

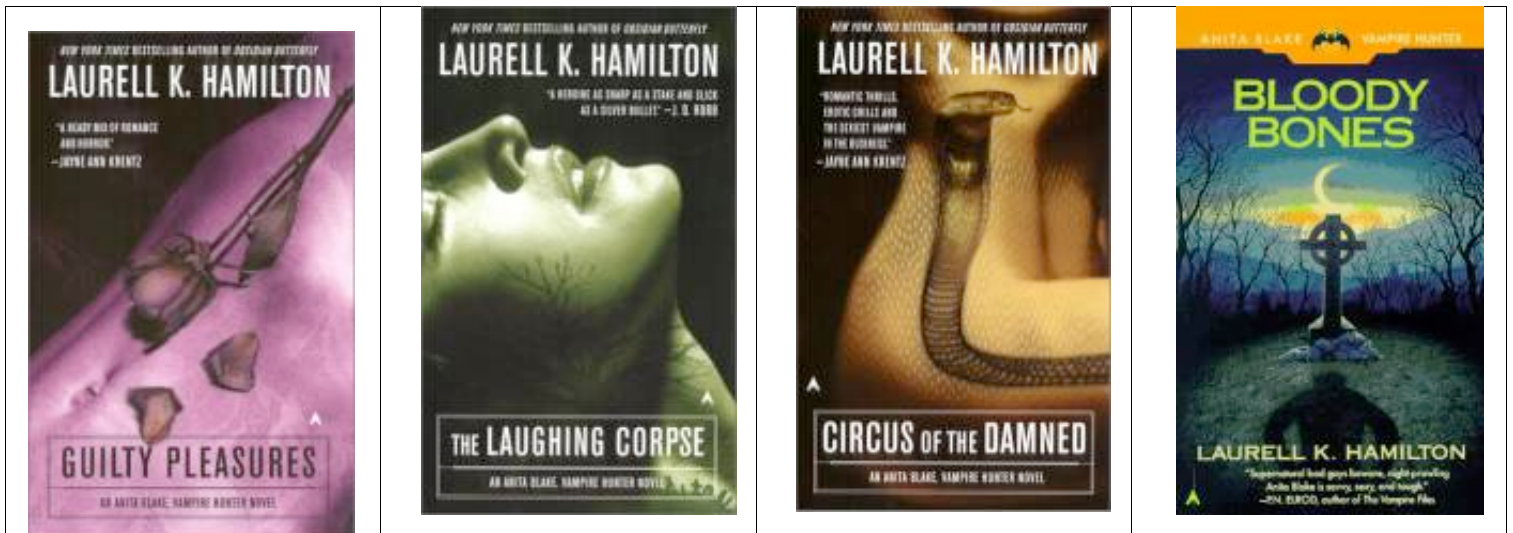


Hilary M. Leon

Why We Love the Monsters: How Anita Blake, Vampire Hunter, and Buffy the Vampire Slayer Wound Up Dating the Enemy



(1) The title characters of Joss Whedon's television drama *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and Laurell K. Hamilton's *Anita Blake, Vampire Hunter* novels, are the latest in a distinguished line of protectors of humanity against supernatural threat. Following in the footsteps of Bram Stoker's Professor Van Helsing, they dedicate their lives to the destruction of the monsters threatening the mortal population. Yet the two women possess some unusual qualities which make them unique among the vampire slayers of history. The traits themselves are surprising, but what makes them particularly intriguing is the degree to which they are shared by these modern slayers.



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(2) Anita Blake and Buffy Summers are alike in many superficial characteristics, making comparisons between them inevitable. Both are relatively young: Buffy is introduced as a high school sophomore, while Anita, at twenty-four, is only a few years out of college. Each attracts attention with her petite, pretty appearance, physical dexterity, and intelligence. Both resort to witty, sarcastic remarks, particularly when threatened. As is traditional among vampire slayers of literature and film, the two women take their responsibilities as hunters seriously, giving up a great deal to fulfill their obligations to those they protect.

(3) These sacrifices, and the slayers' painful awareness of them, contribute to Anita and Buffy's most interesting shared quality: both are reluctant slayers. Each longs for a safe and ordinary life, and especially for a normal relationship with someone of the opposite sex. It is this longing that significantly defines these modern slayers. Anita and Buffy seek to resolve these desires, while continuing to fulfill their duties as vampire hunters. In their struggles, they are forced, as slayers seldom are, to confront the ambiguity of their role: as human protectors who are not quite human, as killers whose victims are both predators and prey, and as women whose lives offer little room for ordinary passions.

