

Buffering the Vampire Slayer  
Episode 6.17: Normal Again

[CHIME]

**Jenny:** [loudly] Hey, everybody!

**Kristin:** Whoa! There go my eardrums. How are yours? [laughs]

**Jenny:** What the heck?

**Kristin:** Fine, because you're the one who shouted. Hey, I would like to begin this introduction with a very important announcement. Which is—

**Jenny:** [laughing] Oh my god...

**Kristin:** That during this episode, I mess up a Brad Pitt movie reference. I genuinely do. And then Jenny makes me fucking believe that *A River Runs Through It* does not star Brad Pitt, and I *believe* her!

**Jenny:** My mistake.

**Kristin:** And she was wrong.

**Jenny:** Honestly? It was an honest mistake anyone could have made.

**Kristin:** Not me, 'cause I had the fucking poster of *A River Runs Through It* on my wall. And *still*—

**Jenny:** You didn't include that fact in your argument.

**Kristin:** Well, because I doubted myself. I *doubted myself*!

**Jenny:** Let this be a lesson to you.

**Kristin:** Don't.

**Jenny:** This was a test, actually—

**Kristin:** Yeah. I failed it.

**Jenny:** To see...mmhmm. [both laugh]

**Kristin:** I was easily manipulated into believing I didn't know as much about Brad Pitt as I did. So when you get there, please know Jenny was wrong. A River Runs Through It does include Brad Pitt. As a matter of fact, I think it is the best crying that Brad Pitt ever does in a film. You can let me know if you disagree.

**Jenny:** Uh, yes, do let her know. [Kristin laughs] Now, don't be alarmed. Yes, it's Thursday. Yes, that's not our normal episode day. But listen, it's for a very good reason. Yesterday, we aired a really awesome conversation that Kristin had with producer Alba and Sarah Duncan, a pop culture scholar, multidisciplinary artist and culture worker, on the representations of mental health in pop culture. We highly, highly recommend listening to that episode, either before or after you listen to us here today.

**Kristin:** Also, hey, we are at the 17th episode of the sixth season of this fucking show! And we have a survey for you all to take, if you would like, to help us figure out some of our future paths. I can't believe we've arrived here. I can't believe we're thinking about the future, just an incredible thing. The main reason for the survey is to get your feedback on our plans for Angel On Top in Season 4. Now, here's some great news. LaToya and Morgan have agreed to stay on posting, despite being in a season-long feud [Jenny laughs] with us. [laughs]

**Jenny:** It's almost as if they actually secretly like us or something? [Kristin laughs] They're sticking around for some reason?

**Kristin:** We are delighted, because we love—well, Jenny loves them. And I am still feuding with them—feuding with love, with them. When we started Angel On Top in our feed here, the original plan was actually for the episodes to be little mini episodes, short recaps alternating with our longer episodes on Buffy. But listen, Angel is a fucking incredible show—

**Jenny:** Mmhmm.

**Kristin:** And the knowledge and the insight and the humor that LaToya and Morgan have brought to the conversation has meant that we've gotten full length episodes from them since the jump, really. And those full length episodes will continue into Season 4 and—if we're lucky, and they'll stay with us—the feud doesn't splinter us—[laughs]

**Jenny:** [laughs] Depending how the feud goes.

**Kristin:** Into Season 5. So the four of us are of a mind to give Angel On Top their own feed. Again, like it was when Brittany and Laura were with us, so that listeners can come to the podcast when they rewatch Angel from the start to the finish and find a complete library of their conversation. It'd start, obviously, with Brittany and Laura in the first two seasons, and then move over to LaToya and Morgan. Not only will it mean that all of the episodes live together in one feed, but it also means that the people searching for an Angel podcast will be able to find Angel On Top. Right now in our Buffering feed, they're a little obscured in the, like, internet podcast searches. So let us know if you're into this plan of giving Angel On Top what I personally like to call a feed of their own. [laughs] [Jenny snorts] [Kristin laughs harder]

**Jenny:** A Feed Runs Through It!

**Kristin:** [laughs] Thelma and the Feed.

**Jenny:** [laughs] Yes.

**Kristin:** And also, also, in addition to giving us your feedback on Angel On Top, we would love to hear your insight on your hopes and dreams for the future of Buffering the Vampire Slayer. Just head on over—I made you a special link as I always do—[Jenny laughs] to [bufferingthevampireslayer.com/2021survey](https://bufferingthevampireslayer.com/2021survey). 2-0-2-1 survey. We're gonna pick four of you who submit your answers to this survey to win a merch bundle when the store reopens in July, just a few weeks from now—

**Jenny:** Ow-ow!

**Kristin:** And, like, you should trust us that you'll be very happy with the merch bundles, 'cause we have some very fun new things coming your way.

**Jenny:** Mmhmm, mmhmm, mmhmm.

**Kristin:** Again, that's [bufferingthevampireslayer.com/2021survey](https://bufferingthevampireslayer.com/2021survey). It's just a few short questions and it will help us a lot in our future planning.

**Jenny:** Yes, please help us! [Kristin laughs] Well! I can't think of a very sexy segue—

**Kristin:** Speaking of helping us...

**Jenny:** [unconvinced] Mmm... [both laugh] It's time for the results of your most recent Sexual Tension Awards! You remember a very notoriously [laughing] sexy

episode called Hell's Bells, [Kristin laughs] where everyone's trying to get it!  
[laughs]

**Kristin:** Oh, the fanfiction that came out of Hell's Bells is simply limitless. [laughs]

**Jenny:** Mmm! Yes. Regarded by most as the sexiest episode ever of Buffy the Vampire Slayer, here are...the various noms and the slots in which they fell, their final resting places [Kristin laughs] when the votes were counted and the dust settled. Perhaps it's because they're teens...

**Kristin:** [laughs] I think so, I think so.

**Jenny:** In fourth place, with only 8% of the vote. Dawn and Teen Demon. We don't need to talk about it.

**Kristin:** May they have a teen-appropriate relationship from here forward. [laughs]

**Jenny:** Yeah. In—shockingly! I am shocked. [both laugh] In *third place*, with 15% of the vote, it's Buffy and Spike. What did Buffy and Spike ever do to you?!

**Kristin:** They broke up! [laughs]

**Jenny:** Oh, yeah. But sometimes that's when—

**Kristin:** [simultaneously] Oookay.

**Jenny:** Things are at their most tense.

**Kristin:** Moving along!

**Jenny:** Oookay! In second place—in *second place!*

**Kristin:** Incredible. Do you know why? Our listenership fucking rules. They know what's good.

**Jenny:** They know what's good.

**Kristin:** Mmhmm.

**Jenny:** In second place, with only 26% of the vote, I celebrate each and every one of you. Everybody who cast a vote played a part [Kristin laughs] in truly achieving something great and historic. Tara and Willow. Second...place.

**Kristin:** Yep.

**Jenny:** 26% of the vote. You know why? Because there was no real danger—

**Kristin:** Mmhmm.

**Jenny:** In that stupid Willow dragging Tara behind a flower arrangement to protect her mini scene. Okay! Are you ready?! Buckle up! We're going to fucking space right now! [Kristin laughs] In first place, god bless America and the globe, with 51% of your horniest votes! It's Cousin Carol...and Krelvin!

**Kristin:** 51%. That is stunning.

**Jenny:** Honestly, I have half a mind to send a Sexual Tension Award to each and every one of you who voted in this poll.

**Kristin:** I—right? You did good. You did really good. I have trust—

**Jenny:** [through gritted teeth] A spicy meatball!

**Kristin:** [laughing] A spicy meatball. Alright, before we get into this delightful episode of television that was preceded by a delightful episode, and will be followed by yet another delightful episode of television—[laughs]

**Jenny:** They're all so fun.

**Kristin:** I have a throwback email. It's actually a recent email, but it's gonna take us back to Season 4. When there's a character—I don't know if you remember this character, Jenny, but his name is Riley. [laughs]

**Jenny:** Hmmm...?

**Kristin:** I thought it would bring a little cheer, a little nostalgic cheer to us. Rebecca—

**Jenny:** It rings something.

**Kristin:** Yeah. It rings heaven's bells, if you will, for Jenny Owen Youngs.

**Jenny:** Yeah. It's like ding-dong.

**Kristin:** [laughs] So—

**Jenny:** [simultaneously] Who's here? A TA?

**Kristin:** [laughs] So Rebecca writes in, it's a very short note, but meaningful. Rebecca says, "I'm watching Buffy for the first time. I—"

**Jenny:** Wow.

**Kristin:** Yeah. Congratulations, Rebecca. "I'm in Season 4 and Kristin keeps coming back to the moment..." [laughs] of course I do—"when Riley removes Buffy's boot [Jenny laughs] in the, hard quotes, sex scene." [both laugh] Quotes are Rebecca's, 'cause Rebecca gets it. Rebecca then says, "I wonder whether this was meant to be a metaphor." And then continues with what I can only call a poem?

**Jenny:** Okay.

**Kristin:** "Riley's hot, hot, hot lovin', removing Buffy's sole." S-O-L-E. Rebecca continues, "Maybe the suggestion we are left with is one of Buffy having experienced sole-stealing bliss in Riley's overly large hands. Wink." [both laugh]

**Jenny:** You know. I...I feel—we are so blessed. [both laugh] With such a beautiful listenership.

**Kristin:** What is the orgasm clause? True love plus happiness equals negative one soul?

**Jenny:** Yeah.

**Kristin:** It's S-O-L-E in the case of—

**Jenny:** Wow.

**Kristin:** Riley and Buffy. Absolutely stupendous, Rebecca.

**Jenny:** This is...spectacular. Mm.

**Kristin:** Just knocked it outta the fucking park. Thank you for bringing us joy.

**Jenny:** The gabagool...is fresh.

**Kristin:** Wow. Spicy meatball and gabagool from completely zero percent Italian Jenny Owen Youngs in this introduction. [laughs]

**Jenny:** Hey! Whoa! Hey, you haven't seen my 23 and Me results. You don't know!

**Kristin:** [laughs] Alright, Jenny. Let us get into, uh, Normal Again.

**Jenny:** What could go wrong?!

[Kristin laughs]

[Buffering theme plays]

**Jenny:** Hello! And welcome to Buffering the Vampire Slayer, a very, very, very *fun* podcast where we're watching and discussing every episode of Buffy the Vampire Slayer, one by one, spoiler free, having an absolute blast and never feeling bummed out, in tandem with my friends and yours, the baddest girls of podcasting! [Kristin laughs] Angel On Top! I'm Jenny Owen Youngs.

**Kristin:** I'm Kristin Russo, and though you may never know, I did a full choreographed dance silently while Jenny did her entire introduction. So you might think she's cheery, but I was definitely the cheerleader, encouraging her—[laughs] she's now dancing. She's doing interesting dance moves. One looked like a stretch, but I believe it to be a dance.

**Jenny:** [laughs] The old knuckle-popper.

**Kristin:** This week, we are talking about your favorite and mine—

**Jenny:** Mm.

**Kristin:** Season 6, Episode 17, Normal Again. Or as I like to say, what the fuck are you doing to us? Stay tuned at the end of this podcast every other week for an original song, written by Jenny—sometimes I help—

**Jenny:** Mmhmm.

**Kristin:** Recapping the Buffy episode we are discussing.

**Jenny:** Normal...Again! [Kristin laughs] Was written by Diego Gutierrez. This is his only Buffy episode. And it was directed by Rick Rosenthal. This is his first of a total of two episodes. And it originally aired on March 12th, 2002.

