Bridgitte the Vampire Slayer

Craig Warner
Prologue

The demon Echthorziath smiled grotesquely as he looked through the mirror, and out into the world. He longed to return there, to the earth. It seemed like forever to him since he had been there. He had been high among the rulers of the earth before it had been struck by that awful plague...humanity. The demon had vowed to return though, and scourge humanity from the face of the earth. He had the tools to do it, too. He stood over thirty feet tall, his skin made of scales so hard no sword could penetrate them. His eyes glowed blood red, his mouth was home to three rows of long, razor-sharp teeth, and his breath was a poisonous gas. Not that he even needed that though, for his telepathic powers were immense. He could kill with a single thought.

Echthorziath knew that no creature on the earth could stop him. But he had to get back there. He had been trapped in a demon dimension for countless millennia, with no way out. No portals could be opened from this dimension, and only the darkest magick could open a portal from the earth to this dimension. Echthorziath had been worshipped by tens of thousands of humans over the years, some even fairly powerful sorcerers, but none of them possessed enough power to open a portal to his dimension. Even if a sorcerer was strong enough to perform the spell, one of the items needed for it was extremely difficult to obtain.

But Echthorziath thought that he had finally found a sorcerer who would be able to obtain the necessary items, and had the strength to perform the spell. So Echthorziath smiled as he looked through the mirror at his newest worshipper. The sorcerer was very bold. When he contacted Echthorziath, he asked to rule the world at Echthorziath’s side when all was done. Echthorziath liked him though, so he had accepted the deal. The sorcerer would open a portal, enabling Echthorziath to return to the earth. He would wipe out the plague of humanity and bring the other Old Ones back to the earth. Then they would rule the earth again, as they had so very long ago. Echthorziath smiled, and waited...

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Cleveland 1996

It was a cool, Fall night in Cleveland. *It was a quiet night*, thought Bridgitte Sampson as she walked through the cemetery. *Four hours of patrol and not a single vampire yet*. As if in response to her thoughts, a hand shot up out of the ground just 40 feet away. Bridgitte took off at a sprint, long brunette hair flowing behind her, and a wooden stake in her right hand. The vampire never had a chance. Before he was even half out of his grave, Bridgitte was upon him and drove her wooden stake through his heart. The vampire’s eyes opened wide in shock as he exploded into a shower of dust.

*If only they were all this easy, she thought to herself.* Her watch beeped, signaling it was now 2 a.m. *One more graveyard and I’ll call it a night.* Ugh! she grunted, remembering that she had a history test in the morning and she hadn’t studied for it yet. *I’d better make this one quick.* She hurried the few blocks down the road to Chester Hill Cemetery. She walked briskly through the cemetery, shivering just a little at the cool breeze. She made a mental note to wear something warmer than her small, blue halter top the next time she patrolled.

She heard a noise off to her left. She spun around and saw three vampires emerging from a crypt. They saw her at the same time, but instead of attacking, they turned and ran. *How lame,* she thought as she sprinted after them. The trailing vampire turned to fight as she caught up with him, his features contorting to show the true face of the demon he was. He seemed to have a scroll of paper in his left hand, which he kept behind him as he swung out at her with his right. She sidestepped to her left and retaliated with a jumping roundhouse kick that connected to the vampire’s head. As she landed, she noticed that the other two vampires had come up behind their companion.

“So, up for a fight after all,” Bridgitte said as she shifted into a defensive posture. The vampire on the left rushed straight at her, fangs bared. She spun to the left and swept his legs out from under him. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw the other two vampires struggling with each other, and then one of them took off running. “Schizo vamps, there’s a first,” she muttered to herself as she turned and punched out at the remaining vampire with her left fist. She connected and pivoted back towards the vampire scrambling back
to his feet. She grabbed the back of his head, threw him back down, and drove her stake through his chest. Even as the vampire turned to dust, his companion grabbed her by the hair and lunged for her throat. She threw her head back in a headbutt, stunning the vampire long enough for her to pivot and deliver a sidekick to the vampire’s stomach that knocked him back a few steps. She advanced, ducking under his wild swing, and hit him with an uppercut to the chin, knocking him off balance. As he fell backwards, she drove the stake through his heart and he exploded in a cloud of dust.

She looked around for the third vampire, but he was nowhere to be found. She looked down at the ground and noticed the scroll of paper that the first vampire had been carrying. She picked it up, and noticed that the top part had been torn away. *Was this what the vampires were fighting among themselves about?* She tried to read what was said on the scroll, but it was in some language she had never seen before. The markings on it didn’t even look like letters to her. She spent the next half hour searching the area for the vampire that had run off, but to no avail. Her watch beeped 3 a.m. She knew she was already looking at less than five hours of sleep, so she decided to head home. *Maybe I can even wake up early and study so I won’t fail my history test.* She decided to take the scroll to her Watcher, Charles Scott, tomorrow. She was sure he’d be able to decipher it. She had known him for four years and he was the smartest person she had ever met. She could still vividly remember the day she met him, the day her life had changed forever.

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It had been four years ago. Charles Scott had been among the group of people from the Watchers Council that had suddenly shown up on Bridgitte’s doorstep talking about vampires and demons. There had been four of them. Their leader, a balding man with deep set eyes and a grim face, had identified himself as John Clarkson. He had a strong British accent. Then there was Charles, tall, and still with an athletic build despite the grey streaks in his neatly combed brown hair. The woman was Victoria something or other; she hadn’t caught a last name. She seemed to be in her mid-30’s, wore glasses, and had a pretty face and long red hair. She didn’t get the name of the fourth man. He appeared to be around 40 with jet black hair slicked back. She had thought them completely insane,
and her parents, Tom and Lydia, had threatened to call the police. They had left then, but they came back.

