

Buffering the Vampire Slayer
Episode 6.08: Tabula Rasa

[Jenny performing acoustic cover of Goodbye to You]

Of all the things I've believed in
I just want to get it over with
Tears form behind my eyes, but I do not cry
Counting the days that pass me by

Been searching deep down in my soul
Words that I'm hearing are starting to get old
Feels like I'm starting all over again
The last three years were just pretend...

Kristin: Wow!

Jenny: Wow.

Kristin: Jenny! Was that—

Jenny: Yes.

Kristin: Was that you?

Jenny: I don't know. I don't know.

Kristin: Did you have a little—you have some feelings there? You got a little—got a little feelings you just—

Jenny: Listen.

Kristin: Sat down with your little acoustic guitar, you had to strum a little bit?

Jenny: Well.

Kristin: Sing a little bit?

Jenny: You know.

Kristin: Hm!

Jenny: Hmm! [Kristin laughs] *Hmm!*

Kristin: Yeah, that's right. In addition to this episode's song, you are all welcome, because I persuaded Jenny Owen Youngs to cover—

Jenny: Yeah.

Kristin: Michelle Branch's Goodbye to You. If you're one of our patrons—

Jenny: [laughs] Yeah. Observe the twin ski tracks of my heels [Kristin laughs] being dragged through the dirt all the way up to the horizon.

Kristin: I know what the people want and I am here for the people!

Jenny: Okay.

Kristin: I'm here for the people, Jenny!

Jenny: Okay!

Kristin: All of you who are our patrons, you received what I consider to be a gift, the full version of Jenny singing the cover of Goodbye to You, in downloadable MP3 format!

Jenny: Hm!

Kristin: A reminder to our black and indigenous listenership, you receive all the digital perks for free. You can learn more about that at bufferingthevampireslayer.com/JustKeepFighting. You can become a patron at bufferingthevampireslayer.com, just click on Patreon. Please join us, let us all sob our hearts out, even more. We do it because we love you. Other things happening in the land of Patreon. Book club, we just finished Cemetery Boys. Such an awesome book. We are now journeying into Lee Bardugo's Ninth House. Jenny's going to be doing a Buffering concert this April. We've got bonus music from Once More, With Feeling, behind the scenes content. And as just mentioned, of course, Jenny singing Michelle Branch. We're gonna keep this intro pretty short today, because you have been so patient with us, as we have journeyed through these past few massive Buffy episodes. So Jenny, why don't you tell them about today's segment? And then we'll just scoot—scoot right on over into the episode.

Jenny: Yes, love to scoot. We just wanna let you know that inside this episode, in addition to, of course, us scream-singing Michelle Branch many times. [Kristin

laughs] There is a segment. That segment is with Natalie Muskin-Press, a licensed clinical addictions counselor, currently working in charge of drug and alcohol education and prevention at a midwestern university. Natalie is also a massive Buffy fan. In this segment, Kristin and Natalie talk a bit more in depth about Willow's arc with her misuse of magic and violation of Tara's boundaries. Timestamps for this segment are in the show notes today, just in case you want to avoid that conversation. And we are working on a full episode with Natalie to discuss Willow's arc in Season 6, which you'll see here in the coming months.

Kristin: Yes. This segment—this episode is, of course, spoiler-free. The conversation with Natalie that we'll be having more in depth will not be spoiler-free. So you're safe from spoilers here, and we'll warn you in that larger episode once more that that will not be a spoiler-safe conversation. Um. I guess it's—

Jenny: You know what I think, Kristin?

Kristin: What do you think, Jenny?

Jenny: You know what I think it's time to say—[singing] "Goodbye to the intro!" [Kristin sings actual song in background] "Goodbye to the intro to the episode!"

Kristin: If you liked that, you'll get more of it. [Jenny laughs] In the episode, so. Bye!

[Buffering theme plays]

Jenny: [inhales sharply] Hello! [Kristin laughs] Hello! And welcome to Buffering the Vampire Slayer! A podcast where we are watching and discussing every episode of Buffy the Vampire Slayer, one by one, spoiler-free, in freaking tandem with Angel On Top. I...am the ghost of Christmas past, Jenny Owen Youngs!

Kristin: [laughs] And I am Kristin Russo. I actually just opened my mouth and some moths flew out. It's been a minute—

Jenny: Nice.

Kristin: Since we've taped just a regular episode of this podcast. And this week, I don't even know if you can call it regular, because we are talking about Season 6, Episode 8, Tabula Rasa. You should stay tuned at the end of this podcast every other week for an original song, written by us, recapping the Buffy episode we are discussing.

Jenny: Tabula Rasa was written by Rebecca Rand Kirshner, directed by David Grossman, and originally aired on November 13th, 2001, just nine days in advance of my 20th birthday.

Kristin: [singing] "Only nine mere days!"

Jenny: That's right. [laughs]

Kristin: [singing] "Before you turned 20!"

Jenny: Uh-huh!

Kristin: Uhh, big changes in the pod this week, because I have decided that I am now taking my episodic descriptions from the TV Guide description.

Jenny: Ooh!

Kristin: The date that they aired. I realized that I had access to that, just today.

Jenny: Wow.

Kristin: [laughing] It only took me four and a half years of the podcast to realize this. But yes, according to TV Guide from November of 2001, this is the one where, despite Tara's misgivings about her overindulgence in witchcraft, Willow tries to cheer Buffy up by making the Slayer forget the idyllic afterlife she left behind. Alas—

Jenny: Lord god. [Kristin laughs] Sorry.

Kristin: Alas, the spell goes awry and affects the minds of all the Scoobies.

Jenny: Okay, and just for our younger listeners, TV Guide [Kristin laughs] which stands for Television Guide [Kristin laughs louder] was a small, thick magazine, that used to come out—

Kristin: Wow. Things are getting sexy already over here. [laughs]

Jenny: That's right. Yeah, Sexual Tension Award nomination number one! Me and TV Guide. It was a small, thick magazine that came out every week and just told you what was gonna be on TV. That's how we were getting our information.

Kristin: Yeah. But it also had, like, interviews with, like, you know—

Jenny: Sure, sure, sure, sure.

Kristin: Days of Our Lives stars and other television—

Jenny: Yeah.

Kristin: People.

Jenny: Probably—I'm gonna guess that, uh, Buffy stuff was on the cover of TV Guide at least once.

Kristin: Oh, for sure.

Jenny: I feel like X-Files definitely was. There was all kinds of stuff going on. But the main point of the magazine was—

Kristin: Yes.

Jenny: Hey, this is what's on TV this week. [laughs]

Kristin: The thickness—the thickness was attributed to the fact that they listed literally—

Jenny: Uh-huh.

Kristin: Everything that was going to—could you imagine? I mean, there—like, it wouldn't even be possible now. Like, take streaming out of the game entirely. It still wouldn't be possible to create a weekly book of everything that was on TV.

Jenny: Oh, wow. I just found so many Buffy TV Guide covers. Okay, what a delight. [Kristin laughs] Y'all gotta Google "TV Guide Buffy cover."

Kristin: Yeah.

Jenny: You will be rewarded.

Kristin: Or follow us on social media @BufferingCast, 'cause I'm sure we'll do a—

Jenny: [laughs] Sure, sure, sure.

Kristin: A post of TV Guide Buffy covers. Alright, so, um. Never could anything get me so excited, Jenny, as when a Previously On includes kitten poker. 'Cause I know shit's gonna be good—

Jenny: Yep.

Kristin: If the kittens are hitting the Previously On.

Jenny: Could I just say, kitten poker? I hardly kitten know her!

Kristin: [laughs] Wow. If you're a new listener, found us because of our musical podcast, this is what it's like in here usually. [laughs]

Jenny: Sorry.

Kristin: Don't be sorry.

Jenny: Let me tell you something.

Kristin: Mm.

Jenny: About this episode.

Kristin: Mm.

Jenny: About the very first thing that we see. Buffy is not only patrolling in head-to-toe cream. Terrible—

Kristin: Cream on cream!

Jenny: Terrible!

Kristin: Cream on cream.

Jenny: It also looks like it might be dry clean only. Like, she's asking for—I thought that Buffy was strapped for cash. But she apparently—when it comes to patrolling in highly stainable fabrics, [Kristin laughs] money is no object. Just spare no expense.

Kristin: I wrote it down, but I knew—I knew that I wouldn't have to say it. Because I knew that you would be all over that. Obviously, this choice is made to contrast,

very deeply, Spike and Buffy. 'Cause Buffy is in white almost the entire episode. I'm gonna jump ahead.

Jenny: Mmm.

Kristin: And say that later, she's wearing a white...shirt? I don't know if we can call it a shirt. It is—I called it a tutu in my notes. It is sort of like a white corset that has some tulle [pronounces it "tull"]—is that how you say that fabric?—at the bottom, just sort of flaring out, underneath her leather coat. A lot of white in this episode, for Buffy with a—

Jenny: Did you say "tull"?

Kristin: [laughs] Tulle? [pronounces it "tool"]

Jenny: I think it's tulle.

Kristin: Listen. I'm no professional.

Jenny: I just—hey. We're just two—

Kristin: Just two girls.

Jenny: Podcasters. Yeah, we don't know what we're talking about. [Kristin laughs]
If you know how to pronounce tull/tool/too-lay—

Kristin: Tulle. You're right, it's "tool."

Jenny: Let us know.

Kristin: Listen, I used to call zines "zines" [pronounced rhyming with "mines"], so you can't trust me.

Jenny: You *really* did.

Kristin: I really did.

Jenny: Whew!

Kristin: Like, literally still was doing that when I met Jenny. So that's how—that's how it is to know me.

Jenny: Mmhmm.

Kristin: Anyway, Spike appears. As you would imagine he would, in this place of graves.

Jenny: Mmhmm.

Kristin: And he's like, hey! Uh, remember? Remember how the last episode ended? Uh, excuse me? [laughs] Did you—did you see how the last episode ended? There was a song, it's called Coda. And we, uh, we kissed.

Jenny: Uh-huh.

Kristin: The music—

Jenny: There was rising music.

Kristin: Mmm.

Jenny: And rising...[sings] "tight embrace!"

Kristin: [laughs] I have never seen *Gone With the Wind*. I'm gonna admit that here, in this space.

Jenny: I don't think that's something you have to *admit*. I think that is—wave a flag about it. You know what I mean?

Kristin: Really? I should be proud? It just seems like—like, a canonically classic movie that—I don't know.

Jenny: [high-pitched] Mm, I don't know, Kristin.

Kristin: Okay, well, I won't watch it then.

Jenny: Don't do it.

Kristin: I'm pissed off at Spike, not the first time, not the last. You know, I mean, Spike is, like, problematic fave, we get it. He does some shitty things, but this line that he says to Buffy when she's like, uh, no, this isn't like—we're not—we're not talking about it, we're not discussing it. It was a fucking thing that happened and, like, whatever. He says, "Don't get prim and proper with me. I know what kind of girl you really are."

Jenny: Eww!

Kristin: That's fucking—that is some creepy fucking shit.

Jenny: Sir! No.

Kristin: And I don't know that we have ever played the Patriarchy jingle for Spike before, but I'm gonna come in hot here. I thought fucking Loan Shark was gonna get it, but you know what? I'm giving it to Spike.

Jenny: Mm!

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

Jenny: Buffy understandably vows that she will never touch Spike again. [Kristin laughs] After he says that. Right before she touches Spike again.

Kristin: [laughs] To save his life!

Jenny: Because there is a—[laughs] there is a literal loan shark. From New Jersey, I think.

Kristin: He's definitely from New Jersey.

