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"Mind and Heart with Spirit Joined": The Buffyverse as an Information System

(1) The fourth season of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* ended with Buffy fighting the first Slayer, Sineya, for the lives of her friends ("Restless," 4022). "Alone," Sineya keeps repeating, reminding Buffy that the Slayer has always been "the one girl in all the world with the power to fight the forces of darkness" ("Welcome to the Hellmouth," 1001)."[1] But Buffy replies, "I am not alone." And perhaps for the first time since she has come to Sunnydale, she believes it.

(2) This gang of four—Buffy, Giles, Willow and Xander—represents a new evolution in Slaying, as their presence in this primordial dreamscape confirms. No longer a single point of resistance against supernatural evil, the Slayer is now backed up by a network of individuals who share her goal of keeping the darker urges of both the supernatural and the human in check. By contributing their own unique talents for discovery and action, they form the core of a system that helps Buffy to be the "most powerful Slayer [any demon] has ever faced" ("Innocence," 2014)—and the currency of that system is information.

What Do You Know? The Supernatural Meme

(3) A system is defined as a set of interdependent components (people, materials, machines, etc.) united to serve a common purpose. A system has distinct boundaries, which differentiate it from its environment. In the case of an information system, it processes inputs like facts, observations, and data, to produce outputs, like knowledge. As Buffy, Giles, Willow, and Xander work together they form their own information system. They identify demonic activity (inputs), try to understand it using books, the Internet, magic, and other information gathering techniques (processing) to kill the demons or, at least, rescue the innocent (outputs). They also maintain a boundary that separates them from those who don't know of the reality of the supernatural (environment).

(4) One of the most revolutionary, and hotly contested, ideas to link evolution and information is the idea of the meme. Richard Dawkins, in his 1976 book *The Selfish Gene*,[2] devoted a chapter to "Memes: The New Replicators." Dawkins was interested in transferring into the cultural realm his idea of the gene as a unit which copies itself and, through copying errors, leads to evolution. This "unit of cultural transmission" (192) he called a meme.

(5) Like genes, memes are replicators; their purpose is to infect (i.e. reproduce in) other hosts to ensure their survival. Selfish genes (and, by extension, memes) are those that "have no foresight" (Dawkins 200), that reproduce themselves often at the expense of their host's life. The degree to which a meme can infect a wide variety of hosts is the measure of its survival value. But what makes a meme, in the context of this informational Darwinism, fitter than all the rest?

> What is it about the idea . . . that gives it its stability and penetrance in the cultural environment? The survival value of the . . . meme in the meme pool results from its great psychological appeal. It provides a superficially plausible answer to deep and troubling questions about existence. (Dawkins 193)

Dawkins is referring specifically to the idea of god, saying that the reason the meme of an unknowable creator/protector has propagated so widely since the first time the idea was thought is because it gives people comfort. Even though they may have no tangible evidence that god exists, they are able to carry on because the meme gives them a way of understanding and coping with the world around them.

Ignorance is Bliss

(6) Prior to Buffy's arrival, the dominant meme among the residents of Sunnydale was that everything is as it appears to be—that life is normal. Any evidence suggesting supernatural activity is conveniently rationalized away. We see an example of this at the end of the pilot episode, when Cordelia tells her group of hangers-on that the people who take over the Bronze and start killing the students were rival gangs. The idea that they could be vampires was never a possibility. It is easier to rationalize the inexplicable than to investigate it. They cling to the normal meme because it lets them avoid any situations that might force them to confront a truth they are unprepared to accept.

(7) But there are a few who recognize this place as the Hellmouth. At first only Giles knows that the city is rife with supernatural evil, but even he is unprepared for its extent until his research uncovers the original name of the town: “The Spanish who first settled here called it 'Boca del Infierno'. Roughly translated, 'Hellmouth'. It's a sort of, um, portal between this reality and the next” (“The Harvest,” 1002). The normal meme is obviously strong if the residents can ignore the nature of their environment.