**Kristin:** Oh, wow. So it aired, like, on—almost on the anniversary of the show. Right?

**Jenny:** Oh my god.

**Kristin:** 'Cause March 10th is the air date. That's interesting. Do you think they cared? Mm, I don't know. But anyway, this is the one, [Jenny laughs] according to TV Guide, where a demon doses Buffy with a powerful chemical that causes her to hallucinate, convincing the Slayer her parents are alive and Dawn never existed. I mean, the description makes it sound like a fucking jaunt in the park, you know what I mean?

**Jenny:** Mmhmm, mmhmm.

**Kristin:** Doodly-do.

**Jenny:** Doo-doo-doo.

**Kristin:** Just a couple little hallucinations, and then she pops right back to normal. Again! Get it? Cool.

**Jenny:** I...I do get it. Did you happen to perceive, um, any strange, uh, audio business with this episode? Some, like, really mismatched ADR? Some kinda clipping in certain people's dialogue, on a regular basis?

**Kristin:** You know, I didn't, Jenny. But that is probably because I barely make it through watching this episode. [Jenny laughs] Which I will talk about, but what did you notice? Just all over the place, smattered about?

**Jenny:** Just—there was a lot of, uh, audio that—like, dialogue audio that seemed to have too much gain, that was just kind of like crunching out.

**Kristin:** Interesting.

**Jenny:** There were some, like, really—like, ADR in different scenes where, like, one actor seems to not be doing ADR and the other is. And, like, the room sounds are very different—

**Kristin:** Huh.



**Jenny:** Between the back and forth. And there's one particularly funny edit that I will tell you about when we get there. [both laugh]

**Kristin:** Great. Yeah, this is a really hard episode for me, and that has made a lot of sense to some people and not as much sense to others. And so, it's, like, really caused me to go on this journey. Because there's a ton of episodes that are difficult to watch. I mean, The Body being a massive one. And those are—those have been hard, you know? It's been like, oh man, I can't believe I have to watch The Body, you know, four times, going into this taping and what have you. But nothing has impacted me like this episode, where I, like, cannot—we have a bonus episode, which I'm sure we talked about in the introduction. And I couldn't even watch it when we talked with Sarah and Alba. Like, I watched, like, ten minutes and was like, you know what? I know. I know?

**Jenny:** Mm, mmhmm.

**Kristin:** So I'm not gonna do it, 'cause I know I have to watch it again for this taping. And someone on Twitter today, actually, said, "Oh yeah, love an episode that makes me dissociate." And I was like, oh, I think that is what is happening. I am somebody who, for a year of my life, had really, really massive panic attacks. You know, I—once you have a panic attack, I suppose you can always have a panic attack. But this particular year in my life, I was 27 and I didn't know what was happening to me. And the major way that I experienced panic attacks was dissociation. Obviously, Buffy is going through more than just dissociation, but the, like, jumping from one reality to another and back again and not knowing which reality is real, I think, is super, super triggering for me. [laughs]

**Jenny:** Mmhmm, mmhmm.

**Kristin:** So it was just—it was a really hard thing for me to get through. Really, the beginning two-thirds. I don't know what happens, but like, somehow, it was not as difficult for me to watch the ending. [laughing] Which is a really fucked up ending, but like, it's really the first two-thirds of it where I feel fucked up. And we talk about it in the bonus episode a bit, but I'm gonna talk about it here too. 'Cause obviously, this episode does a lot of shit, and a lot of it is really fucked up. Notably, the way we end it. We'll get there.

**Jenny:** [exhales through lips] Yeah. Yeah...

**Kristin:** Why don't we start with the Previously On? [laughs]

**Jenny:** Yeah. Previously On, I don't even know when he said this, but somehow, whatever was going on at the time was too distracting and I completely missed that Xander coined the phrase "nerd herd." [Kristin laughs] Which I like, actually.

**Kristin:** Yeah. They're like—

**Jenny:** That's the name they should be peddling around town, not the Trio.

**Kristin:** The Trio. Yeah, I agree, Nerd Herd. Yeah, the nerds are hiding. The gays are flirting. Buffy didn't wanna come back from the dead. Spike is broken hearted—

**Jenny:** Mm, mm.

**Kristin:** And Xander left Anya at the altar. [laughing] The Previously Ons are, like, such a bummer.

**Jenny:** Yeah.

**Kristin:** Except for the gays! The gays, really just having a blast, just flirting with each other.

**Jenny:** Well, it is Pride month, Kristin! [Kristin laughs] For just a couple more—

**Kristin:** We're—

**Jenny:** Just today, actually.

**Kristin:** Yeah, yeah. This is the—

**Jenny:** We're taping on June 30th.

**Kristin:** We're recording on June 30th. But yeah. We're just—we have a lot of, like—not that, like, we've not been in periods of time with this show where the Previously Ons are all recapping fun things. It's just that usually they're not all so deeply traumatic. [laughs]

**Jenny:** Mmhmm, mmhmm, mmhmm, mmhmm.

**Kristin:** Anyway. Let's talk about what the fuck Buffy is *wearing*—

**Jenny:** What is she wearing?

**Kristin:** In the first scene. In the whole episode, she's wearing jeans. Notably, she was wearing jeans when she broke up with Spike. I'm seeing some really good internet content lately about really, like, the psychology behind what Buffy is wearing—

**Jenny:** Mmm.

**Kristin:** And the fact that she is wearing jeans, it's a real departure from where she was before. I don't know that we've ever seen this girl wear jeans. Now, I know her overalls are made of denim. That's not tight jeans. And she's also, in this first scene, wearing a black leather coat that matches her black leather gloves, with a black beanie and a bright, large, white scarf. It's just a very bizarre look for her. It's really, like, whatever the costuming department was trying to do was, like, setting her apart from where she was when she was with Spike.

**Jenny:** Yep. Yep, and they did it.

**Kristin:** They did it. They did it. Her beanie is back.

**Jenny:** She's got a little—she's got a computer printout in her hand. What could it be? Directions via mapquest.com? [Kristin laughs] No! [laughs] It's a list of, uh, real estate up for rent.

**Kristin:** Yeah.

**Jenny:** She's been going to every address and peering in the windows like a little peeping Buff to see if the friggin' nerds might be there. New renters.

**Kristin:** [singing] Detective Buffy!

**Jenny:** Exactly. I love that she brought a red marker, [Kristin laughs] specifically, to cross out each listing as she checked it.

**Kristin:** Aw, do you think it's Giles's red marker from when he used to always circle crimes in the newspaper? [laughs]

**Jenny:** Yes. [both laugh] Yes!

**Kristin:** Ahh. So yeah, she finds where the nerds are, although she doesn't know that. We know that she found where the nerds are.

**Jenny:** Mmhmm, mmhmm.

**Kristin:** And we pan into their new rental—their new lair, where they are still in the basement, even though they have, like, full reign of the house. Because they are a little bit confused about, like, what going undercover means, what hiding means.

**Jenny:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Kristin:** They're in the basement. They've got, to their credit, a wall of, like, really high-tech Mac screens. If you were to time travel—

**Jenny:** That's a lot of Mac screens.

**Kristin:** Back. A lot of Mac screens.

**Jenny:** You know what else they have?

**Kristin:** Those were cool fucking screens, those little clear shits? [Jenny laughs]  
Those were cool.

**Jenny:** You know what else they have that I'm particularly jealous of this week, is a Super Soaker. [Kristin laughs] Because it's been 98 degrees for the last three days in Maine!

**Kristin:** Yeah.

**Jenny:** A state that I heard previously to living here was, uh, cold! Cold state.

**Kristin:** [laughs] Yeah. I think the people in the fucking Pacific Northwest had also heard rumors that it would be cool there. [laughs]

**Jenny:** Yeah.

**Kristin:** We laugh so we do not cry. But yeah, Super Soaker.

**Jenny:** Mmhmm.

**Kristin:** Jonathan gets it to the head, um, because he's sleeping on the job. There's, like, a very quick, very serious moment that is immediately glossed over, where Jonathan is like, "I haven't had a decent night's sleep since..." and then he doesn't finish the sentence.

**Jenny:** Oof.

**Kristin:** And we all take a moment to remember how fucked up everything was the last time we saw these guys. [laughs]

**Jenny:** Woo! Season 6!

**Kristin:** Andrew is like, "Oh, jeez louise. The Slayer's here." Spying her peeking through the window. And they're like, "Well, I guess Andrew needs to deploy his little friend" is what—

**Jenny:** Yeah.

**Kristin:** [laughs] Somebody—Warren says?

**Jenny:** Uh-huh, uh-huh.

**Kristin:** Warren calls it his little friend. We cut back to the street, where Buffy is still—there's a Dodge truck parked in the alley. I only noticed it because it's a 4-by-4. Not to be confused with five-by-five.

**Jenny:** Uh-huh!

**Kristin:** And a waxy, gooey monster appears. And she does a Buffy quip, like, "Do you—haven't happened to see a few nerds around here, have you?" [Jenny laughs] And they fight and he's a pretty good fighter. And he does what I think is an unfair trick. I think foul on the play. If you have a poker, you have to reveal that. You can't—

**Jenny:** Yeah, no secret pokers.

**Kristin:** No secret pokers.

**Jenny:** One of the most important rules.

**Kristin:** Yellow flag, on the field, for this guy. [laughs]

**Jenny:** Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

**Kristin:** But he gets her. He pokes her. And...

**Jenny:** And we get a hard cut—

**Kristin:** Mmhmm.

**Jenny:** To Buffy in a hospital gown, being be-needed [Kristin laughs] by two orderlies. Yes?

**Kristin:** Yes. It's not funny, but "be-needed" is.

**Jenny:** No, but I'm just trying to—I'm working overtime today to bring whatever levity I can scrape together with my little fingernails—

**Kristin:** Mmhmm.

**Jenny:** And jam into this episode.

**Kristin:** Uh-huh. Credits! The credits.

**Jenny:** Oh, the credits are nice, I love the credits. [both laugh]

**Kristin:** This next scene is actually quite fun. I mean, it ends a little, like, womp-womp. But it's not a horrible gaslight-y mental health portrayal that is poor. So I'll take it. Willow is at school. She's rehearsing what she's gonna say to Tara.

**Jenny:** She's got a pitch. It's kisses and gay love.

**Kristin:** It's coffee, food, kisses and gay love, Jenny.

**Jenny:** Well! Okay. How dare Tara have the nerve to—she knows she's meeting Willow. Why would she kiss someone on the cheek?

**Kristin:** On the cheek. Like, Willow never says, when she talks to Buffy later, that it was a kiss on the *cheek*. She talks about it like they kissed on the mouth. They did not.

**Jenny:** Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. But also, have you ever seen Tara kiss anyone on the cheek? Have you ever seen Tara have a friend [Kristin laughs] besides the Scoobies? [laughs]

**Kristin:** No, but Tara's heartbroken—

**Jenny:** Right.

**Kristin:** And she's reinventing herself. So, you know.

**Jenny:** Mmhmm, mmhmm.

**Kristin:** Like, she's making friends. [Jenny laughs] This girl, I think, has a crush on Tara. I think that's—

**Jenny:** I'm picturing—

**Kristin:** That's real. [laughs]

**Jenny:** I'm picturing a gathering at UC Sunnydale. Think of, um, a certain scene that happens in every installation of the Fast and Furious franchise. A bunch of people are gathered.

**Kristin:** Coronas?

**Jenny:** Their cars—no, no, no. Well, maybe Coronas. But the important thing is that there's gonna be a race soon, but first, everyone is gonna stand around their cars and, like, rev their engines and, like, look over at that guy's car and be like, "Oh, look at that car." And that guy's gonna come over and look at your car and be like, "Oh, look at *your* car."