Jenny: And he is owed 40 Siamese kittens.

Kristin: [laughs] This loan shark—

Jenny: By Spike.

Kristin: Has to be amongst the Buffyverse favorites for—for villains, right? I mean, this guy is—he's right out of the Sopranos. He calls Spike "Mr. Spike," which is—

Jenny: Mmhmm, mmhmm.

Kristin: Like, there's a few things that just give such shape and flavor to this beautiful loan shark mobster. "Mr. Spike." He also pulls the stake out of the tree at one point, and just like, the way he does it, you understand that it's a reference to every, like, Italian mafia movie you've ever seen. And he also straightens his tie as he says—

Jenny: Ah.

Kristin: "We're gonna have to talk to him." [both laugh] Just a—he's just a walking caricature of—

Jenny: Yeah. Yeah.

Kristin: Yeah. It's hilarious, in my Italian opinion. You've got one Italian and one New Jersian on this podcast, so—

Jenny: That's right.

Kristin: Between the two of us—[laughs]

Jenny: We make a shark.

Kristin: We like this shark.

Jenny: He makes the great point that time is what turns kittens into cats. There's simply no arguing.

Kristin: You can't. It's honestly one of my favorite lines I've heard so far in this rewatch of Buffy the Vampire Slayer. Time...is what turns kittens into cats. Poetry. He also—

Jenny: Mmhmm.

Kristin: Jenny, this loan shark is not only telling the truth about that. He also suggests to Buffy, maybe she wants a fucking job freelancing for him to help him collect debts. To which I say, perhaps that isn't *the* freelance job she wants, but maybe put that on the board. Maybe put that on the board.

Jenny: Yeah. Yeah. Put literally anything where you're actually using the skills—your innate, like—

Kristin: Yeah.

Jenny: Supernatural skills.

Kristin: Right. Right. I mean, you know—

Jenny: Use them.

Kristin: We all—just in case you haven't heard us say this, we obviously believe that Buffy should be paid for being the fucking Slayer, shouldn't need to freelance.

Jenny: Yeah.

Kristin: But you know, she just went through this whole, "maybe I could be a construction worker, maybe I could—" no. Use the—use the power. Use the power, make some money. Okay, anyway. She saves Spike's life and says, self-awarely...

[Clip from episode plays]

Buffy: [sighs] If I would just stop saving his life, it would simple things up so much.

Jenny: Uh-huh.

Kristin: Mmhmm.

Jenny: This is the thing we've said many times. Why is he alive? Because he's fun.

Kristin: [simultaneously] Maybe she's listening to our podcast. [laughs]

Jenny: Yeah. So next, we go to the Scoobies speculating about where Buffy was, while she was—

Kristin: Mmm.

Jenny: Not alive.

Kristin: Right.

Jenny: And this is a complex issue. This is, like, a difficult thing to parse. Points are made, feelings are revealed. You know, Willow is lamenting that she was so selfish. Xander's like, "I feel weird feeling bad that my friend's not dead."

Kristin: Right.

Jenny: Tara's like, we need to stop [Kristin laughs] focusing on—we need to stop centering ourselves—

Kristin: Yeah, Tara, voice of reason.

Jenny: In this narrative and try to figure out how we can help make things better for Buffy. And then Willow knows a spell!

Kristin: Yeah.

Jenny: Whew.

Kristin: I just want to, like, underline how aware Tara is. She's been—she's already been ahead of the curve, recognizing that Willow is struggling in a way that requires attention. She—

Jenny: Mmhmm.

Kristin: You know, we know that Tara has gone through loss and trauma, in many ways—

Jenny: Mmhmm.

Kristin: Over the course of many seasons and before we even met her on the show. And so, you know, she has an awareness that is very important. Willow, I just—before she derails this train, I wanna say, like, I did think it was a good moment that Willow had. She sort of says, like, "We wrecked it." Xander says, "We didn't know." Willow says, "We didn't wanna know." Then she says, "We were selfish." But then, she pauses and she says, "I was selfish."

Jenny: Mmhmm, mmhmm, mmhmm.

Kristin: And it's just like, you want—you're gonna hear—I have a conversation with Natalie, later in the episode, where we're gonna really dig into some of the dynamics in this scene. But I do just wanna say—

Jenny: Mmhmm.

Kristin: That like, this is a moment, this is what you wanna focus the conversation on. Willow is having a moment of realizing some of her real feelings that are haunting her, that are, like, really upsetting her, that she's struggling with. So that's what you wanna talk about, that's what you wanna talk about, and then follow Tara's lead. You also wanna talk about your friend who has been super traumatized since she's been back, and how to help her. I don't think that Xander's idea of having weekly dinners and book clubs is bad. I think it's actually—

Jenny: No, that's a great idea.

Kristin: I know, right? I was like, that's—that's what she needs. She needs community, she needs to be able to talk, she needs a space to, you know—I mean, she needs a lot of things. She also needs, like, a therapist and you know—whatever. But can I just jump back, for one second, to the beginning of this scene?

Jenny: Yeah.

Kristin: Because I cannot believe the nerve that Anya has, sitting in front of two queer women and hating on Birkenstocks. [laughs] Okay? I just—[both laugh] she's imagining Buffy in heaven, walking around on clouds. She's like, no hate to the harp, everybody loves a harp, but Birkenstocks? Those sandals are clunky. And I'm like, um, read the room, Anya. [laughs]

Jenny: Read the room and also, hey, they're not just for us. They're for anybody who wants a comfortable sandal that will mold to your foot and give you the support you need.

Kristin: Well, yes, looking back from 2021, we know that now everyone likes a Birkenstock.

Jenny: Hell yeah.

Kristin: But back in 2001—

Jenny: Yeah, that's true.

Kristin: Queer women were really ahead of the curve with that guy. [both laugh]

Jenny: So Willow's terrifying proposal is, "I know a spell that will make her forget she was ever in heaven." Willow! What are you doing?!

Kristin: She thinks that's how you fix it. To make it go away.

Jenny: She thinks that's how you fix it.

Kristin: That's not how you fix it.

Jenny: Tara responds strongly and Xander and Anya are like, whoa! [Kristin laughs] Look at the time! Hear that distant telephone ring, we must run for the hills. Farewell!

Kristin: [laughing] Xander's like, it's so high-pitched, couldn't pick it up by the normal human ear. [laughs]

Jenny: Yeah.

Kristin: Gotta go!

Jenny: Yeah, yeah.

Kristin: So the two of them—Tara and Willow—get into a bit of a conversation here. It's really one—more one-sided. I think Tara is delivering a lot of very important wisdom to Willow and Willow is just trying to back peddle out of this. She's really trying—you're gonna hear Natalie and I talk about this, in the segment. But like, Tara says, "If you don't want to fight—" right, because she has uncovered now—she knows what Willow did. This is the moment of reckoning. We didn't know until Tara says it, if she knew or—if like, Willow knew that Tara knew. She finds out. She says, "You violated my mind." Tara's [sic] like, "I didn't mean to." And then Tara says, "If you don't wanna fight, you don't fight. You don't use magic to make a fight disappear." And she also says, you don't get to decide what's better for us. That's not—you don't have the autonomy to be able—

Jenny: Oof.

Kristin: To decide for *me* what is better for *me*.

Jenny: Oof. "Fixing things to your liking, including me," she says.

Kristin: Oof! And she—you know, she says, "I don't think this is gonna work." And that—and you know, what's really troublesome too is that Willow is not engaging in this conversation, except for, like, sort of explaining her intentions, until the threat of losing Tara is on the table. And then—

Jenny: Then it's bargaining mode, right?

Kristin: Yes. And then she's bargaining and she's saying, "I won't use magic for a month." Tara says, "Go a week." I don't know that Tara even means that, to be honest with you. I think it's—I think Tara is not ready to have the conversation right—I think Tara's just not ready to pack her boxes right this minute. And so this

is just like, you know what? Do this thing, 'cause I need a fucking minute anyway. So like, better for all of us if you're not using magic for a week, great. But I think no matter what happened, honestly, in this episode—I think that they would be breaking up.

Jenny: [sighs] Yeah. I mean. Tara says, "Go a week." Then she says, "Go a week and we'll see." You know, like, she's creating that space—

Kristin: Right.

Jenny: For herself. But also, as soon as she says "then we'll see," Willow's face is changing.

Kristin: Yeah. Yeah.

Jenny: You know, is different.

Kristin: Yeah.

Jenny: Is like, oh. I can't just...I can't just make this okay? I don't have the safety net I thought I would have—

Kristin: Yeah.

Jenny: By making this offering?

Kristin: Yeah. This is a very heavy moment. This show is just getting better and better at giving us just, like, many punches to the face. And then, like, making us laugh! And then being like, tricked ya! [both laugh] I'm gonna fucking knock ya down again.

Jenny: Yeah.

Kristin: Jenny and I would be, I think, going a bit deeper into this, but we're gonna leave the space for the conversation we had with Natalie, later in the episode. Because there's so much to unpack here. And outside of this episode, too, and we're gonna be doing that this season, especially over the course of the next few episodes. So. This ends with the classic transition of Willow saying, "Are you saying you're gonna leave me?" And it cutting to the training room where Giles says to Buffy, "I have to."

Jenny: No...[Kristin laughs] bad! Bad Giles!

Kristin: Yo, Buffy coming out strong with some fucking points here. [Jenny laughs] "Trying to—what? Leave me all alone when I really need somebody? You can still be here and I can still be strong," she says. And, like, I...you know, we talked about this in Once More, With Feeling. And I—and we've talked about it a lot. I've just rage-screamed on the internet a lot about it recently. But it's just—I think that, like, Giles is making a decision here because—and he kind of almost admits to it. It's that he knows that if he stays, he won't be strong enough to do what needs to be done so that he can be there for her. Like, that—the weakness is him, it's not her. Because she's right. He can stay in Sunnydale and support her when she needs and deserves support, and tell her no if she needs to be the one to talk to Dawn. Like, he just needs to be able to say no, and he's basically like, I don't know how to do that, I can't do that, so I have to literally physically leave you.

Jenny: Yeah, I can't be an adult, so I'm going to abandon you.

Kristin: Yeah!

Jenny: Boooo! Of course, we know Anthony Stewart Head wanted to be spending more time with his family.

Kristin: Sure.

Jenny: Right? So—

Kristin: But there are a lot of ways that you could get Giles to London, without it needing to be—

Jenny: Right.

Kristin: Rooted in this storyline. And I was—I was trying to talk about that on the internet today.

Jenny: Ah, my good friend—my special friend, Olivia, is—

Kristin: Like, Olivia called—yes!

Jenny: Starring in a production of—

Kristin: Yes.

Jenny: Hamlet and I must go.

Kristin: And if you need me, I will come back. And if you—you know what I mean? Just like, anything. Just like, please. This is just—

Jenny: Everybody stop stomping Buffy into the ground. Please!

Kristin: [groans] Buffy ends the scene by clearly stating the truth, which is, "You're wrong." She's heartbroken. She's crestfallen, and we all are. Well, I don't wanna speak for everybody, but I think a lot of us are.

Jenny: Also, he says, "I've taught you all I can about being the Slayer and your mother taught you what you need to know about life." [Kristin laughs] It's like, did she get the chance to teach—

Kristin: No!

Jenny: Buffy's still—

Kristin: And also, that's not how it works! Imagine, like, when you turned 20, your parents were just like, bye! [laughs]

Jenny: Farewell. Pushing you out of the nest and out of our lives.

Kristin: We're going to a different country now. Don't talk to me. My job here is done.

Jenny: Yeah.

