

Scoobies and Potentials: The Slayer Community as Hero in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*

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ANDREW: Uh, yeah. Um. We - we saved the world together. I mean, Buffy helped, but it was mostly us. ("Damage")

During *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*'s last few episodes, Buffy Summers is presented as a reluctant hero. In previous episodes, she had been tutored primarily by Giles' Watcher wisdom. But she had also benefited by her mother's parental wisdom, Angel's years of experience, Riley's military know-how, and even the Spirit of the First Slayer. During the final season, however, Buffy becomes increasingly isolated as role model and hero – rejecting the gifts of the Shadowmen, the first watchers, and eventually being ousted by the Scooby gang, by the Potentials, and finally by Dawn. Buffy seems to be playing out a traditional masculinist adventure quest story in which the hero is first supported and encouraged by friends who eventually must leave him so that he may continue on his journey alone to face his ultimate challenge or enemy *mano a mano*. But that is not how *BtVS* ends. Creator Joss Whedon concludes the series with a group focus: the Scoobies and the Potentials take on the Ubervamps. Buffy does not stand alone.

This linear stand-alone heroic story line is played out over and over again in literature, from Christ abandoned by his apostles and finally forsaken by his father, who must face Pilate and his torture stake alone in order to become the savior of all, to Luke Skywalker who faces Darth Vader and later the Emperor, to Neo of *The Matrix*, to King Arthur and Superman. But during the first six seasons of *BtVS*, Buffy has not been isolated. Rather there has been heavy emphasis upon her community. Buffy has been supported actively by her Scooby gang, down to the finale of each season. This support group is unusual for a Slayer, as past slayers have worked alone, except for their Watchers. Frequently, Buffy has had to fight the final Big Bad by herself, as she confronted the Master in Season One and Angelus in Season Two, but the gang has always wanted to support her and embrace her afterward. Just as frequently, the season finale has emphasized that Buffy's support team and even her larger community take part in the final fight, so that the entire high school takes on the ascending mayor at the end of Season Three, while at the end of Four, the Scoobies actually merge with Buffy to defeat Adam. Seasons Five and Six provide some variety, because not only does the gang, including Buffy, fight to the end, but someone other than Buffy kills the Big Bad in that Giles finishes off Glory/Ben and Xander conquers Evil Willow with love.

Although Buffy is willing to sacrifice herself for the world, as any good hero would (and which she actually does at the end of Season Five), she rarely stands alone staving off evil. Adam's plan to succeed during Season Four was predicated upon his belief that the Slayer could be destroyed only after her circle was disbanded; Buffy's power lies in her desire to remain connected to others rather than separate herself to strengthen the integrity of her power. The final episodes of Season Seven bring to the fore Joss Whedon's emphasis on the necessity of becoming a member of a caring community, but Whedon also has that community – and the audience – question the authority of the traditional hero. I want to demonstrate how feminist theory derived from cultural feminism and postmodernism can suggest a reading of the *BtVS* which posits the Big Bad as patriarchal authority and which empowers the Scooby Gang, along with the Potentials, as postmodern hero. The postmodern feminist hero does not act like the traditional male hero but works as a community encouraging others to confront injustice and modify the world around them. This hero does not take on the solo role of savior on behalf of others and the world, but each individual group member can take on a caring responsible role within the community which functions as savior. Here I deconstruct the Scooby Gang, the Slayer support team, by looking at the transfer of power from the hero to the community, the portrayal of the gynarchical structure of the group, and the characterization of its members as hyperfeminine as a necessary precursor to group membership.

Ostensibly, the Scooby Gang of Buffy the Vampire Slayer creates a feminine community in support of the primary character, Buffy, but season after season, creator Whedon undercuts the concept of Buffy as independent superhero followed by the support team. Whedon's habit is to conclude the season emphasizing the power within the unified support group and how each member contributes to the vanquishing of the season's villain, the Big Bad. In doing so, Whedon dismisses the traditional image of a solo masculine hero with a harem of adoring fans and family, and replaces that image with a feminist super hero situated, not within Buffy the Slayer, but within the feminine community itself, for Buffy Summers does not function successfully as a hero by herself; the Scooby gang, which finally includes Buffy as a member, takes on the status of compound hero. Individual, independent slayers like Nikki Wood, for example, cannot sustain hero status and eventually fail as heroes. In fact, this is the basic premise of the Slayer; she is meant to fail, designated to fail, defined by failure, which is why there is a cadre of potentials waiting to replace her. The Buffy support community, Willow, Tara, Xander, Dawn, Giles, Buffy herself, Kennedy, Anya, Spike, Oz, Cordelia, and others, takes on the role of hero and maintains it, even as individual members of the community move to Los Angeles or Great Britain, die, or otherwise leave the show. When individuals venture outside this community, endeavoring to take on the role of hero or antihero, they fail or perish, as does Buffy in Season Five, Evil Willow, and Cordelia in Angel.