(8) But this is a selfish meme, insofar as it puts the lives of its hosts in jeopardy. To a certain extent, ignoring the supernatural keeps the residents safe. They do not try to dig deeper into the strange occurrences in the cemetery, or investigate the thefts of blood from the hospitals (“Vampire Meals-On-Wheels.” “The Dark Age,” 2008), so the local demons don’t view them as a threat. But they do view the humans as prey. When the supernatural tries to take over, the humans who have conveniently not acknowledged its existence don’t know enough to get out of its way.

CORDON SANITAIRE: COMPUTERS AND BOOKS

(9) The Slayer’s role is to fight the forces with which others cannot cope or understand. To protect others from themselves as well as the supernatural, Buffy must propagate the normal meme by helping them rationalize any strange occurrences. This includes explaining her frequently odd behavior:

> **Jesse:** Well, you know, we wanted to welcome ya, make ya feel at home, unless you have a scary home . . .
>
> **Xander:** And to return this. (*holds up the stake*) The only thing I can think is that you're building a really little fence. (*hands it to her*)
>
> **Buffy:** (*takes it*) Hah, no, um, a-a-actually it was for self-defense. Everyone has them in L.A. Pepper spray is just so passé. (“Hellmouth,” 1001)

Buffy’s lie here is actually in defense of the normal meme. To keep people safe she must curtail their curiosity. But when Willow and Xander are attacked by vampires in the graveyard and Jesse is abducted, keeping them out of the game is no longer possible, however hard Buffy and Giles may try:

> **Giles:** The Slayer hunts vampires, Buffy is a Slayer, don’t tell anyone. I think that’s all the vampire information you need.
>
> **Xander:** Except for one thing: how do you kill them?
>
> **Buffy:** You don’t kill them. I do. (“Harvest,” 1002).

But it is too late. Willow and Xander been very forcefully rid of the normal meme, and Giles and Buffy have provided the explanations that allow its supernatural counterpart to take its place.

(10) Much of the show revolves around the battle for dominance between the supernatural and normal memes. Unlike the *X-Files* (in which the two memes have their personifications in Mulder and Scully), the battle is not over which one is true [3] but rather which one will increase its survival value by spreading. With Willow and Xander’s help, Buffy and Giles are able to keep the supernatural meme in check. They erect a sort of *cordon sanitaire*, a defensible boundary between the “infected” and as yet pristine areas of Sunnydale. In essence, they shield themselves and their demon-battling activities from the rest of the town.

(11) As lifetime residents of the town, Willow and Xander are able to ask questions and go places where Buffy and Giles, newcomers to Sunnydale, would draw suspicion. Willow also brings her computer skills to the mix. While Giles, with his multilingual capabilities and vast historical knowledge, thrives in the realm of ancient occult texts, it is

Willow who can use “that dread machine” (Giles’ so very British reference to the library computer) to find the current, specific local information they so often need:

> Cut to the library. Willow has the city plans on the computer monitor.
>
> **Buffy:** There it is.
>
> **Willow:** That [sewer] runs under the graveyard.
>
> **Xander:** I don't see any access.
>
> **Giles:** So, all the city plans are just, uh, open to the public?
>
> **Willow:** Um, well, I-in a way. I sort of stumbled onto them when I accidentally decrypted the city council's security system.
>
> **Xander:** Someone’s been naughty. (“Harvest,” 1002)

As the show progresses, the gang will use the computer to access information about the city, their fellow students, and even to call up a group to conquer a demon that has escaped into the Internet (“I Robot,” 1008). They also make wide use of the private collection of occult books that Giles keeps behind the desk and interspersed among the stacks. They are often able to expand their information system without venturing outside of the library; when they do it is usually into the anonymity of cyberspace. This indirect method of information gathering prevents them from rousing suspicions among the unsuspecting population by asking too many strange questions, thereby preventing the spread of the supernatural meme.