Kristin: I mean, I think that's what, like, bears might do. But like, you know. [Jenny laughs] No offense to bears. But you know—that's great.

Jenny: No offense to bears. Official podcast motto?

Kristin: No offense to bears. [laughs]

Jenny: [simultaneously] No offense to bears. We wish not to offend them.

Kristin: [laughs] Anyway.

Jenny: So...Tara and Dawn and Willow are all meant to be going to the magic shop for some kind of debriefing. And Tara and Dawn are ready, but Willow is in a towel. [Kristin sighs] So they leave and then Willow does the classic spell of [Kristin

laughs] "turn my towel into an oddly-shaped shirt thing with slit sleeves and a confusing hem."

Kristin: Yeah, it's called—

Jenny: You know that spell. I'm always doing it.

Kristin: [simultaneously] It's called The Limited Too. That's the name of the spell. It's the Limited—it's called the—

Jenny: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Kristin: You say "Limited Too, Limited Too, Limited Too," and then you—boom.

Jenny: While you're staring in the mirror and—poof. [both laugh] Slit sleeves for days! And then she—oh, no—does another spell and it's the memory spell. And oh no—and if you were covertly trying to do a spell, wouldn't you not leave the bag of spell herbs next to the open fireplace?

Kristin: Yeah. I mean, I don't like a lot of things about this. Also, she just, like, lets the crystal stay aflame by itself in the house. It's dangerous. But yes, I agree.

Jenny: Wait, the crystal, she tucks into a weird unseen kangaroo pouch—

Kristin: Oh, right. Right—

Jenny: In her slit-sleeve Limited Too shirt—

Kristin: [simultaneously] She leaves...the bramble.

Jenny: But she leaves the herbs burning, yeah.

Kristin: Yeah. That's dangerous. That's a fire hazard. So—

Jenny: That's exactly how these things happen, Willow!

Kristin: [laughs] Precisely. Jenny, you mentioned in Once More, With Feeling that you don't like when the title of an episode is in the episode. And I thought, how funny—'cause we don't often get that. But now, we're two for two here. We got "once more with feeling" in Once More, With Feeling and we get "tabula rasa" in Tabula Rasa. How do you feel about it here?

Jenny: This one is fine. I don't know why. [Kristin laughs] I like it. Let me live.

Kristin: Can I—do you know about—do you know what tabula rasa means and, like, any of its history?

Jenny: It's, like, [dramatic, spooky voice] blank slate! Right?

Kristin: [laughs] Yeah.

Jenny: In my case, [spooky voice] haunted blank slate! [laughs]

Kristin: Haunted blank slate, yeah. It's—

Jenny: What is its history?

Kristin: Well, first of all, the sort of—is it etymology? It's etymology when it's a word and entomology when it's a bug, right?

Jenny: Uh-huh.

Kristin: Okay. So like, the etymology of tabula rasa is translated as "clean slate," but it's actually more correctly translated as "erased slate." Because—

Jenny: Oooh!

Kristin: Yeah, because—so a slate—obviously, I think a lot of people know, like, you know, when slates were used to be written on, you could erase them. But also, tablets that were written on with—like, on wax—like, wax tablets were also used as places to, like, write down things. You would re-melt the wax and smooth it so that you could write on it again.

Jenny: Whoa.

Kristin: Pretty sexy, right? So—

Jenny: [high-pitched, doubtful] Mmm.

Kristin: No? Just me? Okay, well—

Jenny: [laughs] Go on.

Kristin: *I* think it's sexy. [laughs]

Jenny: Hey, like what you like. I'm not gonna yuck your yum.

Kristin: I would—re-melting a wax slate to—yeah. So, um, that is the definition of tabula rasa, in terms of the word itself. Its, like, roots, where the root of the word comes from. But it is the theory—

Jenny: Mmhmm, mmhmm.

Kristin: Jenny, that people are born without built-in, like, mental content. So therefore—

Jenny: Right!

Kristin: Right. All their knowledge comes from experience or perception. People who maybe believe in a theory like this would say nurture over nature.

Jenny: Right, right, right.

Kristin: That we learn—we learn how to be social beings. We learn how to do this, we—you know, we're learning it—when we're born, we are just, like, empty little vessels.

Jenny: Mmm.

Kristin: A lot of that's been—I mean, you know, it's scientifically—I know it's just not true. They've done studies—I mean, in a million ways. 'Cause it—if you're just saying somebody is a blank slate, that just can't be true. They've studied twins in the womb. So twins are obviously not outside of the womb, they're inside of the womb. And they are social with each other, inside of a womb. You can—like, as twins grow—

Jenny: They're like, wazzzzuupp!

Kristin: They're like, heyyy! What are you doing?

Jenny: Nice.

Kristin: Floating? What are you do—I'm floating too. And like, that—that, at least—

Jenny: They're like, this amniotic sac is *dank*!

Kristin: [laughs] That, at least, tells us that, you know, being social is innate to us. Right, like, that we do interact with other human beings, et cetera. But—you know, we could do an entire podcast on the theory of Tabula Rasa. And like, all of the fucking philosophers over time who have argued about this. There's probably some fucked up shit in here, if we just unpacked it. But we have a whole episode of Buffy the Vampire Slayer to discuss. So now you know—

Jenny: Yes.

Kristin: What it means, where it came from. And I would just like to say one more thing about this scene before we leave it, Jenny. Which is—

Jenny: Alright.

Kristin: Do you think that that picture of Buffy on the mantle is from when she was dead, but nobody thought to take it down? [laughs]

Jenny: Oooh! Yes?

Kristin: [laughing] It's like an "in memoriam" Buffy picture on the—

Jenny: Yeah, it has strong "the huge picture next to your casket before it goes in the ground" vibes. [both laugh]

Kristin: Alright. Let's go to the Magic Box and talk about some oogly-booglies.

Jenny: Giles is about to tell everybody about the oogly-boogly of him leaving town—

Kristin: Ugh, the worst.

Jenny: When Tweed Spike runs in, smoking, in an ear-flap hat!

Kristin: He's traded his little blanket for an ear-flap hat!

Jenny: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Kristin: [laughing] Anya, when he walks in smoking, says, "holy moly!" Which kills me. And he's like, you need to give me asylum. This fucking shark is after me. Toothy guy. Baby-seal breath? Great writing. Great writing in this episode.

Jenny: Uh-huh, uh-huh, uh-huh. Meanwhile, while this is going on, the crystal in Willow's shirt cloud...tar-pit turns black! [Kristin laughs] Willow's shirt is the void, drawing us inward! [laughs] And—so that happens, indicating that woo, the spell is about to fucking—the beat is about to drop.

Kristin: Yep.

Jenny: And the beat is the spell.

Kristin: Mmhmm.

Jenny: And meanwhile, Buffy is like, y'all! Please. You have to just stop. I need respite. Please?

Kristin: Yeah. Everybody needs a fucking minute. Tara needs a minute, Buffy needs a minute. Giles says he's leaving, right before Buffy has this moment. Like, he does say it out loud, which I think is important. And sorry, but before we get to Buffy talking about her experience—

Jenny: Mmhmm.

Kristin: Xander also does say to Giles, "You're leaving *now*?"

Jenny: Yeah, man.

Kristin: Correct. Right. Willow says—

Jenny: [laughs] "Correct."

Kristin: You know, I'm so sorry, to Buffy. And Buffy is just—I think Buffy is, like, experiencing a moment many of us have experienced of like, nothing that you're doing is helping. And I cannot possibly think of anything that you could do that would help. So I just, like, need you to go away. [laughs] I'm gonna go away—

Jenny: Uh-huh.

Kristin: Because I can't. I just can't. And she says, "If you understood how it felt, how it feels. It's like I'm dying." [pause] And then, just before we get too sad! Don't worry! Poof, goes the crystal! [both laugh]

Jenny: Yeah. Everybody passes out. The timing, wow.

Kristin: [laughs] Thank god! Oh, they all—

Jenny: Seemingly, hours go by. 'Cause they wake up and it's dark.

Kristin: [laughs] Yeah. You know what, I figured out—because there would be no reason for them to need to make this spell take so many hours to work. Except for—if Spike didn't know he was a vampire and this happened and they woke up during the day, he would immediately burst into flames. [laughs] So they had to do a little—do a little night time shoot so that Spike could stay. So that Randy, I should say, could stay alive.

Jenny: Oh, yeah. So...what do we see? We see Willow and Xander, who are kind of, like, laying down together—

Kristin: Yeah, they're a little spoony.

Jenny: Wake up.

Kristin: Mmhmm.

Jenny: And Xander's like, hey! [Kristin laughs] And Willow's like...hey? [Kristin laughs] Spike rolls off the cash wrap and shrieks, which is great.

Kristin: It's a great shriek.

[Clip from episode plays]

Giles: Hello?

[Spike shrieks and falls]

[Dawn shrieks]

Kristin: Yes, followed by that lovely Dawn squeal. It's like a shriek, a squeal. Giles has sort of drifted off on Anya's shoulder. And they are like—

Jenny: Mmhmm, mmhmm, mmhmm.

Kristin: What the fuck? Once again, they're just trying to figure out what the fuck—

Jenny: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

Kristin: Inside of the Magic Box. So Giles is like, maybe it's a hangover or a blackout. Like, maybe we drank a bunch? Anya's like, I don't see any booze. I don't see any head-bumps and I don't see Allen Funt. You know who that is, Jenny?

Jenny: I had to look him up. He's the creator and was the host of Candid Camera from the 40s! Until the 80s. Can you believe—

Kristin: Well, Anya's been around—what's interesting is, how much did they forget, right? Like, how—like, she remembers Allen Funt—

Jenny: Oh, true!

Kristin: Yeah. So like—

Jenny: Hmmm.

Kristin: Maybe for most of them, it went back to the time of their birth. But for, like, Anya—although that would be complicated, 'cause Spike then would remember that he was a vampire and that his name was Spike. So who knows. Meta...physics, everybody.

Jenny: They're putting things together. They're putting together that they don't know who they are. Willow's like, what do you mean, you don't know who I am? Why were you all like "hey"? [Kristin laughs] And Xander says, "I thought you were a girl and I'd remember." Which is...nice. [laughs]

Kristin: [laughing] Xander is like, I don't remember who I am, what my name is, but I remember that I'm a fucking Xander. Is like, that's—

Jenny: Uh-huh. Yeah.

Kristin: That's that moment, right there, for him. Unfortunately for everyone, Spike already took the Patriarchy jingle.

Jenny: They put together that they're in a magic store and Tara—what is her look?—is so excited. [Kristin laughs] Giles says magic is all balderdash and chicanery. Right?

Kristin: Beautiful. "I seem to be..." [laughing] he follows it. "I seem to be British. And a man." Beat. "With glasses." And I'm like, you know, you pretty much nailed it. [laughs]

Jenny: Yeah, nice.

Kristin: That's it. You got it, man.

Jenny: Dawn—Dawn seems to be...reduced to, like, I don't know, twelve—eleven or twelve years old. She's acting way young and I don't know if that's, like, because she...because of the Key business. [Kristin laughs] Does that, like, impact what happens when you do a forgetting spell on her?

Kristin: [simultaneously] Right, what is it to wipe a mystical...yeah. When you wipe a mystical energy ball of its memories, that—it does seem like Dawn would have retained all of her memories. Doesn't it?

Jenny: Right?

Kristin: That's interesting.

Jenny: Or at least not be...acting—like, I feel like she's tougher than this.

Kristin: Yeah. [laughs] Yeah—yeah, oh, wow. That's fascinating. I would really like to have a sit-down meeting with the monks to discuss the workings of this spell with Dawn, the mystical energy ball. Spike makes this comment about...[laughs] Giles being British. A little homophobia in there, a little "nancy boy" comment. Then he realizes, hearing his own voice, that he is also British.