Individually, members of the slayer's community are portrayed as weak, soft, and ineffective, not only making them ineligible as heroes, but also suggesting that as characters, they are not yet fully human; they are disabled. Because at least one aspect of each character is hyperfeminized and this quality begins to symbolize the character, Whedon suggests that the character is disabled by being feminine or female. Clearly, Whedon is working with feminist girl power themes, so he is not implying that women and girls are disabled but rather that society regards women as not yet fully human until they prove otherwise, or, as Luce Irigaray says, until these women achieve the status as "a potential man" (84). The characters are hyperfeminine in that some trait identified by society as feminine is exaggerated to the extent that the trait begins to symbolize that character. Thus Buffy is a ditz blonde; Cordelia, a rich bitch; Willow, a mousey little girl who cannot dress herself; Giles, an older, weak librarian with glasses; Xander, just one of the girls. From the first season we see that Buffy, the great slayer, bounces around, flips her hair, tries out for the cheerleading squad, wears micro clothes, and wants a boyfriend. Her colorful bra straps are constantly on display. Even when Giles first meets her, he ponders her lack of focus. Although she is able to pick a vampire out of a crowd, she does so based on the vamp's fashion sense, or, rather, lack of fashion sense. Buffy and Cordelia have a lot in common as teenage girls with raging hormones. Their biggest power looks to be in their ability to whip out a credit card or say something cruel to a fellow student.

Luce Irigaray uses the term "mimicry" to describe one way in which Woman, the Other, can undermine a patriarchal power system and accrue power unto herself. Mimicry can be defined as:

An interim strategy for dealing with the realm of discourse (where the speaking subject is posited as masculine), in which the woman deliberately assumes the feminine style and posture assigned to her within this discourse in order to uncover the mechanisms by which it exploits her. (220)

By becoming weak, according to Irigaray, one can become strong. It is a slight-of-hand trick. By understanding how patriarchy defines the Other, that Other can then mimic the definition. While the Order observes the definition and looks no further, the Other can do as she likes to undermine and thwart both the definition and the Order. But:

One must assume the feminine role deliberately. Which means already to convert a form of subordination into an affirmation, and thus to begin to thwart it. . . . To play with mimesis is thus, for a woman, to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it. (76)

Although Willow and each character do not deliberately hyperfeminize themselves, Joss Whedon does hyperfeminize them. He has his ditzy, needy, bitchy characters mimic non-threatening women so that they may become powerful and finally consolidate that power within the Slayer community. But Whedon does not stop with the female characters.

Even Whedon's male characters are weakened because of feminized and weak traits. While references are frequently made about Giles' advancing age and weak constitution, Xander overtly is referred to as one of the girls.

Buffy: . . . You're my Xander-shaped friend! Do you have any idea why I love you so, Xander?

Willow: We gotta get her to a --

Xander: Let her speak!

Buffy: I'll tell you! You're not like other boys at all.

Xander: Well --

Buffy: You are totally, and completely one of the girls! I'm that comfy with him.

Xander: That's great. ("The Witch")

If Xander's own friends find him soft and feminine, "not like other boys," then his high school peers must surely see him as weak and powerless. As the series continues, Xander worries that, in fact, he is the only member of the group who does not have some special superhuman power or knowledge. Although his group has situated itself as Other, outside the mainstream of Sunnydale, Xander identifies himself as Other even in relation to the Scooby Gang. But other masculine characters must also give up their masculinity and become hyperfeminine in order to become a member of the Slayer's group. When the Initiative puts the chip in Spike's head, the results are always discussed in sexualized terms, so Spike, in reference to himself, says, "I'm saying that Spike had a little trip to the vet, and now he doesn't chase the other puppies anymore" ("Pangs"), implying that he has been neutered. After Spike's escape from the Initiative, his attack on Willow is presented as a rape and his inability to bite her is couched in terms of impotence.

Spike: I don't understand. This sort of thing's never happened to me before.

Willow: Maybe you were nervous.

Spike: I felt all right when I started. Let's try again. Ow! Oh! Ow! Damn it!

