

Forfeit

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Forfeit

by [glacis](#)

Summary

Giles makes a deal with Angelus to save Buffy's life, and pays a harsh price.

Notes

This is the kick-off story to the Thorny Path series, but stands alone, for those not interested in the Angel-verse, so I'm also posting it on its own.

Forfeit, by Glacis. A Watcher/Demon collision in the Buffy universe.

The Watcher is expendable. The Slayer is not.

This is a tenet around which I have built my adult life. Adolescent rebellion aside, I was bred for one purpose : to protect and support a Slayer. Oh, I know, the books say that the Watcher must not become emotionally involved; one Watcher may watch over more than one Slayer during his lifetime; the Council determines the extent of sacrifice the Watcher must make; the Watcher must follow the dictates of the Council.

I used to believe the books.

Then I met Buffy.

All the rules changed.

Along with Buffy came her coterie of friends, who have become part of my protected pack as well. We have been to hell and back.

Perhaps not back. Not quite yet.

I don't know if I loved Jenny. I do know I could have loved her, and she could have loved me. We'll never know. Angelus snapped her neck and left her in a parody of gifting, dead beneath my bedcovers. I hate him with a passion I haven't felt in years, if ever. For Buffy's sake, I keep it hidden, but I caution and counsel as much as she will allow. Her own nature, and circumstances, conspire against me.

Circumstances like these.

I stare down at the book. The illustrations stare back, mocking me. My Slayer is in mortal jeopardy, held captive by demons she cannot defeat. They can only be killed by one as dead as they. As much as Buffy consorts with the undead, she herself is vibrantly, brilliantly alive. She will not escape, and nothing she, nor her friends, nor I can do will effect her escape.

I'd almost rather ask Spike. Except he'd kill me, and Buffy would still be in peril. Spike is relatively straight-forward, considering his sire. Which thought leads me precisely back where I began, where I do not wish to be.

Angelus.

He enjoys tormenting her. When they made love, and I believe, for them, it was love, it ripped the soul from him, destroying not only his own happiness, but the illusion that Buffy could ever be happy, as well. One thing he doesn't want, however, is to kill her. He's not finished torturing her yet.

My only advantage. His ingrained sadism.

I hear the door slide open behind me, and every muscle in my body tenses.

"Hello, Giles." He has a lovely voice. Goes with the visage. But then, wasn't Lucifer the most lovely of the heavenly host?

"Please enter." My voice is steady, surprising me. He doesn't really need an invitation; he's had one before, and used it, viciously, when it was no longer offered. I can almost feel his suspicion in his silence.

A black-clad arm comes over my shoulder and a long finger traces the outline of the Brumont demon on the page. "Nasty devils," he comments mildly.

"The have Buffy," I respond bluntly. "We -- I need your help." I turn in my chair and stare up at him. He's standing too close for me to rise.

He's smiling. Even laughing, very softly.

"My help? Why on earth would you ask for **my** help?" His eyes are sparkling. I have never wanted to kill another being more in my entire life.

"Because you are the only dead man I know who doesn't want to kill her." More blunt truth.

His hand withdraws from the book, but he doesn't step back. He's staring at me, and his eyes are very dark. I'm faintly dizzy, unsure whether it's from unacknowledged fear or vertigo from staring too closely into those dark eyes. For a moment, I'm not sure I can stand the intensity of his stare, of his almost-physical touch. The reason for my bravery reasserts itself, and the dizziness abates.

I will do whatever I have to do to save my Slayer.

"There's a price." He leans impossibly closer, the shadow of a smile on his lips. I swallow. My mouth feels dry. There's always a price. I believe I know what this one will be. The terror frozen on Jenny's face when I found her flashes across my mind.

The Watcher is expendable. The Slayer is not. I'll pay his price. I'd say damn him, but he already is. As am I.

"I agree," I tell him firmly. The smile widens, and the sparkle in his eyes intensifies.

"Let's get started, then, shall we?"

The last night of my life is a strenuous one.

We walk to the crypt in silence. Once there, he holds up one hand, and I draw back. The Brumont are mere animals to vampires, though deadly to humans, and there is no reason to give Angelus another victim to rescue. He wouldn't let them kill me, either.

He reserves that pleasure for himself. His price.

Moving faster than any human, he dives into the crypt, breaking stone apart with his fists, descending like the wrath of Satan on the nest of Brumont. Buffy is chained to the far wall, bruises darkening her face, blood dried at her wrists under the manacles. I hug the perimeter,

making my way to her, ducking the flying body of a demon as it impacts the wall behind me. In moments, I'm beside her. Her eyes are huge, and she looks very confused.

Not surprising in the least.

Three more Brumont die as Angelus, in full demon visage, rends them to pieces. I can't get the bloody manacles apart. Digging into the tool kit slung over my shoulder, I take out a pry bar and get to work on the joining of the chain to the wall.

A rush of displaced air startles me and I duck. Angelus snarls over my shoulder, catches the chains in one fist, and pulls them from the wall with a scattering of stone dust and sharp pebbles. I can feel his breath on the side of my neck as he pants, an odd thing for a being who doesn't breathe.