The Hand of Fate

Kendra: "You talk about slaying like it's a job. It's not. It's who you are."
 Buffy: "Did you get that from your handbook?"
 Kendra: "From you."
 "What's My Line?" Part Two

"I raised the dead and laid the undead to rest. It was what I did. Who I was."
 Anita Blake, *Guilty Pleasures*, 79

(4) By an apparent accident of birth, Buffy and Anita find themselves labeled, each in her respective universe, as the salvation of humankind. As a necromancer, Anita possesses some innate defenses against vampiric powers; these, along with her "affinity with the dead" (*The Laughing Corpse* 44), make her uniquely qualified to deal with the various monsters that manifest in Hamilton's alternate St. Louis. Anita's training as an animator and educational background in preternatural biology enhance her inborn abilities. In the few short years of her professional animating career, she becomes a licensed vampire killer, exterminating the murderous undead. Her marked skill in this task prompts her nickname among the vampires: The Executioner. Anita often feels that she had little choice in becoming a slayer. She views it as a natural extension of her necromancy, but in reality her own instinctive skill and sense of social responsibility have driven her into the role. Like her police force colleagues on the Regional Preternatural Investigation Team, she feels personally accountable for utilizing her abilities to avert danger from other humans.

(5) Unlike Anita, who exercises some choice over her future path, Buffy is unceremoniously confronted with her destiny as "the one girl in all the world, [the] Chosen One . . . born with the strength and skill to hunt the vampires" ("Welcome to the Hellmouth"). She protests being pressed into duty by her first Watcher, Merrick, and later by Giles, after Merrick's death; still, like Anita, she ultimately cannot reject her calling. Joss Whedon comments, "Buffy may grouse about it, but she has heroic instincts" (Tracy 48). She comprehends that being the Slayer is, as Giles tells her, a "sacred duty" ("What's My Line?" Part One), on which she cannot turn her back.

(6) Despite their acceptance of the slayer role and its requirements, Buffy and Anita rail against these obligations. Anita expresses early feelings of "battle fatigue" (24) in *Circus of the Damned*; by the time she views the bloody crime scenes of *Obsidian Butterfly*, the numb and emotionally exhausted animator is seriously questioning her choice of lifestyle. She cannot, however, find a way to leave behind her role as the Executioner. The sense of inevitability, of inescapable fate, and of undeniable responsibility overwhelms both women, creating dedicated yet reluctant heroines. Buffy sums up Anita's feelings as well as her own when she tells Giles, "I don't have to be the Slayer. I could be dead" ("What's My Line?" Part One).

Childhood's End

<p>Buffy: "Nothing's ever simple anymore. . . . It's like the more I know, the more confused I get." Giles: "I believe that's called growing up." "Lie To Me"</p>	<p>"But we were all young once. It passes, like innocence and a sense of fair play. The only thing left in the end is a good instinct for survival." Anita Blake, <i>Circus of the Damned</i>, 250</p>
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(7) The slayers may be chronologically young, but they mature far more rapidly than their peers. This is due, in part, to having faced the death of close friends and family early in life. Buffy experiences Merrick's death during her first year of high school, and Anita loses her mother at the age of eight. These tragedies are by no means isolated incidents in the slayers' lives. In an early episode of the series, Buffy is confronted with further pain when her childhood crush turns to vampirism in order to escape a fatal brain tumor ("Lie to Me"). Anita, in *Guilty Pleasures*, watches helplessly as her new friend Phillip, with whom she feels a strong emotional bond, is tortured and later killed. And this is only the beginning: again and again, both women watch friends and loved ones, along with a host of innocent strangers, slaughtered by the monsters.

(8) Living through this kind of emotional trauma, as well as harboring feelings of guilt about the deaths that occur, forces the slayers to grow up with abnormal rapidity. As A. Susan Owen says, "In Sunnydale, young people must take on adult responsibilities before they have finished being children" (30). Along with this sudden maturity comes a realization of personal mortality. Anita comments, not quite jokingly, that she does not expect to live past thirty (*Obsidian Butterfly* 241), although she takes no steps to prevent such an eventuality. Buffy also accepts, almost without question, the idea that her life will be brief. In "What's My Line?" Part One, she describes her future as "pretty much a non-issue." Her philosophy, related to Willow in "Welcome to the Hellmouth," is, "Seize the moment, 'cause tomorrow you might be dead."