The next night, soon after sunset, they had come back. She and her parents had been about to turn back inside, to call the police, but they suddenly froze as they realized that there was a fifth person with the group this time. Charles and the dark-haired man had opened the trunk and roughly pulled another man out of the trunk. There was a leather mask over the man’s face and steel chains bound his arms behind his back. His feet were shackled so that he could hardly move them. “Remove the mask,” came an order from Clarkson. Bridgitte and her parents stared in horror as the mask was removed, revealing a visage that was anything but human. The thing’s face was all lumpy, with feral yellow eyes, and long, sharp fangs.

“What the hell?” began Bridgitte’s father. “Mr. and Mrs. Sampson, Bridgitte,” came the reply from Clarkson, “I realize that certain things are hard to accept without solid evidence. That is why we have arranged this little demonstration. If you don’t trust me, trust your own eyes. You are looking at a vampire. The world is a very old place. Before the existence of humans, demons ruled the earth. Vampires are among the last of those demons that remain in our dimension. They feed on some people and mix their blood with others to make more of their kind. They can be killed by sunlight, fire, beheading, or...” Clarkson signaled to the dark-haired man, who retrieved a crossbow from the car, pointed it at the vampire’s chest, and fired. “A wooden stake through the heart.” finished Clarkson as the vampire suddenly turned into a shower of dust.

After a moment of stunned silence, Tom Sampson spoke, “But...but why us?” he stuttered, “Why show this to us?”

“As long as there have been vampires, there has been the Slayer.” replied Clarkson. “In each generation there is one girl in all the world gifted with the strength and skill to fight the vampires and demons of the world. She is the Chosen One, the Slayer. When one Slayer dies, another is Chosen. We are members of the Watchers Council. We fight the war against the forces of evil and train the Slayer to aid us in this war. There is no way to know exactly who the next Slayer will be, but we have become good at identifying girls that are likely candidates to be Chosen.”

The full impact of what he was being told finally hit Tom Samp-
son. “You think that Bridgitte is this...this Slayer? She’s only 12 years old! She’s just a normal girl.”

Charles Scott stepped forward. “Bridgitte is a likely candidate to be Chosen to be the Slayer.” His accent was not as strong as Clarkson’s. Bridgitte thought he must have been living in America for a while to lose most of his accent. “Bridgitte is actually closer to 13 than 12 years of age, correct? She could be Chosen in a year or in three years. We really have no way of knowing when. Or, she may never be Chosen. She is just one of several we have identified as likely candidates to succeed the current Slayer. But she must be trained in case she is Chosen, and there is not much time. We are usually able to identify potential Slayers at a much younger age and take them to London to be trained.”

This was too much for Bridgitte to hold her silence anymore. “Wait a minute! Don’t I get a say in this? This is my life. Mine. And I don’t want to go away to London! I want to stay in Cleveland. My family’s here and so are all my friends.”

“It is imperative that you be trained,” replied Clarkson. “Most Slayers who are not trained before they are Chosen only survive a few months if that.”

Charles interrupted him before he could continue. “We realize that this comes as a big shock so we will give you some time and come back tomorrow night. I will emphasize again, that Bridgitte must begin training as soon as possible for both her own good and that of the world.” With that, they turned and left, leaving the Sampsons in shocked silence.

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Bridgitte and her parents were up late talking things out that night. Her parents didn’t want her to be taken off to London by herself anymore than Bridgitte did. And despite the fact that they had seen a vampire, they were not completely convinced that such a thing as a Slayer existed, much less that Bridgitte could actually become a Slayer. They did agree, however, that if Slayers did exist, and if there was a chance that Bridgitte would become a Slayer, she needed to train. They didn’t want to believe any of it though. The idea that if she was Chosen, even with training it was likely she wouldn’t even live to see her eighteenth birthday scared all three of them more than they thought possible.
By the time the Watchers returned the next night, the Sampsons had reached a decision. They told the Watchers that no matter what, Bridgitte was staying with them in Cleveland. John Clarkson said that he wouldn’t stand for that. He said that Bridgitte had a sacred duty to come to London with him and train to be a Slayer. The Sampsons remained adamant that Bridgitte stay with them in Cleveland, but after a long, sometimes heated discussion, they conceded that she could train every day after school.

John Clarkson still objected to this. “I have direct orders from Quentin Travers, the head of the Council, that Bridgitte be brought back with us to London.”

But Charles Scott replied, “She won’t train well if we force her to go with us, or need I remind you of what happened the last time? The most important thing is that she is trained at all, everything else is secondary. I can stay here in Cleveland and train her myself.” Victoria Crawford, the red haired woman, immediately said she’d stay too. Bridgitte wondered if there was something going on between her and Charles Scott.

Clarkson obviously still didn’t like it, but he had no choice other than to agree.

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Bridgitte trained for two hours every day after school. She trained in martial arts, combat strategies, and weapons. First the stake, but later swords, crossbows, and more weapons. She also had lessons on demon research. Those were taught by Charles Scott. Surprisingly enough, Victoria Crawford was her martial arts instructor, and a Japanese man, Zheng Wing, taught her weapons lessons. His name always made her laugh. This went on for close to four years. Bridgitte had decided from the start that it was unlikely she’d be Chosen and she became more sure of this with every passing day. By the time her sixteenth birthday came around, she was convinced of it. Most Slayers, she had learned, were Chosen before the age of sixteen.

