

A Ray of Summer Sun

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A Ray of Summer Sun

by [zabjade](#)

Summary

Aliena (Ah-lee-ehn-uh) - Slavic version of Helen, meaning “sun ray”. The name taken on by the character Celia in Shakespeare’s “As You Like It.”

Spike and Buffy await the arrival of their second little bundle of joy. Takes place between chapter sixteen of Lost Child and the epilogue and after Out For a Walk.

Chapter 1

Buffy wrapped her arms around herself, absently kicking a rock as she meandered through the nighttime streets of Sunnydale. It was quiet, especially for May when things tended to heat up, and not just the weather. Giles had a theory that Glory had sucked up so much energy from the Hellmouth during her stay that it was taking longer than normal for it to recover and attract the next Big Bad to fill the power vacuum.

Whatever. Didn't matter. There were still the usual Little Bads scurrying around her town, and it was her job to keep them in line. That's why she was out here. Really. She would have gone on patrol even if everyone hadn't ganged up on her and kicked her out of her own home. Mom and Dawn included. And Spike.

Buffy hugged herself tighter. Stupid vampire. Stupid friends and family. She kicked the rock harder than she'd meant to, and it skittered off the road and out of sight into some bushes. Stupid rock.

"You're kicking me out?" Buffy asked incredulously, staring at her mother in hurt betrayal.

"We're not kicking you out, sweetie, it's just that—"

"You're driving everyone bloody sack of hammers with all the pacing," Spike interrupted bluntly. "Go hunt and kill something. We'll all be the better for it, especially you."

"I..."

"Buffy," Tara said gently, eyes full of compassion as she took Buffy's hand in hers. She looked exhausted from all of the work they'd been doing. "You're all wound up, and well... kind, kind of in the way."

"Kind of in the way," Buffy grumbled, kicking at another rock.

It was a nicer rock. She'd call it Charlie. Maybe they could go shopping together. For shoes and makeup and handbags and... and baby clothes and things. Buffy sighed and pulled out her cell phone. Was it too soon to call? It was probably too soon to call. It had only been five minutes, after all. A lot could happen in five minutes. She called.

"Unkidnapped and still preggers," Spike said instead of a greeting when he picked up. "The monkeys fly at midnight."

Buffy's lips tugged up into a smile. He'd suggested the phrase sarcastically as proof that he wasn't being forced to say he was okay, but she kind of appreciated him saying it. Even if he did sound lovingly exasperated.

"It's a valid worry," she pointed out, the smile slipping from her face.

Aliena was due to be born any day now, and Buffy had gotten more and more wound up as the time came closer. With Thursday, Spike had been the equivalent of eight months pregnant when the whole big kidnap-o-rama had happened, ending with Drusilla cutting the baby out early. With that and the premature labor scare a couple of months ago, was it any wonder Buffy was maybe a little bit paranoid about being there for Aliena's birth?

"It's alright, love," Spike said softly, his voice soothing some of her worry. "Tara's right here and says the sprog is doing just fine. And I've her, Xander, and the little bit all dancing about at my whim."

"But not Mom?"

"Sprog wants pie," he said, sounding smug. "As we haven't any, Mum went off to buy some. Cherry apple. And some Funyuns."

Buffy wrinkled her nose in disgust. She'd blame him liking to pair pie and Funyuns as a weird pregnancy thing, but no. He and Dawn just both had the same whacked out sense of taste.

She sighed and let go of the hurt over being kicked out of the house for a minimum of two hours (assuming nothing happened during those two hours). Okay, so she had good reason, but maybe she'd been getting just a little bit obsessive. And pacey. And in the way while everyone had been trying to get the house cleaned up enough to satisfy a nesting vampire who wasn't being allowed to do any of the cleaning himself.

"You'll call me if you need me for anything before the two hours are up?"

"Always need you, slayer-mine," he practically purred, making her feel all tingly inside. His sex drive was practically non-existent at the moment, but that didn't stop them from doing things. Mostly, he held her, telling her, in that sexy, sexy voice, everything he'd like to do to her while his gorgeous, talented hands stroked and fondled her just right. "But you need a good slay to get out all the tension. I'll call if Aliena seems to be about to break out. Or if the wards the Wicca group put up go—"

Buffy tensed as Spike stopped talking. What had happened? Contractions? Or the wards going off because a demon that wasn't Spike or his friend Clem had come onto the property? Or—

"Mum's back with the pie," Spike said cheerfully before the worry could completely swamp her. She wanted to be pissed at him, but, well, pie.

"You enjoy your pie and Funyuns, you weird, weird vampire," she said affectionately. "I'm going to go find something to kill."

"Love you."

"Love you, too."

Buffy hung up and stared down at her rock with a sigh. “Come on, Charlie. Let’s go find some vampires.”

...

