

SACRED SECRETS

A Buffy Fanfiction by AmandaK

Through the haze of anguish, Buffy heard a soft click. When she looked up she saw Spike glare down at her. She'd been too upset to sense him coming, and as she sat watching him with tear-filled eyes, the gun in his hands barely registered. "What do you want now?" she asked in a low tone. She didn't have the energy to fight him. Not tonight.

"What's wrong?"

He surprised her with the softly voiced question and Buffy looked away, fresh tears burning behind her eyelids. She couldn't tell him; she couldn't tell anyone. As long as she did not say it out loud, it wasn't real. Not really real. And maybe it would go away.

"I don't wanna talk about it."

"Is there something I can do?"

Buffy's eyes widened and a sarcastic retort formed on her lips. Damn vampire! Couldn't he leave her alone when she was in such pain? But the nasty words died on her lips when she caught the genuine concern in his blue eyes.

She almost laughed. Had the world gone crazy and nobody bothered to tell her? First her mother, who tried so valiantly to pretend that there was nothing seriously wrong with her when they both knew better. And here Spike was exhibiting a bona fide interest in her well being.

She gave a small shake of the head, afraid that if she tried to speak, all her dismay would come out in a scream. Better to remain silent.

She didn't look up as Spike closed the last few feet between them and sat down next to her on the back stairs. It was strangely soothing. He was a creature of the night, someone she had fought on countless occasions. Someone who had tried to kill her at least as many times. And now, in her hour of need, she found his presence a comfort.

Buffy pushed against the door to the crypt, not quite sure what she was doing here. When she left the hospital, she had been determined to go to the Magic Shop to talk to

Giles about possible spells or potions that would cure her mother. Instead, she found herself detouring to the cemetery and Spike's crypt.

It wasn't as if she owed the blonde vampire anything.

"Spike?" she called out after she descended the steps. The word echoed around in the empty chamber and she received no reply. Spike wasn't there; the crypt was deserted.

Why anyone, even a vampire, would choose to live in a crypt was beyond her. Buffy wandered around, studying the objects in the room. She didn't often get the chance to take a good look at Spike's living accommodations. Mostly, when she came to his place, it was in anger, and they fought.

She stopped beside a large, wood chest, fortified with weathered iron bands. It looked sturdy and worn, and quite old. Spike probably had lugged it around since his early vampire days. What treasures would it hold?

Before she could stop herself, Buffy's hand had grabbed the lid.

She froze. Bad, bad Buffy. What was she doing? It wasn't right to go sniffing around other people's things. Even if that other person was the world's most aggravating master vampire. Still...

Curiosity got the better of her. She glanced around, and perked up her ears and her vampire-attuned sixth sense. Nothing. Spike wasn't close, and neither was anyone else. She lifted the lid.

On top of the chest were old clothes: a tan, old-fashioned coat, a bit frazzled at the collar. Also, a pair of crooked wire glasses, a tattered hat, a dried rose. Buffy chuckled. She was surprised to find that Spike had retained a sense of romance.

She pushed the clothes aside, delving deeper into the trunk until her fingers closed around the cool leather of a thick book. She pulled it out. The cover was worn, but well cared for. Its smooth texture told her that Spike had touched it often. And it smelled a bit musty, like the old volumes Giles always studied. Buffy wondered what this book was about. There was no title on the front, or any other indication about its contents. She flipped it open.

A spidery handwriting covered the pages from top to bottom. She browsed through the book and discovered that about three-quarters of it was filled with the scribbles, the paper yellow with age. In a couple of places, pages had been ripped out violently. She squinted in an attempt to make out the written words. And nearly dropped the book in

shock.

Poetry.

She had a sudden flashback to the night before. They called him William the Bloody. Because his poems were so bloody awful. These were Spike's!

For the longest time she stood there, with the leather-bound journal in her hands, unseeing eyes staring at the pages as she tried to make up her mind. She was astonished to find out that Spike had kept up writing after being turned. Poetry and the Big Bad - it was a mind-boggling notion.

What could he possibly be composing poems about?