Willow: Maybe you're trying too hard. Doesn't this happen to every vampire?

Spike: Not to me, it doesn't! ("The Initiative")

Spike has been emasculated, rendered effeminate, and as such, he is now possible Scooby Gang material, loosely associated with the group through the rest of Season Four and, it seems, becoming a member in Season Five. On the other hand, Andrew has always been portrayed as soft and feminine. Not only does he become a member of the slayer's community, but he is perhaps the last authoritative voice of Slayer power heard and obeyed in the Whedon Slayer story when Andrew appears in Los Angeles to collect the psychologically damaged Potential-turned-Slayer Dana, whom Angel has found.

The emphasis upon the soft, weak, overly feminine nature of each group member underscores the apparent vulnerability of the group itself. Sending Andrew to demand something of Angel is at first laughable, even among Buffy fans who watched him fight the Ubervamps alongside Anya. Angel certainly does not take him seriously:

Angel: Chain her into the van. I want armed guards ridin' with her in the back.

Andrew: That's all right, boys. I'll take it from here.

Angel: What?

Andrew: Totally 'preciate your help on this one, big guy. Never could've found her without you, but you got enough problems of your own to worry about.

Angel: Get outta the way, Andrew.

Andrew: She's a slayer. That means she's ours.

Angel: Yeah. Sorry. Not how it works. Load her up. Don't hesitate to tranq her if she so much as - ("Damage")

Andrew may be one voice, but he is speaking for the Slayer community. Whereas Andrew as an individual is laughable, even though he is "faster, stronger, and 82% more manly," and even though the Slayer community appears vulnerable and incapable of defending itself, as represented by the individual damaged slayer, the full Slayer community rallies around Andrew and Dana and a dozen new slayers appear during the scene to back Andrew's claim ("Damage"). Angel must back down when confronted by the unified community.

Andrew: Think we're just gonna let you take her back to your evil stronghold? Well, as they say in Mexico. No. We're not gonna let you.

Angel: She's psychotic, and I'm not turning her over to you.

Andrew: You don't have a choice. Check the view screen, Uhura. I got 12 Vampyr Slayers behind me, and not one of them has ever dated you. She's coming with us one way or another.

Angel: You're way outta your league. I'll just clear this with Buffy.

Andrew: Where do you think my orders came from? News flash! Nobody in our camp trusts you anymore. Nobody. You work for Wolfram & Hart. Don't fool yourself. We're not on the same side. Thank you for your help but, uh, we got it. ("Damage")

Andrew recognizes his role within the community and the power of that community. Although he likes the concept of personal power and implies that he can handle the situation – "I'll take it from here" – he quickly reverts to community resources when he acknowledges that as an individual, he has no power that Angel recognizes, so he employs plural pronouns – "she's ours," "we're not gonna let you."

Cultural feminism can be used to investigate the roles of the individual and the community, suggesting that an ethics of relational care within a community is superior to an ethics of objective justice on behalf of the rights of individuals. Rather than valuing "the individual [as] higher than

the universal" (as Noddings interprets Kierkegaard, 400), Carol Gilligan suggests that the concept of a traditional male hero, placing himself between the world and disaster is "a human absurdity, the illusion of a person standing alone in a reality of interconnection" (160). A person who sees himself as singled out and standing alone is fooling himself when the larger picture shows that the individual is a small part of an interrelated community, a network of connections, of "interconnectedness" in Gilligan's terminology. In other words, an individual hero who positions himself to act alone and ultimately to sacrifice himself, even on behalf of others, chooses to be unaware of the heroic community surrounding him – but also the society which imbues him as hero is misguided in placing unwarranted value upon the traditional hero while ignoring the network which created the conditions under which the hero acts. Buffy's network of interconnectedness not only grows with each season, but heroic power grows too, not because the hero Buffy has learned more or become stronger, but because she situates herself within an interconnected community, sharing her super skills so that the community itself approaches hero status and the heroic power resides in the gang, not in Buffy. Although the Slayer as an individual accepts help from Angel, from the coven in Britain, even from Riley's commandos as they remove Spike's defective chip, it is the Slayer group that takes on the power and ability to overcome the Big Bad. Buffy's power does not increase, but when she shares her power with the group, the community resources and ability to actively and creatively use that power grow. Buffy does not retain the honor and responsibility of savior because she freely shares savior status with the entire network.