[Clip from episode plays]

Spike: Bloody hell. Sodding, blimey, shagging, knickers, bollocks, oh god! I'm English.

Giles: Welcome to the nancy tribe.

Spike: You don't suppose you and I...we're not related, are we?

Kristin: Anya—fucking, just jumping in here to let us know that perhaps they are related because there is a ruggedly—

Jenny: There's a ruggedly handsome—

Kristin: Handsome. Resemblance.

Jenny: Resemblance.

Kristin: Nice. [laughs]

Jenny: Nice. [laughing] Giles—Giles then goes on to say, I do—when I look at you, I have this feeling [Kristin laughs] of like, familiarity and disappointment. [both laugh]

Kristin: This episode—from this point forward, for the next, like, 20 minutes or so, it's literally just gonna be Jenny and I saying the lines. 'Cause they're all just so fucking great.

Jenny: They're all—yeah. It's really tight.

Kristin: It just really is. It's just so well written, it's so hilarious. Spike decides that [both laugh] Giles is his dad and that Anya, therefore, is a tart. [laughs] I mean—

Jenny: A tarty stepmom. Sure.

Kristin: Tarty stepmom.

Jenny: He also—I love how Spike is like, "Oh, how I must hate you." And Giles is like, "What did I do?" And Giles—and Spike says, "There's always something!"

Kristin: [laughs] Anya's like, oh, wait, don't worry. Everything's cool, we're engaged. Look at my ring. It must be—it must mean that you and I are gonna get married. I don't understand how her engagement ring would signal that they're engaged and not already—I guess you would have the wedding ring also?

Jenny: Yeah, you would. And—

Kristin: Is that how straight people get married? Okay.

Jenny: Yes. And then...and an engagement ring somehow legitimizes—like, you're allowed to be in a relationship?

Kristin: Yeah.

Jenny: Because you're engaged? Okay.

Kristin: [laughs] Like, what is happening there?

Jenny: Oookay.

Kristin: Who knows? But it all—it all tumbles us into a place where they—you know, Giles is like, "I'm not that old. I still get carded." I would—I don't know about that, sir. [laughs]

Jenny: [doubtfully] Mmm. I don't know.

Kristin: I don't know about that. But it reminds them they have licenses, so they check their pockets. And we get a little name rundown. Alex. Nice. Willow. She says, "Oh, that's a funny name." And Tara—Tara, who is just at her horniest this episode—[both laugh]

Jenny: [laughing] Yeah. Tara has no chill.

Kristin: Tara just, like—once Tara lost her fucking memory, she was like, I would just like to fuck. Thank you very much. [both laugh]

Jenny: Yeah.

Kristin: She is all over Willow the entire episode in a way that I don't think we've seen Tara be all over Willow before. Tara thinks it's a pretty name. They realize they go to school together and contemplate, hmm. Perhaps we're—

Jenny: Maybe we're study buddies. You know when—when descriptor words rhyme with each other. It has a certain flavor, doesn't it?

Kristin: Gal. Pal.

Jenny: Gal pal.

Kristin: Study. Buddy.

Jenny: Study buddy.

Kristin: Mm. Got any others?

Jenny: Not right now. [both laugh] Tweet at us with your rhyming, uh, lesbian girlfriend euphemisms.

Kristin: [laughs] Dawn luckily wears a nameplate, so we get that her name is Dawn, or Umad. Rupert—ohh, this is a good moment for me, everyone. Because

Giles finds his license, of course, says his name is Rupert Giles. Spike bursts out giggling, first of all. Second of all, [Jenny laughs] Giles says to Spike, "You're not too old to put across my knee." Yes!

Jenny: Uhh...

Kristin: Jenny looks *horrified*. [Jenny's "uh" still drawing out] I am *into* it! [laughs]

Jenny: ["uhh" sound morphs] 'Kay!

Kristin: Luckily, this podcast is 50/50, so that will be in the Sexual Tension Awards, coming right around the bend.

Jenny: Uh-huh.

Kristin: I'm sorry—

Jenny: Uh-huh.

Kristin: But you go back and you watch fucking Spike's face in that moment. Uh, there is—just imagine that it's Spike and Giles. [stammers] Okay.

Jenny: Alright.

Kristin: Wow.

Jenny: So Spike doesn't have a wallet but he does look on the interior of his clearly Salvation Army-sourced...[Kristin laughs] tweed suit. And it says made for care—or made with love...for Randy.

Kristin: Made with care, yeah.

Jenny: And he looks at Giles and says, "Randy Giles?!" [Kristin laughs] Thanks for nothing, Dad!

Kristin: [laughing] "I'm sure it was a family name," he says. So...[both laugh] Xander—well, I'll use their actual names here now, in this episode. Alex and Willow think they might be a couple because they woke up together. Anya does not know how to pronounce her own name. She refers to herself as Enya.

[Part of Orinoco Flow by Enya plays]

Sail away, sail away, sail away
Sail away, sail away, sail away

[music fades out]

Kristin: Enya and Rupert discover they own the magic shop together. "Very progressive of me," says Rupert. [both laugh] And I think in a moment that is very—you know, like, a point—a beat in the episode, if you will. Buffy is the only one in the crew who has to name herself. Everybody else—

Jenny: Uh-huh.

Kristin: Finds a name for themselves, finds an identity for themselves, even if they don't know who they are. Buffy is the only one who has to name herself and she chooses Joan.

[Clip from episode plays]

Buffy: I feel like a Joan.

Jenny: Name a more auspicious name for a lady chosen one. Her name selection leads to her and Dawn having a little spar. And then they're like, [whiny] "We must be sisters!" and then they hug.

Kristin: Sisters, the other, um...

Jenny: Oh, yeah. Sisters, roommates, gal pals, study buddies.

Kristin: [laughs] "You never showed me affection like that, I'd wager!" says Randy. [both laugh] And then he also says, Dad—they decide they're gonna leave. They're gonna take themselves to the hospital, which I would love to see that—

Jenny: Uh-huh.

Kristin: As well. Hi, we all lost—

Jenny: Yeah.

Kristin: Our memories.

Jenny: Help.

Kristin: Spike says, "Dad can drive. He probably drives a red shiny car, shaped like a penis." I mean, the hits keep coming and they don't stop coming.

Jenny: Mmhmm. Yeah! But oh no, they open the door and they are greeted by some vampires.

Kristin: Classic shot here, of everybody.

Jenny: [simultaneously] Headed straight for the Magic Box. Yeah, screaming, slamming the door. They all, like, hit the deck. And Spike is like, [gasps] vampires!

Kristin: [laughs] Willow is the first one with a plan. Lock and barricade the doors, instinctually. Rupert proposes that they fight these monsters with magic tricks. [laughs] And—

Jenny: Uh-huh. Nice.

Kristin: And they hear the vamps outside asking for Spike, and so they assume that that means spikes. And they, luckily, gather a bunch of stakes. And then we get my favorite line in the episode, perhaps in the series. Anya. Basically, Joan is fucking—[Jenny laughs] Joan is fucking freaking out, okay? She's freaking out about the vampires. She doesn't know what the hell's going on. And...[laughs] and Anya-Enya so calmly says...

[Clip from episode plays]

Anya: Blood suckers. They kill by sucking blood. Take it easy, Joan.

[Kristin laughs]

Jenny: Take it easy, Joan!

Kristin: Take it easy, Joan! I die. I cackle. I lose my mind—

Jenny: It's good.

Kristin: Every time.

Jenny: It's good.

Kristin: It's so good. It's like—it's an amazing line and fucking Emma Caulfield, on the motherfucking delivery of that line. Whew! I would stand up, but I'd be too far away from the microphone.

Jenny: Uh-huh, uh-huh, uh-huh. The vamps subsequently bust in.

Kristin: They do.

Jenny: They grab Spike and they're like, "Give us what you owe us!" And he's like, "Take your spikes!" and tosses a bunch of stakes on the ground. [Kristin laughs] And there's some tousling and Buffy stakes a vampire and she's like, "I think I know why Joan's the boss. [Kristin laughs] I'm, like, a superhero or something."

Kristin: She says—she also says, "Hey! Stay away from Randy!" [both laugh] Right before she slays the vampire. Why does it work so well? It's so funny. It's just so *funny*. And like, they—you can tell that they, like—maybe they knew—maybe they had all these lines written before. Maybe they already had the lines written, but it's also, I think, possible that once they realized how fucking hilarious it is for Sarah Michelle Gellar to call James Marsters "Randy" and for him to call her "Joan," they, like, added a few more in. [laughs] Because then, they just—

Jenny: Yeah. I'll say...there's, like, a—there seems to be an abnormal amount of ADR in this episode. And I don't know if that is due to post-shoot rewrites—

Kristin: Interesting.

Jenny: Or like, punch-ups.

Kristin: Huh.

Jenny: Because man, this episode is really funny. Like, really densely funny. So I wonder if they really just, like—once they cut it all together, they were like, you know what? The beginning and end of this episode are devastating, so we *really* need to juice up the middle and make it as funny as possible.

Kristin: Yeah, 'cause it's really—I mean, just like, the "stay away from Randy" before she slays the vamp is hilarious. And then they decide—I have a whole theory, actually, about Buffy realizing that she's a vampire slayer superhero, whatever. So I'll take that moment in a moment, but before Randy and Joan go out—'cause they decide they're maybe the strongest, they should go. We get this again. "Ready, Randy?" "Ready, Joan." And it's just. So. Funny! It's so funny.

[AD BREAK]

Kristin: Can I—can I tell you something that I thought about today while I was watching the episode?

Jenny: Please.

Kristin: So when Buffy realizes that she is some kind of superhero—

Jenny: Mmhmm.

Kristin: And she gives us—Sarah Michelle Gellar, giving us an amazing line delivery on "I don't know, but it was cool!" [laughs] Just brilliant. I thought to myself, oh man, like, she just—without memory of what it feels like to slay a vampire, she just slayed a vampire for the first time. And I remember another vampire slayer telling me that after you slay a vampire, you feel horny and hungry. So I wondered, to myself—this is in real time. As the episode is playing in front of my eyeballs, I'm thinking, I wonder if she's feeling horny and hungry right now. And then she literally looks at, like, Spike or somebody, and she's like, "I feel *wicked* strong." And I was like, [makes brake squealing sound] what just happened? So my theory is—

Jenny: Whaaaaat?!

Kristin: That she slayed the vampire, she felt horny and hungry. That brought up some memory in her that gave her just one Bostonian word, that popped right out of her mouth.

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

Kristin: So it's a good theory, right?

Jenny: I love this.

Kristin: Should I start a Reddit thread?

Jenny: This is a very good theory.

Kristin: I've never used Reddit in my life.

Jenny: Yes!

Kristin: I don't understand it, but. [laughs]

Jenny: It's exactly for this sort of thing.

Kristin: [laughs] Okay.

Jenny: So. Some plans are hatched. They decide Buffy and Spike are gonna go confront the vampires. Anya's gonna stay and protect the cash register. That's, I guess, innate?

Kristin: Innate. Right? Yeah.

Jenny: Okay. And—

Kristin: Blowing the tabula rasa theory right out of the water. [laughs]

Jenny: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And then, as Randy and Joan are about to leave, Rupert says, "uh, son?" And then they...embrace?

Kristin: [laughing] He just wants to make up for all the damage he's done in the fake life they've created for himself.

Jenny: Yep. Yep, yep. It's very nice.

Kristin: It is!