Warm cherry and apple goo inside of a warm, flaky crust. A fantastic contrast and compliment to the scoop of cold cinnamon ice cream. Of course, the pairing of warm pie and ice cream was rather humdrum, wasn’t it? Was the addition of the Funyun on top that made it genius. The crunchy texture of the puffed corn ring along with the flavor of salt and onion powder. Bloody brilliant, it was.

Spike’s eyes fluttered closed as he savored the combination of textures and flavors, only to pop open a moment later when he heard the pitter-pat of toddling feet.

“Dada,” Thursday squealed happily as she approached the couch where he was currently ensconced in a nest of pillows and blankets.

“Escaped your keepers, did you?” he asked, noticing the bit of pie filling smeared at the corner of her mouth. Joyce wouldn’t have set her loose on purpose without a proper wash-up.

He set aside his plate of pie and pulled her up onto the couch with him, shifting about so she could rest against the pillows supporting his back and head. The on and off bed rest he’d been on for the past couple of months was annoying, but at the same time, he had to admit the pampering was a bit of alright. Friends and family making sure he had all he needed and scurrying about, tidying the place up enough that he could ignore the urge to do it himself. Though now he thought on it, he really should head upstairs and check on the ring of potted bluebells he had around the bassinet....

Not now, Spike, m’lad, he told himself with a snort of amusement as he absently licked his thumb and used it to clean Thursday’s face. Pregnancy made you obsess over the oddest things, didn’t it? But there was time enough later for checking the plants, when he’d be up there anyway. No need for an extra trip that would jostle Aliena about. As near as Ben could figure, her due date was in just a couple of days, which meant she was like to be born anytime between now and two weeks.

“How’s that sound, bitty-bit?” he asked Thursday as he settled back in with his pie. “Your li’l sis will be out and about soon.”

“Ossu fu.”

“That so, is it?” He’d no idea what that particular bit of baby babble might be about, but he randomly decided it meant she wanted some ice cream, so he swiped his finger through the remains of the scoop and stuck it in her mouth.

Joyce peered in from the kitchen, no doubt looking for Thursday, but he waved her away. The little one could be a right handful at times, but she seemed content to snuggle and be fed bits of ice cream and pie filling. Sounded good to him. Cuddles and a treat while they listened to the sounds of the others scrubbing and disinfecting everything.

They were a good lot. Tara had moved into the basement to help with things while Xander, Anya, and Giles took turns going out on patrol with the members of Tara's coven. That's what Anya and Giles were up at the moment, doing a real patrol of Sunnydale so Buffy didn't have to worry about it. Of course, she was out there now, wasn't she? Punted outside to work out her pent up energy like a kid who'd been into the sugar.

He wished she was back already, there with him. Well, no, actually, he wished *he* was out there with *her*. A spot of violence would have been lovely. The pie was almost as lovely, and being with his little girl was just as, so he finished off the one, and held the other.

A bit of a nap might be good, he thought, settling more comfortably into the pillows. Maybe Buffy would be home when he woke.

...

"Oh, ew," Buffy grumbled in disgust as she looked at the goo splattered all over her shirt. "Majorly of the gross."

Vampires at least had the decency to turn into dust, but she hadn't found any so far. Just some huge cockroach-gopher looking things that had tunneled up from the ground. And were filled with icky orange goo that got everywhere when you killed them. It so did not go good with her green top. She sighed, wiped her stake down with a relatively clean part of her shirt, and put it away. Then she bent down to pick up Charlie, tossing the rock up and down in her hand as she paced.

"Clashing goo aside, I have to admit that felt pretty good," she told the rock. "I really did need a good slay."

She took a slow, deep breath, staring up at the sky. The stars were really pretty in this isolated part of town, out near the woods. She never really took the time to just look at them. It was... nice, to be able to do that while her friends helped out with the whole sacred duty shtick. She felt a twinge of guilt at that, but she shoved it aside.

"I have friends who care about me, and I'm not just a slayer anymore. I'm a mom. That's an important duty, too. Besides, just because my friends aren't slayers doesn't me--"

Her foot stepped out onto nothing, the ground giving way under the other one before she could yank herself back. As she fell into one the holes left by the burrowing demons, a single thought crossed her mind. *This is the kind of thing that usually happens to Spike*. Then she hit

the bottom, her head striking the ground hard enough to send an explosion through her senses.

Chapter 2

Buffy stirred as awareness slowly seeped back. Where...? Hole. She'd fallen down a hole. *Buffy go down the hole*, she thought woozily, her mental voice imitating the cutesy tone of baby Plucky Duck from a half-remembered episode of Tiny Toons she'd seen as a kid. Something about the little ducky flushing things down the toilet, including himself. Good cartoon. She should see if she could find DVDs of it for Thursday and....

Buffy's eyes snapped open and she forced herself up into a sitting position. Her entire body ached, and her head felt like all seven dwarves were in there, hi-hoing away with their pickaxes. Something thick, warm, and sticky was trickling down from her right temple. Probably blood. Right. Okay. So, she'd fallen in a hole and hit her head. A quick feel around revealed a large rock. Also a small rock that felt like her friend, Charlie. She lifted it up towards her face and squinted at it in the dim moonlight that was filtering down. Yep, Charlie.