But a few months later, it happened. She woke up one night with a start. She had been having a nightmare about vampires chasing her. She could feel the blood still rushing through her veins and had tingling sensation all over. She finally went back to sleep until her alarm went off in the morning. She hit it, intending to just hit the
snooze button, but instead had shattered the clock. Her fears had been confirmed when she showed up for training that afternoon...the Slayer had been killed and she had been Chosen. She had of course accepted her duty, however reluctantly. She had always known that she would. Still, it chilled her to the bone that she would likely not live to see her eighteenth birthday. And just when she had been sure that she was a normal girl and could live a normal life after all. She wanted to go away to college in a couple of years, and a few months ago, she had started dating a boy she liked, Billy Watson. She knew she had to push all of that aside though, and concentrate on her duties as the Slayer.

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It had not been easy though. The first week had been rife with tragedy. Bridgitte would never forget the awful events of her second night of patrol. After training, she had met her friends Melanie and Jill at a coffeehouse to hang out for a couple of hours before patrolling. Melanie was the same age as Bridgitte, with long, curly blonde hair and blue eyes. They had been friends since middle school. Jill was a new friend of theirs. She was a year older than them and had shoulder-length brown hair and brown eyes. Both Melanie and Jill loved to gossip, and as the three of them talked, time slipped by so fast that it was well after dark before Bridgitte realized she was late for patrolling. She hurriedly gave her friends a lame excuse about forgetting something, told them that she'd be back later, and ran out the door.

By the time Bridgitte made it to Charles's house, she was forty minutes late for patrol. He lectured her on promptness as she grabbed a couple stakes and vials of holy water from his weapons chest and then she rushed off toward the nearest cemetery. Charles had told her that she should be able to sense vampires, but she didn’t think she had developed that skill yet. She patrolled for the next hour and a half without encountering any vampires. Finally, she decided that since it was such a quiet night, she’d go back to the coffeehouse and see if her friends were still there.

She was about two blocks away from the coffeehouse when she heard a scream come from a nearby alley. Stake in hand, she turned down the alley, and what she saw horrified her. There were two vampires and between them, they cradled the limp body of a girl
with long blonde hair. The vampires looked up as Bridgitte entered the alley, and dropped the girl’s body to the ground. As she approached, Bridgitte recognized Melanie’s face. “Nooool!” She let out a scream of rage as she attacked.

She came in fast and thrust her stake toward the vampire on the left. He easily knocked her arm out wide and knocked her to the ground with a strong backhand. As the vampire leapt on top of her, she pulled out a vial of holy water and smashed it across his face. Howling, he jumped away, and she flipped back to her feet. The other vampire was upon her then, fists swinging. She sidestepped and ducked under the blows, then landed an uppercut to his chin that lifted him off the ground. Bridgitte turned back to the first vampire, who was still yelling and clutching his face. He seemed to have been temporarily blinded by the holy water, and she wasted no time driving a stake through his heart. As she turned back, the remaining vampire threw her against the wall. But she landed on her feet and came right back at him with a jumping kick. She followed that with a roundhouse kick to the side of his head, and then shoved the stunned vampire back against the far wall as she drove her stake through his chest.

*I was too late,* thought Bridgitte as she approached Melanie’s body. *Too late. I should have been able to save her.* She broke down in tears across her friend’s body, promising herself that she would never let anything like this happen again. She had always known that vampires were evil, of course, but it had seemed so abstract a concept until now. Melanie had been one of her best friends for the past four years and now she was just gone.

The next day, the newspapers had reported that Melanie had died as the result of a mugging. Jill told Bridgitte that she had left around 10:00, but Melanie had run into a guy she knew and had decided to stay for a few more minutes. Bridgitte wanted to tell Jill the truth about what had happened, wanted to tell her about vampires and the Slayer, but she knew she couldn’t. Charles had been very adamant that no one was allowed to know that she was the Slayer. The rest of the week was a blur. Bridgitte patrolled for many hours every night, and spent a lot of time during the day with Jill talking about Melanie. It wasn’t until the funeral that weekend that she finally began to accept Melanie’s death.

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Bridgitte’s thoughts turned back to the present as she approached her house. It was an old-fashioned two story brick house. It was a very comfortable size, its three bedrooms giving them an extra one for whenever they had company. Bridgitte went upstairs and decided that despite the late hour, she needed a quick, hot shower before she went to bed. She always liked to shower after fighting vampires, as if to wash their vileness off of her.

Feeling refreshed after her shower, Bridgitte slipped on a robe and went back to her bedroom. She changed into her pajamas and placed the scroll she had recovered from the vampire into her backpack so she could take it to Charles Scott after school. Ugh, school, she thought as she remembered her history test the next day. She changed her alarm clock to an hour earlier so she could study in the morning. She knew she wasn’t going to get much sleep that night.

Bridgitte’s alarm went off at 6 a.m. the next morning. After hitting snooze a couple of times, Bridgitte finally struggled out of bed around 6:15. Not only had she not gotten much sleep the night before but what sleep she had gotten had been riddled with disturbing dreams. They had not all been bad though. She blushed as she remembered one of her dreams that had involved Billy Watson. They had been going out for a few months now, but despite his persistence, she had mostly just made out with him. She had let him feel her up once, but she didn’t think she wanted to go any farther than that anytime soon.