Jenny: Like, if that's the last time he's gonna see his son Randy—

Kristin: It is.

Jenny: You know—

Kristin: It is very sweet.

Jenny: Gonna leave it on a good note. Okay. Kristin.

Kristin: Mmhmm.

Jenny: Question for you.

Kristin: Yes.

Jenny: You are traveling through a sewer, with no memory.

Kristin: Mmhmm.

Jenny: And some people that you don't really know.

Kristin: [laughing] Yep.

Jenny: And vampires are hunting you.

Kristin: Yep.

Jenny: Do you move quickly and quietly [Kristin laughing] or do you sing The Ants Go Marching One by One?

Kristin: Definitely option B.

Jenny: [simultaneously] Like a fucking dipshit!

Kristin: Definitely option B. I love the song, love it, used to be a camp counselor myself. [Jenny laughs] It's a great way to bring, like, team unity, you know what I mean? Get everybody feeling like they're ready for the fight. [laughs] Yeah. Hey, Dawn is still innately fucking Dawn, you know? Must be another Tuesday.

Jenny: Yeah, it's true. Ugh!

Kristin: [laughs] Before Dawn starts singing The Ants Go Marching...[sings] "one by one, hurrah, hurrah." We also see that Joan has realized Randy is a vampire. [laughs] Randy believes himself—

Jenny: [laughing] Oh, yeah.

Kristin: To be a superhero too. "Hey, I'm a superhero too! Joan, where are you going?" [both laugh] Giles is—everybody's discovering things.

Jenny: Oh, yeah.

Kristin: Giles has discovered that he has a one-way plane ticket. A lot of extrapolation here. I mean—

Jenny: Yeah.

Kristin: Maybe he was just gonna get his return ticket when he got there. Like, wha—[laughs]

Jenny: Yeah. Take it easy, Rupert.

Kristin: Yeah. But he decides that this means he's leaving his fiancée, Enya.

Jenny: Uh-huh.

Kristin: Meanwhile, we're getting a lot of intuition. Lot of intuition happening—[crosstalk]

Jenny: She's—Anya's—! Excuse me. Enya's intuition [Kristin laughs] helps her select a magic book. Which is apparently just solely a spellbook for how to summon bunnies and then more of them.

Kristin: Oh my god.

Jenny: So she is putting herself in a bad position.

Kristin: "My intuition tells me this is the book," she says. And then follows it up—again, amazing moment. My intuition—'cause Rupert is like, how do you know I'm not the magic one? [laughing] And she's like, "My intuition tells me [Jenny laughs] you are more of the paperwork type."

Jenny: Hell yeah.

Kristin: Okay, so as you know, we are feuding with the hosts of Angel On Top, Morgan Lutich—

Jenny: Are we?

Kristin: And LaToya—

Jenny: I'm not feuding.

Kristin: Jenny refuses to participate in our feud. She doesn't like to feud. She doesn't—

Jenny: I love everyone!

Kristin: She doesn't like fun or feuds.

Jenny: I don't like conflict.

Kristin: Well, I think that the feud has become incredibly official, since it is now canonized in the show itself. We get Spike slash Randy, and Buffy slash Joan, essentially [laughing] tearing Angel and his entire livelihood to shameful shreds in this next scene. Let's just play a sound clip here of what Randy thinks—you know, he's realized he's a vampire, but he's like, "I don't wanna bite you." So what's going on here?

[Clip from episode plays]

Spike: I must be a noble vampire. A good guy, on a mission of redemption. I help the helpless. I'm a vampire with a soul!

Buffy: [unimpressed] A vampire with a soul?

Jenny: Buffy is disgusted.

Kristin: She is like, that's...

Jenny: Excuse me. Joan. Joan is wholly unimpressed.

Kristin: [laughs] Joan—Joan thinks it's ridiculous. Using ableist language, once again, in this show.

Jenny: Mmhmm.

Kristin: But she thinks that the whole idea of being a vampire with a soul who helps the helpless is ridiculous. To which I say, feud, feud, feud, feud, feud, feud!

Jenny: Hmmm.

Kristin: Feud! [clears throat] Alright, ready for some fucking quick cuts?

Jenny: Yes!

Kristin: Alright. We get more bunnies, bunnies, bunnies, bunnies. We get Spike, yapping more about Angel. We get Tara and Willow—again, Tara is—

Jenny: Their faces are so close!

Kristin: Tara is like, I don't remember who I am or what I do, but I would like to kiss you. [laughing] It's all I can think about, I just wanna kiss you. Please, can I kiss your face?

Jenny: Uh-huh.

Kristin: Back to the Magic Box. I only bring us back there because fucking Rupert suggests that Enya get down off the table and she's, like, so taken aback. "Into that pit of cotton-top hell?" she says. [both laugh]

Jenny: "So I can let them hippity-hop all over my vulnerable flesh?" [both laugh]

Kristin: We cut to Randy and Joan fighting the vamps. Joan, great mailbox snapping move here. I hope that you cover the damages for this poor person's mailbox—

Jenny: Mmhmm, mmhmm.

Kristin: But it's a great move. She snaps the mailbox post in half, uses it as a stake. Fucking Rupert is sword-fighting with a skeleton in the Magic Box?

Jenny: Which makes me sad, which makes me realize that I am sad that Bruce Campbell never guested on this show.

Kristin: Who?

Jenny: Bruce Campbell?

Kristin: Who's that?

Jenny: Army of Darkness? Xena: Warrior Princess.

Kristin: Nothing. [laughs]

Jenny: Uh...Evil Dead?

Kristin: Nope. [laughs]

Jenny: Uh...Brisco County, Jr.—excuse me. The Adventures of Brisco County, Jr.?

Kristin: Wow, it seems like perhaps we'll need to do a Feels Like the First Time where you teach me about this skeleton man.

Jenny: Oh. [laughs] "This skeleton man." [both laugh] Yeah, he—well, okay, yeah. That's a whole other pod, okay, zipping right along.

Kristin: [simultaneously] Yeah. That's a whole other pod. Last in the quick, quick snaps before we land back at a little—

Jenny: Oh my god.

Kristin: Bit of a longer scene in the Magic Box is Willow giving us a callback. Saying "I think I'm kinda gay" to Dawn. [laughs] That's what we heard, of course, Willow say in Doppelgangland, after she had some close encounters—

Jenny: Mmhmm. Innate!

Kristin: With her vampire Willow self. Getting more gay by the minute, Will. Getting more gay by the minute.

Jenny: Everybody has their own stuff. We're all individuals, but one thing we can say is that in every AU we've seen, Willow has said or thought or acted on the idea of "I think I'm kinda gay." Okay, so. Giles and An—Enya? Rupert and Enya? Rupert and Ann-ya?

Kristin: [singing] "Sail away, sail away—"

Jenny: Are fighting.

Kristin: [singing] "Sail away."

Jenny: They're fighting, because the bunnies just won't stop coming. [both laugh] And Enya won't stop using her "intuition." [Kristin laughs] She says, "I feel compelled to take some vengeance on you," and smacks him on the head with a very thick book. And he's like—

Kristin: Yeah.

Jenny: "No wonder I'm leaving you!"

Kristin: [laughs] Drama!

Jenny: And Ann-ya throws her ring across the room!

Kristin: Yeah.

Jenny: And then she's mad at Giles, because she thinks the monster's gonna eat her ring now. [both laugh]

Kristin: The passion between these two, really! Giles figures out how to fix this shit. He says a bunch of—sorry, Rupert figures out how to fix this shit. Says a bunch of Latin—

Jenny: Using his intuition!

Kristin: Yep. Anya gets her ring. [laughing] He says, "I'm so sorry, dear." To which she says, "No, Rupey." Rupey! She calls him—

Jenny: Rupey.

Kristin: Rupey! That's R-U-P-E-Y. Rupey. And then...they kiss. They kiss, they kiss, they kiss.

Jenny: Yeah, they're making out. They're making out. Meanwhile, in the sewers, a vampire who is hunting the Scoobies says, "I smell fear! [Kristin laughs] It smells good!" The writers were like, the rest of the episode is too good. We gotta do something! [both laughing] To cut it! To balance it out.

Kristin: Like, why did he talk—why did he even need to talk?

Jenny: "It smells good!" [both laugh]

Kristin: Dawn is like, "Alex!" [laughs] Which kills me.

Jenny: Yeah.

Kristin: Throws Alex a stake. You know, Xander—pulling some good shit here. Really bringing the fight, really bringing the fight. He stakes this vamp. Willow and Tara are on the floor. Tara's still like, I know that vampires are being dusted all around us, but I still just wanna have sex with you! [laughs]

Jenny: [laughs] Yeah, but—but oops, Willow fell on top of Tara!

Kristin: Oh my god! And then—then Xander stands up and one of his big, clunkity Xander sneakers smashes...the crystal. The dark crystal, if you will.

Jenny: I will.

Kristin: Jenny. We've...had a nice time, talking through the really hilarious part—

Jenny: Yeah...

Kristin: Of this episode. And before we turn the corner, getting ready to say goodbye to you. We're gonna move to a segment. [laughs]

Jenny: A'right!

[CHIME]

Kristin: Natalie, hello!

Natalie: Hi!

Kristin: Before we jump in, do you want to tell our listeners sort of who you are and what you do and how you're coming to this conversation?

Natalie: Yeah, absolutely. So my name's Natalie. I'm a licensed clinical addictions counselor. I work in the midwest. I have been a Buffy fan since it—since probably its second to third season. I was drawn in by Seth Green. [Kristin laughs] Which is probably not everyone's story, but I saw Can't Hardly Wait in the theater. Really liked the spiky-haired short guy and someone told me he was on Buffy. And then—here I am now, like, however-many years later. But yeah, so I've worked—I've worked with people who have misused drugs and alcohol or have experienced significant distress because of their use. I've worked with—I've worked with women, I've worked with teens, I've worked with adults, after care. I've worked in the local prison system and jail system, teaching college courses and doing groups there. So I've got kind of a variety, and then now I work with college students. So I've run the gambit. [laughs]

Kristin: I think what's really important about bringing you into this conversation right now is that we're also coming out of Once More, With Feeling.

Natalie: Mmhmm.

Kristin: Which is an episode where, obviously, we were focused on, you know, singing and music. And we had a little bit of conversation, but there's this whole arc of Willow, breaking boundaries.

Natalie: Mmhmm.

Kristin: Doing things without consent, that we haven't talked about too much. And so, I would just love to hear maybe your framing around what we've seen Willow do here. And if it's portrayed in a way that you feel is, like, responsible in terms of showing how this could manifest in real life?

Natalie: Yeah. So I think that, up to this point, right, we're really looking at stuff that feels very true, both, I feel like, to Willow's character and just to this behavior piece. Like, we're seeing—we've always had these moments of Willow, who really just didn't handle loss well, right? And maybe feeling out of control and lost and not having this power, you know. Even if we think back to when she found out about Oz and Veruca, right? Like—

Kristin: Mmm.

Natalie: In her mind, like, she couldn't go through with the spell. It wasn't that, like, the spell was a bad idea. It was that she couldn't go through with it, right?

Kristin: Mmhmm.

Natalie: And this idea behind, like, you know, everything from moving that book out for Dawn when she was missing Joyce, right? That Willow really doesn't—does see magic as a tool to make the world better. But because she struggles so much with loss and grief, her idea of making it better maybe isn't always the healthiest way.

Kristin: Mmm.

Natalie: And you see that. You know, and I think—well, if we go back to, you know...Bargaining? Right, is that the first episode, is it Bargaining?

Kristin: Yes.