Which wasn't actually important. It was just a rock. She needed to figure out how to get back up out of the hole. Also, how much time had passed. It couldn't have been too long, or a locator spell would have been done to find her when she didn't check in. She could do the check in and check the time easily enough, assuming her phone had survived the fall.

She dug it out of her pocket and flipped it open, half expecting it to be dead. *Yes!* She grinned at the comforting glow of the display. According to the clock on it, it was 10:07, so about half an hour since her last call, and seven minutes past the two-hour limit. Spike had been asleep the last two times she'd called, and Mom had picked up. Was he still asleep or awake and worrying about her?

She'd already started dialing before she realized something she should have noticed right away. There were no bars. Of *course* there were no bars. Why would her phone have reception in a freaking *hole* in the ground made by uber gross giant gopher-roaches? No reception. No way to call or be called. No way to be told if Aliena was being born without her there....

Buffy didn't remember dropping or putting away her phone, but she must have done one or the other. It wasn't in her hand as she tried to scale the side of the hole. She got about half way up before the dirt got too loose, crumbling away under her hands and sending her back down to the bottom.

Okay, this isn't working, she told herself, trying to calm down. *Breathe. Just breathe for a bit and think.* The others would do a locator spell if she didn't check in soon. All she had to do was wait. Or.... Her eyes had adjusted enough to the dark to make out the deeper shadows where the tunnel she was in went horizontal.

If she followed it, she might be able to get out sooner. Or she'd just end up making herself harder to find. *Fortune favors the brave*, she thought. Then she took a step forward.

...

Spike gently stroked Thursday's cheek, careful not to wake her as he tucked her in. He hadn't been allowed to bring her up, Joyce had done that after changing her into a fresh nappy, but following along up the stairs wasn't a worry. Not that carrying a fourteen-month-old up the bloody steps was like to make him pop or anything, but the whole lot of them were a mite bit overprotective. With reason, he supposed.

He pressed his hand against his belly. Pretty much to term, and they'd managed to keep Aliena in for it all. No premature labor despite the scare, and no crazy ex slicing him open to pull the sprog out. Best to just take it easy and let her come in a day or two, when Buffy was like to be there for it. No reason to go out the window and risk giving birth alone in the middle of a cemetery or somesuch, especially when one of the witches would have an easier time finding Buffy if she'd crisscrossed about along her own scent trail.

He grabbed at the crib railing, taking slow, deep breaths as he fought not to crush the flimsy bit of wood. Calm, calm. No need to worry. No need to think on the whispered conversation he'd woken to roughly ten minutes ago. Xander and Tara, worrying over the fact that Buffy hadn't checked in in a while.

She's only about fifteen minutes late, he reminded himself. Her phone could have been broken in a fight. Not the first it had happened. And Buffy wasn't exactly the most punctual sort, was she? It had only been about fifteen minutes, not long at all. Fifteen minutes, when he'd expected that she'd be waiting right outside the front door for the time to run out. He wanted to go out there and find her. *Needed* to go out there and find her.

Slayer's a big girl, isn't she? Can look out for herself. But even someone as strong as the Slayer could get into trouble and need help. He snorted and shook his head. Fat lot of good he'd do her if she actually *was* in some sort of trouble. He doubted whatever villain she may have come across would be impressed by him waddling over and bitching about his aching back and swollen ankles. No, it was best to stay at home and keep himself and the little ones safe while others currently more capable saw to Buffy.

God, he hated this. Being sidelined while the woman he loved was out on her own with no one to watch her back. *And you were one of the ones what sent her out there.* Because slaying was bloody well as much a part of her life as breathing, wasn't it? Slayer, bloody the. She mowed down vampires and the hordes of hell all the sodding time. *But all it takes is just one vampire, one demon, having himself one bloody good day. And then it's bye-bye Buffy.*

It would happen someday, he knew that. Demon, vampire, hellgod, or simply old age. Assuming he didn't dust first, he'd lose her to something. *Prob'ly lose her by being kicked to the curb if I try swaddling her in bubble wrap*, he thought with a snort. Someday... someday he was going to lose her, but that wasn't today. He turned towards the door just as Tara peered in. He couldn't be out there watching her back, but she'd friends, his slayer did.

"I called Giles," Tara said. "He has Bethany with him, and she's got a locator spell going."

He just nodded at that, resisting the urge to insist that Tara herself do the spell. Bethany was one of the best of the UC Sunnydale Wicca group, a competent young witch who knew what she was about. When it came to something like a locator spell, she was just as good as Tara. And Tara was needed here, keeping tabs on him and Aliena. Along with her witchy ways, she had apprenticed for a few years with her mother, who had been a midwife.