(12) The *cordon sanitaire* also works in their favor by keeping them hidden from any demons that might view them as a threat. They can work in secret, in the library, without attracting too much attention. When they need information that the books and computers cannot provide, they have their supernatural “spies”; those in whom supernatural infection has been contained, like Angel, Anya and Oz, and the non-contagious carriers of the supernatural meme, like Jenny and Willy the snitch. Each of these individuals can traverse the *cordon sanitaire* because they walk in both worlds, and are, to varying degrees, accepted on both sides.

THE GHOST IN THE MACHINE

(13) The supernatural manifests itself in many forms, and most of them make an appearance at one time or another in Sunnydale. There are a few benign representatives, like the spies mentioned above, but these helpful individuals are few and far between. For the most part the supernatural cadre is composed of “zombies, werewolves, incubi, succubi, everything you've ever dreaded was under your bed, but told yourself couldn't be by the light of day. They're all real!” (Giles in “Hellmouth,” 1001). These monsters don’t generally walk around with their game faces on; [4] they masquerade as regular humans, in order to wreak havoc on the unsuspecting. Even though Buffy and the gang are well aware of the persistence and ubiquity of supernatural evil, they occasionally get caught with their guard down.

THE DEPTHS OF KNOWLEDGE: LOVE AND DEATH

(14) Although the gang is deeply committed to fighting supernatural evil, they are still human—and most of them are teenage humans. Their biggest vulnerability is love. All of the members of the gang have become romantically involved with quasi-supernatural beings at one time or another, with most of those relationships ending in near disaster. In some cases, a supernatural predator senses an emotional weak spot and exploits it, drawing a member of the gang into a prey/victim relationship, like Xander’s crush on a teacher who turns out to be a praying mantis “Teacher’s Pet,” 1004), or Willow’s brief but torrid online relationship with Malcolm, who is really the demon Moloch, the Corruptor (“I Robot, You Jane,” 1008). By the time the demon’s human façade begins to crumble, the victim is too emotionally invested in the relationship to notice. There are also the relationships in which the lover knows of the beloved’s supernatural background, but continues the relationship anyway. When the supernatural and the human come into conflict (Oz turning into a werewolf, or Angel losing his soul) emotions frequently prevent them from recognizing the truth of the situation.

(15) In the context of the information system, romantic emotions function as noise. They are unintelligible or false signals that disrupt communication, sometimes destroying it altogether. Emotional noise is the deathblow for the

Buffy/Angel and Giles/Jenny relationships. The idea that Angel might “turn bad,” revert to being the demonic Angelus, is something that is never far from anyone’s mind. In fact, his vampire sire, Darla, preys upon this suspicion by feeding on Buffy’s mother, then setting up Angel to take the blame (“Angel,” 1007).

(16) But the only one who really knows how Angel can lose his soul is Jenny. Charged by her Romany clan to observe Angel and ensure his continued suffering, she keeps her knowledge of the specifics of the curse secret. Torn between familial obligation and concern for Giles and his friends, she does not tell them (or, indeed, learn the crucial specifics herself) until it is too late; Buffy has lost her virginity to Angel, and he has, once again, lost his soul. Because Buffy cannot bring herself to kill Angelus when she has the chance, he is able to kill Jenny before she can recreate the curse that will restore his soul.

(17) More than just a metaphor for the lure of the dark side, these romantic tragedies act as entropy, or disorder, in the information system. Getting too close to the supernatural interferes with the gang’s ability to communicate effectively, producing tragic consequences. Entropy is a natural part of any system. In this one, it gives supernatural evil the opportunity to thrive.