**Kristin:** Yeah.

**Jenny:** And then, there are a lot—there are always scantily-clad women dancing in and around and about the automobiles. Right? Okay, so picture all of that, but just remove the cars. And then insert...[laughing] maybe "insert" was a poor choice of words. [both laugh] Everyone brings their finest crystal dildo, [Kristin laughs] and they're all lined up in the UC Sunnydale parking lot. And they're all like, "Ooh, ahh. Wow, yours is jade. Oh—"

**Kristin:** Okay, you're cut off. Get—

**Jenny:** Okay. [laughs]

**Kristin:** Where's that fucking shepherd's crook? [both laugh] Get her outta here. I refer to this girl who kisses Tara on the cheek as Lesbian Student #2.

**Jenny:** Oh, you know what she's actually credited as?

**Kristin:** Oh, what?

**Jenny:** "Kissing Girl." [both laugh] Yeah. What do you think about that?

**Kristin:** "Kissing Girl."

**Jenny:** Mmhmm.

**Kristin:** Well, I credited her as Lesbian Student #2 because I left #1 for Riley. Our first lesbian student at UC Sunnydale.

**Jenny:** Of course. [both laugh]

**Kristin:** Oh, to the Doublemeat. To the DMP.

**Jenny:** What a fucking relief. Even though we only see her for but a moment—

**Kristin:** Mmhmm.

**Jenny:** I'm so happy to be briefly reunited with Lorraine!

**Kristin:** [laughs] Lorraine, who I guess is drug-testing her employees. Because *she* says to Buffy—

**Jenny:** "If I didn't know better."

**Kristin:** Right, which—I mean—

**Jenny:** If I didn't have this little vial of your pee [both laughing] that I ran some tests on. I'd think you were on drugs.

**Kristin:** But this is another—I've marked these, um, flash sideways? I'm rewatching *Lost*, so—

**Jenny:** Mm, mmhmm, mmhmm.

**Kristin:** You have to bear with my terminology here. But like, this is the second one, and the orderly nurse person in the institution has said, "Time for your drugs." And Lorraine has said, "If I didn't know any better, I'd think you were on drugs." So this is the second flash for Buffy. And she goes home and Willow is on her brick of a laptop. Love—Mac, getting some serious placements in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, Season 6. [laughs] You know? Really, like, I hope they—I hope they paid the series. [Jenny laughs] Because they're getting some good promo. Anyway, they're looking for an email—Willow is looking for an email from Xander. Which is sort of, like, our



first acknowledgement that, like, yeah, last week did happen. Right? Like, that did happen.

**Jenny:** Mmhmm, mmhmm.

**Kristin:** Because we ended on quite a horrible note, from the last episode—

**Jenny:** Yes.

**Kristin:** And they haven't heard from him yet.

**Jenny:** Yep. Yep, yep. And Willow's like, "Also, I went to see Tara but she was busy seeing someone else!" Who knows wha—ah, she's very mad.

**Kristin:** Yeah. [laughs] "They're probably just friends." "I press my lips to my friends all the time," she says. [laughs]

**Jenny:** Uh-huh, uh-huh, uh-huh.

**Kristin:** Buffy's like, "Um..." [both laugh] "What's going on, bud?"

**Jenny:** And then—are you ready?

**Kristin:** I'm ready.

**Jenny:** Xander comes in through the door.

**Kristin:** Mmhmm.

**Jenny:** And please, go back and enjoy the very weird edit—

**Kristin:** Oh.

**Jenny:** And crossfade of Willow saying, "Xander?" and then some weird kind of blurred audio that has been—

**Kristin:** Huh.

**Jenny:** Like, that is still present but kind of indiscernible, like, where a fade has happened. And then Willow saying, "Xander?" a second time—

**Kristin:** Wow! Really?

**Jenny:** In the same intonation.

**Kristin:** Okay.

**Jenny:** Yeah!

**Kristin:** I gotta go back and look. I said I would never watch this episode again, but I will go back and look at that one moment. [Jenny laughs] This is really sweet. This is, like, really nice. Xander is back and immediately is given all the hugs. I mean, you know, we gave this crew a lot of shit at the start of the season for not being supportive of each other [laughs] in ways that were helpful—

**Jenny:** Mmhmm.

**Kristin:** Or healthy.

**Jenny:** Mmhmm, mmhmm.

**Kristin:** And this episode, I think, showcases two different times—the first being this—and maybe I’m wrong, maybe there’s even more. But the first one being Xander, you know, just being told immediately, “You don’t have to explain it to us.” Right? We are your friends. We are here. Things were not okay, and we are here to support you and love you and give you a landing pad. Because no matter who fucked over who and how, this is bad for everyone and you are hurting.

**Jenny:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Kristin:** That’s cool. That’s really, really cool and it’s nice to see. He says—Xander has, I think, a pretty good episode, this episode. He says that the closed sign on the Magic Box chilled him to the bone. Which—

**Jenny:** Aw!

**Kristin:** You can imagine. I mean—

**Jenny:** Mmm.

**Kristin:** Anya would have kept that shit open to make money, pretty much for anything.

**Jenny:** Yeah.

**Kristin:** So the fact that she—

**Jenny:** I'm sure she cleaned out the cash register on her way out.

**Kristin:** [laughs] That's true, but she's still not making additional profits—

**Jenny:** I know.

**Kristin:** That had to be hard.

**Jenny:** I know. And making profits is her number one priority—

**Kristin:** Exactly.

**Jenny:** And interest.

**Kristin:** Exactly. So—

**Jenny:** Ohh! He tells them that he...[Kristin groans] still wants to date her. Eugh!  
[Kristin groans] He says, "I know that I'm a better person with her in my life."  
Xander! You fool.

**Kristin:** I know, but he—

**Jenny:** Why?!

**Kristin:** What is so painful about this is that he's so aware of the fact that he was a fool. You know? Like—

**Jenny:** Yeah.

**Kristin:** He's not even like, "I'll fix it and everything's fine!" He's just, like, I—

**Jenny:** Mmhmm, mmhmm.

**Kristin:** He says—[laughs sadly] he says, "I've had this painful hole inside and I'm the idiot who dug it out."

**Jenny:** Correct.

**Kristin:** And then there's a pause and he says, "I screwed up real bad."

**Jenny:** Oh, buddy.

**Kristin:** And it's so genuine. It's really—Nick Brendon does a great delivery of these lines. Letting us—because, you know, those of us—and you know Jenny and I were top on this list—who were ready to just toss Xander out the fucking window for the first few seasons. I think, like...this could be a place where you're just like, I fucking knew it! Tossing this guy back out! You know? Like, fuck this guy. But I, at least, do not feel like that. I feel like Nick Brendon's performance and the writing here gives us the ability to see how he's grown and how he's aware of what he's done.

**Jenny:** Yeah.

**Kristin:** There's a couple lines here that I'm gonna point out that I'm just gonna say, I think, fucking, they're Joss punch-up lines that are Xander-specific and that I find completely unnecessary and unhelpful to that arc. I don't know that—

**Jenny:** Mm.

**Kristin:** I don't know that they're Joss punch-up lines, but. I'm gonna pin it on him, 'cause I can do that.

**Jenny:** Alright, alright.

**Kristin:** This is half my podcast. [both laugh] I'm gonna wait and I will talk about them when we get to them, but, um...other than those couple of moments, I feel that the arc that Xander's being given is allowing us to see, like Buffy says, a human who has screwed up. And Buffy says, "We all screw up." And we're getting that. We're getting that, like, unity of experience here. It's not just that Xander is a jerk. It's that Xander has come from a lot of trauma and didn't make the right turn at this particular fork in the fucking road.

**Jenny:** Yeah. Yeah. Well. Sometimes. [Kristin laughs] Two roads [laughing] diverge in a yellow wood and all you have is two bennies, as I always say.

**Kristin:** Listen. If you don't support us on fucking Patreon, now's the time to come on over, because we are just fucking crawling up this wall. We're just—we are sweating. [both laughing] We are taking deep breaths. We are working so hard to make this an enjoyable listen. And we're gonna be working this hard until the fall. [laughs]

**Jenny:** I came up—actually, I have something for this. I have something—

**Kristin:** Okay. [laughs]

**Jenny:** That I've prepared. We cut to the cemetery, where Spike is walking with a bag, a paper bag of groceries. And I thought it would be really fun to play a game—

**Kristin:** Oh, a game?!

**Jenny:** Yeah. Called "What's In Spike's Grocery Bag?" [Kristin laughs] And, to make it extra challenging, what if—[both laugh] what if we go back and forth and we play it like a game where we have to stick to the alphabet. So, like—[Kristin gasps] you say an A thing—

**Kristin:** Oh my god.

**Jenny:** And I say a B thing and you say a C thing and so on. What do you think?

**Kristin:** Okay, okay, okay. Fine, great, I love this. Wow, Jenny, really pulling out all the fucking stops. We never play games here.

**Jenny:** It's 98 degrees in *Maine*, Kristin! I'm barely hanging on.

**Kristin:** Every time you say 98 degrees, I just think about how we once fucked up the name of...what did we say? We said—

**Jenny:** Oh. Some other Nick, but we were talking about Nick Lachey, right?

**Kristin:** [simultaneously] We said Nick Carter and we were talking about—

**Jenny:** Right.

**Kristin:** Nick Lachey. [Jenny gasps] And it was like a 98 Degrees fucking uproar in the [both laughing] Buffering crew. Okay, anyway, yes, let's play the game. Oh my god.

**Jenny:** Okay.

**Kristin:** Are you starting or am I?

**Jenny:** Um...

**Kristin:** This isn't fair, by the way. Jenny's invented the game so has had advanced notice. [laughs]

**Jenny:** Well, I'll tell you there's very obvious ones at B and C. So in the interest of—

**Kristin:** And M.

**Jenny:** Mmm.

**Kristin:** And W.

**Jenny:** Yes.

**Kristin:** [laughs] We'll never get to W.

**Jenny:** [simultaneously] Exactly. We'll never get to W. But let's see. Um...you know what I think Spike's got in his grocery bag?

**Kristin:** What does he have, Jenny?

**Jenny:** I think Spike has some Kraft singles sliced American cheese.

**Kristin:** Wow. That's disgusting.

**Jenny:** I think it's a guilty pleasure, yeah. I think he's—

**Kristin:** That is, no offense—

**Jenny:** I think he's watchin' his little soap operas, peelin' his single wrapped slices.

**Kristin:** Oh my god, that—the thinnest. If you don't know American cheese, uh, singles—if you don't—

**Jenny:** Yeah.

**Kristin:** You don't understand that everyone who does know American cheese singles is viscerally feeling the thinness of the cellophane—

**Jenny:** [laughing] Yes.

**Kristin:** [laughing] They were wrapped in. It was, like, the weirdest—it was, like, kind of like it was the cheese until you—

**Jenny:** Yeah. You could accidentally eat it, sure.

**Kristin:** [simultaneously] Peeled—like a sticker! It was like a sticker backing, except for on cheese.

**Jenny:** Yes.

**Kristin:** Well, great for me, because he probably has some blood in that bag. Probably—

**Jenny:** Oh, wow. I thought you would say beer.

**Kristin:** No. No, I think he went to the fucking grocery store and then he swung by the fucking—

**Jenny:** Sure.

**Kristin:** You know what I mean?

**Jenny:** Well, I know that he's got cigarettes, 'cause they're sticking out of the bag.

**Kristin:** Yeah. Okay, so that leaves me with the letter that is unclear. A D. So, um, I think that he probably has...you know what I think he fucking has in that grocery bag?