“They’ll find her,” Tara said into the silence. “And once they do, Giles is going to call. She’s probably fine.”

Spike nodded again and took a slow, even breath. “Yeah, I know. It’s Buffy. Whatever she’s come across, she can deal with it.”

...

Ew. Ew. Ew, ew, ew! I so cannot deal with this, Buffy thought in disgust. Well, okay, she *could*, she just really didn’t want to. She didn’t remember the gopher-roach demons being slimy, but the walls of the tunnel were covered in some sort of slippery ick. She was using the right-hand rule, running her right hand along one side of the slimed tunnel, following any branches that went that way. Her other hand held up her cell phone, the weak glow better than no light source at all.

Maybe this isn’t the best idea ever. The right-hand rule was for mazes, not tunnels carved out by uber gross demons. She should have just stayed put. What if her friends were already looking for her, now following a signal under the ground instead of finding her sitting around waiting in that handy-dandy little hole? She should have....

She followed a curve, and suddenly there was light off in the distance. Ha! Yes! The maze technique apparently worked for demon tunnels, too. She put her phone away, then cautiously made her way forward. It looked like the tunnel had been dug out of a wall. Maybe a basement? *No, sewer,* she thought as she got closer. Maybe a maintenance room. She stepped through the hole. *Or maybe a demon nursery, considering how this town was set up.*

Whatever the case, the small, dimly lit room was full of pulsating, grayish brown eggs about the size of her head. And some of them were rocking, like they were getting ready to hatch.

Chapter 3

Buffy had found herself in pretty sticky situations before. Never one exactly like this, but she'd always been good at quickly assessing her surroundings. Dim emergency lighting that revealed dozens of pulsating eggs. A push button light switch on the wall across the room. A nearby stack of various lengths of pipe.

Ideas flashed through her mind even as she moved, grabbing up a section of pipe and pivoting on one foot to swing the improvised weapon towards one of the eggs. She hesitated, losing some of her speed as a thought suddenly popped into her head. She was a mother, anxiously waiting for her second child to be born, and here she was, getting ready to kill a bunch of babies.

Gopher-roach babies, she reminded herself. She knew there were some demons who just sort of hung out in Sunnydale, minding their own business and taking in the Hellmouth-y ambiance, but the adult gopher-roaches had pretty clearly been slaving beasts that had tried to eat her. *So* not the type that could be invited over for snacks and a History Channel marathon. Hesitation now gone, the pipe smashed into the egg, crushing it and the demon inside.

Buffy was vaguely aware of a sort of *crinkle, crinkle, pop* sound, then something slammed into her back with a high-pitched squeal before chomping down on her shoulder. She immediately dropped to the ground, arching so that all of her weight was on her upper back and the balls of her feet. Then she rolled away from the squished monster and jumped up into a fighting stance, the adrenaline rushing through her body dulling the pain in her shoulder.

Crinkle, crinkle, pop, crinkle, pop, crinkle, crinkle, pop, pop, crinkle! Hungry screams filled the air as the hatchlings threw themselves at her. Buffy didn't even think for the first few moments, just lashing out with the pipe and kicking at anything that got close enough. They were horrible looking, covered in a gross patchwork of hair and chitin. They had six creepy legs and huge gopher-like teeth. So, a lot like the adults, but with a sort of unfinished look to them that made it all somehow worse.

They weren't too hard to kill, but the sheer number of them meant that several were able to get in and bite before she was able to smash them. She was losing blood and getting weaker when she hadn't exactly been at her best after the fall into the hole and smacking her head on that rock. *Rock... huh....*

With a loud grunt of effort, Buffy whirled around, hitting enough of the demons with the pipe to give herself a window of opportunity. Then she pulled good old Charlie out of her pocket and flung him across the room at the light switch button. Ear-piercing screams shattered through the room as the roach-gopher monsters scattered from the sudden flood of fluorescent lighting.

Buffy bolted for the door – pausing just long enough to grab her lucky rock and turn the light back off – and out into the spacious, well-lit, and relatively swanky Sunnydale sewer system.

He may have been a crazy, immortal megalomaniac who'd done a lot of horrible things in order to become a giant snake, but Mayor Wilkins had been damn good at city planning. For demons, anyway.

Buffy closed the door behind her, leaning against it and closing her eyes for a moment. She wished she had a coat like Spike's. Something with a lot of pockets that she could carry things like a lighter in. A nice Molotov cocktail thrown into the maintenance room would have taken care of the problem. As it was, she'd have to make sure to let the Wicca group know about this nest so they could take it out. Hopefully turning the lights off had been enough to keep them in there, and not scurrying out into the tunnels.

You should go back in, an inner voice urged. It's your duty. Take them out. Now. Do it now. She took a slow deep breath, then very deliberately pushed away from the door and began walking. She did what she could, when she could. She had friends out helping with the demons and vampires so that she could have a normal life. And normal was being able to be there when her boyfriend gave birth to their second child.... Well, it was *her* normal, anyway.