The Lure of Love

<p>Buffy: "Dates are things normal girls have. . . . You know what I think about? Ambush tactics. Beheading. Not exactly the stuff dreams are made of." "Halloween"</p>	<p>"One bit of advice. People in our line of work don't make good significant others." Edward, <i>Circus of the Damned</i> 281</p>
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(9) Neither of the slayers deliberately sets out to find a lover. Buffy is a sixteen-year-old innocent at the start of the series, naïve and nervous around men, and too overwhelmed by her obligations to consider dating. Anita speaks bitterly of a college fiancé to whom she lost her virginity, only to be abandoned by him when his family did not approve of her mother's Mexican blood. Both women, therefore, harbor certain fears when it comes to pursuing the opposite sex. Then, too, neither slayer feels that her life permits a normal love relationship: as Buffy says, after several abortive attempts, "This isn't the kind of gig where you can just hang it up at the end of the night and snuggle with your honey" ("Doomed").

(10) Buffy and Anita both fear introducing noncombatants into their complicated lives. The object of Buffy's grade school affection dies in a confrontation with vampires during her sophomore year ("Lie To Me"); a later crush, Owen, becomes overly enamored of the near-death thrill that Buffy's lifestyle arouses. "Two days in my world," Buffy tells Giles, "and Owen really would get himself killed. Or I'd get him killed. Or someone else" ("Never Kill a Boy on the First Date"). She worries not only that a human boyfriend will be a target for the monsters, but that having a man in her life will distract her from her most important tasks. This, she fears, will put herself and others at risk. Similar fears cause Anita to limit her ties with human friends and to resist the

put herself and others at risk. Similar fears cause Anita to limit her ties with human friends, and to resist the idea of dating mortal men. While she longs for a traditional husband and home, she realizes her life is a battleground and that she cannot risk anyone she truly loves in that environment.

(11) Despite these qualms, Anita and Buffy find themselves yearning for normal, passionate relationships, and for the feelings of safety and stability they anticipate will be inspired by such domestic dynamics. Their unusual requirements for a prospective mate, however, eliminate most conventional men. Two of the most important traits they seek are nearly impossible for any human to fulfill: the ability to protect oneself from the monsters without assistance and an understanding and acceptance of the slayer's role in her world. The only people aware of Buffy's identity as the Chosen One are friends whom she does not view as potential lovers. Anita need not hide who she is; on the other hand, she has trouble finding a man who can accept her strength of will, capacity for violence, and dangerous lifestyle. Neither woman has success in finding a mortal man who can hold his own against the monsters she faces daily.

(12) Drawn inexorably by their slaying duties into the world of the creatures they fight, Buffy and Anita spend much of their time among those who are not human. In her roles as necromancer, police advisor, and executioner, Anita is surrounded by criminals, killers, and practitioners of the dark arts. She is also, inevitably, faced with non-humans who do not fit her original, rather simplistic definition of "monster." Buffy faces a similar dilemma: her closest contact with undead activities in Sunnydale turns out to be himself a vampire, a fact she discovers only after their first passionate kiss. Neither woman intentionally seeks a lover among her enemies, but for each a variety of factors culminates in an unexpected and powerful attraction to the predators she is sworn to destroy.

Loving the Monsters

Buffy: "I love you. I don't know if I trust you."
Angel: "Then maybe you shouldn't do either."
Buffy: "Maybe I'm the one who should decide!"
"Lie to Me"

"I, Anita Blake, scourge of the undead—the human with more vampire kills than any other vampire executioner in the country—was dating a vampire. It was almost poetically ironic."
Anita Blake, *Blue Moon*, 7

(13) Anita and Buffy do not, at first, have any sympathy for the monsters they kill. Buffy reacts with disbelieving horror to the revelation that her mysterious informant, Angel, is a vampire. That initial response, however, is followed quickly by a desire for her feelings toward him to be somehow permissible. Desperately, she asks her Watcher, "Can a vampire ever be a good person? Couldn't it happen?" ("Angel"). According to Giles, however, the undead are not people, but human bodies possessed by demons. Although a vampire may retain the memories or personality traits of its human host, it lacks any humanity: "It's still a demon at the core, there is no halfway" ("Angel"). Due to this straightforward perspective, until meeting Angel, Buffy's wholesale slaughter of the creatures has caused her little concern.