Natalie: Yeah. You know, you get this sense—and I think you guys talked about it, right—that Xander is like, having these second thoughts. And Willow is very, you know, no, Buffy is probably in pain. Right? But like—and as you kind of see this as—they're at this table in Tabula Rasa. And Tara's like, hey guys, maybe we need to stop talking about us and maybe we need to start talking about making this right. Like, it was so much about, like, Willow not wanting Buffy to be gone.

Kristin: Yeah.

Natalie: And none of them really wanting Buffy to be gone. But them not really reckoning with, what would it mean if Buffy came back? Do we really want Buffy back, or do we not—or do we just not want to be sad about Buffy not being here anymore?

Kristin: Mmhmm.

Natalie: Right? Maybe "she's in a hell dimension" felt like a good argument that coated over this other piece of, like, Willow just couldn't accept a world where Buffy was gone. And if there was a way she could change, she was going to do it, come hell or high water.

Kristin: Totally. Totally. The excuses that we, like, make for ourselves—

Natalie: Yeah.

Kristin: Is such a, you know—or like, the narratives that we—

Natalie: Mmhmm.

Kristin: Write for ourselves, to get to the things that we need—

Natalie: Yeah.

Kristin: In a way that feels responsible.

Natalie: What you really kind of see with Willow in particular is a little bit of a love of the power, but a lot of just this, oh, I can make things that make me feel bad—I can try to make them get better. But like, what we see sometimes when people use something that's a quick fix for an emotional problem, right. What happens is, it never really fixes the problem as much as you think it will. And so then, you have a new problem. And then it's like, okay, well, I can fix that or I can fix that.

And so what I do see with Willow is this, like, immediate default to magic at this quick fix. And a low tolerance—an even lower tolerance for uncertainty or even the threat of loss. When they're all four at that table, and she starts to promise Tara, like, "I won't use magic, I won't use magic, I won't use magic for a week." And Tara—or Tara's like, "Just go a week." And then you see, when Tara still can't promise her, "everything will be fine if you don't use magic for a week," you can see it in her eyes. Like, whatever earnestness she had about not using magic is, like, melting away, just in that immediate moment. That like, wait, this—not using

magic may—still may not help? And it's just like, she cannot tolerate that uncertainty. Like, she's lost her ability to kind of cope with this—these emotions.

And that's really where I think the metaphor holds up, right? Because a lot of times, when people use and they're using in a way that maybe isn't healthy for them or isn't helping them, it's because a lot of other stuff is going on. A lot of times, use is just a coping behavior. But it's not a one size fits all coping behavior, right? Like, a glass of wine after a stressful day that—for you, while you kick your feet up and you're just relaxing, is a piece to a lot of other coping strategies, right?

Kristin: Right.

Natalie: Like, but using it as the only way to make the feeling go away isn't—you know, we can't outrun our emotions. And so—

Kristin: Man. You know what? So many of us have tried. [laughs]

Natalie: I know, right? Like, you know, believe me—

Kristin: [laughing] They just—

Natalie: They follow you.

Kristin: They just catch up, yep.

Natalie: Yes.

Kristin: They always catch up.

Natalie: They do.

Kristin: Can I ask you to—

Natalie: Yeah.

Kristin: Something that I thought—and I'm so glad that you are here. Because—and we'll touch a little bit on, like, something that I said in a previous episode, that several people emailed in about. Because I don't know—

Natalie: Yeah.

Kristin: I'm not experienced, the way that you are, in talking about these things and I wanna be really careful in what I say. And when I was watching this episode and that scene came up that you just mentioned, where Willow says, "I'll go a month with no magic" and Tara says, "How about just a week?" I thought to myself, having little experience in this conversation, this doesn't necessarily seem like a healthy approach...either way. Like, a week, a month, like, it doesn't seem like that should be the conversation, but I would love to hear your input there.

Natalie: Yeah. So it really isn't, right? And you can tell it isn't, because Tara is—it's clear that the issue with Tara is the violation of her—literally, her body and her mind and her trust, right? I think sometimes—and this is very typical, right. Like, it's so easy to focus on the behavior, because that's the safe—

Kristin: Mmm.

Natalie: There's the safe argument, there's the safe conversation, there's the safe fight. And then there's the really scary underlying fight, with all of the real heart-to-heart issues, the violations of trust, the—you know, the fear. And so what I think you see here, and you see it in the argument over the decorations in the party as well, right?

Kristin: Mmhmm.

Natalie: Like, it's not really about the decorations. Like, I don't think that if—she wasn't concerned about Willow's, kind of, disregard for like, how she uses magic, I don't think she would get mad about the decorations. But it's safe to get mad about the decorations, 'cause that's a lot safer than, don't you think you're messing with people's lives or not thinking these things through? Like, when are you gonna stop? And then we see, she—you know, she moves all the way up to erasing the fight from Tara's memory.

Kristin: Right, right. Right, and Tara's proximity—and that was—you know, that was the comment that I had made. I was sort of trying to work through that in real time.

Natalie: But I mean, it's an honest question. Like, because that's what happens, right? Like, it's—because then it creates this dynamic where it's about the use. And it's not about the fears about—

Kristin: Yeah.

Natalie: What the use is doing to the relationship or this person's ability to cope with the decisions they're making. But then it also creates this really surface-level—so, like, someone could say, I just won't use for a week. Or—

Kristin: Mmhmm.

Natalie: They get to—other people'd be like, it's just decorations. What are you worried—right? Like, it creates this, like—

Kristin: Yeah, you can—right. If you're not looking at, like, the root of it—

Natalie: Mmhmm.

Kristin: It's easy to sort of, like, argue your way out of it or say—

Natalie: Yeah.

Kristin: Well, I'll just stop this thing. And you're right. It's like, gosh, even if Willow didn't immediately—after saying she would go using—you know, go without using magic for a week—used, now, even bigger magic.

Natalie: Yeah.

Kristin: Even if that didn't happen, I think that what's so important about what you're saying is that that wouldn't fix—

Natalie: No.

Kristin: The consent issue that happened here. That like, the real conversation is that the trust that Willow broke—

Natalie: Right.

Kristin: Is massive.

Natalie: Well, and like, when you think about Willow and Tara's relationship, like, its origin is using magic together.

Kristin: Mmm.

Natalie: It's linking their powers. It's being in—so to have that go from a really, like, joint, together venture to one using it on the other. Like—

Kristin: Oof.

Natalie: Ooh, it's just so, you know...it just upends their entire—the entire dynamic they've had with each other, with magic, with their relationship, with their communication. It's just...

Kristin: Yeah. Yeah. It's devastating and, like, so much of this season is just...like, really hinges on lack of information and lack of tools. It's like—

Natalie: Mmhmm.

Kristin: You know, Tara—Tara certainly doesn't know what to do in this situation. I mean, none of them know what to do about bringing Buffy back—

Natalie: Absolutely.

Kristin: And the trauma that that has caused. None of them have dealt with any of the trauma that happened before that. [both laugh]

Natalie: No, just trauma, trauma, trauma. It's heavy. I mean, and then I think, like, when we watched it, right, like, how young we were, watching this. And how we didn't—we were happy Buffy was back, too.

Kristin: Yeah.

Natalie: And we were probably mad at her, too. Like, it—you know, I mean—

Kristin: Yes. Why are you so sad?

Natalie: Yeah!

Kristin: Get over it. [laughs]

Natalie: You know, which really makes you—like, how much did we project our emotional, like—I'm looking to you to be our north star about, like, strength and—you know, and power and you know, identity. And then, she comes back and she's none of those things because she doesn't know who she is anymore.

Kristin: Right. When in truth, it is probably the most important thing that you could see from, you know, your hero, your—you know, like—

Natalie: Mmhmm.

Kristin: We have such a need, still—I mean, I'm a child of this era, so perhaps that's where I get my need from. But like, such a need to see strength manifested as only one thing.

Natalie: Yeah.

Kristin: As like, standing up, as continuing forward, as like, being able to do it, as not breaking down, as not, you know, needing to erase feelings or have feelings go away.

Natalie: Mmhmm.

Kristin: And the ability to look at those moments, I think, is very important 'cause that's the reality.

Natalie: Yeah. This is a group that's been forged through trauma. And—which means that, like—and sometimes you see in groups where there's, like, emotional intensity around things, like, rigid behaviors can set in. And people can not want things to change in any way, shape, or form, in some ways, because that group cohesion means so much to them.

Kristin: Yeah. Willow does want it to feel like it used to feel.

Natalie: Mmhmm.

Kristin: And it *cannot* feel like it used to feel.

Natalie: No.

Kristin: Which I imagine is the under-current to so much misuse of, you know, substances and—

Natalie: Mmhmm.

Kristin: Like, just—the things that we do in our lives that are often unhealthy and unproductive, I think, root in that space—

Natalie: Yeah.

Kristin: Of, I just want it to feel like it used to feel.

Natalie: Yeah, absolutely.

Kristin: And spoiler alert. [laughs]

Natalie: You can't get it back. [laughs]

Kristin: It's like, come on—you can't. You can't. We don't know how to process loss! Ugh. I have so many feelings. [both laugh]

Natalie: It is so true, right? Like, you can't go back to, you know, season—you know, the second to last season [sic] of season four and just, like, hug it out in an elevator shaft. Right? Like, you can't do it anymore. We have to, like—our lives are changing and we're growing or becoming much more complicated people. And this desire for things to be simple, right? Ugh. And I think Willow's belief, truly, that everyone will be happier if they can't remember the bad things.

Kristin: Ugh!

Natalie: Right? Like, that that's—it's not just, like, her. It's like, she truly believes, I think, that this is good for everyone. Like, why would she wanna remember being in heaven, right? Like, she doesn't need to grow from this. We don't need to *really* help her. We just need to wipe her memory and then it'll be like it was. You know, even in the face, then, of that conversation with Tara, where Tara's like, it can't be like it was. While both lying to Tara's face, but then also, truly, deeply thinking that she was doing the right thing for their relationship—

Kristin: Mmhmm.

Natalie: Is just that dichotomy of, like—of that difference between what the person who you're in the relationship with or the person who loves you experiences, which is the betrayal and the lies. And what the person who's using and trying to deal with emotions has experienced, which is this desperate fear and terrifying realization that things might be spiraling out of control and I don't know how to handle it. I think we've seen Willow go from this, like, high of bringing Buffy back bravado, right? Like, feeling this power to this terrified, like, scared—you know, and so I wouldn't blame her if she wants to go back to that other place.

Kristin: Of course.

Natalie: Because I'm sure that place felt safer, when she was yelling at—you know, to stand up—you know, like, finger quotes—to Giles in the kitchen. And what did

that feel like and, you know, even Sweet says, like, "I smell power," right? Like, it's gotta be so conflicting for her, because she's feeling powerful, even as she's feeling lost.

Kristin: Yeah. Yeah.

Natalie: Like...and if you have those two emotions, who wouldn't be like, hey, this makes me feel better.

Kristin: Right.

Natalie: This makes me feel awful. [laughs]

Kristin: Yeah. Yeah. And—because—and I would imagine that that is the truth.

Natalie: Mmhmm.

Kristin: I mean, that is the truth—obviously, it is definitely the truth for Willow. But that, like, for so many people who are using substances—you are feeling better, right? You are feeling better when you are misusing—

Natalie: Mmhmm.

Kristin: The substance. And when you are not, you are feeling fucking bad! Like—

Natalie: Yes!

Kristin: You know, like, that's what—that's at the heart at all of this, is that, like, it takes—it takes being able to turn away from the thing that might be the only thing that's taking the pain away at that moment.

Natalie: Right. You know, and I mean—and this goes for, like, any behavior that's—that, you know, can be self-harm or destructive, right. Like, anything—

Kristin: Yeah.