**Jenny:** Mmm.

**Kristin:** Some goddamn Dunkaroos. I think—

**Jenny:** Wow!

**Kristin:** That when—I think that when he isn't in the mood for American cheese singles—

**Jenny:** Mmm.

**Kristin:** He wants to take a little Dunkaroo out while he watches his programs—

**Jenny:** Alright.

**Kristin:** And dunk—you know what I mean?

**Jenny:** Alright, alright.

**Kristin:** A little crunch? Yeah.

**Jenny:** You know—you know he's also got a box of Twinings *Earl Grey* tea—

**Kristin:** Yeah. I mean, he is British.

**Jenny:** In there, obviously.

**Kristin:** Obviously. Obviously. Um, you know what? He probably picked up some Fritos for Clem.

**Jenny:** [laughs] Yeah.

**Kristin:** He's a good—you know, he's a good guy.

**Jenny:** Yeah.

**Kristin:** Get Clem something.

**Jenny:** He doesn't want you to know it, but he's thinking of Clem.

**Kristin:** He is.

**Jenny:** And Clem seems like a Fritos man.

**Kristin:** [laughs] Maybe we *will* make it to W. [laughs]

**Jenny:** Yeah. You know what? I think he's probably also got some Gatorade. Because—you know. Because he—look at those abs.

**Kristin:** I'm giving Jenny a face right now.

**Jenny:** He's doing a *lot* of crunches—

**Kristin:** You think that a vampire needs electrolytes?

**Jenny:** I think they can't hurt and they might help.



**Kristin:** [laughs] Alright, fine. Well, what better to use Gatorade to wash down for than a Ho-Ho? Which is definitely in that bag. [both laugh]

**Jenny:** I don't know how this turned into—[laughs]

**Kristin:** [simultaneously] Can you tell—like, I feel like this is so revealing that, like, you and I were definitely, like, raised lower-middle class. [laughs] Like, it's just—

**Jenny:** Like, it's definitely...it definitely...

**Kristin:** This is a—

**Jenny:** Speaks at least to a time.

**Kristin:** A time and a budget, a time and a fucking budget.

**Jenny:** A time and a budget.

**Kristin:** You're eating fucking Kraft singles and Ho-Hos.

**Jenny:** Oh, yes. Um. I think he's actually got some—I think he's got some ice. I think he's got some ice because his—his fridge is plugged into god knows what.

**Kristin:** Okay, okay, he's using a—

**Jenny:** And who knows if it's on the fritz, so he might be cooling his chill box—

**Kristin:** Mmm.

**Jenny:** With some actual—

**Kristin:** Ooooh!

**Jenny:** The analog way, with some ice. [laughs]

**Kristin:** Ooh! You know what he fucking has? He bought some fucking boxed Jell-O, because he's not making it for Jell-O. He's using the gelatin for the blood to make blood Jell-O! For dessert!

**Jenny:** Wow.

**Kristin:** Motherfuckers!

**Jenny:** Wow!

**Kristin:** Yes! [laughs]

**Jenny:** Um, that's very good. I like that a lot.

**Kristin:** Thank you.

**Jenny:** He's also got a box of Kleenex—

**Kristin:** Oh. Oh—

**Jenny:** For when he watches his soap operas.

**Kristin:** And because his heart is broken.

**Jenny:** Yeah.

[short pause]

**Kristin:** I literally have no idea what letter comes after K.

**Jenny:** L. [both laugh]

**Kristin:** Cool, well, I don't have an L. So I lose. L is for Kristin *loses*.

**Jenny:** [gasps] I love that. That's my favorite thing L has ever stood for.

**Kristin:** Wow. [laughs] The fuck. [Jenny laughs] But we know that he also has Weetabix in that fucking bag.

**Jenny:** Oh yeah, he's got Weetabix.

**Kristin:** [simultaneously] That was the W. And the M was for *Morely* cigarettes—

**Jenny:** Oh, yeah.

**Kristin:** Although you said cigarettes for a C. So, you know, write us—if you have other letters of the alphabet, let us know. Personally, I will be retiring on the genius that is blood Jell-O. But—

**Jenny:** Yeah, that was very—a very good idea.

**Kristin:** Thank you.

**Jenny:** Not just for Spike, for all of us.

**Kristin:** For everyone, right? Yeah.

**Jenny:** Yeah.

**Kristin:** Get your protein. Alright.

**Jenny:** If anybody out there has any scientific data on the, um...

**Kristin:** Ooh.

**Jenny:** Solidification—

**Kristin:** Ooh.

**Jenny:** Properties of blood when introduced into Jell-O, if you have acquired this data by, you know, virtuous means.

**Kristin:** Mmhmm.

**Jenny:** Do write in at [bufferingthevampireslayer@gmail.com](mailto:bufferingthevampireslayer@gmail.com) and let us know. But if you acquired this data by, uh...by evil means, please do not write in, thank you.

**Kristin:** [laughs] Would have to be, like, pretty thin blood, you know?

**Jenny:** Mmm.

**Kristin:** You don't want any, like, clotty—

**Jenny:** I've heard it's thicker than water and that's the usual liquid that gets involved with Jell-O. [laughs]

**Kristin:** True. Wow. Okay!

**Jenny:** Alright.

**Kristin:** So Buffy is in the cemetery in yet another beanie that matches her jacket. This time it's tan and tan.

**Jenny:** She's a woman of many beanies.

**Kristin:** I mean, seriously. She's got, like, a stack of beanies and a whole closet for her jackets. Like, just a whole closet.

**Jenny:** Mmhmm. Mmhmm.

**Kristin:** Sorry, Dawn, I know you bought her a—stole her a jacket. But she's got enough, bud.

**Jenny:** She's got a lot.

**Kristin:** Spike has not heard about what has happened at the wedding, so he is like, "Did you cry?" and she's like, "Oh, you didn't hear." But then, she kinda like—

**Jenny:** [laughs] It mostly is weird that Spike doesn't know, because Clem was there for the whole thing. [Kristin laughs] Have they not hung out?

**Kristin:** Ohh, he woulda told him tonight, over Fritos and Ho-Hos.

**Jenny:** Right.

**Kristin:** Right? So Buffy sits down and starts—this is, like—this is, like, this thing where you, like, have broken up with somebody but you already have a familiarity. So even though you've broken up with them, [laughs] you, like, default—like, Buffy totally defaults. She, like, immediately sits down next to him and is like, "Yeah, it was, like, this thing and it was really blah, and like, bliggity-blah." And they're kind of, like, sharing—

**Jenny:** Yeah.

**Kristin:** A familiar moment. Spike, fuck you. "Some people can't see a good thing when they got it," he says.

**Jenny:** Well!

**Kristin:** I know. But—

**Jenny:** The man is stung.

**Kristin:** He is.

**Jenny:** But then Xander and Willow roll up, and Xander tells Spike to run along. Which prompts Spike to immediately deploy the ammunition he has *just* come across, [both laugh] by calling Xander the “king of the big exit.”

**Kristin:** Very different from the king of wishful thinking. [laughs]

**Jenny:** Very, very different.

**Kristin:** So, Willow is like, “Let’s release whatever manly thing is happening here.”

**Jenny:** Yeah.

**Kristin:** Let’s—I think that if Willow had possession of the patriarchy’s jingle, she would have played it in this moment. So I’m gonna play it for her.

[THE PATRIARCHY jingle plays]  
The patriarchy! [thunder clap, evil laughter]

**Kristin:** After Willow sort of, like, breaks this situation up, they—Spike and Xander both have, like, names for each other, which are both—Jenny, you might know what—like, is there a word for when things have the same first letter? Like, it’s—alliteration? Is that—

**Jenny:** Yeah, it would be alliterative nicknames, sure.

**Kristin:** Alliterative nicknames. Xander’s—Xander calls Spike, “Willy Wanna-bite.” And...[laughs] Spike calls Xander, “Pathetic Poof.” Poof? Poof.

**Jenny:** Oh—oh, dear.

**Kristin:** Yes, it’s homophobic. But it’s alliterative.

**Jenny:** In Pride month!

**Kristin:** [laughs] It’s Pride—it’s not. It’s July when this airs.

**Jenny:** But the gays do love alliteration.

**Kristin:** It’s Angelina July, Jenny.

**Jenny:** Oh, right, right, right.

**Kristin:** So...Xander punches Spike and Buffy collapses. And we get our third flash sideways to the fucking...mental institution. Yes, Jenny?

**Jenny:** One moment. I also wanted to mention that Spike, just like I've been saying, for month—years! [both laugh] Spike says—after he says the thing about, like, friggin' Xander and Anya and whatever. He says, "Let's not listen to Spike."

**Kristin:** Oh, yeah.

**Jenny:** "Might get a bit of truth on you."

**Kristin:** Yes. Yes. I'm glad you said that, because it's true. [laughs]

**Jenny:** Mmhmm!

**Kristin:** It's true. He does deliver the truth. And I mean, if we're being real about life, most of us don't wanna hear the truth.

**Jenny:** Yeah, get that outta here.

**Kristin:** Yeah, get it outta here. So, um, we go back to the institution.

**Jenny:** Mmhmm.

**Kristin:** "Buffy, can you hear me? Sunnydale, none of that is real. You've been here for six years." A specific number. We'll get information on it shortly. There's a very brief flashback to the cemetery, and then we go back again. And now, we have some new people here, at the mental institution.

**Jenny:** Oh god, it's Hank and Joyce Summers.

**Kristin:** Together!

**Jenny:** Oh, no. Yeah, they seem friendly.

**Kristin:** Mmhmm.

**Jenny:** They seem like the idealized version—the perfect, idealized version—

**Kristin:** Yeah.

**Jenny:** Of your parents you'd wanna encounter—

**Kristin:** Yes.

**Jenny:** In an alternate reality that's trying to lure you away from your real reality.

**Kristin:** [simultaneously] They're like the Sears photo parents, you know? Like, Dad behind Mom.

**Jenny:** Mmhmm.

**Kristin:** Right? Like, a very photogenic, heteronormative kind of situation. And...

**Jenny:** Yep.

**Kristin:** Joyce says, "Welcome home, sweetie." [Jenny groans] Buffy's like, "Mom? Dad?" And the doctor is like, "Keep talking." They're like, "We missed you. Stay with us." This is so fucked up. I, like—during, like—I mean, listen. [laughs] This episode is really fucked, for a lot of reasons, okay. But what I'm talking about specifically right now is just that this girl lost her mother, then had to go through dying and coming back and suffering that loss all over again. [Jenny exhales] Then had to go through Tabula Rasa, forgetting that she fucking lost her mom and then remembering again. And now, she's here, seeing her mom and we'll get a scene with her shortly, where she's reaching to touch her mom. And has to kind of make the decision to leave that space. Like, how many times can this fucking person go through this trauma? It's so much! I'm upset! [laughs]

**Jenny:** Mmhmm. Mmhmm!

**Kristin:** Anyway. We go back to the cemetery.

**Jenny:** Xander and Willow take Buffy home and Spike is left there with his bag full of Ho-Hos and Fritos.

**Kristin:** Oh my god, and ice! You were probably right, 'cause he says, "Put ice on her neck, she likes that."

**Jenny:** Exactly.

**Kristin:** Wow, you didn't even know you were right. So...

**Jenny:** Oh, you'd be—

**Kristin:** I get a half-point for that shit. [laughs]

**Jenny:** Amazed at how often I'm right without even knowing it. [both laugh]  
Anyway. Uh, they go back home and Buffy's running down, like, the whole hospital business for Willow, Xander and Dawn. Xander comes up with a pretty hilarious list of reasons that Sunnydale is perhaps [Kristin laughs] the less probable reality. [both laugh] And then when Dawn hears that Hank and Joyce were there, she's like, "What?"

**Kristin:** Yeah.

**Jenny:** And Willow's like, "Okay! Research mode. Let's, uh, rally!"

**Kristin:** Yeah...

**Jenny:** Let's round up the wagons.

**Kristin:** Yeah. The things in this scene—well, so, this scene contains one of the punch—what I would like to posit as a punch-up line. Because Buffy is—so Sarah Michelle Gellar, and I will say this beginning here, although she's been great up till here. But this is the moment in the episode where her acting is so good that I can barely stand to witness it.