She'd managed a few yards before she heard a sudden noise above her. She tensed, getting ready for a fight as the nearest manhole cover was pulled away. Then she sagged in relief at the sight of Giles and Bethany peering down at her.

Hmm.... Tara talked about Bethany a lot, and the progress she'd been making in magic....

"Hi," Buffy called up. "Do you know any fire spells?"

...

One step. Two. Three. Turn. One step. Two. Three. Turn. Over and over. Spike paced in front of the microwave as a mug of freely donated human blood warmed on low power, biting absently at the tip of his thumb. Giles had called not long ago with the news that Buffy had been found. They were going to burn out a nest of baby demons right quick, then she'd be on her way home. With that news, Xander had gone home and the Summers ladies and Tara had headed to bed, leaving Spike the only one awake in the house. Waiting.

He felt strangely agitated, even knowing that Buffy was fine. In fact, thinking on it, he wasn't sure the agitation even had much all to do with her, though it didn't help. He wanted... he wanted to go out and *hunt*. The house was clean, practically sparkling it was, and now.... He shuddered and squeezed his eyes shut for a moment, taking in a deep breath. The smell of the warming blood made things both worse and better at the same time. He'd plenty of blood on hand for himself and the sprog. No need to bring home a victim or two to fill the larder.

Was a part of him, though, outside of the nesting urges, that just... *wanted*. He wanted a victim. A warm body snuggled up against his own as he sank his fangs into tender flesh, drawing the liquid essence of life into himself.

The microwave dinged, and he flung it open to grab the mug, his eyes fluttering closed as the blood flowed over his tongue. Not the same as taking it straight from the tap. Never the same, even when he took it directly from his slayer's veins. Even when she played the passive victim for him. *Doesn't need to be*, he told himself. The soul got in the way of it, but even more than that, *he* got in the way of it, his own choice and desire to give up on killing humans. But he couldn't give up on killing entirely. Soul or no, he was still a vampire, and the demon in him *needed* the kill. Other demons satisfied the urge, but it'd been a couple months since his last slay. Too long. He needed –

The kitchen door burst open, and Buffy walked in. Covered in blood.

...

Buffy flung the back door open, eager to get to Spike and make sure he and Aliena were okay. There he was, right in the kitchen with a mug of blood. There was a look in his eyes that should have made her wary, but all it did was make things go all tight and tingly. Predator. He was looking at her like he was starving and she was a nummy treat.

He slowly and carefully set the mug down on the counter, like any sudden movement would snap his control. Then he closed his eyes and took a slow, deep breath. When they opened back up, the predator was still there, but submerged under the concerned boyfriend as he took in all of her wounds. Most of them were shallow, but still, she was covered in blood. She should have stopped at Giles's apartment for a shower or something. Spike didn't need the stress of seeing her like this, especially when she'd gone missing for a bit.

"I, uh, got a few boo-boos," she said lamely, flashing an awkward smile.

Spike raised a brow at that, but didn't say anything right away. Then he sighed. "I've only five words for you, pet, and the worry you put me through. Bathtub, bubble wrap, packing peanuts."

That was usually *her* line and hearing it from Spike startled a giggle out of her. "Promises, promises."

They really needed to do that for real one of these days. Maybe get Dawn or Mom to babysit while they – Her train of thought was interrupted by Spike suddenly wrapping his arms around her and holding her tight. He was trembling.

"It's okay," she whispered, sliding her hands up under his sweater to touch him skin-to-skin. Something eased inside of her as she held him. She'd needed to go out and slay, but she needed this even more. To be with Spike while they waited for Aliena to be born. It was what he needed, too. "I'm here."

"Mine," he breathed softly, nuzzling her neck for a moment before kissing his way to her shoulder. He tore away the ripped up sleeve, and then his tongue was gently lapping at the

bite there, his saliva dulling the pain.

“Yeah.” She was his. And he was hers. Her vampire. Her man. The perfect match to the slayer and woman that she was.

They stayed like that for several minutes, just basking in each other. Then Buffy stirred and pulled away just enough to look into his eyes. Dark and serious with need. Not for her blood or even for her to play victim. He needed *her*. The mother of the child who would be born any day now. The woman that he loved. She felt powerful and protective. Tender and loving.

“Come on, let’s go on to bed.” She led the way towards the stairs, his hand in hers until they got to the first step. Then she let go to dig into her pocket as something occurred to her. She pulled out her new friend and solemnly held him out to Spike. “This is Charlie. He’s good luck, and watched my back tonight.”

Spike just stared at her for a moment, then he laughed and kissed her on the nose before gently folding her fingers back around the rock. “Then you’d best keep him close for now, hadn’t you? Just until I can take that particular job back.”

She smiled and put Charlie back in her pocket. “I’m looking forward to that.”

“Me too, Slayer-mine.” He smirked and did that *thing* with his tongue behind his teeth. “You’ve a very nice backside for watching.”