Similarly, postmodern feminism rejects the patriarchal belief that one societal-approved standard is expected of all. This has long been a theme within BTVS, as Buffy, Giles, and the entire gang reject the patriarchal standards of the Watchers' Council. But whereas Buffy repeatedly refuses to allow the council to cast her in the role as savior and to cast itself as arbiter of her behavior, she has not rejected it as a source of information; she maintains a connection to the Council, which will benefit her network. At the same time, she insists that the Council recognize that she as Slayer is part of a community rather than a stand-alone hero. In the episode "Checkpoint," Season Five, Buffy uses an unusual (for her) patriarchal voice oozing in power in order to be heard by the Council, as this is the only type of voice it is capable of hearing. Her point, however, is to position herself and her network outside the control of the Council and to establish herself as a part of the Slayer "unit."

Quentin: We can begin the review at last. We'll skip the more obvious questions.

Buffy: There isn't going to be a review. . . . No review, no interrogation, no questions you know I can't answer. No hoops, no jumps, no interruptions. See, I've had a lot of people talking at me the last few days. Everyone just lining up to tell me how unimportant I am. And I finally figured out why: power. I have it. They don't. This bothers them. Glory came to my home today.

Giles: Buffy, are you -

Buffy: Just to talk. She told me I'm a bug, I'm a flea, she could squash me in a second. Only she didn't. She came into my home, and we talked. We had what in her warped brain probably passes for a civilized conversation. Why? Because she needs something from me. Because I have power over her. You guys didn't come all the way from England to determine whether or not I was good enough to be let back in. You came to beg me to let you back in. To give your jobs, your lives some semblance of meaning.

Nigel: This is beyond insolence --

Buffy: I'm fairly certain I said no interruptions.

Xander: That was excellent

Buffy: You're Watchers. Without a Slayer, you're pretty much just watchin' Masterpiece Theater. You can't stop Glory. You can't do anything with the information you have except maybe publish it in the "Everyone Thinks We're Insane-O's Home Journal." So here's how it's gonna work. You're gonna tell me everything you know. Then you're gonna go away. You'll contact me if and when you have anymore information about Glory I will continue my work with the help of my friends.

Watcher: I, uh, I don't want a sword thrown at me, but, but, civilians, I -- we're talking about children.

Buffy: We're talking about two very powerful witches and a thousand-year-old ex-demon.

Anya: Willow's a demon?

Philip: The boy? No power there.

Buffy: The boy has clocked more field time than all of you combined. He's part of the unit. ("Checkpoint")

Here Buffy formally places herself, Watcher Giles, and the "unit" outside the parameters of Council control, thereby acknowledging a space outside the hierarchical power structure of the Council, a space on the margin existing as a separate postmodern community outside the traditional, accepted authority of the council. Until the final season, however, Buffy has accepted the council's definition of "slayer" and she has functioned with the understanding that "slayer" is her job, her essence from which she cannot run, even though she would rather be a normal college student. The Scoobies, then, still recognize the council as a centered traditional authority whereas their gang functions on the margin outside of the council's control.

Patriarchy, like the council, seeks to codify behavior and identity. It imposes a method of thinking under which one functions without even questioning that methodology. Even though Buffy repeatedly has rebuffed the council's authority over her, she has continued to accept their definition of what a slayer is and she acts like a slayer, a traditional hero sacrificing herself on behalf of others. As Buffy's role as caregiver increases, however, she appears to question her past methodology and replace it with something subversive. At the same time, the council is destroyed and Caleb appears, taking on the role of patriarchal religious definer and representative of the First, the First Evil. This suggests that the First Evil represents patriarchy itself. In killing Caleb, Buffy demonstrates that an individual hero can indeed defeat an individual voice of patriarchy but that in itself does nothing to overcome the institution, the governing force of patriarchy. Whereas Caleb is gone, the systemic structure of patriarchy still exists. An individual hero such as a Slayer would never be able to bring down the First Evil.

More effective in battling patriarchy is the communal approach, as when the Scoobies embrace an ethics of care as they take on the responsibility of caring for potential slayers. When the Sunnydale community breaks down, the residents leave, and the school closes its doors to education, then the Summerses' home becomes the center of care which houses not only the Scooby gang but also the potential slayers whose ranks grow each week. Finally, it is not clear how many people are living in the house, but a small army of Potentials leaves it in the final episode. Buffy, Willow, Xander, Giles, and even Spike, Anya, and Andrew, extend their parental roles over Dawn to all the Potentials, providing for basic needs and offering education, training, and family to teen-aged girls confused about their roles in life. The Potentials come to understand