It was the other dream she remembered that disturbed her, though. It had been so vivid! She could still clearly remember every detail. Billy had been in that dream too, but it was much different than the other one.

She was in history class at school. Her teacher was talking about some war, but she wasn’t really paying attention to him. Billy Watson was sitting next to her, wearing a white shirt and blue jeans.

“I really like your dress,” he said. She looked down and saw that she was wearing a silk, rose-colored dress. It was very low cut, showing off much more of her cleavage that she would have liked.

“Thank you,” she said. She looked around, slightly embarrassed. That’s when she noticed her parents sitting on her other side. She blushed a little and tried to cover up more.

“We’re so proud of you,” said her mother.

“Our little warrior,” came her father’s voice.
She looked back over at them. Her father, Tom, was dressed up in a fancy brown suit. He wore a top hat that covered his dark, but thinning hair. Her mother, Lydia, wore a long blue dress. Her straight, light brown hair flowed down just past her shoulders. They both looked at her and smiled, but the smile did not seem to touch their eyes.

Just then, Bridgitte heard her name called over the intercom. She got up and walked over to the door, where Charles Scott and Victoria Crawford were waiting. Charles was wearing a dark red dress shirt and a pair of slacks, while Victoria wore a very elegant black dress. They both smiled at her too, but like her parents, the smiles did not seem to touch their eyes. Charles took her hand in his. “Come along,” he said, and led her down the hallway and outside of the school.

When they stepped outside, it was dark out. She saw a man in a red hat standing in front of them, facing the other way. Slowly, he turned to face them, and she realized that he was not a man at all, but a vampire. He was a very large vampire, and more hideous than most. His hands seemed more like claws, and his eyes blazed a bright yellow as he looked at her and smiled.

That had been when she had woken up. She tried to put the dreams out of her mind and concentrate on studying for her history test. After half an hour of studying, she showered and changed for school, and went downstairs for breakfast.

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A few hours earlier, the vampire Mitch had returned to his master’s lair, happy to have survived his encounter with the Slayer. His master, Altered, lived in an old, abandoned building in the industrial side of the city. “Did you get it?” came Altered’s raspy voice as he approached. “Were my sources correct, that a page of the Karkolet, the prophecies of the Slayer, is right here, buried in that crypt?”

“Yes, master. It was right where you said. Only...”

“Only what?” came Altered’s reply.

“The Slayer, master. She was there tonight. She killed Lenny and Carl and I was lucky to get away. I did manage to get this though.” He handed the piece he had torn off of the scroll to Altered. Altered took it from Mitch with a sneer of contempt. He
examined it and read the prophecy aloud.

*She is destined to face the ancient among the undead.*
*If alone she faces him, then die she will,*
*and he will lead the armies of Hell to feast upon rivers of blood.*
*If not alone, then he shall die the final death,*
*and his death shall close the mouth of Hell.*

Altertod summoned two more vampires, Elena and Joshua, to his side. “You three, find the Slayer tomorrow after sunset. Find out what she has done with the rest of the prophecy. I must have it! If you succeed, we can bring forth the end of the plague of humanity and rule the world as kings. If you fail, well you will not fail me, will you?” With that, he dismissed them.

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Altertod sat long in thought after he dismissed the other vampires. *The ancient among the undead.* That had to be him. Altertod was over 600 years old, although he did not know his exact age. He did not remember anything about his human life except that he had been a sorcerer. And he still was a sorcerer, an extremely powerful one. He did not even remember his real name. He had received his name in Germany over 500 years ago. He had been named Altertod in horror, and had adopted the name in pride. His name literally meant “ancient death”. Altertod tapped a claw to his head in thought. He was so old, that he had started to become more demon than most vampires. He couldn’t assume a human face anymore, only the true face of the vampire, and his hands and feet had turned to claws. He was not sure exactly when the change had happened, but he was glad to be less diseased of humanity than most of his kind. A plan already forming in his mind, he decided he needed to consult his scrying mirror before he went to sleep for the day.

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“Everyone put down your pencils and hand in your tests.” came Mr. Martin’s voice. Frustrated, Bridgitte put her pencil down and passed her test forward. She had left three of the 25 questions blank.
When will I ever need to know such useless information as the name of the general who burned Atlanta, she thought to herself. Still, she thought she had done pretty good on the test. She glanced to her side to see Billy Watson staring at her, and she smiled back at him.

After class, she held Billy’s hand as they walked down the hallway. He invited her to the school’s Homecoming dance at the end of the month. She had expected him to ask her, but it thrilled her nonetheless. She had never been to a formal dance before and she couldn’t wait to pick out a dress for it. She spent most of the rest of the day thinking about the dance and wondering how much her mother would allow her to spend on a dress.

School finally ended for the day, and Bridgitte walked over to Charles Scott’s house to train. He lived in a large, white house just a few blocks from the school. He had converted the huge living room into a training gym for her. Most of the other downstairs rooms were libraries full of books about various demons. “Hi Bridgitte. How was patrol last night?” asked Charles as he opened the door.

“Well, four vamps. Three of them are now dust in the wind,” she replied, “but one ran from me and got away.” she added disappointedly. “Ooh! But there’s this,” she said as she pulled the scroll out of her backpack and handed it to Charles. “I think three of the vamps got it out of some crypt. Seemed important to them. They ran when they saw me, and I think they were even fighting over it. The one that got away made off with the other piece of it.”