**Jenny:** Mmhmm.

**Kristin:** She really is embodying a person who does not know which is their reality—

**Jenny:** Yeah.

**Kristin:** What is reality, in a way that's so vulnerable and so fragile. And we don't see her like this, and we don't see her, like, giving information like—like, this sit-down talk? This is not a scene that we get in this show, you know? Like, not often. Where it's just like—

**Jenny:** Mmhmm.

**Kristin:** "I've been—this is what I've been going through. And this is what happened." It's very, very serious. And Xander—she says, like, "They—the gross



waxy demon poked me.” And Xander’s like, “When you say ‘poked’...” And Willow—Willow is all of us and, like, looks at him, like, dude, fucking—

**Jenny:** Like, is now the time for this joke?

**Kristin:** And it’s not. And that’s why, like, I—whoever put it in here, it’s just—it’s not appropriate. And it’s not appropriate given the performance that we’re getting from Sarah Michelle Gellar. Like, you would not—

**Jenny:** Yeah.

**Kristin:** Fucking make a joke if you were sitting in the room with Buffy, and this is what she was giving to you.

**Jenny:** Yeah.

**Kristin:** So. Anyway. And the other thing that I wanted to say is just that she says—Sarah Michelle Gellar in this scene—“They said—” right, the people in the other reality—“said that none of this was real.”

**Jenny:** Mmhmm.

**Kristin:** Which I feel like is just really the seed for the core of it all. You know, she has two groups of people, both equally believable, in, like, her reality. They feel tangible and real in both places. And both places are saying the other one isn’t real.

**Jenny:** Yeah, I hate that.

**Kristin:** Hate it! So, anyway. She has another flashover to the doctor’s office, now. They’ve moved into the doctor’s office.

**Jenny:** And the doctor says—this is a phrase that I’ve never heard. And now that I’m saying it, I can’t remember if this specific phrase came up in the special episode? “Undifferentiated type of schizophrenia.”

**Kristin:** Yeah, well, I mean, I think that’s important. So the special episode and this episode, we are not getting into, like, a medical conversation.

**Jenny:** Right.

**Kristin:** Because we can’t. And—

**Jenny:** Yeah.

**Kristin:** And there are—there are several of you all who are psychiatrists and psychologists who wrote in with this knowledge. But we just sort of, like, had to make a choice on, like, what this podcast space was for and, like, how to do things responsibly. And so, yeah, he does. He talks about delusions, he talks about schizophrenia. He says something like “the latticework of.” And I think that, you know, based on our conversation with Sarah and, like, her conversation with people she knows, that some of this is—like, some of these words are obviously rooted in reality. We know schizophrenia is obviously a real thing. But I don’t think that—I think—I think a show that had the awareness it needed to have about mental health would never have delivered this episode unto us this way.

**Jenny:** Mmhmm.

**Kristin:** So I think that we are to take all of this with some grains of salt. And also, I just wanna double down on the fact that, like, we are not here to debunk or discuss, like, the medical terms used and their validity—

**Jenny:** Right, right.

**Kristin:** Or the treatments used and their validity. That’s not what—that’s not what we are capable of doing.

**Jenny:** What is interesting is that he does mention, right, that she’s created this, like, world of friends and enemies to support her primary delusion.

**Kristin:** Yes.

**Jenny:** And that she actually inserted a sister, rewriting—

**Kristin:** Yeah.

**Jenny:** A lot of the story, you know, some years into it. And then, he mentions—he’s speaking directly to Buffy. “Your friends haven’t been as comforting—”

**Kristin:** Mmhmm.

**Jenny:** “Lately. These things you created to make yourself comfortable haven’t been working lately. Your world is kind of, like, starting to fall apart over there, isn’t it?” Which is not untrue!

**Kristin:** Right. Well, and like, the way that the episode positions this, we are afraid that this is her reality.

**Jenny:** Mmhmm.

**Kristin:** That she has been institutionalized for six years and that everything we've seen is not true. But it is also positioned where there's some really decent truth to the fact that Buffy is wanting the things that exist in this other world. Like, I think it's reversed in a lot of ways for her. Not that she doesn't want her friends, not that she doesn't wanna be the Slayer. But that she wants her mom back.

**Jenny:** Right. Yeah.

**Kristin:** And she wants a dad who gives a fuck about her—

**Jenny:** Yeah.

**Kristin:** Or her fucking mom.

**Jenny:** Yep.

**Kristin:** You know, that she—like, these are—these are things that she is missing. And I think that that—that's important, and that's interesting. I just think...I just think the ending of this episode really, like, hammered home all of the irresponsible things that it did. So.

**Jenny:** Yeah.

**Kristin:** Um—

**Jenny:** Meanwhile at Nerd Herd HQ—

**Kristin:** Well—

**Jenny:** Oh.

**Kristin:** Well, hold on, though—

**Jenny:** Okay.

**Kristin:** No, because how we get to Nerd Herd is that the other thing that the doctor says is, "You used to create really big demons. And now, it's just three pathetic little men." And then—

**Jenny:** [laughs] Spot the lie.

**Kristin:** Uh-huh. Not a lie, but also, guess what? They're a pretty big fucking demon, these three together.

**Jenny:** Yeah. Andrew and Warren are coming back to the HQ with Chekov's mysterious boxes! [Kristin laughs] What could they contain? It's none of your business in this episode!

**Kristin:** Jonathan is fucked up in this scene. Like, you can really see the effects of murder on Jonathan, more than—

**Jenny:** Yeah. He's not doing well.

**Kristin:** Mm-mm.

**Jenny:** They won't tell him what's in the—what's in the box?! [Kristin laughs] And he tries to leave—

**Kristin:** We've seen Twelve Monkeys! [laughs]

**Jenny:** Yeah. Seven. Seven. No monkeys, just seven.

**Kristin:** [laughing, whispering] Damnit. [Jenny snorts] What happens in Twelve Monkeys? [laughs]

**Jenny:** There's an outbreak. Twelve Monkeys is—

**Kristin:** We've seen Fight Club! We've seen...A River Runs Through It!

**Jenny:** Oh!

**Kristin:** We know what's in the box!

**Jenny:** Wow! [Kristin laughs] Is Brad Pitt in A River Runs Through It?

**Kristin:** Yes!

**Jenny:** Or are you thinking of Legends of the Fall?

**Kristin:** Oh.

**Jenny:** [laughing] Okay. Anyway. [Kristin laughs] Jonathan tries to leave headquarters, and I think it—I firmly believe that Jonathan wants to leave this basement and go find Buffy and tell her what’s up. Because he is coming apart at the seams, he is unspooling. But Warren stops him. Also, Jonathan is wearing a little shirt that I’m pretty sure says “Golden Eagle”—

**Kristin:** It does.

**Jenny:** And has a little golden eagle’s head on it, and it is truly great—

**Kristin:** It is.

**Jenny:** And if anyone has this shirt or knows where I can find it, please let us know, thank you.

**Kristin:** I’m just rooted in myself. Just—just eviscerating Brad Pitt’s, uh...canon of work.

**Jenny:** I’ve seen Interview with a Vampire, [Kristin laughs] of course I know what’s in the box! I’ve seen Once Upon a Time in Hollywood, I know what’s in the box!

**Kristin:** Um, just to give us one other pop culture reference, and one that did make me giggle. Andrew—so they’re looking at, like, a vault or whatever. And Andrew’s like, “I still really think we need eight other guys.” [laughing] And Warren is like, “I should have never let you watch that movie.”

**Jenny:** Oh my god.

**Kristin:** It’s a nice Ocean’s Eleven—

**Jenny:** Oh, I missed that. Great. [laughs]

**Kristin:** Yeah, so it’s a nice moment. Okay. So we’re back at the Summers house and Buffy’s looking at photos, specifically a photo of both of her parents and her when she’s little. This is the Buffy that we saw when she was—I mean, really, that was also related to her mental health, right? Like, when she was sort of going to a place that felt safe for her and she was a little kid and she had a doll and it was a whole thing. And Dawn was being brought home and—this is that Buffy, in the

picture. So she's looking at that, and then Willow comes down. This is probably the most, uh, upsetting part for me in the episode—is because Willow is like, "We found the demon. And the antidote is in its stinger." And you know that, for Buffy, there is no longer a tether to either reality.

**Jenny:** Mmhmm.

**Kristin:** So she can't believe in this, and she can't believe in that. And she's just—

**Jenny:** Yeah.

**Kristin:** Like she says.

**Jenny:** She says, "I feel so lost."

**Kristin:** Yeah.

**Jenny:** And this is where we find out, and Buffy tells Willow—

**Kristin:** Mmhmm.

**Jenny:** That she did stay in an institution for a couple of weeks back when she first saw her first vampires. AKA, before the TV series.

**Kristin:** Right. [sighs]

**Jenny:** And you know, she was there for a couple weeks and then she just stopped talking about vampires and they let her go. And eventually, her parents just forgot.

**Kristin:** Right. But now—

**Jenny:** And then she says—oh, no!

**Kristin:** Yes.

**Jenny:** And then she says—

**Kristin:** Yes.

**Jenny:** "What if I'm still there?"

**Kristin:** Yes!

**Jenny:** The worst thing I've ever heard on television.

**Kristin:** Literally. Literally, that's the thing [Jenny exhales] is that, like, now she—I mean, she's just lost—she's just lost the tether to reality. And we've lost the tether to reality! And that is what is so fucked up about this fucking episode. I was thinking, when I was watching it today, like, what would it be like to watch just this episode?

**Jenny:** Mmm.

**Kristin:** Like, if you didn't have a connection to the characters, if you hadn't been invested in the show? And I don't know that it would be that fucking traumatic to watch. But it's the fact that we've been watching this story for *years*. We have formulated our fucking inner self, our fucking philosophies, some of our strengths, some of what gets us up in the morning, on the story that this show is telling. And the flippant just dismissal of that in this episode—

**Jenny:** Mmm.

**Kristin:** Is what's so fucked up. And I mentioned this in the episode that we have with Sarah and Alba. But the—

**Jenny:** Mmhmm.

**Kristin:** When you hear Joss and Marti Noxon talk side by side about it, I think some of the patriarchy jumps right out ya. Because he's just like, "Whatever! Like, crazy, right? This totally—it could be anything!" And Marti Noxon's like, "Well, I mean, um. No, we're not undoing the premise of the whole show." [laughs] I'm paraphrasing for both, of course. But I do think that—man. Maybe at this point in the series, we care more about Buffy than the creator of the show.

**Jenny:** [unsettled] Yeeeeee. Okay, now. Onward and...upward. To two men.

**Kristin:** That is—yes, that's true.

**Jenny:** Working side by side. You know how things can get kind of sexy when you're—

**Kristin:** [simultaneously] They love to hunt. They're hunting, you know?

**Jenny:** Working with your friend who's compactly muscled.

**Kristin:** [laughs] So compact.

**Jenny:** Spike and Xander are hunting a demon together. And, um, Spike is just kind of very casually running off at the mouth about why he thinks Buffy would love for this to be a fake reality, because—

**Kristin:** Mm.

**Jenny:** Uh, she made him fall in love with her [Kristin laughs] and then made him her sex slave. And Xander's like, "Wait, what?"

**Kristin:** Yeah. [laughs]

**Jenny:** And then Spike says, "Maybe there's an alternate reality where you didn't leave Anya at the altar." And we're like, eugh! And then these boys channel all this rage and pent up aggression to beat down a demon together.