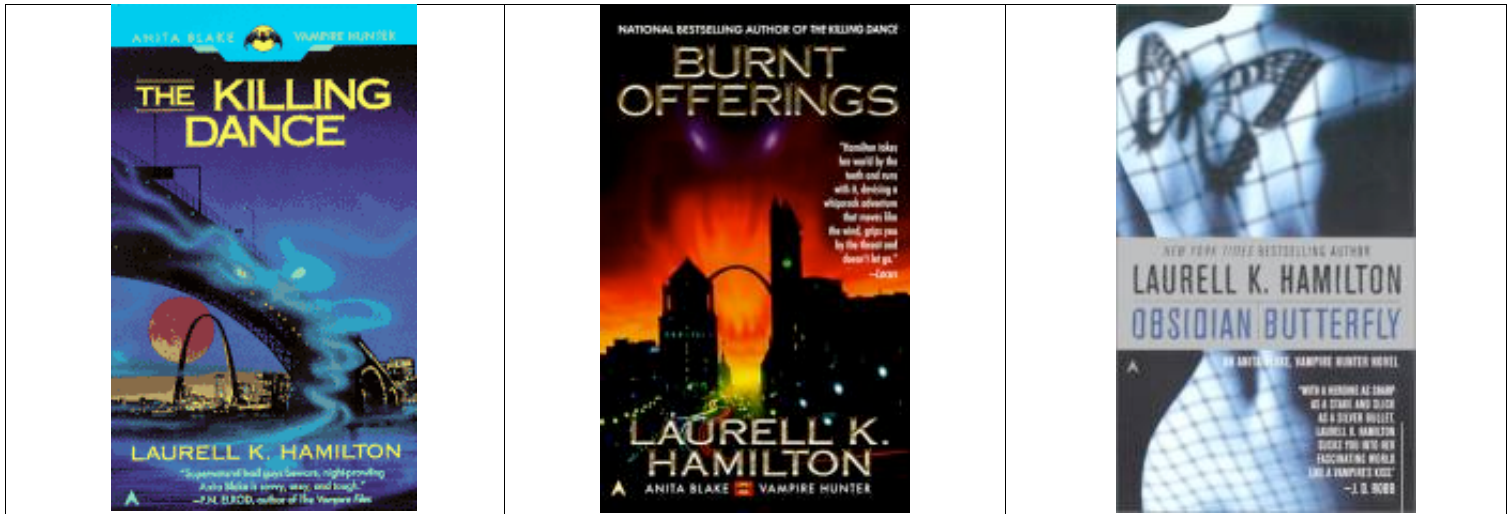
(14) Yet Buffy faces in Angel, for the first time, a natural enemy whose actions declare him as a friend. Even after discovering his status as a monster, she is hesitant to destroy him, both because he has never offered her violence, and because their mutual attraction complicates matters. Her slayer instincts are aroused only after she sees Angel appearing to attack her mother. When she confronts him, he taunts her by questioning her motives for executing him, suggesting that she views his kind merely as animals. She expresses her hatred at the way he has deceived her about his true nature; he responds, "Feels good, doesn't it? Feels simple" ("Angel").

(15) The problem, of course, is that things are no longer simple. What angers Buffy most about the deception is the conflicted feelings that result. She cannot help but see Angel not as an animal, but as a person with complicated emotions and motivations. As it turns out, she is right to view him in this way: Angel's soul has been restored by a gypsy curse, thus purging him of his demonic self. While he retains his lust for blood and his vampiric abilities, these are tempered by his very human sensibilities. As a result, he intends to fight on her side against the other monsters.

(16) In her dealings with the opposite sex, Buffy is ruled by her heart, rather than her better judgment. Although she knows something of Angel's sordid past, and he, too, questions the wisdom of further intimacy, by the end of "Angel" they are in each other's arms. Their relationship proceeds in fits and starts, but by "What's My Line?" both Slayer and vampire give in to their passions. Angel remains Buffy's boyfriend, but not her lover, until the show's second season; at that point, a combination of sexual passion and the terms of his curse cause him to revert to traditional vampiric evil. Buffy's recovery from the bloody aftermath of the relationship requires months of soul-searching, and leaves behind terrible scars. A devastated, deflowered Buffy later insists to a would-be suitor, "I'm not seeing anybody, ever again actually" ("I Only Have Eyes For You"). As Mim Udovitch states, "Buffy has developed trust issues from the fact that if she trusts the wrong person, the whole world comes to an end" (Udovitch 66).