Charles took the scroll and examined it closely. “Hmm. I’m not sure, but it looks like ancient Egyptian. It may be a prophecy or a spell, or I’m not really sure yet. I wish you had been able to bring the whole scroll intact. It could be important.” He looked back at Bridgitte then, “Oh, you did your best, I have no doubts.” he said. “Why don’t you head into the gym and train with Victoria as I have a closer look at this.”

Bridgitte agreed with this and went to the gym, where she found Victoria waiting. She spent the next hour and a half training in various martial arts and meditative disciplines. After her training session, she found Charles in one of his libraries, seemingly trying to read about eight books simultaneously. “Any luck?” she asked.

“Nothing yet,” he replied. “During your patrol tonight, why don’t you check out the crypt you saw the vampires come out of last night? Report anything you find back to me tonight.” Bridgitte
agreed to this and headed home for dinner...and to find out how much her mother would allow her to spend on a dress for the Homecoming dance.

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After sunset, Bridgitte went out to patrol. She was pleased with the way things had gone at dinner. Her mother had finally agreed to let her spend $200 on a new dress. She thought about maybe a green dress, to bring out her eyes. Or maybe black, black is always good. She headed back towards the cemetery where she had encountered the vampires the previous night and soon found the crypt. To her disappointment, it was empty other than a few caskets. If there was anything else in here, that vampire must have come back and gotten it, she thought as she mentally kicked herself for not checking inside the crypt the night before.

Bridgitte thoroughly patrolled the graveyard for the next two hours, but saw no vampires. She did have a strange sensation of being watched by unseen eyes, but whenever she turned around, there was only darkness. Around 10:00, Bridgitte decided to report back to Charles. She walked back to Charles’s house and told him that she had found nothing during her patrol. She asked if Charles had been able to translate any of the scroll.

“Not just yet.” he replied, “Although I am fairly certain now it is written in Egyptian. I don’t have the books here to translate it, but the Council is overnighanging them to me. Meanwhile, I suggest you resume your normal patrolling for the rest of the night.”

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A few minutes after Bridgitte left, the bushes outside stirred as a vampire emerged from them. Two more vampires joined her from nearby as they left to report back to their master. “Master, the Slayer gave the rest of the prophecy to her Watcher. He cannot read it, but he will have the books to translate it sometime tomorrow.” Upon hearing this, Alteredod smiled a wicked smile. As he began to give orders to Mitch, Elena, and Joshua, they all smiled too.

Alteredod dismissed them and departed to his quarters. He had a lot of planning to do. Alteredod licked his lips as he thought of tasting another Slayer. It had been way too long since the last one.
Zurich, Switzerland 1711

Alpertod had left his longtime home of Germany two years ago, and had been moving from town to town, cutting a swath of death and destruction in his path. He had been in Zurich for a few weeks now, and had planned on staying there for a while. Zurich was a large enough city that a few deaths here and there didn’t create much of a stir, unlike several of the smaller towns Alpertod had recently passed through. But a few days ago, Alpertod had begun to hear rumors of a Slayer in town. Last night, he had seen her from afar. That would have been enough to send most vampires running for the next city, but Alpertod had decided to stay. It had been a long time since he had faced a real challenge, and he liked challenges. Ones that were played out by his rules at least.

Earlier that evening, Alpertod had summoned all of his followers in Zurich, and given them their orders. Now, he just sat back and waited for the Slayer to fall into his trap. He had sent a pair of vampires out to attack humans at a specific location, knowing this would draw the Slayer’s attention. Then, along with two other vampires, they were to lead her down a series of narrow alleys into a dead end. All along the way, his other vampires would slowly close in behind her, sealing off the only way out. Alpertod hoped that she lived long enough to confront him. He wanted to be the one to drink her.

Alpertod was shaken out of his thoughts by the approach of a vampire. “Everything is happening just as you said, Master.” the vampire said, “She is nearing the dead end and her escape is cut off.”

“Excellent.” replied Alpertod, starting off at a brisk pace down the alley that would bring him to where his followers had cut off the Slayer’s escape.

He arrived just in time to see the Slayer finish off the last of the four vampires he had used as bait. But she was hurt. She had a pronounced limp, and bled from a dozen cuts on her face and arms. She seemed to be around 15 years of age, hardly more than a child, really. She had a plain face and long, dark hair. And she was scared. Alpertod could see the fear etched on her face, and he could smell it, almost taste it. Apparently, she had sensed that there were more
vampires around.

Altertod moved through the crowd of vampires and stepped out into the alley in front of the Slayer. Neither of them spoke a single word. They just stared at each other for a moment, and then Altertod began to slowly walk toward her. The Slayer backed up against the wall, in a defensive position. Altertod continued his slow approach until he was almost within arms reach of her. He towered over her by more than a foot.

The Slayer swung first. She lashed out with a jumping roundhouse kick aimed for Altertod’s head. But he ducked under it and punched out, his right fist connecting with the Slayer’s cheek as she landed. She staggered back a couple steps, and came in more cautiously. Stake in her left hand, she feigned a stab toward Altertod’s chest, but as he reached to block her arm, she backhanded him with her right, and followed that up with a kick to the back of his right knee. Altertod went down to one knee, and the Slayer brought her left knee up to connect with his chin, sending him reeling backwards.

But Altertod was quicker than she thought, and even as she drove her stake toward his chest, he caught her arm and broke her wrist, forcing her stake to drop harmlessly to the ground. He pulled her toward him and hoisted her into the air, throwing her against the side of a building. She hit face first, shattering her nose. She struggled to maintain consciousness as blood streamed down her face.