"Angel?" Buffy asks. He's back to fighting, and I shake my head, gathering up the chains. We can remove the manacles back at my flat.

"Angelus." She opens her mouth to query further, then pulls me down by the simple expedient of nearly strangling me with my own collar. Another body impacts the wall, directly where I'd been standing. "Thank you, Buffy." I attempt to smile reassuringly at her. The attempt obviously fails. I'm not very good at it in the best of times, and these are certainly not those.

The crypt is quiet. I raise my head and venture a look. Gouts of blood, torn flesh, a few severed heads, limbs scattered about, broken demon bodies flung every which way. Angelus was certainly thorough. But then, he always did enjoy himself in a fight. I peer more closely, but he's no longer there.

"You going to tell me what just went down here, Giles?"

Buffy is seldom, if ever, truly frightened, but she can be persistent if she's worried. I avoid her eyes, gathering up her chains again and handing them to her. "Let me take you home. We'll get the manacles off, and I'll explain."

No, I won't. Not completely. But as I pick at the rusty locks until her wrists are free, she accepts my explanation of a one-time binding spell, Angelus being the only demon who'd not kill her outright, and the fact that this doesn't mean he's any closer to having a soul than he has been since he lost it. Only the first part of the explanation is an outright lie, and Buffy usually tunes out of my metaphysical explanations. This time is no different than the usual, and luckily, Willow isn't here to catch the inconsistencies. Just Buffy, tired, bruised, and heartbroken. It takes little to convince her to go home, try to sleep, heal up. Make herself ready for another day of fighting evil.

At least she's not making deals with it.

The Watcher is expendable. The Slayer is not.

It has become my mantra.

Not knowing how much time I'll have, I check once more to make sure my documents are in order. The Watchers and the military : the two places one is certain to always have an updated last will and testament. I have just propped the letter I've left for Buffy against the small strongbox holding my documents, unlocked for her convenience, when the door opens and he walks inside my home.

I rise before he can block me against the desk again, moving to meet him. He's faster than I, not surprisingly, slamming the door, crossing the floor to stop inches from me, beside the sofa. I don't greet him. He looks at me, smiling that damnedable smile again, and I look back at him, determined to meet my death with some semblance of dignity. I don't want Buffy to see the same look on my face that I saw on Jenny's.

Unbuttoning my collar, I lift my left hand to my shirt, laying the fabric flat against my shoulder, baring my neck. Still looking at him, defiance and acceptance warring within me, I tilt my head to the left. My world narrows to the hunger and the laughter in his eyes, and the beat of my heart in the jugular vein running along the right side of my throat.

His hands are on me, one at my waist, the other at the back of my head. He moves closer, until all I can see is soft thick brown hair and the curve of his ear. His hands are inhumanly strong, but oddly tender. His body is cold against mine, but feels strangely hot. Anticipation, perhaps? Triumph? Killing me will certainly torment Buffy, and that does seem to be his current quest in what passes for his life.

His mouth moves over my skin, skimming it, barely touching. I want to grab his head, force him down, make him get on with it, for God's sake. For Buffy's sake. For my own. I can't move. His mouth is touching now, pressing against the skin, and I tense against my will, waiting for the pain of fangs tearing into my flesh.

He's kissing me.

I shudder, trying instinctively to arch away, but I can't move against the strength of his hold. He laughs, very softly, the sound ghosting over my neck, sending a shiver directly down my spine, loosening my knees. Damn him, thrice over, were he not damned already! Why is he doing this? Why the bloody hell doesn't he just feed and get it over with? I don't realize I've said the words aloud until he answers me.

"Now, where would be the fun in that, Giles?"

I freeze, and the fangs clamp into me. It hurts, but not as much as I expected, and my brain unlocks enough to realize that he's not chewing. He's simply biting. And sucking.

It hurts.

Hurts.

My head is swimming, and my knees are shakier than before. I'm held as close to him as two separate bodies can be, but I'm not fighting any more. My arms have moved.

I'm holding him.

The realization that I'm actively participating in my own death kicks my mind into action. Commands pulse to nerve endings and muscles, and my body strives to obey. Unlock the death grip I have on his waist. Stop melting into him. Firm those knees. Concentrate on the pain and repeat, over and over to myself. The Watcher is expendable. The Slayer is not.

He's stopped suckling at me. With his jaws still clamped in the side of my neck, one hand still holding my head in a vice grip against his mouth, his other hand moves, tearing my shirt from me as if it were made of tissue. Finally, his jaws unclench and he slowly, slowly removes his fangs from my flesh.

God, it hurts.

My eyes are watering, and I'm weak again, can't seem to gain my balance. He's holding me up by my hair, bending down along my body, licking at the trail of blood as it seeps from the wound in my neck over my collarbone, along my right breast, over my nipple. He bites again, without warning, striking like a snake, and I moan, unable to contain the sound.

It hurts. And I'm aroused.

Damn him.

Damn us both.