(17) In Buffy's world, Angel is introduced as the single exception to Giles' vampire lore; his fellow vampires are considered wholly evil. For Anita, the undead represent a more complex problem. While for some superhuman powers and perceived immortality breed corruption and evil, others manifest much the same personalities as they once did in life. In the opening pages of *Guilty Pleasures*, Anita meets with Willie McCoy, a man she once knew as human who has now become a vampire. Her ambivalent feelings about him will later be reflected in her reactions to many other vampires whom she cannot view as truly evil. Buffy can accept her passion for Angel without questioning her role as the Slayer; Anita's lot is not so easy.

(18) Nevertheless, Anita's stronger prejudices against the monsters, particularly the undead, allow her to resist her own desires longer. Over the course of nine novels, she is pursued by a master vampire, Jean-Claude, and Richard, a powerful werewolf. At first Anita remains stoic without much difficulty: in *Guilty Pleasures* she admits her physical desire for the vampire, but insists, "I know who and what I am. I am the Executioner, and I don't date vampires. I kill them" (266). Later, after meeting Richard and learning of his lycanthropy, she reminds herself that "loving the monsters always ends badly for the humans. It's a rule" (*Circus of the Damned* 328).



Book covers from Amazon.com.

(19) Like Buffy, Anita feels a strong physical attraction to presumed enemies; despite her best efforts, she also develops strong emotional attachments to both Richard and Jean-Claude. Absorbed in these complicated romances, almost against her will, Anita struggles with the fear that her love for vampire and werewolf compromises her own humanity. She dreams of white picket fences and domestic bliss, away from the monstrous world in which she lives, but does not accept that her future holds such potential. As she tells Edward, the bounty hunter against whose cold-blooded persona she often compares herself, "I do believe in marriage, but not for people like us" (*Obsidian Butterfly* 171). Her relationships with Richard and Jean-Claude fill a void left by the husband and family she is certain she will never possess. In spite of her love for both men, Anita refuses to commit to either, prompting Edward to wonder aloud what might happen if she allowed herself to be ruled by her emotions, rather than her sometimes questionable good sense (*Obsidian Butterfly* 43).

(20) A number of factors contribute to the slayers' surprising changes of heart toward their traditional enemies. Simple proximity plays a significant role: Anita and Buffy spend more time, and share more emotionally charged experiences, with their future lovers than with any human males. Anita is surrounded constantly by the monsters, including Jean-Claude in early novels, and both the vampire and Richard in later books. While Angel's presence in Buffy's life is not at first so obvious, he appears at pivotal moments, brings warnings of danger, and leaves her with the impression that he is perpetually watching over her.

(21) It is also no coincidence that the slayers find the physical prowess of these men attractive. Angel, Jean-Claude, and Richard all possess supernatural strength and fortitude. Finding men who can fight alongside them, and whose safety is not a constant cause for concern, understandably reassures both women.

(22) Acceptance by society, or lack thereof, becomes another important issue. The slayers are largely rejected by their own kind, and ultimately find intimacy more feasible among the monsters and other social exiles. Anita's powers brand her as insufficiently human among the civilians she protects, so much so that she and the other animators are excommunicated by the Catholic Church. Buffy is a social outcast throughout most of high school and has a troubled relationship with her single mother; both situations can be attributed primarily, at least in the show's first two seasons, to her secret identity and its accompanying requirements. Even when, as with Owen, ordinary humans do display an interest in Buffy, the complications that arise prevent her from reciprocating ("Never Kill a Boy on the First Date").

(23) While neither woman is devastated by the negative attitudes of those around her, each seeks out companions with similar experiences. Jean-Claude may be master of St. Louis's vampires, but he must fight the humans to protect his kind's hard-won legal rights; Richard and his fellow lycanthropes are branded as diseased, and face daily discrimination. As a vampire, Angel is feared by humans but loathed by his own kind for possessing a soul. All three men readily comprehend Buffy's and Anita's difficulties in inhabiting both human and supernatural worlds.