**Kristin:** Yes! Spike sees the demon and [laughs] he says, "You didn't say he was a glar-ga-ga-gash-manok?" I wrote it out phonetically, for myself.

**Jenny:** It's pretty good.

**Kristin:** Still probably didn't get it. And Xander's like, "That's because I can't say all of those things." [Jenny laughs] And then they fight the demon. I wanna point out, before we get to them fighting this demon, that Spike says something, which we talk a little bit about in the—this bonus episode. Which is that he pins Buffy's state on being self-centered. [Jenny groans] We'll probably talk about it a little more later when Spike is in her room, but like, yeah. That's fucked up.

**Jenny:** It's a bad vibe.

**Kristin:** Mmhmm, that's a bad vibe. [laughing] Xander fights really well! Xander fights really well. He does a good—he shoots two darts into this guy. Nails both, doesn't hit Spike either time.

**Jenny:** Mmm.

**Kristin:** And then, he's—he wants to impress his boyfriend just a little bit more—

**Jenny:** Ha! Yes!



**Kristin:** So he's like, "I altered his reality." And Spike—

**Jenny:** Nice.

**Kristin:** Is just trying not to laugh. Just trying—

**Jenny:** Mmm!

**Kristin:** To be like grumpy old Spike—

**Jenny:** [laughing] Uh-huh.

**Kristin:** When he really wants to kiss him.

**Jenny:** Oh my god.

**Kristin:** We're working hard. We're working hard, guys. [laughs]

**Jenny:** Yeah, we're trying, we're trying, we're trying.

**Kristin:** We're trying.

**Jenny:** Dawn brings Buffy some tea.

**Kristin:** Mmm.

**Jenny:** And she's looking for evidence anywhere she can find it. She says, "I should be taller than you." Just basic reasoning—

**Kristin:** That's not—

**Jenny:** She's the older sister, so she should be taller.

**Kristin:** My sister is taller than me. She's younger.

**Jenny:** Mmhmm, mmhmm, mmhmm.

**Kristin:** Older doesn't mean taller. Hell math.

[HELLMATH jingle plays]  
Hellmath!

**Jenny:** Then, she starts saying, like, “You’ve gotta start getting better grades. Has Willow been doing your chores for you?”

**Kristin:** She says “coming apart.” She’s sort of connecting dots, though I’m not sure she’s connecting them in the order we need her to. And this is—it’s just fucking sad. And she has another—it’s sad because Dawn is really—so concerned.

**Jenny:** Mmhmm.

**Kristin:** And just, like, concerned in a way that we don’t often see Dawn, either. She has another flash sideways. This is her sixth, I kept count. [laughs] And she’s like...with Joyce. And Joyce says, “You don’t have a sister. Say it.”

**Jenny:** Eee!

**Kristin:** Then she’s like, “We just wanna take you home.” Joyce—you know, “We just wanna take you home. We wanna take care of you.” And Buffy reaches for Joyce. This really—this is not something I would have, like, probably noticed if we didn’t watch *The Body* so many times and talk about it [laughs] for so long. But she does reach for Joyce in a way that reminded me of how Dawn reaches for Joyce at the end of *The Body*.

**Jenny:** Mmm.

**Kristin:** And what’s really interesting about that is that she reaches for Joyce, and then flashes back to her room and she’s now reaching for Dawn.

**Jenny:** Mmmm!

**Kristin:** I don’t know, y’all figure it out. We’re not smart. Well, I’m not smart. I can’t speak for Jenny. [laughs]

**Jenny:** Mmm. Of course, of *course*! Dawn...*would*...[through gritted teeth] hear her sister, who’s really having a hard time, say—

**Kristin:** I know.

**Jenny:** “I don’t have a sister” and take it *soo* personally! “It’s your ideal reality and I’m not even a part of it,” she stomps.

**Kristin:** Oh, Dawn.

**Jenny:** Dawn! No!

**Kristin:** I know. It's like—part of me has space for this, because Dawn is 15. She hasn't yet learned how to, like, put various traumas on scales and decide—

**Jenny:** Mmm.

**Kristin:** Which one is gonna weigh out this time, so fair.

**Jenny:** Mmhmm.

**Kristin:** But I do think this would have been a much more appropriate response if it happened after what happened between them. Because, you know—and maybe not. Maybe I'm doing a disservice to Dawn. Because the truth is that Dawn was a mystical ball of energy that was inserted into their lives. And that probably carries a massive amount of insecurity about the fact that, even though they have memories of her, she wasn't really there. So, like—

**Jenny:** Right.

**Kristin:** This is probably pushing buttons for her. Should she have stayed and supported Buffy? Of course. But I'm gonna make space for her. So, I've now started referring to the demon as Gar-gar. Gar-gar's chained up [Jenny snorts] and in the basement.

**Jenny:** Nice.

**Kristin:** Mmhmm.

**Jenny:** Let's get that antidote! Let's go!

**Kristin:** Alright. So, I got a question.

**Jenny:** Yeah.

**Kristin:** Why the fuck aren't we calling Tara at this point, to make this antidote and not take twelve hours to do so?

**Jenny:** Great point. No answer.

**Kristin:** It's the perfect way for you to flirt with the girl you wanna flirt with.

**Jenny:** Mmhmm.

**Kristin:** It's a great way to get Buffy fucking saved a lot quicker.

**Jenny:** Mmhmm.

**Kristin:** Call Tara.

**Jenny:** It's foolish. Foolish! They make the healing sauce. [Kristin laughs] Willow brings it to Buffy. And Buffy's like, "You never stop coming through. Thanks, Willow." And then Willow says, "Spike," who's just come in. "Make sure she drinks all of this." And Buffy...has no interest in what Spike thinks about what she should do with that liquid. She says, "You're not a part of my life! GTFO!"

**Kristin:** Yeah. "You never stop coming through" is a very, very powerful moment between Willow and Buffy. Like, it's—and it's given that space in the show. It's really powerful.

**Jenny:** Mmhmm.

**Kristin:** And Willow leaving Spike—like, I understand that there's, like, sort of an inherent trust for certain things with Spike. But I just...

**Jenny:** Just seems like he's not the guy to make sure it happens.

**Kristin:** Right. And yeah, Spike says a lot of stuff here. He's—

**Jenny:** It's not great!

**Kristin:** No. He says, "I hope you don't think that the antidote will relieve you of your martyrdom." So he's sort of playing—

**Jenny:** Eugh!

**Kristin:** That same card of like, this is you feeling bad for yourself. This is you—

**Jenny:** Ugh.

**Kristin:** Having, like, a hero complex. Not helpful at all. I mean, he doesn't really know the extent of what she's hearing on the other side. But still, this is, like, not supportive and not good at all. And then he expounds on this and says, like, "You're

not—I was wrong about you. You're not drawn to the dark. You're actually addicted to misery."

**Jenny:** Oh, Spike.

**Kristin:** "That's why you won't tell your friends." He's basically saying, like, she won't go all the way in either direction. That if she tells her friends that they've been sleeping together, they're either going to accept her and then she's gonna have to admit that she wants to keep sleeping with him.

**Jenny:** Mm.

**Kristin:** Or they're gonna be like, fuck off, and then she will just cut them out of her life, and keep sleeping with him. I think in both scenarios, Spike believes that they continue sleeping together.

**Jenny:** They'll keep going to Bone Town.

**Kristin:** Right... "Let yourself live and stop with the hero shit," is what he says. And that is—

**Jenny:** Oof.

**Kristin:** That's fucked up. It's really fucked up.

**Jenny:** Then he also says, "Tell your friends about us, or I will."

**Kristin:** Yeah...

**Jenny:** Is now the time for this conversation, if you really believe you need to have it, Spike?

**Kristin:** No. It really isn't.

**Jenny:** No.

**Kristin:** And like, I mean, Spike with the emotional intelligence...I wanna really believe that he would've known that now is not the time. But...he didn't. And he's felt really left out. It's like, he's felt like this person—

**Jenny:** Oh, yeah.

**Kristin:** Who he loves is in danger and not okay and no one knows that he cares. And he can't, like, say that he cares and express that he cares. And he can't, like, take care of her. Still not excusable, but I think that's where he's rooted.

**Jenny:** [whispers] Oh, god. [normal volume] He huffs out and then Buffy dumps the liquid antidote—

**Kristin:** It is barely liquid. It's very sludgy.

**Jenny:** Into the plastic bag-lined trash can—

**Kristin:** It is almost blood Jell-O that comes out of that cup. [both laugh]

**Jenny:** Wow. Go to the sink, girl! Go to the toilet.

**Kristin:** Thank god there was one of those teenie tiny little garbage bags in that fucking—[Jenny snorts] remember those? I don't—do people use those still? Those little teenie tiny bathroom garbage bags? I don't use them.

**Jenny:** Yes, I do.

**Kristin:** Do you?! Really?!

**Jenny:** Yeah.

**Kristin:** Like, you buy the, like, teenie tiny garbage bags?

**Jenny:** That's right.

**Kristin:** Wow, that's cute. Okay. So people do, 'cause one of them is here. We're a 50/50 split, so—

**Jenny:** So sorry.

**Kristin:** Your scientific study is complete. [laughs]

**Jenny:** Um...

**Kristin:** 50% of people do. [both laugh]

**Jenny:** Uh, we go back to the hospital and the doctor's kind of telling Buffy she's gonna have to let go of her friends, the anchors that are sort of tethering her to the Sunnydale reality.

**Kristin:** Yeah, and notably, she goes back and says, "I don't wanna go back there."

**Jenny:** Yeah.

**Kristin:** "I wanna be healthy."

**Jenny:** And that is because...of Spike. [laughs]

**Kristin:** Right.

**Jenny:** Because of how she feels about her and Spike.

**Kristin:** Right. Well, and because—

**Jenny:** Eugh!

**Kristin:** Because—but—I mean, you know. Yes, it's Spike but it's also that Spike is representative of so much for her. And like, that is the biggest button she's got and he's pushed it. So—

**Jenny:** Oh, he's pushed it many times, man.

**Kristin:** I know. Knocked down a whole fucking house—

**Jenny:** [simultaneously] HG—[laughing]

**Kristin:** [laughing] With that.

**Jenny:** 1080P TV. [both laugh]

**Kristin:** So she's like, "Get me the fuck outta here. I'd rather be in this world where my parents are together and alive and care about me." And—

**Jenny:** Mmm.

**Kristin:** Yeah, is sort of given this, like, "Your friends—" So that's another notable thing in this very, very quick moment, is that he essentially says, like, "Your friends

were what brought you back.” Like, we are led to believe that when Buffy died at the end of Season 5 in this reality, that was her coming back to that reality.

**Jenny:** Right.

**Kristin:** And being there for however long—

**Jenny:** Ugh.

**Kristin:** And then it was her friends that brought her to this not-true reality. Like, that—and that—

**Jenny:** I hate it. [singsong] I hate it!

**Kristin:** Yeah, it’s all really fucked up. And listen, like, I think we’ll say it in the intro or what have you. But I just wanna make sure that you know that we talk a lot in the bonus episode about the portrayal of mental health in television and in media, and specifically this episode. And what it does to us and how it informs us, as human beings, of like, what we think about people who have mental illness. And how—

**Jenny:** Right.

**Kristin:** It is not responsible and not okay to have put this storyline this way in this show. Certainly, very irresponsible to also have ended things like this. Like—

**Jenny:** Ew.

**Kristin:** You need to kill your friends. For a million reasons, and we get into that much, much more in that bonus episode. We’re trying this thing where, like, we try to have as much fun as we can in the episodic conversations, for those of who don’t want to walk through some of the trauma that we—

**Jenny:** Mmhmm.

**Kristin:** Collectively carry. But also, giving you the deeper dive on some of those issues. So that’s what’s happening. Back at the Summers house.