Then he was the one leading her up the stairs as she tried not to blush... and totally failed at not watching *his* backside. Mmm. The black utility kilt didn’t show said backside off as nicely as a pair of tight jeans, but it had its own perks. Like mostly bare legs and easy access to....

Whoa, down girl, she told herself sternly. She was tired, sore, and wounded. She should shower and then go to bed, not fantasize about running her hands all over Spike’s skin. Or playing with that part of him that would probably stay soft as she fondled it because of the weird mix of hormones running rampant through him. She should....

She followed him into their bedroom, pressing herself up against his back and stopping him when he started to get undressed. She slid her hands under his sweater, stroking his side with one while the other snaked forward to cup the swell of his belly. As much as she loved the usual rock hardness of his abs, she was going to miss this after Aliena was born. With a soft sigh, she nuzzled the back of his neck before letting him go.

Without a word, they undressed each other, clothes whispering down to the floor as they kissed and caressed, slow and sensual. Then Buffy was on the bed with Spike above her, cataloging each bite and scratch with a lick. Oh god. Her eyes fluttered closed as she moaned. That first lick, he hadn’t put much into it, just enough to dull the pain. Now, though....

It felt like her blood was catching on fire as the euphoric seeped into her, nearly enough on its own to push her over the edge. And then... then his mouth found a new place to lick, and she plunged down from the cliff, feeling loved and beautiful and cherished.

Chapter 4

Spike stared up at the bedroom ceiling, feeling twitchy and oddly out of sorts. He wanted Buffy. Wanted her snuggled up against him while he buried his nose in her hair, breathing in her scent. Just a single peep from him, and there she'd be, running into the room, body still wet and gleaming from the bath she was having. She'd had a shower last night, of course, but she'd needed a good soak to ease all the aches once they'd woken up. He'd been the one to insist on it, in fact.

He sighed and slowly got up out of the blanket and pillow nest he'd turned the bed into. Buffy wouldn't be long. He could wait for her to finish. And until then, he could get things all sorted. He never could seem to get the bloody bluebells set up just right. The four potted plants had been a gift from Tara who had said they represented rebirth of the dead. Fitting sort of thing for a dead man to put around his child's bassinet. And seemed a bit more sanitary than the piles of dirt he'd messed about with for Thursday, even if he *had* bleached the sodding things.

He had, of course, tried putting the plants at the four main compass points, but it hadn't felt quite right. Nor had a square or rectangle. A cross shape was out, obviously. Hmm... maybe....

He felt an odd sort of twinge through his abdomen, but didn't think much of it as he considered things, absently rubbing his belly as he tilted his head and studied the flowers. Then he glanced over at the rock on the nightstand. That had some possibilities, didn't it? He scooped up the rock, tossing it up and down in the palm of his hand as he considered things. Couldn't use the symbols of his own belief, but would be rather fitting to use something from Tara's beliefs, wouldn't it? Bending wasn't exactly the easiest thing for him just then, so he used his foot to put the potted plants where he wanted them. Then he carefully dropped the rock where he wanted it, forming a pentacle.

There now, that looked about ri- Another twinge, followed by a sort of pinching cramp. What the bloody...? Excitement and fear jolted through him as he realized what was happening. He'd felt something like this before, when Aliena had tried to come early. Was okay now, though. The right time, it was. He just... he needed Buffy.

He turned towards the door, a wave of dizziness crashing over him as another cramp stabbed through his body. He staggered over to the wall, leaving against it before he could fall over. *Not yet, bitty-bit*, he thought, pressing his hand tightly against his belly as if that would keep the sprog in. He wasn't exactly sure on how long this was going to take, but Buffy was bloody well going to be there for it.

Spike gritted his teeth through the feeling of his insides being pushed all about, then called out for Buffy.

Buffy was half-asleep, lulled by the hot water despite the full sleep she'd had, when she heard Spike yell her name. She was up and out of the tub before she even consciously registered it, flinging the door open without bothering to grab her robe or even a towel. Her heart felt like it was lodged in her throat, pounding away a mile a minute. What the hell had happened? Had something gotten in, or...?

She was across the hall and bursting into her room in an instant, her eyes going wide as she saw Spike leaning against the wall for support. Oh god. It was time. It had to be time. She rushed over to him, a flash of purple light sparking between them just as she touched him. Spike made a soft sound somewhere between a sigh and a moan, then looked at her with eyes that had gone all glazed and dilated, like he was drugged or something. Had the ritual done that, making things easier on him now that she was here to help?

Of course, there wasn't really anything she could do other being here for him. She didn't know much about how babies were born, especially when the one giving birth was a guy. What the hell was she supposed to do? She needed to.... She had to.... Ben. They needed Ben and Tara. But her Mom and Dawn were both out for the day and Tara was all the way down in the basement. Her phone, where was.... She glanced around frantically as she murmured soothing nonsense and guided Spike down to the floor.