that if Buffy should die, one of them will step in to become defined as the Slayer. They understand that they exert no choice in this decision, that the designation "The Chosen One" will descend upon one of them like a dove anointing that one as the Messiah, but then another will be defined Slayer as they individually fall like dominoes in the face of evil. Whereas the definition of Slayer identifies that only one young woman will be chosen, a hierarchy will be enacted in which the pretty maids line up all in a row awaiting the death of the previous slayer. At this point, Buffy is perpetuating the patriarchal voice of the Council. She is buying into the masculine concept of the traditional hero: one individual standing up in the face of evil. Although she and the Scooby gang have embraced a marginal, postmodern existence with power situated within the group, Buffy is demonstrating that she is not yet ready to share all of her power with the group. She is still holding out, preserving power, in a hierarchal, patriarchal manner.

Nevertheless, Buffy extends her care to each one of these Potentials equally, striving to give all of them extensive defensive and offensive training. While Buffy's care-giving role is expanding and she is becoming more competent at providing support for Dawn and the Potentials, Joss Whedon carefully focuses our attention upon Buffy as savior hero placing more emphasis upon the inevitability of slayer defeat and the rise of a new slayer. The credit voiceover becomes more and more ominous in its meaning: "Into each generation a Slayer is born. One girl in all the world, a Chosen One, One born with the strength and skill to fight the vampires, to stop the spread of their evil and the swell of their numbers." This too is a slight-of-hand trick. While we believe Buffy is becoming a classic isolated hero, Whedon has other plans, showing us instead how the classic hero is inadequate and incapable of taking out the First. Buffy seems to know instinctively that the classic hero definition does not suit her. With all the Potentials gathering at her home, it's hard to avoid thinking about being replaced by one of them. This puts Buffy in a peculiarly Freudian position – like a father raising a son whom he knows will replace him – or in proper Oedipal fashion, the son rises up to slay the father. Buffy is in the position of desiring to hand down the heroic slayer role to someone who has been properly trained and who will bestow honor upon the Slayer position, the definition itself, but that means she is planning for her own demise. Just as Freud's Oedipal son casts the father aside, the potentials vote Buffy down as leader, as father, protector, and role model.

Buffy has become doubly de-centered. First, by rejecting the patriarchal authority of the Watchers, even the Shadowmen, the first Watchers, she places herself and the Scoobies outside on the margin. They have cultured the margin into a comforting, care-oriented community but predicated upon the paradigm of the Watchers, localizing power within the figure of the reigning patriarch, this time the Slayer rather than the Watchers. But Buffy is de-centered a second time when this new powerful community of the margin rejects its center and boots her further into the margin where her only supporter is Spike. Re-creating a patriarchal power structure within the margin has not worked. Those within the marginal community reject the patriarchal voice when they hear it from Buffy. Later when Faith is rejected as leader and Buffy is reestablished, she cannot use that patriarchal voice of authority as she had before, neither dictating nor enforcing a course of action. Instead she allows her community to make their own decisions, as Andrew and Anya do when they go off on their own to the hospital storeroom for supplies and when Dawn rejects Buffy's decision to send her to safety.

Up to this point, Buffy has been positioned as a "special woman" – a woman who stands apart and above other women and who draws the approval of the patriarchal order. Adrienne Rich discusses this special woman and the mythos about her in her essay "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision." This essay is based upon a speech she gave to university women. She addresses them:

We seem to be special women here, we have liked to think of ourselves as special, and we have known that men would tolerate, even romanticize us as special, as long as our words and actions didn't threaten their privilege of tolerating or rejecting us and our work according to their ideas of what a special

woman ought to be. An important insight of the radical women's movement has been how divisive and how ultimately destructive is this myth of the special woman, who is also the token woman. Every one of us here in this room has had great luck -- we are teachers, writers, academicians; our own gifts could not have been enough, for we all know women whose gifts are buried or aborted. Our struggles can have meaning and our privileges -- however precarious under patriarchy -- can be justified only if they can help to change the lives of women whose gifts -- and whose very being -- continue to be thwarted and silenced.
(170)

By separating token special women from other normal women, the patriarchy shows its approval over a few, bestowing some power upon them without having to share it with all women. If these special women wish to retain their special privileges and special power, then they must remain approved by the patriarchal order, as the patriarchy still retains enough power to strip the special woman of privilege and send her back among the normal women.