**Jenny:** The pace kicks up.

**Kristin:** Oof.



**Jenny:** Buffy comes downstairs and Willow's like, "It'll be good to see you healthy." And Buffy's like, "Mmm." And then we have an interesting cut to Xander coming in and nobody's around in the house, and he's all showered. And then Buffy clocks him in the face with a frying pan and soon he is dragged down to the basement to be hogtied alongside Willow. And—mm, this moment of Xander saying, "Willow. What?" And then passing out on the basement floor is, I think, kind of funny. I think. It's not a great acting moment.

**Kristin:** Mmhmm.

**Jenny:** I think it's bad.

**Kristin:** Mm, okay. That's fair.

**Jenny:** That's my official...

**Kristin:** That's fair. As you know, uh—

**Jenny:** [simultaneously] It's very—it's kind of campy.

**Kristin:** [simultaneously] At the beginning of this, I told you that I barely make it through, so I didn't—

**Jenny:** Yeah.

**Kristin:** I wasn't paying any attention. But yes. Also, notably, Willow says, "No more cuckoo's nest." We'll talk about that in the bonus episode, but I just wanna say—'cause if you don't listen to that, like, Cuckoo's Nest is—yeah, of course. Most of us know the film *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. But cuckoo's nest is also a term that's used for, um...the vehicle in media where the viewer is led to believe that everything they've known to be true has not been true the whole time. [laughs] So there's kinda, like, a meta thing happening with that line from Willow. Alright! Let's go get Dawn!

**Jenny:** Uh, Dawn's sassin'—she's trying to go to Janice's, where they actually want her around.

**Kristin:** Oh, Dawn.

**Jenny:** [laughing] And then Buffy—oh no, so terrifying. "You're going downstairs with the others."

**Kristin:** Oof. [exhales]

**Jenny:** "It's the only way I can get healthy." Ahhh!

**Kristin:** This is where we get, like, real horror movie. Like, we—

**Jenny:** Yeah.

**Kristin:** We turn a hard corner into, like, horror movie music, horror movie cinematography. Like, very, very scary shit. Also, Dawn, like—she's, like, pissed. She's like, "Don't you knock?" And then she, like, takes one look at Buffy and immediately changes course and is like, "Are you okay? You don't seem okay." So...now we're running. Now we're running. Dawn is running. She's in the bathroom, Buffy kicks the fucking door open. Dawn is gone, because as we know, the Summers bathroom upstairs connects both to the bedroom and the hallway.

**Jenny:** Oh, god.

**Kristin:** And...so Dawn's in the room. She's looped around, she's in the bedroom. The doorway of Willow—now Willow's bedroom, formerly Joyce's bedroom. And she is appealing to reason, which is not going to be an effective tactic, but also is a heartbreaking tactic.

**Jenny:** Yeah.

**Kristin:** "I'm right here. You're my sister. I need you. I love you. You have to feel that somewhere." And then Buffy, counterpoint. [laughs] Is like, "What's fucking more real? A girl who is sick or one who saves the world and sleeps with a vampire she hates?" Gasp. [laughs] Now she's told Dawn.

**Jenny:** Ohh, god. [laughs] Oh yeah, now she's told Dawn, although Dawn doesn't seem to really take it in.

**Kristin:** Yeah, Dawn doesn't really clock it.

**Jenny:** Um. Yep. Yep, yep, yep, yep. Soon enough, down Dawn goes to the basement with the others, tied up and with her mouth duct taped closed.

**Kristin:** This, too, is the moment I was referring to where Dawn is, like, the most traumatized. Because she's on the floor, pinned down by her sister, and she's saying, "Buffy, I'm real." Which, like—

**Jenny:** Uuugh!

**Kristin:** Ooooh.

**Jenny:** Yeah, that's not great.

**Kristin:** Mm-mm.

**Jenny:** So flash sideways to the hospital. The doctor's encouraging Buffy to take her time and make it as easy on herself as she possibly can. Back in Sunnydale, Buffy moves to the demon to undo his little chains. And did you notice the demon's little shoulder-shimmy [Kristin laughs] once the chains were undone? He does a little shimmy to get them to fall off, all sexy. [laughs] As though he—

**Kristin:** [laughing] I didn't.

**Jenny:** As though he were wearing a sexy, little piece of negligee.

**Kristin:** He does have, like, little, like, feather—they're not—

**Jenny:** Yeah, what's going on there? It's a hell of a look.

**Kristin:** [simultaneously] It's an interesting—yeah, he's got a look. It almost looks like he has a boa on, but not made of feathers, made of, like, entrails, maybe?

**Jenny:** Yeah, yeah.

**Kristin:** Right?

**Jenny:** Also, why do we assume it's a he? No idea.

**Kristin:** Ugh. Yeah. Great question, because of the patriarchy but—

**Jenny:** Oh, right.

**Kristin:** I don't wanna play the jingle again. [laughs]

**Jenny:** So fight ensues in the basement. Ding-dong! It's Tara! At the hospital—

**Kristin:** Thank god.

**Jenny:** Joyce says, "Keep concentrating. Whatever it is, it's not real." In Sunnydale, Xander says, "Help me." And then Tara busts in, frees the tied-up people with a spell, and then throws a shelf of, like, paint cans, uh, with a different spell, at the demon. Hilarious.

**Kristin:** Mmhmm.

**Jenny:** Joyce in the hospital saying, you know, "You have a world of strength in your heart. Believe in yourself. I know you can do this. Like, come back to us." And Buffy's like, "Thanks, Mom. And also, goodbye." Noo, god! It's—none of—it's all bad, actually, Kristin.

**Kristin:** It really is. There's, like—the most heart wrenching moments for me in this sequence. One is after Buffy—'cause Buffy, like, grabs Tara's foot through the gap in the stairs to trip her.

**Jenny:** Mmhmm.

**Kristin:** And that moment, she's like, ter—like, she's in so much pain. Because she is hurting her friends. They're calling out for her. [Jenny groans] Xander is like, "Buffy, please help us." And she has, like, tucked herself, like, as far away as she can get. Like, under the stairs, in the corner.

**Jenny:** Yeah.

**Kristin:** And every time we flash sideways to where Joyce is, she's saying the names of the people that she hasn't helped, that she isn't helping. It is horrible!

**Jenny:** Yeah.

**Kristin:** It is so horrible! I'm so sorry that I have to talk about this in your ears! It's really, really, really sad. And the thing that I love about Joyce being the one to say this is that, like, if you really flip it, right? Like, the most obvious read, I think, is Joyce is saying, "You've got people who love you. Believe in yourself." And she's like, right, my friends fucking love me and I need to believe in myself and I'm gonna fight for them.

**Jenny:** Yeah.

**Kristin:** But the other thing—I mean, there's probably 50 ways you could interpret it. But the other way that I interpreted it was that Joyce says, "You've got people who love you. We'll always be with you."

**Jenny:** Mmhmm!

**Kristin:** "Believe in yourself." And—

**Jenny:** Ohh, god, it hurts. And is good.

**Kristin:** It hurts in a good way, though. Like, I do think that we have sort of seen Buffy process the trauma of not having her mom. But I think that, like, the reality of losing a parent, losing a mother, is that, like, that trauma resurfaces in many ways, at many times.

**Jenny:** Yeah.

**Kristin:** And I think that, like, this is a message that Buffy did really need to get from Joyce.

**Jenny:** Yeah, that's—oh, what a good point. Hey, this episode actually does something. How nice. [laughs]

**Kristin:** It does—yeah. At least through that lens, I think it's important. And—

**Jenny:** You know what else it does?

**Kristin:** [laughs] What does it do?

**Jenny:** Buffy's kicking ass!

**Kristin:** Yeah.

**Jenny:** Buffy's taking names! Buffy punches a hole in the wax demon! Yeah!

**Kristin:** [laughs] She comes out with a full, like, alien goo hand, after that punch.

**Jenny:** [makes punch sound effect] Yeah, hell yeah.

**Kristin:** It's good.

**Jenny:** Then she apologizes to her friends and she says, "I'm not going anywhere until I sip my delicious antidote!" [slurps]

**Kristin:** And she already knows the consistency—

**Jenny:** Yeah.

**Kristin:** So she's really committed to staying here.

**Jenny:** Hey, maybe it's like a smoothie.

**Kristin:** It didn't look like a smoothie, Jenny.

**Jenny:** Um...okay, and then here's the real "fuck you."

**Kristin:** Yeah.

**Jenny:** Here's the real "fuck you."

**Kristin:** [simultaneously] That's literally my—my scene—my, like, scene location. It was like, Buffy's basement, and the last scene location is just, Fuck You. [laughs]

**Jenny:** Yeah. The doctor is putting light in Buffy's eyes, saying, "I'm afraid we lost her." No.

**Kristin:** No.

**Jenny:** Unsubscribe, actually.

**Kristin:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Jenny:** Not from our podcast, but from this scene.

**Kristin:** This scene. Like, because this episode would have fucked up shit with mental health and the way we perceive it and—it did some fucked up shit. But it could have been better if we didn't at least end here. We should have—

**Jenny:** Yeah.

**Kristin:** *Never* ended here. And at first, before my friend on Twitter was like, "You're probably triggered for dissociation. Like, that's probably what's happening for you."

**Jenny:** Mmhmm.

**Kristin:** Part of what I thought—and I’m sure, like, all things are true—is also that I’m a woman. And it is still—and I’m a cisgender white woman, right. So like, I’m walking with plenty of privilege. But I’m still a woman. And I don’t think that we’re far enough away from a time when women were just simply told, “You’re crazy.”

**Jenny:** Yeah.

**Kristin:** “You have to be put away. Goodbye.”

**Jenny:** Mmhmm. Mmhmm.

**Kristin:** And like, nothing that they said or did would be fucking believed. And like, I think that there’s some of that inside of me as well, that’s like, you can’t do this. You can’t take a show that is said to exist to let us believe that we *do* have the power, that we *can* get up and stand up—

**Jenny:** [groans loudly]

**Kristin:** And fight. You cannot take that and then make a mockery of it and make a joke of it. And use the vehicle of mental illness as the way to say maybe it’s not all real. Because that is playing on every fucking trauma that we have experienced historically, over time. It’s not okay.

**Jenny:** No. No good.

**Kristin:** It’s not okay. Jenny and I are recording this episode at night, and I feel like it’s bringing out a deeper piece of my Italian soul. [laughs]

**Jenny:** Yeah, you’re going for it. You’re really going for it.

**Kristin:** I’m just mad! I’m so mad about this episode.

**Jenny:** Mmhmm, mmhmm, mmhmm.

**Kristin:** One thing I wanna say, ‘cause I know that you have just sexual tension, just building—it’s just building. It’s ready to—

**Jenny:** Boi-oi-oi-oi-ing!

**Kristin:** Pop out through your fucking eyes. But one thing I wanna say is that...when Buffy stands up in the basement. When she says, like, “You’re right” to

Joyce, "thank you, goodbye." She stands up, she kills the demon. There's actually a hero shot that's done.

**Jenny:** Mmhmm.

**Kristin:** Like, it comes up from below her. And I thought it was really interesting, because at the beginning of this season, I incorrectly talked about, uh—I think it was the beginning of this season? I incorrectly talked about hero shot Buffy—

**Jenny:** [simultaneously] Oh yeah. A Buffy hero shot but it's actually the Buffybot.

**Kristin:** Right, but it's actually the Buffybot. And so I just thought it was interesting that this moment—

**Jenny:** Mmm.

**Kristin:** I don't know if we got any others in this season so far. I don't think we have. But—

**Jenny:** Maybe this signifies Buffy really coming back to herself.

**Kristin:** Yeah. I think that—I think that we can maybe look at it as significant, so.

**Jenny:** Yeah, so the rest of the season will just be—

**Kristin:** [simultaneously] It's gonna be great.

**Jenny:** Uh, fun and only a good time.

**Kristin:** Yeah! We did it!

**Jenny:** And speaking of both a good time and doing it. [Kristin laughs] It's time for the Sexual Tension Awards!

[SEXUAL TENSION AWARD jingle plays]  
Sexual tension award!

