour, a nearly burnt out candle and an hourglass.

Apart from the slight sounds of her moving, the room was silent. It was the middle of the day, so Buffy and Dawn were off to work and school. Only Willow was still at home, sitting on the carpet in the room where any hope of happiness had been torn away with the bang of a gun and the thud of a bullet penetrating flesh and the little splattering sounds of blooddrops hitting her sweater.

Denial had come and gone. So had fury, in a blaze of magic and destruction.

Despair stayed.

She took some flour in her hand, spread it in a neat circle around her, concentrating on raising a barrier between herself and the rest of the world. The spell would be no good if it affected herself as well as everything else. As her hand moved, the flour fell and started to glow with a faint glittering light. She lit the candle, turned over the hourglass, and opened the book. Still concentrating, she began to read.

"There's a neat little clock," she read. "In the schoolroom it stands."

Her voice, harsh from many nights of crying, rang hollowly in the room.

"And it points to the time with its two little hands."

The sand in the hourglass stopped falling.

"And may we, like the clock, keep a face clean and bright, with hands ever ready to do what is right."

All the sounds of an empty house had stopped. All the little creaks and bumps were silent, and the car's roars and children's cries from outside had ceased. The only thing that could be heard was Willow breathing.

"There's a neat little clock, in the schoolroom it stands," she went on. "And it points to the time with its two little hands. And may we, like the clock, keep a face clean and bright, with hands ever ready to do what is right."

Slowly, the sand in the hourglass started falling up, filling the top bulb. Willow read on, faster and faster.