The Shadowmen and Watchers have defined the position of Slayer but have also dictated how many slayers exist. If only one exists as a special woman, then she is easily controlled by the Watchers and yet there is always a special woman, as a Potential immediately becomes a slayer upon the death of the previous one. By being separated out as slayer, the woman feels empowered and better than the Potentials; she separates herself from the others because she believes what the patriarchal authority has told her: that she is special. Buffy has never felt comfortable as the Chosen One, even trying to re-create herself as Anne the waitress in order to hide from her destiny. Even in the Season Seven, Buffy wants to reject her Slayer destiny while her friends remind her that she has no choice. But this time, Buffy recognizes the problem: her belief that she is the one and only Slayer, resulting in her trying to cut her connections with others in order to preserve and control her power.

Buffy: That's my problem. I say the word, some girl dies. Every time.

Spike: There's always casualties in a war.

Buffy: Casualties - it just sounds so casual. These are girls. That I got killed. I cut myself off from them, all of them. I knew I was going to lose some of them and I didn't. You know what? I'm still making excuses. I've always cut myself off, I've always being the Slayer made me different but it's my fault I stayed that way. People are always trying to connect to me but I just slip away. You should know.
...

Spike: I've seen the best and the worst of you and I understand with perfect clarity exactly what you are. You are a hell of a woman. You're the one, Buffy.

Buffy: I don't want to be the One. ("Touched")

A token special woman can undermine the patriarchy by sharing her privileges with others, thus making the other women as special as she herself is or, in other words, by making herself as normal as other women. This is what Buffy does in asking Willow to find a spell that will imbue all the Potentials with slayer power, thereby annulling Buffy's special status but changing the lives of other women. She is now as normal as any other Potential and no longer imprinted with the burden of being the One. She has become just a part of a community and not the privileged hero.

For Buffy to defeat the First, she must give up completely any special patriarchal power she retains and seek another means of power. Whedon presents another means via a gynarchical approach when the scythe comes into Buffy's hands. A woman guardian explains that it is a

source of power for the Slayer which had been kept from the patriarchal control of the Watchers and Shadowmen. This guardian clearly represents another power opposed to the Watchers yet aligned against evil so that the binary opposition is dissolved between the Watchers, championed by their carefully controlled Slayer, versus the First and his Bringers. That is, although the First represents the problem, the solution does not have to come in the form of a patriarchally-approved and Watcher-backed Slayer. That the unnamed guardian who represents those who created the scythe is opposed to both the First and the Watchers suggests that a completely new way of thinking can exist to defeat the First. It is gynarchical not so much in that a woman offered to Buffy knowledge of the scythe, but that Buffy uses the scythe as an equalizer, distributing slayer power equally among all Potentials, just as a gynarchy equalizes power among all its members rather than preserving that power hierarchically as a patriarchy.

This gynarchical distribution of power among the Potentials and Faith and Buffy preserves the cultural feminist integrity of the community, allowing all the girls to partake in protecting themselves and each other. While fighting for justice, they bond as a community, assisting one another as one individual uses the scythe and then passes it on to another. By espousing a different approach in confronting the First and the mass army of Ubervamps, Buffy is using a postmodern methodology in which everyone can become a savior. Although she chooses to equalize her power and thereby refuses to become the One, the Chosen One, which seemed to define her former self, she allows Spike to take on a patriarchal savior role, if he so chooses, and become the champion, using the amulet and going down in a blaze of glory like a traditional, masculine hero. Buffy no longer has to identify herself as the Slayer, since she is now one of many. Whereas the series began with a focus on the Chosen One, the one girl who could save the world, the series concludes with an equalization of power and focus on the power of the group:

Xander: We saved the world.

Willow: We changed the world. I can feel them, Buffy. All over. Slayers are awakening everywhere.

Dawn: We'll have to find them.

Willow: We will. . . .

Giles: We have a lot of work ahead of us.

Faith: Can I push him in?

Willow: You've got my vote.

Faith: I just want to sleep, yo. For like a week!

Dawn: I guess we all could. If we wanted to.

Willow: Yeah, The First is scrunched so. What do you think we should do, Buffy?

Faith: Yeah, you're not the one and only Chosen anymore. Just gotta live like a person. How's that feel?

Dawn: Yeah, Buffy. What are we going to do now? ("Chosen")

Hierarchy is completely done away with. No one is first – indeed, the First is destroyed – as is the One. In this final lines, Whedon underscores the gynarchical distribution of power among the Scoobies and the Potentials with the repeated use of the plural first-person pronoun “we” and the concept of equal voting. Buffy is just one of many and the Gang is the hero. Andrew was right: all the Scoobies and all the Potentials saved the world – Buffy just helped.

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