(24) Most importantly, the slayers gravitate to men with whom they can share their true selves. Buffy agonizes over hiding her identity from potential boyfriends and searches for someone to whom she can reveal her other life. Far from being ignorant of Buffy's responsibilities, Angel learns of her calling long before he meets her. In "Becoming," Part I, led by a demon named Whistler, he watches from a distance as Merrick first approaches Buffy and later trains her in her duties. Angel sees the difficult road that lies ahead and vows to help the Slayer in the years to come. His awareness of her identity, and willingness to support her efforts, make

him an ideal choice for her.

(25) Anita, who wears her slaying as a badge of honor, needs a lover who can accept not only her humanity, but her lack of it. Both her necromancy and her role as vampire executioner brand her as a special kind of monster, and even Richard is troubled by these aspects of her personality. Still, it is, ironically, only among the monsters that Anita and Buffy find men capable of accepting who they really are.

Facing the Consequences

Kendra: "It's as I feared. [Angel] clouds your judgment. . . . He's a vampire, he should die. Why am I the only person who sees it? Are you that big a fool?" "What's My Line?" Part 2	"You just spend too much time with the damn monsters, Anita. I don't mean who you date. I mean all of it. You've played by their rules so long, sometimes you forget what it's like to be normal." Rudolph Storr, <i>Burnt Offerings</i> , 40
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(26) The slayers recognize, with regret, that a relationship with an ordinary human may be an unrealistic goal. However, choosing lovers among their potential enemies brings its own complications. Anita, only beginning to recover from her own hatred of the monsters, faces the rampant prejudices of her society. For Buffy, giving in to her passion for Angel encourages her to lie to those she trusts, and blinds her to the threat he may one day represent. In addition, both slayers must accept the potential necessity of destroying their lovers in order to protect themselves, their loved ones, and society as a whole.

(27) Anita knows there will be opposition to her growing feelings for both vampire and werewolf. She attempts to keep her affair with Jean-Claude from becoming public knowledge, primarily to prevent her devoutly Catholic father from learning of it. When Anita's closest friends become aware of her budding relationships, they rapidly confront her with objections to her choice of lovers. Sergeant Rudolph Storr, who heads the Regional Preternatural Investigation Team, bluntly expresses his disappointment, as well as his diminishing trust in her loyalties. Detective Zerbrowski, also an RPIT member, cautiously encourages her to bring Richard over for dinner, but rejects Jean-Claude outright (*The Killing Dance* 198). Similar opinions are put forth by Edward, who offers to help her kill Jean-Claude if she'd prefer to remain with the werewolf (*Obsidian Butterfly* 25). He and Zerbrowski, like many of Anita's friends, exhibit a stronger prejudice against the undead variety of monster—a feeling Anita once shared.

(28) Among Buffy's confidantes, thornier problems arise. Although her friends are largely accepting of her relationship with Angel, the loss of his soul results in heightened tensions among them. After initial confusion, Buffy learns that her passion for Angel has rid him of the gypsy curse, returning him to the evil "Angelus" persona. She cannot bring herself, at first, to kill the man who was once her lover, and her hesitation yields disastrous consequences. In addition to various small torments, Angel ultimately tortures Giles and murders Giles' girlfriend, fellow teacher Jenny Calendar. Buffy, at last facing her responsibilities, sends Angel to Hell.

(29) Rather than face her friends and family after this experience, Buffy runs away. After she comes back, she struggles to regain the trust of Giles and the others, especially her mother. Only a few episodes later, Angel returns from Hell, traumatized but alive and with his soul intact. Buffy begins seeing him in secret; when her friends discover this, she faces their disbelieving anger. Giles in particular demonstrates his disappointment in her, for a variety of reasons. Partly it stems from Buffy's dishonesty, which manifests whenever she and Angel are together. He also reminds her that Angelus caused him great personal pain. But most importantly, Buffy's protection of her former lover puts Angel's safety above her responsibilities as the Chosen One ("Revelations"). Buffy has no defense against these charges.

(30) While combating the disapproval of their colleagues, family, and friends, the slayers must also confront their own ambivalence about their chosen mates. Each is forced to accept the knowledge that she may one day have to kill her lover, in order to fulfill her responsibilities to the wider community. Buffy actually carries out this act. Anita, though never required to put her own strength of will to the test, informs both her lovers that she is capable of killing either man if he threatens her life or loses control of his beast. A. Susan Owen's comments on Buffy's situation apply to both slayers, in that they each "experience the anguish of putting community before self-interest" (27).