Altertod punched straight out at her, but the Slayer ducked and his fist pounded against the brick wall. The Slayer turned to run, but the only way out was cut off by fifteen vampires. She turned back to Altertod, and he could see in her eyes that she knew she was about to die. She leaped straight at him as if to tackle him to the ground, but he sidestepped and once again, threw her into the brick wall. She bounced off of it with a resounding thud and sank to her knees. Altertod was upon her then, fangs tearing at her throat. The power contained in her blood was amazing, and Altertod cried out in ecstasy as he drained the life out of her, and then let her lifeless body drop to the ground.

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The next morning, Bridgitte woke up feeling refreshed. She had gotten to sleep relatively early the night before, around 12:30, and had not had any recurrences of the disturbing dreams from the pre-
vious night. After a shower and a quick breakfast, she headed off to school. She couldn’t wait until after school, when she planned on going to the mall to start looking at dresses. School was fairly uneventful. She had managed to get a B on her history test. She didn’t like the minus, but she was still happy she had pulled a B on it. She spent her lunch with Billy, as they talked about what they should do that weekend.

After school, Bridgitte met up with Jill, and they were off to the mall. She was sure that Charles wouldn’t be too mad if she missed training just this once. And besides, it would give him a chance to work on translating that scroll. She’d stop by his place as soon as she had finished shopping. Bridgitte and Jill spent the next few hours shopping and gossiping. They had become best friends in the months since Melanie’s death. Bridgitte wanted to tell Jill the truth, that she was the Slayer, and she had been very close to telling Jill on several occasions, but she had never quite been able to do it. So she and Jill just talked about other things: dresses for the dance, boys, and school. Jill had already bought her dress the previous weekend, and Bridgitte hoped she could find one as pretty.

After visiting six different stores, Bridgitte had narrowed her choice down to four dresses. She looked at her watch, and realized that it was already time for dinner. She decided she’d have her mother take her back to the mall on Sunday and she could make her final decision then. She said goodbye to Jill, and with a last glance at a black, strapless gown, she left for home.

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Charles Scott had woken up early that morning. He rolled over to see his lovely Victoria still asleep beside him. It was rare for him to be out of bed before her, and he decided to let her sleep a while longer. Charles went down to the gym for a morning workout. When he was finished, Victoria was up, and made breakfast for the two of them before she left. Early that afternoon, the package he had been expecting arrived with the volumes he needed to translate the scroll. Charles made himself a quick lunch, and set to work translating.

It was very arduous work translating the scroll, but after many hours of work, Charles had translated a good portion of it. And he had been right, it was important; more important than he had
imagined. The fate of the world may depend on what is written here, he thought. He recognized it as being a page out of the Karkoleth, the prophecies of the Slayer. The Council had only obtained five or six such pages previously. Some of what had been written there had helped them discover how to identify likely candidates to be Chosen. But no page that they had dealt with such cataclysmic events as this one did. No other page they had dealt with the apocalypse. Charles knew, of course, that Slayers had prevented the end of the human world before. Those cases were well documented. But this was different. This was beyond anything any Slayer had done before. He again read over what he had translated so far.

*Three thousand, three hundred, thirty-three Suns from now,*
*it is then that she will be called.*
*She is the summer Slayer,*
*the Champion of the Light.*

*It is fated that she die with glory*
*and by the red tree, live again for the dawn.*
*The fate of the world,*
*she balances on the edge of a sword.*
*To save the world,*
*she must kill the one she loves,*
*and bring him back again.*
*Death shall be her lover twice,*
*and shall be gifted to her thrice.*

*Two roads ahead there lie.*
*Which will she take, which will she travel?*
*She will purge evil from the face of the earth,*
*like no Slayer ever before,*
*or she will sink the earth into the depths of hell,*
*and humanity will be nevermore.*
Three thousand, three hundred, and thirty-three suns, thought Charles, that has to mean 3,333 years. He thought back to everything he had ever learned about the Karkoleth. It had been written in ancient Egypt and to the best of his knowledge, everything written in it had come to pass. When was it written? He remembered the Watcher’s Council had carbon dated some of the pages. Chills went down his spine as he remembered the results. It had been dated at 3,300 years old, give or take a years. This could be it! This summer Slayer could be his Slayer, Bridgitte! After all, she had been chosen during the Summer.

Suddenly Charles realized that he hadn’t seen Bridgitte yet today. He looked at his watch and was surprised to see that it was after 8:00 already. He had been so engrossed in his work that he hadn’t even noticed it had gotten dark outside. Where is Bridgütte? Why did she not come for her usual training? Charles decided that this was too important to wait for her to come to him. He would go find her. He still had to translate more of the scroll, and notify the Council of his findings, but first he must find Bridgitte. He must know why the vampires were so interested in this page, and what was said in the missing piece. The fate of the world could be at stake. Charles left a note for Victoria, gathered up the scroll and his translation, and headed out to find Bridgitte.

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Before Charles had even gotten within ten feet of his car, two vampires jumped out of the shadows and attacked him. Charles cursed under his breath for being so careless in his haste and pulled out a small cross that he kept with him at all times. He shoved it toward the face of the male vampire, who hissed and recoiled. The female vampire, though, grabbed him from behind and lunged for his throat. Charles placed the cross on the back of her right hand and she cried out in pain and released her grip on his shoulder. Charles pivoted to the left and swung out in a hard right cross that connected with the female’s face. As she staggered back, Charles made a break for his car, fumbling to get out his keys. He almost made it.

