

Teatime

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Teatime

by [zabjade](#)

Summary

In a quiet moment during Thursday's Child, Buffy asks Spike to teach her how to make tea. Takes place between chapters 23 and 24 of Thursday's child, but before Whale Night.

Buffy didn't bother to announce her arrival back home. She just shut the door as quietly as she could behind her, sighing as she leaned against it. An ancient, primordial evil was after her sister, it had only been a couple of months since her mom's brain surgery, and the vampire she was dating was having an ongoing emotional crises because of their baby's soul. Why, exactly, had she thought enrolling for the spring semester was a good idea again?

Her eyes narrowed suddenly as she heard something. Mom was at the gallery and Dawn wouldn't be home from school for another hour. That meant either a burglar was making himself at home in the kitchen, or.... Damnit! He was *supposed* to be sleeping. Even as she stomped towards the kitchen, she started feeling guilty about the anger.

It wasn't Spike's fault he wasn't getting enough sleep. Insomnia apparently happened a lot during pregnancies. And then there were the nightmares. *Maybe he just got hungry?* she thought hopefully as she peered into the kitchen. There was Spike, wearing a sweater and one of the kilts he'd gotten now that his jeans didn't fit anymore. No food or even blood out. Just the kettle. Damn. Definitely nightmares, then, and he was turning to the one fluid even more comforting than blood if you happened to be an English vampire. Tea.

"Good day at uni?" he asked quietly, turning on the faucet and letting the water run before looking over his shoulder at her.

"Busy, but I'm managing."

God, he looked exhausted. His hair was sleep-tousled and there were dark circles under his eyes and shadows in them. She wanted to hug him. Just wrap her arms around him from behind and rub his belly while telling him everything would be okay. Sometimes, after the nightmares, he was even more touchy-feely than normal. Other times, though, he didn't want to be touched at all. Since he hadn't initiated anything yet, she was pretty sure it was the latter right now.

So, cuddling was off the table at the moment to make him feel better, and since it was still daylight out, they couldn't even do a patrol to get it all out of his system. She looked around the kitchen for something to distract him. Maybe she could open a can of pineapples and see if the smell would wipe out any other thoughts other than eating the things.

"Why do you do that?" she blurted suddenly, eyes locking on the water still streaming from the faucet. "Let the water run for a while before you fill the kettle?" She would have thought it was because he wasn't paying attention, but he did it every time he made tea.

He looked at the water and shrugged. "Good tea starts with good water. You've good tap water. Filtered, but still has minerals and all in it. Needs to be aerated a bit, though, so you let it run."

"Teach me," she demanded. If he was focused on that, then he wouldn't be thinking of all of the people he'd killed over the decades.

Spike blinked, head tilting as he studied her. "Alright, then," he said. He filled the kettle and got it set up on the stove to boil before wandering to the cabinets. He ignored the various boxes of teabags and pulled out a bag of loose-leaf tea. It was mostly black with little flecks of brown. "Assam flowery orange pekoe."

Either he'd started speaking in gibberish, or that was the name of the tea. Buffy decided on the second option. "And it's better than what we have in the bags?"

Spike snorted and rolled his eyes. "Just about *anything* is better than that bagged shite. Fannings and tea dust shoved into little packets with tags stapled on. It's the rubbish left behind after the good stuff is packed up. It's drinkable in a pinch, but calling it good is like claiming the cut off bits of crust from a sandwich is fine dining."

"Ew." Buffy wrinkled her nose. She usually didn't bother cutting the crusts off her sandwiches, but eating *just* that seemed kind of gross.

"Yeah." He actually smiled slightly at that, and his eyes seemed a little brighter. "Assam's a good black tea, and flowery orange pekoe is fairly high grade for it. Good stuff, that."

She had no idea what he was talking about, but she nodded like it all made perfect sense. Since the tea he made was better than what she made, he obviously knew a thing or two. That and the whole being British thing. She was pretty sure they all popped out of their mothers with a cup of tea in hand.

Spike put the baggie of leaves on the counter while he gathered up the other things they'd apparently need. A box of sugar cubes, two tea cups, two weird mesh cup things, and a measuring spoon. He tapped one of the mesh things. "Put these on the list last week when your mum felt up to shopping. She's a few tea balls, but these are better. Leaves need room to expand and release their full flavor and whatall."

The kettle started to whistle at that point, and he immediately took it off the heat and started pouring into one of the cups.