Again, curiosity won out over the morals and ethics ingrained into her since birth. Telling herself that she wanted to know if the poems were truly as bad as Spike's contemporaries thought, Buffy refocused on the page.

The early verses were written in black ink, a couple of blotches showing where the nib had scratched the paper. And yes, they were awful. Bloody awful. A bit guiltily, Buffy giggled.

But as she progressed through the pages, and time, the poetry changed. Once Spike let go of the idea that a poem was supposed to rhyme, his work developed into something that went far beyond a lovesick puppy's scribbles. The words grew dark, morbid, evoking images of violence and bloodshed. A shiver ran down her spine at the insight his words proffered into the demonic side of his character.

As she continued to read, she discovered that it was easy to pinpoint the verses that described certain momentous events in Spike's life: his first years as a vampire, the murder of the first slayer, the gypsies cursing Angel.

Curiously, she flipped to the end of the book. If Spike worked linear, these pages should hold his latest musings. She caught a few stanzas that were obviously about the chip the Initiative had planted in his head, the chip that he hated so much.

Then her eye fell on a specific line.

Buffy took in a shuddering breath, suddenly feeling cold and a bit lightheaded. It couldn't be, could it? That poem wasn't about her? 'Oh God,' she prayed silently, 'let it not be about me.'

'Why not?' another part of her mind asked. 'Would you really mind?'

'Yes,' she wanted to scream. 'I would mind. It's sick, twisted. Me - Slayer. Him - Vampire. Impossible. Nuff said.'

"Slayer?"

She had been so absorbed in the poems that she never sensed him coming in. Caught red-handed, Buffy whirled around and tried to hide the leather volume behind her back. But it was too late. Spike took one look at the book and his features hardened as his eyes turned golden.

A primeval instinct took over, a territorial claim so ancient it predated time. "Mine!" he growled deep in the back of his throat. Hot rage boiled his insides. How dare she touch his things, his journal, his most prized possession? Wasn't it enough that she kicked him when he was down, that she trampled over him every chance she got?

If it were possible to combust from pure anger, Spike would have turned to dust right there and then. As it was, he forgot for a moment about the chip in his brain and he lunged for Buffy, fangs bared and glinting dangerously.

Even before he reached her, the chip activated and white-hot, searing pain exploded in his skull. He screamed, an animalistic shriek that made Buffy shrink away from the furious vampire.

Sobbing, he crumpled to the floor, holding his head in his hands as he waited for the pain to fade to bearable proportions. The pain had burned the anger right from his system, and what was left was a bone deep weariness.

Buffy had read his poems.

They held his deepest thoughts, his innermost secrets. And if Cecily's cruel words had cut the human William, it would be nothing compared to what Buffy's sharp, cynical tongue could do to the vampire Spike. A stake through the heart would be preferable to how she would slash and hew him down verbally in the next few seconds.

On his knees on the cold, hard floor Spike waited for the axe to fall, for Buffy to speak and deliver the final blow to his psyche.

"I'm sorry."

His keen hearing picked up the words, spoken in a low whisper, but he couldn't believe his ears.

"What?" he said, slowly raising his head to gape at the Slayer. She looked down at him, but there was none of the disdain he had expected to see in her gaze. Instead, she looked... sad?

"I'm sorry," she repeated. She held out the book.

He snatched it from her hands and clutched it to his chest.

"Spike... I'm sorry about--" She gave a vague wave in the direction of the open trunk. "I shouldn't have looked. It was wrong and I know it. And I'm sorry you couldn't hit me. I did deserve it."

For the second time in as many minutes Spike blinked with surprise. Buffy was telling him she had been wrong, was *apologizing*? Perhaps the earth had started to rotate backwards.

"Bloody 'ell," he muttered. It was all he could think of to say.

"I have to go," Buffy mumbled when the silence grew from oppressive to suffocating. She brushed past him and darted up the stairs. At the top she turned around and found his gaze. "Spike... They're not. Bloody awful, I mean."

Before the vampire could recover from the third mental slap the Slayer handed him, she was gone. The heavy door closed with a thud. And Spike was left to ponder the mysteries of life in general, and that of the Slayer in particular.

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