Just as he reached the car and found the right key, another vampire emerged to his right. This one did not seem like an ordinary vampire though. He was big, very big, and looked extremely ancient.
The vampire had claws instead of hands and he raked one of these across Charles’s face, causing blood to stream down his cheeks.

“So,” rasped Alpertod, grabbing Charles by the throat, “you too would have the Karkoleth. Very well, then. You shall witness its prophecy fulfilled. You shall witness the death of your Slayer, and the downfall of humanity. For it is written in the Karkoleth that your Slayer will face me and if she faces me alone, she will die and I will lead my armies to conquer the earth.”

Charles tried to struggle away from Alpertod’s impossibly strong grasp. Then he noticed that the other two vampires were now on either side of him. He was surrounded. The ancient one struck him with a heavy blow across the back of the head. As he sank into unconsciousness, his last thought was that he had to somehow get to Bridgitte or the world was doomed.

Joshua and Elena carried the limp body of the Watcher with them as they followed Alpertod back to his lair. Alpertod carried the scroll and the Watcher’s translations. Once back to his lair, Alpertod had commanded Joshua and Elena to tie the Watcher up against a wall and not to drink him. He had then departed for his private chambers.

Alpertod once again got out his scrying mirror and intoned the incantation that allowed him to communicate with the demon Echthorziath, his master. “Have you done as I asked?” the voice of Echthorziath sounded in Alpertod’s head.

“We have the Watcher and the scroll,” replied Alpertod. He knew he didn’t need to speak aloud for Echthorziath to hear him, but he did out of habit anyway. “The Slayer will come here tonight and I will feast on her blood myself. It has been too long since I have tasted a Slayer, almost three centuries.”

“And her blood will complete the spell, and open a portal so that I may return to the earth. Nothing will be able to stop me once that happens. We will destroy the plague of humanity and you shall rule the world as a king by my side,” came the voice of Echthorziath.

The demon could hardly wait. He had been banished from the earth countless millennia ago, when the way for humans was first being prepared. Now, he would finally return in all his glory, in all his horror, and rid the earth of humans. There may be a few humans who survived, those who worshipped him and had served him well over the years, but they were few and far between. He did find it
ironic that the current Slayer was in the place humans and vampires called Cleveland though. For this Cleveland had borne witness to many sacrifices in his honor. One of his most devout worshippers, a man who lived in what he called Chicago, had offered him the blood of many virgins over the years to curse this Cleveland.

This man and many others among his human worshippers were involved in what they called sports. They would do anything to succeed at whimsical tasks. Ecthorziath laughed. And yet, by the gifts Ecthorziath had given him, this man was now worshipped by many, many humans just as he worshipped Ecthorziath himself. Yes, it would be entertaining to keep a few humans around. Another of his most devout worshippers lived in this Chicago too, but he had been originally from an island where voodoo and worshipping demons was very common. Ecthorziath had granted that one strength, exceptional vision, and telepathic abilities. Some of his worshippers involved in these sports did not participate themselves, but led others. These were his favorites because they recruited many followers for him. Two of them in particular had gained the favor of Ecthorziath. One of them had served him well for over 40 years, mostly from the place he called Tallahassee. The other man, who lived a little farther north, in a place he called Knoxville, had only started worshipping Ecthorziath within the last few years. Ecthorziath decided that he would allow a few of these to be his slaves and witness the splendor of his world.

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After dinner, and convincing her mother to take her back to the mall that weekend, Bridgitte left for Charles’s house. She arrived there and knocked on the door, but there was no answer. She tried the handle and it was locked. She knocked loudly for the next few minutes, growing frustrated. *His car is still in the driveway, so he must be here*, she thought to herself. Finally, she gave up and turned to leave.

As she walked away, she heard a voice behind her say “Our master has your Watcher.” She turned and saw two vampires standing there, one male and one female. Before she could attack them, one of them held up something. She took a couple of steps closer and her blood froze as she recognized Charles’s pocketwatch. “You must come with us back to our master at once, or your Watcher will die.”
Bridgitte stood there for a moment, stunned. She couldn’t believe what was happening. *Is Charles even still alive? I know I’ll be walking into a trap if I go with them. I need backup. I have to find Victoria and Zheng. Oh God. Charles can’t be dead, he just can’t!*

“You must come now and come alone.” said the female vampire, as if reading her thoughts.

Bridgitte suddenly exploded into action. She rushed straight at the female vampire, pulling out a stake as she ran. Just before she reached the vampire, she stopped suddenly and pivoted to face the male vampire charging straight at her. Before he had time to react, she punched the stake through his heart. His dying cry echoed as he turned to dust that blew away on the wind. She turned back to the female vampire. “Take me to your master,” she said.

After twenty minutes of walking in silence, the vampire stopped and motioned to the large, seemingly abandoned building that loomed up in front of them. “In there.”

“My Watcher is in there too?” Bridgitte asked.

The vampire nodded, and turned to enter the building. As she turned, Bridgitte pulled her stake back out and drove it through the vampire’s heart from behind. *I may be walking into a trap, but the odds are evened up a little now,* she thought, as the vampire turned to dust. Bridgitte opened the door, and entered.

The place seemed just as abandoned on the inside. Bridgitte started to wonder if this was in fact the place Charles was being held captive. Then she heard a groan coming from the next room. She rushed in to see Charles tied up against the back wall. She could sense vampires nearby, but none were in the room. It was totally empty, save for her and Charles. She suppressed a slight bubble of hope that maybe she could get Charles out of there before any vampires realized she was there, and ran over to him.