(31) Yet all this only scratches the surface of the challenge created by the slayers' love lives. While they must accept that their significant others are inherently and irreversibly not human, they must also face the reality of their own love for these men. Anita and Buffy demonstrate understandable discomfort with the depth of their feelings for and identification with creatures that prey on humanity. The bonds they form with these monsters, and their constant involvement with the supernatural world, require that they examine their own not-quite-human status. Each slayer is called upon to either reject or embrace not only the monsters she both loves and fights, but the monster she perceives within herself.

The Abyss Gazes Also

"He who fights with monsters might take care lest he thereby become a monster. And if you gaze for long into an abyss, the abyss gazes also into you." Friedrich Nietzsche, <i>Beyond Good and Evil</i> (qtd. in <i>The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations</i> , 1979)
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(32) Both Anita and Buffy are forced to confront these issues, although Anita does so most directly. It is she who admits that, as a necromancer and vampire slayer, she lacks moral high ground among the monsters: as early as *Bloody Bones*, she labels herself as one of them (271). Yet, on the whole, she accepts her inborn powers without questioning her humanity. When the Pope excommunicates practicing animators, she becomes

without questioning her humanity. When the Pope excommunicates practicing animators, she becomes Episcopalian rather than trying to suppress her abilities (*Guilty Pleasures* 186). In her opinion, what matters is her personal relationship with God. She is confident that He does not object, a belief bolstered when she successfully confronts a demon in *Blue Moon*.

(33) Rather than her magical abilities, it is the slow erosion of her once stringent morality that troubles her most. The hatred and prejudice she exhibits toward the monsters, for instance, which are readily apparent in early novels, come frequently into question as her character evolves. This change can be attributed in part to her passions for Jean-Claude and Richard, as well as her friendship with other supposed monsters. However, it also owes a debt to her dealings with fellow humans such as Edward, whose ethics and morality are infinitely questionable. These relationships with both humans and monsters cause her to examine the validity of her distinction between the two.

(34) Anita does not welcome this release from a black-and-white worldview. Instead, she fears for her immortal soul, wondering if this unfamiliar ambiguity will someday destroy her (*Bloody Bones* 370). In *Burnt Offerings*, Rudolph Storr questions her loyalties outright: "It's not the fur or the fangs that make you a monster, not always," he informs her. "Sometimes, it's just where you draw the line" (40). For Anita, this is the crux of the matter. She fears that, as Nietzsche would have it, the closer her actions and feelings come to that of her monstrous victims, the more like them she becomes. In *Obsidian Butterfly*, she comments, "And that was perhaps my biggest problem. I was always willing to compromise my soul if it would take out the great evil. . . . I couldn't let the monsters win, not even if it meant becoming one of them" (251). Anita's problems are twofold: on one hand, she empathizes with the monsters, befriending many and loving others; on the other, immersing herself in their culture has burned away her innocence and soft edges, turning her into the sort of remorseless killer she frequently combats.

(35) As Storr impugns Anita's allegiance, so does Kendra accuse Buffy of losing her perspective in the war against the vampires. Kendra, the Slayer called when Buffy momentarily dies in "Prophecy Girl," indicts Buffy for her sympathies, particularly her relationship with Angel. Foreshadowing Giles' later complaints, Kendra maintains that Buffy's love for Angel blinds her to danger, and prevents her from fulfilling her obligations as the Chosen One. Although Kendra eventually accepts their mutual passion as defensible, her point is well taken, especially considering Angel's radical change in *Innocence*, and its consequences.

(36) While Buffy is not often forced, as Anita is, to question the moral value of her actions against the monsters, she does have to consider the fine line she walks between destroying them and becoming one of them. The entrance of a third Slayer, Faith, who appears after Kendra's death, brings these issues to the fore. Faith insists that Buffy enjoys what she does, and that she ought to; after all, "Slaying's what we're built for. If you're not enjoying it, you're doing something wrong" ("Bad Girls"). After a night of slaying, Buffy describes to Willow the exhilaration she felt when Faith led her impetuously into the sewers to attack several vampires: "It was intense. It was like I just . . . let go and became this force. I just didn't care anymore" ("Bad Girls"). Faith exerts a dangerous influence over Buffy, encouraging her to take more and more pleasure in the kill, rather than the ultimate purpose of slaying: the safety of the human world.