**Jenny:** Well! It's a very, very interesting episode for sexual tension! In fact, I think maybe for the first time in Sexual Tension Award history, every single...[Kristin laughs] every single slot...is full of the exact same two noms and then one variant throuple third.



**Kristin:** There's no way that this is the first time we've done this.

**Jenny:** Mm, I don't know—

**Kristin:** There's no way we've made it through Season 3 without a Buffy/Faith quartet.

**Jenny:** I call upon the power of Emily McLongstreet—

**Kristin:** [laughing, simultaneously] Yeah, she'll know.

**Jenny:** To tell me immediately if I'm full of shit! But I'm gonna go with, this is the first time we've ever done this. Here we go. In the first slot, if you please.

**Kristin:** I please.

**Jenny:** It's Spike. It's Xander. And it's releasing a manly thing. [laughs] In slot number two, your noms are Spike, [Kristin laughs] Xander and alliterative nicknames. Mmhmm! In slot number three, it's Spike, Xander and getting a bit of truth on you. [Kristin laughs] And in slot number four, if you dare! It's Spike, Xander and altering *his* reality.

**Kristin:** Wow.

**Jenny:** Nice!

**Kristin:** My, like, face hurts from laughing and smiling through that segment, Jenny.

**Jenny:** I can't wait to see what your emojis are gonna be on the Twitter poll, where you can cast your vote in our beautiful democracy. Make your voice heard! The poll will be live for one week following the publishment of this episode. So find us on Twitter @BufferingCast and let us know who you think had the most sexual tension, and why it was Spike, Xander and fill-in-the-blank.

**Kristin:** Yeah, please do. Also, please know that one day, when I have all the time in the world, I will make you a video of [Jenny laughs] the amount of shoulder shimmying that Jenny did—

**Jenny:** How. Fucking. Dare you.

**Kristin:** [simultaneously] While delivering that.

**Jenny:** [simultaneously] My shoulder shimmy is a private—

**Kristin:** [simultaneously] For me, and only me. It was only me.

**Jenny:** [laughing] Yeah, yeah.

**Kristin:** [laughing] I'm the only audience member.

**Jenny:** It's just for us. It's a company shimmy-shim. Ah, shoulder shim.

**Kristin:** Oh, god.

**Jenny:** Shoulder shimmy. There we go.

**Kristin:** Alright, well, that's been sexual tension.

**Jenny:** [sings triumphant tune]

[SEXUAL TENSION AWARD jingle plays]  
Sexual tension award!

**Jenny:** Well! I know you've been waiting, since we started taping the episode for me to say these words, but I guess that's the end of this episode.

**Kristin:** Oh my god. Thank god—you know that Miley Cyrus song that's like...[sings]  
"The climb!" You know?

**Jenny:** Yes, it's all about the climb, I've heard.

**Kristin:** It's all about the climb. We are, like—just hit play on that fucking song. We're gonna be playing it until September. [laughs]

**Jenny:** Mmhmm, mmhmm, yes.

**Kristin:** Just, like, slowly, precariously making our way up this fucking wall. [Jenny laughs] [sighs]

**Jenny:** We're doing it. We're doing it.

**Kristin:** We're doing it. We're doing it. Um, yeah. So. Hey! We did Normal Again. I made a promise to Twitter that I would never watch this episode again, which

means that if we start again at the beginning of Buffy the Vampire Slayer with spoilers—

**Jenny:** We're just gonna skip this one?

**Kristin:** No. You can just watch it again and not—I'll remember what I remember.

**Jenny:** And we can—yeah.

**Kristin:** But I'm not watching—that's it.

**Jenny:** Beautiful.

**Kristin:** I'm done. Lifetime.

**Jenny:** Cool.

**Kristin:** Lifetime promise.

**Jenny:** Okay. [Kristin laughs] Well. Can't wait for that blessed day to arrive. Until then, I am Jenny Owen Youngs and when I'm not watching Buffy and making this podcast with Kristin, I'm doing some other stuff. First of all, I make another podcast with my friend Helen Zaltzman called Veronica Mars Investigations. And we are nearing the end of our series run, so if you haven't checked it out, now is a great time. I also make a lot of songs. I make them for me, I write them for other people. I'm in a band. Let me give you the full rundown. You can find out about me at [jennyowenyongs.com](http://jennyowenyongs.com). You can give me a shout on Twitter, @JennyOwenYoungs. You can check out my newest release, which is called Echo Mountain. You can check out my band's—

**Kristin:** It's a good shirt. You should buy the shirt. I have the shirt. [Jenny snorts] It's a good shirt, Echo Mountain.

**Jenny:** Okay.

**Kristin:** Sorry.

**Jenny:** You can check out my band's latest single and brand new music video! For Skinny Dipping. Which features a lot of people actually kinda skinny dipping.

**Kristin:** I can tell by the way you said that that it is not you. [laughs]

**Jenny:** Hell no, it's not me! There's a scene where the band steps up to the edge of the pool. And the treatment was like, "And then you each take your shirts off, don't worry, we'll cut it, but you'll, like—" and I was like, cool. I'm gonna wear one button-down shirt [Kristin laughs] and then one vest that is fully buttoned as well. So. [both laugh]

**Kristin:** You're, like, literally the opposite of Angel. [both laugh]

**Jenny:** Exactly, I'm like, the anti-oops.

**Kristin:** [simultaneously] 4,000 buttons and you'll unbutton one. [laughs]

**Jenny:** Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. And the other business that I got up to kinda recently that might interest our listeners is I recorded a very creeeeepy cover of the Sinatra classic, Witchcraft.

**Kristin:** [singing] "Witchcraft!"

**Jenny:** Which has been used in the Season 2 promo for, uh, Motherland: Fort Salem which is a show about, among other things, gay witches. But also, because Pride month has been running in their little Instagram ads that are very focused on the two girls who love to kiss each other. And I'm all like, [sings] "Witchcraft!" [Kristin laughs] And they're like, smooch! So check out—look out for that on Instagram. [laughs]

**Kristin:** You know, whether you like it or not, Jenny Owen Youngs has been the soundtrack to ladies kissing each other for...at least 15 years.

**Jenny:** I'm [clapping noise] high-fiving myself.

**Kristin:** Yeah, Grandma. [laughs]

**Jenny:** The fuck? [laughs]

**Kristin:** Sorry, I just—I felt like I complimented you so much during that, that I had to, like, get one—

**Jenny:** You had to do something, sure, sure, sure.

**Kristin:** One dig in. I am Kristin Russo. You can learn more about me at my website, [kristinnoeline.com](http://kristinnoeline.com). That's K-R-I-S-T-I-N N-O-E-L-I-N-E. What else do you do? You ask. Well, um—

**Jenny:** Ha!

**Kristin:** [laughs] I work with LGBTQIA+ communities for...also over a decade, because I too, like Jenny, am a grandma. And I've been doing a ton of workplace events. It has been June, so it is a high time for people talking about being LGBTQ, how to be an ally in the workplace. And notably—honestly, most of my talks that I did were for parents, who have LGBTQ kids and wanted to talk to each other and with me about that.

**Jenny:** Mm, mm.

**Kristin:** Jenny, I just have one small story to tell you [Jenny gasps] about the event that I did today, actually—

**Jenny:** Tell me everything.

**Kristin:** As of this taping. Because I—this was, like, a—I did, like, an event slash moderation thing. Like, I was like, doing an event but also, like, then moderating some parents who wanted to share their stories. And one of them was this mom who was in her 60s. And she was, like, talking about using they/them pronouns. And she was talking about using they/them pronouns because another parent was, like, really vulnerably talking about struggling with using they/them pronouns for their kid. And this mom—like, a mom whose kid uses they/them pronouns, and was also on the call—was like, “Well, you know, we’re still working on it. But one thing I did was I put post-it notes over all the pictures of my kid in the house that said, like, they love to go swimming. They loved this trip.”

**Jenny:** Oh my god!

**Kristin:** I know, I died—that’s why I’m sharing it. I, like, almost lost it. I was like, you’re being a professional. You have to continue to moderate this thing, but I was, like, ready to weep. Because I have never heard of anyone doing that and it is such a good idea—

**Jenny:** Wow, yeah.

**Kristin:** And it is so beautiful.

**Jenny:** Yeah.

**Kristin:** And this mom was just like, "So every time I saw the picture, I was internalizing them with they pro—" [Jenny exhales] I know!

**Jenny:** [squeals]

**Kristin:** [groans] So, anyway. You can learn about the things I do at workplaces and the places that I cry when parents—

**Jenny:** Ha!

**Kristin:** Tell me about the incredible things that they do for their kids—

**Jenny:** Yep, yep.

**Kristin:** Over at kristinnoeline—and that spelling will take you to my Twitter and my Instagram as well. I also do a podcast that's for patrons of Buffering and for The Storm called Feels like the First Time. And it is the month of July, which means it is Angelina July. And Jenny—

**Jenny:** Hell yeah it is.

**Kristin:** I have three Angelina films I've never seen before that I'm watching in succession.

**Jenny:** Oh my god. And they are?

**Kristin:** Salt. [Jenny gasps] Wanted. [Jenny gasps] And Gone in Sixty Seconds.

**Jenny:** Wow! Gone in Sixty Seconds, the Fast and Furious of [Kristin laughs] the Angelina Jolie IMDB filmography. [laughs]

**Kristin:** I made some collages—I've never seen the movies and I try not to inform myself about what they're about. But I made some Angelina collages today [Jenny snorts] for social media.

**Jenny:** Good.

**Kristin:** And, like, looked up all three movies and I was like, soo...like, she literally is just, like, holding guns in all of—like, she's just doing—

**Jenny:** Yeah. Enjoy.

**Kristin:** Very similar things in all of three movies. [laughs] So yeah. Come, come join us. It's very fun. We watch the movies together and then Joanna and I talk about them. It's a very good time. And I have to say, I'm particularly excited for Angelina July. [laughs]

**Jenny:** Oh, hell yeah. Meanwhile. Buffering the Vampire Slayer is on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, @BufferingCast. And you can drop us an email at bufferingthevampireslayer@gmail.com.

**Kristin:** Yes, and you can support us on Patreon. Like I said earlier, it's a great time—listen. I don't usually say, like, "please support us." But like, I really do feel that we—and that is the we with a capital W. We meaning Alba, we meaning Mack, we meaning LaToya and Morgan. Like, we're all really in it right now. You know?

**Jenny:** Oh, yeah.

**Kristin:** We're doing—we're doing some fucking heavy emotional lifting in all these spaces. [both laugh] So if you have, like, a couple bucks a month to spare and you wanna support the work that we're all doing here, you can do that. Bufferingthevampireslayer.com, just click on Patreon. Our store is closed right now. It closed on the 29th of June and it will—hopefully, if all the stars align—reopen on the 21st of July.

**Jenny:** Yeah.

**Kristin:** So stay tuned. We're gonna have some new shit. It's gonna be good.

**Jenny:** Mmhmm. Mmhmm, mmhmm.

**Kristin:** And yeah, you can also rate and review us. If you want.

**Jenny:** Please. And till next time...

**Both:** Awwwwooooooooooooooooo!

[“Normal Again” plays off the album “Songs from Season Six” by Buffering the Vampire Slayer]