What the hell was she even doing? She should have gotten him over to the bed, but she'd been worried about him falling, and now he was already down on the floor, shivering and panting. The warming bracelet Tara had made was still around his wrist, so he probably wasn't cold, but.... Buffy darted over to the bed and pulled the comforter off, wrapping it around both of them as she settled down beside him.

"It's okay, I'm here. It's okay. Just breathe and relax." It was good advice for both of them. She took a slow, deep breath and took Spike's hand in hers. He gripped it hard enough to hurt, but that was okay. She could take it. She squeezed back, strong but gentle. "I'm here."

"Bloody bugging fuck," Spike gasped out, his entire body tensing for a long moment and his grip on her hand tightening. Then he went limp against her, the panting and shivering back. "F-feels like she's... bloody playing football with my innards."

"You mean *real* football or soccer football?" It was a stupid thing to say right now, but it just sort of popped out. Before she could apologize for teasing him, he grinned and gave a shaky laugh.

"Soccer bloody well *is* real football, you colonial sava—" His word was cut off by a pained grunt.

Buffy held him closer, stroking his back with her free hand while she glanced around the room. No use. She remembered now. They'd left both of their cell phones downstairs to charge, which had been really stupid. *We're going to have to get through this on our own and call Ben after the fact.* Just as she'd decided that, she heard the thud of someone running up the stairs. Then Tara appeared in the room with a stack of towels.

“I c-called Ben,” she said, tripping over her words a little. Her stutter was mostly gone around them, but sometimes came back if she was excited or upset. Buffy was pretty sure it was excitement this time. “The, uh, the monitoring spell I had on Spike went off.”

Oh, right. Buffy had completely forgotten about the monitoring spell. She felt kind of dumb and useless. They’d had all these safeguards in place and everything, and she’d just panicked and had stupid things like making Spike sit on the damn floor. She felt even stupider when Tara glanced over at the bed, biting her own lip as she considered things.

Then Tara put the towels down – close enough that Buffy could feel the warmth radiating from them – before going over to the bed to retrieve the spell quilt she and the rest of the Wicca group had made for Spike. She knelt down beside them and managed to get the quilt between Spike and the comforter.

Buffy waited for the other woman to get onto her about all of the mistakes she’d made, but she just smiled and patted her comfortingly on the shoulder, while sort of averting her eyes. Why would she...? Heat flooded her face as she suddenly remembered that she and Spike were both naked. Not that Spike being naked would really bother Tara, but here Buffy was, flaunting naked boobies in front of someone who liked boobies and.... Spike tensed again, and worries about modesty went right out of Buffy’s head as she focused on what was actually important.

He leaned into her, incoherent noises spilling out of him as he clamped blunt human teeth onto the side of her neck. Buffy just stroked his back in response, one-handedly kneading the tight muscles. “It’s okay. You’re doing okay.” She glanced over at Tara, who nodded encouragingly.

“I-it shouldn’t be too much longer,” Tara said. “Labor is pr-pretty fast when the ritual’s been used on someone who isn’t designed to have a baby. It–”

Spike suddenly let go of Buffy’s throat as he jerked back, the movement interrupting Tara’s words. He cried out, body arching as a purple glow shimmered into existence. Something was coming out of him. A purple ball of energy with the clear silhouette of a baby inside.

Tara immediately sprung into action, unfolding one of the towels and laying it out just as the purple ball popped and vanished, leaving behind a wet and wrinkly baby girl, along with a lumpy, red-streaked gray *thing* attached to her by the umbilical cord. There was a moment of silence before the baby reacted to her new surroundings by screaming angrily. The sound jolted through Buffy, making her breasts – still full of milk since she hadn’t pumped or nursed Thursday yet – feel tight and achy.

She wanted to scoop Aliena up in her arms, but Tara was still working, discarding the soaked towel to gently pat the baby down with a clean one. Then a third towel was used to partially wrap her up before she was handed over to Buffy. The towel was still warm. Probably from a spell. Not that wondering about it was at all important. Not when Buffy was holding a precious little treasure in her arms, the way she’d been wrapped leaving one side bare so she could rest skin-to-skin against Buffy’s chest.

She smiled down at the red, wrinkly little face, feeling tears prick at her eyes. God, she was so tiny. Bigger than Thursday had been, but still so fragile and tiny. Spike shifted beside her, and she carefully settled Aliena against her chest with one arm so she could wrap the other around and pull him close. She was vaguely aware of Tara still quietly working, watching the gray, lumpy thing for a little bit before getting in close enough to clamp and cut the cord.

Spike shifted again, snuggling Buffy and reaching over to gently stroke Aliena's cheek. "Hey there, 'Yena," he slurred.

Buffy sniffled and the tears finally spilled down her cheeks. "Welcome to the world," she whispered. "Aliena Will Summers."