"Some of the more delicate teas, you want to let the water cool for a spell after it boils. Black tea is sturdy. Likes it piping hot, it does." He motioned her over and handed her the kettle. Once she'd filled the second cup with water, she set the kettle down and reached for one of the mesh basket things. Spike shook his head and moved it out of the way. "Not there just yet, love."

She blinked in confusion but followed his lead when he dumped the water in his cup out into the sink. Only then did he put the baskets in, followed by an overflowing scoop of tea leaves into one of them. He handed her the bag and measuring spoon for her cup before pouring hot water into his own.

"Okay, so what was with the dumping out the water thing?" she asked when he handed the kettle back to her. "Some arcane ritual sacrifice to the tea gods?"

That got a laugh out of him as he shook his head and carried his cup and the sugar cubes to the kitchen island. "Nah, gets the cup warm so you don't lose as much heat. You do it with

the pot instead of the cups if you're making more than a cup or two. Can teach you the way of that tomorrow, if you'd like." He sounded oddly shy as he offered.

"I'd like that," she said with a smile as she set her own cup on the island. Then she frowned down at it. Something had just occurred to her, and the protective instinct from the ritual was starting to stir, vaguely demanding she toss the stuff down the drain and force Spike to suffer a fate worse than death for an Englishman. "How much caffeine is in this stuff, anyway?"

"A lot," he admitted as he put a saucer over each cup to hold in the heat. "Nothin' to get your knickers in a twist over, though, pet. Read the same things you did, and seems like humans can't have much caffeine when preggers because it's a diuretic. Vampires don't use the loo, so I can't literally piss away the nutrients the sprog needs."

The protective instinct settled down at that, and Buffy was able to relax and take a seat at the island. Spike didn't, though. He tapped on the surface for a moment, then went to the refrigerator to get out the milk. That was set down next to the sugar cubes. Then he muttered something about biscuits before digging into the pantry.

"Steeping time is important," he said, finally taking a seat as he put down a package of shortbread cookies. In a weird manifestation of the Americanization of Spike's vocabulary, chocolate chip were sometimes cookies, but shortbread were always biscuits. "Too little, and you might as well be drinking hot water. Too much, and you release a lot of tannin, which makes it too bitter. Three to five minutes is good for most blacks. For whites and greens, you want slightly cooler water and a shorter steep."

Wow. That was a lot of tea knowledge floating around in Spike's head, and she suspected he was only sharing the tip of the iceberg. No wonder his was better. She just heated up some water, usually in the microwave, and threw in some tea bags.

After about four minutes, he took the saucers off and set them down on the island. The mesh baskets were taken out and put in the sink. Buffy gazed down into her cup while Spike dropped a couple of sugar cubes into his and stirred in some milk. It was really pretty in the white tea cups with nothing in it; a rich, clear copper. She took a slow sip, careful not to burn herself on the hot liquid. Bitter, with a lot of other flavors hovering in the background.

"There's some what swear by putting the milk in first, but that doesn't work when you're brewing it straight into the cup. Not much point to it, anyway. That's for when you've chipped or worn cups. They can shatter if you put your hot tea in direct." He finished fussing with his, but instead of drinking it, he held the cup out to her. "Here. Try this first, before you drink the rest of yours or muck about with it."

His fingers lightly brushed against hers as she took the cup. Whatever dreams had haunted him, he seemed to be feeling better now. Definitely of the good. So was the tea. She took a sip of Spike's and held it against her tongue. The sugar completely neutralized the bitterness, letting more of the flavor through. She wasn't really sure what the milk did – it didn't really taste all that milky – but it did seem to make everything fuller.

A weird thought popped into her head. Spike's feelings for her were like sugar, the sweetness of them tempering the natural evil tendencies of a vampire and letting more of his real

essence through. The soul he was sharing with their baby was kind of like the milk. You couldn't quite put your finger on what it did, but there was definitely a difference.

"It's good," she said, handing his cup back.

She immediately scooped two sugar cubes out of the box and dumped them into her tea. She eyeballed the carton of milk, then looked at Spike. She'd started falling for him even before the "milk." Of course, actual dairy products weren't the same as souls, and she needed the calcium, so she added a splash.

Spike grinned at her. "You've good taste, love."

She smiled back, feeling warm and fuzzy as the love in his eyes chased away the last of the shadows there. "Yeah, I do."

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