Natalie: That feels—makes us feel better in the moment, because the surrounding moments are so painful. And if you don't have someone helping you get through it, if you don't—or if you're just not ready to get through it, those moments are so meaningful. Because they help you feel better, when you're feeling bad.

Kristin: Yeah.

Natalie: And I think that that's—that's really important to keep in mind, that like, Willow's in a lot of pain. Doesn't excuse her behavior, right? But—or doesn't justify it. But it's a reason, right? It gives you a reason, it gives you a way to, like, I think look at her with empathy and autonomy and pull her and Tara apart and see them as two individuals, right.

Kristin: Yeah, and it gives you this whole other storyline that we could have, if anyone knew to focus in on the fact that Willow is in pain.

Natalie: Yes.

Kristin: Right? Like, that's the—that's the thing is, we don't get that story.

Natalie: Mmhmm.

Kristin: And I think that that—at least, like you said, up until this point, I think that's actually very accurate. I think that a lot of times, people do not know where to focus or where to put the energy. But man, if somebody could just talk to Willow about that pain—

Natalie: Yeah.

Kristin: Like, honestly and openly, I wonder what we would see.

Natalie: Yeah, absolutely.

Kristin: Spoilers. That won't happen. [laughs]

Natalie: No! It gets worse! [both laugh]

Kristin: It does! It just gets worse.

Natalie: So I think the reason Tabula Rasa hits us so hard is because we get to go back in time with our people, right? Like, we—they get their minds—[Kristin laughs] I know, right? Like, they get their minds—

Kristin: Rude, Natalie! What if I just turn off the mic? [both laugh] Stop making us feel. [laughs]

Natalie: You know, like, they go back in time. And like, we know who they are, so we get to have all the, like, "oh, that's Buffy being Buffy again!" That's—but they

don't. So they're just their pure selves without the trauma, right? These people that we've, like, known and loved. And they get to be themselves in some ways, while also being funny. And it's just like, [gasps] it's Buffy! And then it's just like—

Kristin: Ugh.

Natalie: And...the crystal smashes. And Michelle fucking Branch, with that hair—[Kristin laughs] and she's singing and Willow's crying and Dawn's mad and taking it out on Tara. You know, because that's what happens when you're the person who sees the underlying problem and has to draw a boundary for yourself. People get mad at you, because they don't—I—ahh! It's just everything.

Kristin: Oh, god. Natalie, thank you so fucking much.

Natalie: Yeah.

Kristin: For being here, inside of Tabula Rasa. Do you want people to find you anywhere? What's the—

Natalie: [laughs] If you wanna find me on Twitter, @Mzbitca, M-Z-B-I-T-C-A. So that's where you can find me.

Kristin: We'll put links to where to find you in the show notes today.

Natalie: Perfect.

Kristin: And Natalie, if you have any resources that you think would be great to share with the listeners after this segment, we can put those in the—

Natalie: Awesome.

Kristin: In the show notes as well. And we will be talking more with you as we journey through this beautiful season of television. [both laugh] But until then, thank you for chatting with us today.

Natalie: Thank you so much for having me.

[CHIME]

Kristin: Oh my god, fucking Natalie, right?

Jenny: Incredible.

Kristin: I mean—

Jenny: Thank you so much, Natalie.

Kristin: Oh my god, and—and as you heard in the segment itself, there'll be more of a conversation with Natalie because there's a lot more to talk about here. But wow, just so happy to have found you and to be having this conversation with you. And now that the segment is over, I guess that means that we...have to say...

[Goodbye to You by Michelle Branch plays]

Goodbye to you...

Jenny: Well, before we do that. [both laugh]

Kristin: [laughing] I just—

Jenny: Let me give you one more dose of levity—

Kristin: Yeah.

Jenny: To inoculate you—

Kristin: Yes, please.

Jenny: Against the dark clouds that are rolling in even as I speak.

Kristin: Please, please.

Jenny: When the crystal gets smashed, Giles and Anya are still making out.

Kristin: Oh my god.

Jenny: They lock eyes in realization! [Kristin laughs] And the next time we see them, they are *maniacally* cleaning [Kristin laughs] the magic shop at opposite ends of the room.

Kristin: Well, the place certainly needs—

Jenny: No amount of scrubbing is gonna free you of that memory, y'all!

Kristin: Ooh...

Jenny: You are gonna remember that forever.

Kristin: I mean. You know, he is ruggedly handsome and she is, uh, a vengeance demon.

Jenny: [simultaneously] I know. A thousand years old. [laughs]

Kristin: Yeah, exactly. I mean, nothing's keeping these two—I'll tell you what. I would much rather see Anya and Giles together [both laugh]] than I would see Anya and Xander, so. I'm here for it, folks. I am here for it.

Jenny: Will they ever tell? Will she ever tell Xander?

Kristin: Ugh. So back in the sewers. There's this—

Jenny: Oh no.

Kristin: Yeah, the moment when the crystal breaks is really shot very well. It's a very heartbreaking moment. It's like, this realization on the faces of everyone, that something very bad has just happened. And obviously, Tara knows very precisely what has happened. And Willow knows that she didn't even make it, like, a fucking day.

Jenny: Ugh.

Kristin: Which wasn't the point, as per the segment with Natalie that you just heard, right? Like, that's not even the point.

Jenny: Mmhmm.

Kristin: The point is that, um, she deeply, deeply hurt this person that she loves and is starting to hurt many people that she loves, and is making decisions that are harmful to herself and to others. And now, with this revelation, it's sort of like, everyone knows that something else has to happen. That it can't just be, like, chatting about this issue, right? Like, it has—like, this serious. It's really serious. And Tara...we see her face last as Willow walks out of the sewers and she's crying. And it's fucking awful. We get—we get one, kind of, little moment. [Jenny sighs] Because we get the fucking shark one more time. And he's like, "You're an odd duck, Mr. Spike." [both laugh] "Don't worry about your debt." To which Spike is nice enough to be like—not nice enough, but just like, I like that part of Spike's self,

is like, this is not about me getting out of the 40 Siamese kittens that I owe you. I will get you those fucking kittens. This is just about, like, I need a fucking minute, man. And I told you that at the start of the episode.

Jenny: Mmhmm, mmhmm.

Kristin: So. Spike's like, "Buffy, are you okay?" So the other—[Jenny laughs sadly] there's a lot of tragedy.

Jenny: What's—what's—what's worse [Kristin laughs] than being pulled out of heaven by your friends—

Kristin: Yeah.

Jenny: Back to the hellscape of life on earth once? Oh! What if it was twice?!

Kristin: Yeah.

Jenny: Essentially.

Kristin: Exactly.

Jenny: What if you would have to have that realization all over again?

Kristin: All over again. All over again. This is—I mean. Do you think that Willow ever even realizes that she has now caused this, like, complete re-traumatization of Buffy? I mean, I know we have to watch the season—

Jenny: Oh my—fu...

Kristin: And find out. But like—

Jenny: Unknown.

Kristin: This is fucking horrible! And Buffy is just, like, reduced to, essentially, like, not speaking. And we cut—

Jenny: She's reeling. She gets up, she runs away. She's gotta get to the Bronze because Michelle Branch is playing! [Kristin laughs] [singing high-pitched] "Goodbye to you! Goodbye to everything I knew!" Is this good?

Kristin: [simultaneously] I'm so mad that you didn't wait for me to sing with you.

Jenny: There's—there's no time like the present.

[Kristin clears her throat]

Kristin and Jenny: [singing, out of time with each other] "Goodbye to you!"

Kristin: [singing] "Goodbye to every—"

Jenny: This is what—[laughs] [takes deep breath] [singing] "Goodbye to everything—" [both laugh] Cool. This is what—this is what the people want, right?

Kristin: Yeah.

Jenny: Us scream-singing Michelle Br—I will say. Sometimes I listen back to my earliest recordings and I'm like, why do I pronounce my words like that? You can't—that is wrong. That is—I'm clearly—

Kristin: Why? 2001, you know?

Jenny: On—lost in some syllable sauce, some vowel sauce. Seeing Michelle Branch warp these syllables of all these words to her will was...validating. That's all.

Kristin: Yeah. The idea of Buffy being, like, so fucked up and traumatized but being like, fuck, I got these Michelle Branch tickets. [laughs]

Jenny: Gotta go!

Kristin: [laughing] Gotta—I gotta go. I gotta go. So Buffy is—

Jenny: She's like, [singing] "You're everywh—" [clears throat]

Kristin: [laughs] My first note, in the Bronze, is "the Michelle Branch of it all." Which is—

Jenny: The Michelle Branch of it all!

Kristin: Right? That's where we are.

Jenny: Yeah.

Kristin: Buffy is sitting at the bar.

Jenny: [simultaneously] What a montage.

Kristin: She's real sad. Tara's packing...her cardboard boxes with all of her things, all of her belongings. Who gets to keep the crystal dildo? The question that every queer breakup asks. Who?

Jenny: I think that was Tara's to begin with.

Kristin: That's true, it was.

Jenny: So.

Kristin: Yeah.

Jenny: We get a sad bathroom Willow.

Kristin: Ooh, really sad bathroom Willow, yeah. She's on the bathroom floor.

Jenny: Dawn is...huffy. To Tara. Which is rough.

Kristin: Yeah, Dawn's...you know, like everybody else on the show, not given the tools to understand, like, really probably what's even happening, clearly. And even if she did have an understanding of that, probably not the tools to understand that Tara is attempting to draw boundaries, and her intentionality is to help Willow, not hurt Willow. And...wow. Willow on the bathroom floor. Michelle Branch playing at the Bronze. Buffy basically rendered speechless once more. What could be worse? Oh! Cut to the fucking airplane where Giles is—

Jenny: No!

Kristin: What the fuck, dude?! You just got on that—

Jenny: No.

Kristin: You—ooh! Somebody—

Jenny: Like, that night? He's like, I gotta go to the airport. [both laugh]

Kristin: I gotta go, guys. Somebody make me—

Jenny: He was cleaning the Magic Box and so was Anya. And he was just like—he had a moment of realization. He was like, this is not gonna do it. I just gotta get the fuck out of town.

Kristin: [laughs] Can somebody please make me a supercut where Michelle Branch is actually singing in all of the places, though? Like, she's singing at the Bronze but then she's also in the bathroom with Willow. And then she's like, in the fucking airplane bathroom as well, just like, [singing] "Goodbye to you!"

Jenny: [laughs] Why does she have to be in the airplane bathroom?

Kristin: I don't know. I just felt like it was—you know, that seat wasn't taken.

Jenny: [laughs] Okay.

Kristin: Anyway. We cut to Willow—

Jenny: Poor Giles in a middle seat, by the way.

Kristin: Yeah. That's what he fucking deserves! Man.

Jenny: Well.

Kristin: "You were the one I loved, the one I—one thing I tried to hold onto. I want you, but I'm not giving in this time," says Michelle Branch. Echoing the thoughts of Tara, who is not giving in this time, correctly. The thoughts of Giles, who is not giving in this time, incorrectly. And the thoughts of not Buffy, who is fully giving in...

Jenny: Hell yeah!

Kristin: This time! [laughs]

Jenny: [singing] "Making out! At the Bronze!"

Kristin: I'll tell you what. Uh...I would make out with Spike to a live concert of Michelle Branch in 2001 and I would enjoy it. So—

Jenny: Congrats.

Kristin: Buffy—you know what? Fucking—this is how I feel, right? I mean, whatever. This is how I feel today, at the end of Tabula Rasa. Buffy is fucked up, and no one is helping her figure out her fucking trauma. And she—

Jenny: Please help Buffy.

