

## REAWAKENINGS

A short story by AmandaK

Such is the sweet taste of human blood.

I relish the darkness, and the way the room is filled with shadows. The blinds are closed against the sun that will soon rise on a new day. The gloom fits my mood, which is even darker than usual. I don't move as I slouch against the upholstered leather of my seat and replay the events of the night in my mind. I feel tired. Exhausted, really. The aftereffects of the demonic shroud's madness are fading and they leave me drained. Yet I know I won't be getting much sleep today.

One moment, I had everything under control. The next, all went to hell.

The spicy sweetness of her blood is still on my tongue. It heats my cells, courses through my veins, nourishes and sustains me.

It rekindles memories.

Memories I don't want to recall. Painful memories. Memories of years long gone. Memories of delightful nights filled with brutal slaughter. Memories of the decades with Darla and Drusilla. Memories of a time when we roamed the earth together, when we scoured the night and struck fear in the hearts of men.

No matter that the bite saved Kate's life. She is human. And I drank from her.

That's the explanation I gave everyone: that it was the only way to save her life. I think they bought it: Gunn, Cordelia and Wesley, perhaps even Kate did. I can't fool myself, though; I know better. I *\*relished\** it.

The shroud of Rahmon had awakened the demon within me and it rejoiced when my teeth sank into her flesh, so warm, so pliable, so soft. It cheered me on from the sidelines as it fed on her life-giving fluids along with me.

It is going to be a long time before the lust for blood will have faded to a tolerable level once more. Until then, I just have to work harder.

Having a soul helps. But it's not the only thing that keeps me from giving in.

No matter how many years pass, no matter how much the memories of the pain I inflicted hurt, the lust is always with me. It's hard to walk in a world filled with humans. What does Spike call

them? Right, Happy Meals with legs. His poetry sucks, but he does have a way with words.

The blood calls me, always. I hear its siren song now, while I listen to the quiet of my deserted home. I can feel it, as the city wakes up slowly around me. I sense it rush through veins and arteries, rich with oxygen, and kickstarting muscles and brains into action.

It was so hard to let Kate go before I drained her completely. So damn hard. Perhaps the hardest thing I have ever done. Certainly harder than leaving Buffy and Sunnydale; I did that out of love, and love gives a man strength. It was definitely harder than destroying the Ring of Amara and giving up the chance to live in the light.

It had taken every shred of will power I could find to push Kate away and drop her limp body.

For the longest time I feared I had taken too much. It wasn't until Wesley returned from the police station and told me that Kate was alive -and well, considering- that I could breathe more easily. Figuratively speaking, of course.

I'm left with this burning need, this raw craving for more of the same.

I have to fight the urge. And I can't talk to anyone about it. Cordelia has seen me at my worst. Wesley and Gunn know what I am, and what I can become. Despite everything we've been through, I know that deep beneath their loyalty lives the fear that one terrible day I will revert to my old self, that Angelus will reclaim my personality.

No, I can't talk to them.

There's only one person who might understand. And I would rather take a walk in the sun than go running back to her.

Such is the sweet taste of human blood...

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