Chapter 5

Spike woke up to the sound of a car pulling into the drive, completely alone in the bedroom. Not his favorite way to be, but it was out of love, not abandonment. He'd been given a few extra hours of kip while the non-infant ladies of the house got things all sorted. Another car pulled up, which meant it was time to stop lying about.

He carefully rolled out of bed and padded over to the dresser to pull out a pair of soft, loose pajama bottoms and the baggy #1 Dad shirt Buffy had given him after Thursday had been born. He wasn't anywhere near as bad off as then, when flesh and muscle had been sliced clean through, but everything felt sore and tender from all the months of being stretched out, followed by suddenly having to adjust to eight pounds of baby being suddenly gone, along with however much the fluid-filled purple ball and placenta had weighed. Not to mention Aliena bouncing all about on her way to freedom.

He'd wondered why she couldn't have got all intangible right from the start of things yesterday. Tara's best guess was that she'd needed to be positioned properly, else she'd been like to have just dropped down vertically through him and past the floor to land with a splat downstairs.

Spike shuddered at the thought and hugged himself for a moment. Bruised insides were a small price to pay for a healthy sprog, and he'd willingly endure far worse for his girls. Hell, human women generally *did* endure far worse. He'd got off relatively easy this time, and not just when it came to the birth itself. Yeah, there had been that whole mess with Wolfram & Hart near the beginning, along with the vengeance wish that had nearly led to early labor. But no sprog being cut right out his body, and no being beat on by Buffy or tortured with holy water by a crazy hellgod.

The sound of the front door opening and closing broke into his thoughts. Right, then, enough of enough, that was. Time for him to get ready and mingle. Was meant to be a party going on, after all. He pulled the soft, loose clothing on, not bothering with boots or his coat before heading downstairs. No need for armor for this.

Xander, Anya, and Rupert were all in the living room, along with Thursday, who was babbling happily in her playpen. Before he could scoop her up, Buffy and Tara seemed to appear out of nowhere, hustling him over to the couch. Within moments, he was sat down with a heating pad over his middle to ease the sore muscles, an armful of sleeping newborn cuddled against his chest, and Thursday sitting beside him with a sippy cup full of blood.

"Bay-bee?" Thursday chirped, patting gently at her swaddled sister with her free hand. The other got the cup into her mouth so she could drink her blood while she stared up at him with big, curious blue eyes.

"Yep. This is your baby sis, Aliena."

"Yeh-yeh!"

Spike grinned at her attempt to say Aliena, barely noticing as Tara nipped back into the kitchen, Rupert and Xander following along to help. Buffy settled in on his other side, resting her head against his shoulder.

“My heartbeat hasn’t been bothering her,” she said, reaching out to run a light finger along the side of Aliena’s face. Thursday had been frightened of the sound at first, so they’d recorded Buffy’s heartbeat for Aliena and had put a pair of headphones against his belly from time to time to get her used to it. Seemed to have paid off.

“Glad to hear it, love.”

Anya approached then, carrying a large pink gift bag with “It’s a Girl!” writ out in silver script. Puffs of pink and white tissue paper stuck up out the top. “We brought a gift,” she beamed. “Giles and Xander helped, so it’s from all of us.” She held the bag out. “It’s for you, not the baby.”

He started to shift Aliena over to Buffy, but the two women apparently silently agreed that it was best for Anya to just hand the bag over to Buffy. She dug into it and pulled out a ten pack carton of smokes and a large glass bottle full of dark red liquid. The label was in an unfamiliar language.

“It’s a demon brew. Fireball whiskey mixed with shelf-stable lamb blood.” She looked anxious suddenly. “That *is* appropriate, right? Xander wasn’t sure, but Giles thought it was a good idea.”

“You did fine, pet,” Spike assured her, eying the bottle appreciatively. Lamb wasn’t quite as good as the horse he was transitioning over to, but was a damn sight better than pig. Seemed like a good choice to pair with fireball. As for the fags.... His fingers practically itched to grab and light one up. Later, once the sun was down and he could sit out on the porch for a spell.

Anya smiled, practically wiggling in place as she radiated awkward excitement. A bit like a pup getting the hang of a new trick. Bloody adorable, she was. *They all are, in their own ways*, he thought as the others tromped out the kitchen with an assortment of snacks and drinks. And he was going to outlive every bloody one of them, assuming he didn’t dust first. They’d grow old, while he stayed the same.

He absently stroked Aliena’s cheek, not really paying attention. Then she shifted in her sleep, little rosebud mouth closing around the tip of his finger. Just like that, she broke through his melancholy like the sun ray she was named for. You had to enjoy the good things in life as they happened without getting bogged down in thoughts of what would happen after.

“Right, then, let’s get this party started,” he called out. “Dibs on picking out the first movie.”

Maybe humans and near-humans were fragile — hell, he was, too, in his own way — and maybe he hadn’t centuries to spend with his, but he was going to cherish however long time and circumstances allowed.

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