Kristin: She needs to—she needs to feel something that is going to be able to, like, take away some of the chaos that she's living through and like, numbness that she's living through.

Jenny: Mmhmm.

Kristin: And she's said it to us. She's been clear about it. And since no one is helping this fucking girl, I say, make out with Spike on that pole. You make out with Spike on that pole, Buffy!

Jenny: Hell yeah!

Kristin: You fucking do it! You do it! Because you fucking deserve to feel something, and no one's helping you. If I was there, I would help you. And not by making out with you. I would help you holistically. But also, then we could make out too. I don't know, I'm not—[stammers quietly]

Jenny: Okay! Alright, alright.

Kristin: Anyway. My last note in—

Jenny: Speaking of. Oh, yeah.

Kristin: My last note is just "making out," so I'm riffing on it now.

Jenny: Oh, so speaking of making out.

Kristin: [laughs] Yeah!

[SEXUAL TENSION AWARD jingle plays]
Sexual tension award!

Jenny: Alright, alright, alright, alright. So! We are back. In the pilot seat. Back, in our beautiful—where we are always trying to get to. We're clawing our way here every episode. [Kristin laughs] We got some slots. We got some noms.

Kristin: It's true.

Jenny: This is how they fall. Today!

Kristin: It's true.

Jenny: In the first slot for your consideration, he...is a daddy shopkeeper. She...has got a big old ring on her finger. It's Rupey and Enya! [Kristin laughs] [Jenny sings a jaunty tune] In the second slot, well! The British invasion, anyone?! That's what I'm talking about! Matching tweed, matching rugged handsomeness, it's Randy and Rupert. Why not? In the third slot, your noms and ours, well, there they are! A classic. A perennial favorite, it's Buffy and Spike. [Kristin laughs] The fourth set of noms for the final, fourth slot, well! It's your favorite host of Buffering the Vampire Slayer, Jenny Owen Youngs—

Kristin: Wow.

Jenny: And a short, thick, TV Guide. [Kristin laughs] [singsong] What do you think about that? Yeah!

Kristin: Great, great, great, Jenny. I'm so excited to vote in the...slot-nom party. And I just want everybody to know that the Sexual Tension Award segments are not scripted. And I say that because it—like, it just—I think probably people think you have planned out what you're saying. And Jenny never is. She just comes up with it, like, live in the space. Which I feel deserves—

Jenny: Well!

Kristin: A little recognition.

Jenny: Thank you so much, I'm touched.

Kristin: Yeah, you're welcome. Touched by your...[laughing] short, thick TV Guide. Gotta go!

Jenny: I just get filled up with the STA spirit. You know? So! Join us, cast your vote, make your voice heard in our beautiful, sexual tension democracy by voting in the Twitter poll, @BufferingCast. It'll be up for a week.

[SEXUAL TENSION AWARD jingle plays]
Sexual tension award!

Jenny: Well!

Kristin: [simultaneously, singing] "Goodbye to you!"

Jenny: [singing] "Goodbye—" [clears throat] [singing] "It's the end, it's the end—"

Kristin: [simultaneously, singing] "Goodbye to everything that I knew!"

Jenny: [singing] "Of the episode!" It kinda lines up.

Kristin: [laughs] [clears throat]

Jenny: We're here at the end of the episode. [laughs]

Kristin: We are, in fact, indeed.

Jenny: Have we said everything we need to say about this ep?

Kristin: Yeah, I mean—

Jenny: I think so.

Kristin: I think, you know, a lot of people talk about the one-two punch of it all. Perhaps we'll even find that there are a couple more punches to be—

Jenny: The sad and the funny, you mean? Those punches?

Kristin: No, no. I mean, the punch of Once More, With Feeling followed by the punch of—

Jenny: Oh. Yeah.

Kristin: Tabula Rasa. It's sort of, like, you know—it's just a lot. And we've been talking—

Jenny: Oh, yeah.

Kristin: We've been talking since the start of Season 6 about how, like, there's a fucking lot. This is a really heavy season, and you know, the writers thankfully do give us—I mean, this episode is a classic example of like, just sheer joy and delight in getting to enjoy these characters—it—I mean. I think we might have even mentioned it in the segment with Natalie, but like, this enjoyment of the characters that we once knew. It's what they want and we feel a relief in it, you know? I mean, I think that this is one of the best episodes of the series. But I also started to question, like, why—it is. But also, is part of the reason I enjoy this episode so

much because I also, like, yearn for before all of this trauma happened and we were here in this place? And I think there's a truth to that.

Jenny: Yeah. I think absolutely, a hundred percent. Like, it's...after the devastation, [laughs] they give you exactly what you want, which is a window into simpler times.

Kristin: Yeah.

Jenny: Into the past.

Kristin: Yeah.

Jenny: But no. Reality comes crashing back in.

Kristin: Yeah, it's almost like an immersive experience. You know, it's like—we've been talking about how, like, Willow's want is to just fix the problem by making it go away. But that makes the problem worse.

Jenny: Mmhmm. Oh, yeah.

Kristin: And we just got to live that, by being like—[fake laughter that turns worried]

Jenny: Heh...

Kristin: And then just being like, kicked in the fucking stomach.

Jenny: Yeah.

Kristin: You know, which probably wouldn't have hurt quite as bad if we weren't laughing so much and enjoying ourselves in the middle of the episode. [both laugh]

Jenny: It's true.

Kristin: That metaphor might fall apart under pressure, but yeah. I think my point is just that, um, there's a lot. And that's why I'm glad that we have people like Natalie and we've already had other segments and we're gonna have some bigger episodes this season. And we're still gonna enjoy chomping on our Buffy the Vampire Slayer—sorry, I've been listening to a lot of Angel On Top and they say "chomping" all the time and I'm so jealous.

Jenny: Oh, yeah.

Kristin: And so I just wanna start saying it.

Jenny: Chomping. Slurping.

Kristin: Just chomping, yeah. Just took a little chomp. Every time LaToya says that, like, Darla took a little chomp out of somebody, I just—I'm so happy. I'm just so thrilled by it. [both laugh] Anyway. We are going to keep enjoying all that is Buffy. And you know, we're gonna also keep sliding down this fucking hill that is Season 6, so. [laughs]

Jenny: Oh, yeah.

Kristin: Just get in the boat with us. If we're all together as we slide down the hill, at least we'll be together. [laughs]

Jenny: It's true!

Kristin: So luckily, we remember who we are. At least for now. We better tell them now before we run the risk of forgetting, Jenny.

Jenny: I am the co-captain of your log flume adventure through this sad season, Jenny Owen Youngs! And when I'm not making this podcast, I am writing and recording lots of music. You can learn more about me at jennyowenyounsgs.com. You can give me a shout on Twitter, @JennyOwenYoungs. You can keep up to date on new releases and stuff there. And I'll tell you what! I'm in a band! I'm in a new band and we just released our first song last week. We're called L.A. Exes and our first song—our first single—is called Temporary Goodbye. You can find it wherever you stream music. Go give it a listen, please, it's fun. It's a bop. It's kinda like this episode, actually.

Kristin: Mm!

Jenny: It's all about just finding a little escape hatch when life gets too ragged, too rough. You just want, like, a nice little moment on a mental beach somewhere.

Kristin: Oh!

Jenny: Ahh. Simpler times. To soothe the soul.

Kristin: I can't wait to buy my tickets to see L.A. Exes play at the Bronze, Jenny.

Jenny: Yes!

Kristin: It's been a long-standing dream of mine, personally. [Jenny laughs] As your other co-captain on this apparent log flume. So a log flume, you can't really sit next to somebody, so are you sitting in the front seat? Or...like, where—like, where will you be when the log plunges?

Jenny: We're in the—we're both in the front.

Kristin: Oh, it's a two-seater? It's a two-seat—

Jenny: Oh, yeah.

Kristin: Okay.

Jenny: Oh, yeah.

Kristin: Okay, alright. Cannot wait—

Jenny: Arms up.

Kristin: [laughing] To get the photo of all of us in the log flume, on our way down.

Jenny: That's gonna be one *long* log.

Kristin: If you are a child of the 90s, like Jenny and I are, you have a log flume picture somewhere in your possession—[laughs]

Jenny: Somewhere.

Kristin: Because I know I do. Anyhow. My name is Kristin Russo. You can learn about the work that I do outside of this podcast on my website, kristinnoeline.com. K-R-I-S-T-I-N N-O-E-L-I-N-E. You can use that spelling to find me on Twitter and on Instagram. I do work with the LGBTQ community. I do speaking events—so many more now, because we are so digital. That if you—if you'd like to, you know, have me speak at your workplace or your school, you can find out how to contact me using that website. Also, I do a podcast with Joanna Robinson on Patreon. We are just wrapping up Feels Like a Thirst Time. We watched Magic Mike XXL, [both laugh] Coyote Ugly and Mr. and Mrs. Smith.

Jenny: Wow.

Kristin: We got thirsty in February. That's on our Patreon, at Buffering. And speaking of Buffering, maybe you could tell them where they can find us.

Jenny: Indeed! Buffering the Vampire Slayer is on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, @BufferingCast. Or you could drop us an email at bufferingthevampireslayer@gmail.com. Furthermore, take it to the next level and leave us a voicemail at 216-30-BUFFY.

Kristin: Hey, if you would like to support the work that we're doing here—many of you already do, thank you—you can go to bufferingthevampireslayer.com. Just click on Patreon and you can join our family, over in Patreon. We have a secret Facebook group. We've got a Slack, we've got book clubs, we've got concerts, we've got chord sheets, we've got work tapes. And most notably, now we have a lot of behind the scenes content from the making of Once More With Once More, With Feeling.

Jenny: Oh yeah.

Kristin: So find that there. Also, we've got some really rad new shit in the store. A lot of Big Fucking Nerd paraphernalia. [laughs] We got hats and pins and shirts and tanks and just—you know. If you're a nerd and you'd like to let the world know, well, now there's one more way.

Jenny: We got you covered.

Kristin: Yeah, yeah.

Jenny: Mmhmm.

Kristin: Pocket protect—Big Fucking Nerd shirts are the new pocket protectors, like I always say.

Jenny: Hell yeah. And, uh, wow, is that everything?

Kristin: That's everything.

Jenny: [takes deep breath] I forget how to make a regular podcast. [Kristin laughs] [takes deep breath] Till next time...

Jenny and Kristin: [to the tune of "Goodbye to You"] Awwooo, awwooooooo!

Jenny: [to the tune of "Goodbye to You"] Awwoooooooooooo-awwwoooooo!

[Kristin laughs]

["Tabula Rasa" plays off the album "Songs from Season Six" by Buffering the Vampire Slayer]

La la la la look at me go
Who am I? I don't really know
But I've got fists that are made out of stone
Don't mess with Joan

You know that thing
Where you wake up in an empty store with a bunch of strangers
You don't know your name
But in no time you're affronted with a boatload of danger

Dudes drop by lookin' to bite
Demanding we send out spikes

La la la la look at me go
Who am I? I don't really know
But I've got fists that are made out of stone
Don't mess with Joan
Don't mess with Joan

That feeling when
You awake with brand new fighting skills that sure come in handy
I'm ten by ten
Guess this whole world-savin' thing is left up to me and Randy

AN-ya will protect the cash
Umad's a pain in my ass

La la la la look at me go
Who am I? I don't really know
But I've got fists that are made out of stone
Don't mess with Joan
Don't mess with Joan
Don't mess with Joan
Don't mess with Joan

Playing hero sure is fun

But I bet when my memories come
Back to me
I'll feel better