His hands are at my waist, now, both of them, working at my trousers, stripping me, and I can't fight him. I push at his shoulders and I might as well be pushing at a granite wall. The vertigo is growing, the room spinning. Perhaps that was me, for I find myself prone on the sofa, cold in the cool room, colder still as he lowers himself over me. I clench my fists in the cushion, closing my eyes against tears, vaguely surprised that my glasses seem to have disappeared.

He's laughing again, licking at my neck, where the seepage of blood has slowed to a trickle. Solid thighs part my own, and I realize, dimly, from far away, that I'm protesting, not going to this fate silently, although I might as well be mute for all he listens. My own chorus of no, and god, and please, and don't, echoes uselessly in my head.

He bites again, and again, not sinking deeply into me, just enough to mark, enough to draw blood. He laps at it like a cat, making tiny appreciative noises. The nape of my neck, below my left shoulder blade, the small of my back. The top of my thigh, my right buttock. He's taking his time, extracting my forfeit, enjoying the payment I will make for the life of my Slayer.

My litany has changed. Two words, three more. Damn him. Damn us both. His tongue follows his fangs, opening me, and he thrusts into me with no preparation. The pain is back, tearing at me regardless of my attempts to relax, to accept, to not make it so difficult. I may as well be a virgin, it has been so long, and he takes me hard, delighting in the pain if his laughter is anything to go by, and it has always been.

Time slows down, as it does when one wishes it would fly. The pain goes on forever, joined by another sharp jagged slice of it as he bites back into my neck, worrying at the edges of the

original wound. Too much early conditioning with my only other male partner, and my body responds, unable to differentiate between extreme pleasure and extreme pain, knowing only that the one using it is knowledgeable and determined to force a response. I am moving with him, now, not against him, and while the passage has eased with blood and force, the pain remains.

His bite is deeper, his sucking stronger, his thrusts near to breaking me, and I'm nearly unconscious with the combination of pain, pleasure, and blood loss. His hand slides from my hip to my penis, and his touch completes what his violence began. My climax triggers his own, and he stops biting long enough to howl as he comes. The sound hurts my head.

He withdraws, with one final lick at the slowly trickling wound at my neck. His hands are petting me, soothing me against my will, but then what of this has not been against my will? I gave him permission to kill me. Not to destroy me and leave me alive. His wandering hands settle on my buttocks, and I whimper, not willing for another go round, utterly unable to stop him. A raspy sensation, and I whimper again as I realize he's cleaning me, licking up the blood and spillings from my arse and thighs.

It doesn't hurt.

I'm unconscious before he stops.

Sunlight coming through the front window wakes me, and I painfully go through my morning routine. The strongbox is locked, letter to Buffy burned to ashes in the litter bin, throw bundled into a bloody ball and thrust deeply into the rubbish disposal outside. None of the wounds is deep enough to require stitches, and bandages will keep any stains from showing to the outside. A long, hot shower to loosen abused muscles, a dose of castor oil, and a strong cup of tea strengthen the facade of normalcy. I'm ready to face the day, as ready as I can be to face a day I hadn't expected to see. Ready to face my Slayer.

She takes me by surprise by storming into the room as I make ready to leave.

"Buffy?" Her eyes are red rimmed. The bruises from the previous day have faded to nothing, but the bruises behind her eyes are raw. "What's happened? What's wrong?"

"What's **wrong**?" I have seldom heard her actually shriek. I wince, and when I open my eyes again, she has thrust two sheets of paper before me. They're rattling. Her hands are shaking. I reach out gingerly to steady them, then freeze in horrified disbelief.

Two still life drawings, beautifully rendered, exquisite in detail. Vintage Angelus work. The subject is intimately familiar. My own body, in motion and at rest.

Being taken, marked, broken. Agony and pleasure in every twisting line, every bunched muscle, even to the sheen of blood and sweat on my skin. It was rape, but could look like love, in another universe, in another lifetime, with another person.

The second is peaceful, my face in repose against the sofa cushion, the line of my shoulder and out-flung arm, the loose drape of the throw covering me. A thin trickle of blood making a stark line from the wound at my neck down onto the sofa below me.

Gradually, the world comes back into focus, and I can hear her screaming at me, her voice thick with betrayal and pain. He is so very good at inflicting pain. A true master. Damn him. Damn us both. Her words strike at me.

"Why can you have what I can't ever have again?" She's crying, and I'm shaking. I take the pictures from her. I will burn them. Later.

"You and Angel were lovers. This isn't love, Buffy. This is Angelus. This is hatred. This is exactly what he wants."

She bites her lip, staring up at me. "What?" she finally asks, her voice breaking.

"To hurt you." The truth does, indeed, hurt.

Her eyes close, and her shoulders slump. Hesitantly, I reach out to her, unsure of my reception, unsure of my actions. Blindly, she reaches out to me and wraps her arms around my waist, hugging me tightly. Her grip presses against the wounds he gave me, and I tighten my throat against the pain. My arms come around her, and I hold her as tightly as she is holding me. We will get one another through this. He will not destroy us. He will not destroy *her*.

The Watcher is expendable. The Slayer is not.

FINIS

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