He seemed barely conscious and dried blood caked his face. “Bridgitte,” he whispered.

“I’m here, Charles. I’m here,” she replied, “and I’m going to get you out of here.” The knots were very tight, but after a minute, she succeeded in freeing him. “Let’s get out of here!” she said, draping his arm across her shoulders in an effort to help support him. But just then, his features changed, contorting into the hideous visage of a vampire, and he lunged for her throat.

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Instinctively, Bridgitte shoved him away from her with all her strength, and lashed out with a jumping kick. *No, oh God no! He can’t! They can’t! They’ve turned Charles! No, this can’t be happening,* she thought, her mind reeling. As she stood there in shock, Charles got back to his feet and attacked. He feigned a right cross, and then swept her legs out from under her. Bridgitte went down hard and he was upon her. Purely on instinct, she kicked out at him as he lunged for her. She connected, sending him staggering backwards, and she leapt back to her feet.

Her mind would not function. She was going purely on instinct. But her instinct was that of the Slayer. She kicked out with her left leg, and Charles ducked under it, but before he had a chance to do anything else, she brought her leg back down, her heel connecting with the back of his head, sending him sprawling to the floor. She lunged for him with her stake, but he rolled out of the way and scrambled to his feet. The Slayer swung out with her right fist, but Charles had already sidestepped and punched Bridgitte with a right cross of his own. “I trained you. I know all your moves, your strengths and weaknesses. How can you possibly hope to defeat me,” he taunted her.

Bridgitte had no reply. Of course, Victoria and Zheng had actually been the ones to train her, but they had done so according to Charles’s instructions. For several minutes, they fought to a standstill, each one anticipating the other’s next move.

Bridgitte pivoted on her left foot. She knew that Charles would expect a roundhouse kick with her right. She started to bring her leg up and Charles predictably ducked. Suddenly, she stopped, dropped to her knees, and punched straight out with her right fist. She connected with Charles’s nose, knocking his head back. At the same time, her left hand shot out in an underhand motion, her stake firmly in its grasp. It connected with Charles’s chest as he fell backwards, the stake penetrating his heart. He clutched at his chest as he exploded into a shower of dust. She remained on her knees, and clasped her hands over her face, finally allowing her tears to flow.

Bridgitte didn’t hear Altered approaching her from behind. She was still sobbing loudly as Altered began to bend down toward her neck. She finally sensed him there and started to turn, but as she did, he struck her hard across the face. She went sprawling across the floor, the stake falling from her grasp. Altered was on her in
an instant, his fangs just inches from Bridgitte’s throat. She pushed
his head back with one hand and tried to punch out with the other.

Her legs were of no use, trapped under Altered. Unable to
force him off of her, she rolled over, so that she was now on top
of Altered. He laughed and gripped her tightly as she struggled to
stand up. As she pummeled his face, he rolled back over so that he
was on top again. They continued to roll back and forth as they
fought, Altered’s fangs inching ever closer to Bridgitte’s throat as
she became worn out by grief and exertion. She knew she was losing
this fight, but there was nothing she could do. Altered was back
on top of her, fangs less than an inch from her neck, and her legs
were trapped underneath him.

Altered could sense that his victory was imminent. He wanted
to treasure this moment. This Slayer was prettier than the last one
he had tasted, with her beautiful, creamy neck, her full lips, deep
green eyes, her long brunette hair. Altered yelled triumphantly as
he grasped the top of the Slayer’s hair and dragged her that last
inch closer.

Bridgitte cried out as Altered’s fangs sank deeply into her neck.
Her blood flowed freely into Altered’s mouth, a trickle of it stream-
ing down her neck. Then she felt the fangs withdraw.

“The power! I can feel it flowing through me!” shouted Altered,
and he sank his fangs back into the Slayer’s neck.

Bridgitte felt weak, her vision started to cloud. Her hands reached
out...and her right and touched something. Her stake! In what
seemed like slow motion to her, Bridgitte grasped the stake with
her right hand. With her last remaining strength, she brought her
right arm up around Altered, and drove the stake through his back.

“Noooo!” came Altered’s cry as he turned to dust, and suddenly
Bridgitte was just lying on the floor, her clothes covered in a fine
dust. She knew that she had to get out of there. She could sense
at least four or five more vampires in the room. Everything felt like
slow-motion to her as she tried to get to her feet. Her head swam,
and her vision blurred. She managed to make it up to her knees,
when she felt a cold hand on either side of her head. Everything
seemed to be spinning. She wondered if this was just some horrible
dream. The last thing Bridgitte heard was the loud crack as the
vampire snapped her neck, then everything went black.

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From the other side of the scrying mirror, the demon Ecthoraizath looked on and cried out in anger as Alertodd turned to dust. He watched the vampire, Mitch, break the Slayer’s neck. It mattered not at that point. None of the other vampires were skilled enough in the black arts to open the portal and bring him forth. But he thought to himself that somewhere, another Slayer was being Chosen right now, and maybe that one’s blood would set him free. He would just have to bide his time until then. For now, he always had the sacrifices his human worshippers would offer him, and the strength that those would give him.

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Epilogue

Los Angeles, that night

Buffy Summers woke up with a start. What a dream! A nightmare, actually. It had been so vivid. She was being chased by all these creepy guys with lumpy faces and pointy teeth. She thought they might have been vampires, or maybe some other movie monsters. She could still feel her heart pumping, blood rushing through her veins, giving her a sort of tingling sensation all over. She felt different somehow, but she couldn’t quite put her finger on it...