(37) Buffy is jarred back to reality by Faith's accidental murder of a human, and manages to resist the lure of her fellow Slayer's cavalier attitudes. However, Faith continues to drive Buffy to actions that call into question her own humanity. In "Graduation Day," Part One, Faith poisons Angel with a mystical compound, curable only by drinking the blood of a Slayer. Buffy tracks her down and attempts to kill her, prompting Faith to exclaim, almost proudly, "Well, look at you! All dressed up in big sister's clothes." Both women exhibit shock when Buffy finally plunges the knife into Faith, but Faith takes pleasure in nearly being murdered. Buffy has proven to her that, deep down, they are both killers. Later, in "This Year's Girl," Buffy claims that she tried to kill Faith because, "You had it coming," but Faith demands that Buffy face the truth: the Slayer was willing to trade the life of a human for that of her vampire lover.

(38) The assumption shared by many of Anita's and Buffy's comrades is that their sympathies for the monsters are a direct result of proximity. Rudolph Storr, Kendra, and others believe that, by spending too much time among their enemies, the slayers lose sight of the dividing line between good and evil. As Anita's life becomes intricately entwined with the supernatural world, she develops strong bonds of friendship with many monsters beyond her lovers. Among these are Richard's werewolf pack, the king of the local werewolves, and several of Jean-Claude's vampire lieutenants. She even takes on the protection of a wereleopard pack whose violent leader she kills. Buffy pursues similar friendships with Oz, a werewolf; Amy, a witch; and Anya, a former vengeance demon.

(39) These friendships, developed in the wake of passionate relationships with the monsters, contribute to the slayers' rejection of their once-sacred stereotypes. In spite of the beliefs of those around them, Anita and Buffy know that not all humans are inherently good, nor are supernatural creatures by their very nature evil. Possessing human and monstrous characteristics of their own, Buffy and Anita endeavor to straddle both worlds without committing fully to either. Their responsibilities as slayers must come first, but they also allow themselves to experience love and intimacy with the monsters they deem worthy.

Blurring the Lines

Buffy: "Nothing's ever simple anymore. I'm constantly trying to work it out. Who to love, or hate, who to trust. It's just like the more I know the more confused I get. Does it ever get easy?"

"I execute people, Doctor Cunningham. . . ."
"Don't you mean you execute vampires?" he said.
"Once upon a time, that's what I meant."
We had another long moment of looking at each other

comused to get . . . Does it ever get easy?

Giles: "You mean life?"

Buffy: "Yeah, does it get easy?"

Giles: "What do you want me to say?"

Buffy: "Lie to me."

"Lie To Me"

We had another long moment of looking at each other, then he said, "Are you saying you kill humans?"

"No, I'm saying that there's not as much difference between vamps and humans as I used to tell myself."

Anita Blake, *Obsidian Butterfly*, 241

(40) Buffy Summers and Anita Blake are neither ordinary women nor strictly human, and their lives are mired in violence, magic, and moral complexity. For these and a myriad of other reasons, they are drawn to lovers from outside the human world. In many ways, their choice is a good one: not only are Jean-Claude, Richard, and Angel better equipped than mere mortals to survive in the slayers' worlds, but they are also a part of those worlds, and therefore capable of accepting Anita and Buffy for who—and what—they are. The support offered by these men helps both women continue to fulfill their obligations as slayers. At the same time, their lovers serve as living reminders that the enemy can sometimes be difficult to define.

(41) Do these feelings of empathy, passion, and even love toward the monsters compromise the slayers' ability to carry out their responsibilities? Are they undermined by allowing ambiguity to temper their actions and opinions? In his essay, "Warrior Women," Michael Ventura suggests that Buffy and others like her "not only tolerate but learn to relish ambivalence—and . . . refuse to let a lack of boundaries demolish their morality" (61). Rudolph Storr fears that the monsters have corrupted Anita's sense of normality, of the accepted line between good and evil, and this is certainly true. Yet Joyce Millman's comments on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* apply to both Whedon's and Hamilton's work: both are "about learning to accept the world—and people—as being more complicated than simply good and evil" (para. 14).

(42) Joss Whedon and Laurell K. Hamilton present their slayers with worlds in which moral and ethical ambiguity are inevitable. Humans and monsters alike are enigmas, as they are in our own world. Good and evil are slippery concepts, right and wrong equally obscure. Accepting these facts requires the slayers to consider the consequences of their own behavior, and to question constantly their motivations. Rather than being forced to choose between the humans and the monsters, Buffy and Anita accept the complexity of their roles, and ultimately address both sets of responsibilities: to humankind, and to their own passions.

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