IT’S THE END OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT (BUT I FEEL FINE)

(18) The fact that these human/demon relationships succeed at all shows that the supernatural can be embraced without a subsequent loss of humanity. Buffy and the gang have a live-and-let-live attitude toward the supernatural. They are not looking to wipe it out but to coexist with it—and sometimes use it to their advantage. Willow incorporates her chemistry experience, Giles’s early tutelage, and Jenny’s technopagan files in an increasingly successful study of witchcraft. The gang regularly employs supernatural weapons, charms and spells to defeat demons, often employing the same ones the demons try to use to defeat them. The supernatural is not inherently evil. Usually the only supernatural types that Buffy proactively goes after are vampires, because their existence is predicated upon the destruction of humans. Demons that don’t necessarily have any quarrel with humans, like the ones found in Willy’s bar, are more or less left to their own devices. But occasionally there are those überdemons who want nothing less to take over the world: The Master with his Harvest, The Mayor and his Ascension, and Angelus’ activation of the Judge, to name a few. This is a retrograde impulse on the part of the supernatural population, since the blindness of Sunnydale residents makes it a pretty good place to be a demon. The vamps can pick off a tasty little treat anytime they like—if Buffy isn’t around. Giles tells us in the pilot episode that the Earth was once their private, hellish playground, and some want to remake that world. This would seem to be demonkind’s very own selfish meme. Each of these very public attempts to dominate the system lead not only to many demon deaths, they bring the Sunnydale residents that much closer to understanding the truth of the Hellmouth.

INFORMATION EXPLOSION

(19) In Buffy’s first two years at Sunnydale High, she does what she can to keep her identity a secret and knowledge of alternate realities to a minimum. But in the process of thwarting at least three major attempts by supernatural evil to take over the world, not to mention the machinations of several minor demons, some things have slipped out (like Willow’s evil twin from the demon dimension in Doppelgängland [3016]). The only natural resistance the community of high school students has to the supernatural is ignorance. Those who Buffy cannot save are usually destroyed, learning the price of their self-delusion only when it is too late. The system retains its balance by a process of natural selection in which those who know but are unprepared for the knowledge are destroyed, and those who are ignorant remain. Eventually it becomes apparent to many of the survivors that Buffy’s presence is not exactly a coincidence. While this may be a failure of the group’s ability to propagate the normal meme, it is actually helps prepare the community to accept the supernatural presence in their midst. The students come to this realization almost unconsciously, but it is the crucial first step to surviving the biggest day of their lives.

EPIDEMIC: KEEPING THE MEME ALIVE

(20) Because the students can’t yet comprehend the supernatural, they don’t really understand the dangers from which Buffy has saved them. In "The Prom" (3020, they make their first overt acknowledgement of this fact:

> **Jonathan:** This is actually a new category. First time ever. I guess there were a lot of write-in ballots, and, um, the prom committee asked me to read this. "We're not good friends. Most of us never found the time to get to know you, but that doesn't mean we haven't noticed you. We don't talk about it much, but it's no secret that Sunnydale High isn't really like other high schools. A lot of weird stuff happens here."

Crowd outbursts: Zombies! Hyena people! Snyder! (laughter)

Jonathan: "But, whenever there was a problem or something creepy happened, you seemed to show up and stop it. Most of the people here have been saved by you, or helped by you at one time or another. We're proud to say that the Class of '99 has the lowest mortality rate of any graduating class in Sunnydale history." (applause from the crowd) "And we know at least part of that is because of you. So the senior class, offers its thanks, and gives you, uh, this." Jonathan produces a multicolored, glittering, miniature umbrella with a small metal plaque attached to the shaft.

Jonathan: It's from all of us, and it has written here, "Buffy Summers, Class Protector." ("The Prom")

(21) They still don't understand, but they have demonstrated their faith in Buffy because she has demonstrated her ability to protect them. Unlike the god meme, which often replicates in spite of evidence to the contrary, believing in Buffy's power does not require blind faith. The tangible evidence of her actions, even if it is little more than noise at this point, is what allows the students to take their first step beyond willful ignorance of the supernatural. This public acknowledgement is proof that the normal meme has begun to lose its hold on the class. When the gang enlists the aid of those they have helped in the past—Harmony, Jonathon,[5] Percy[6], and Larry[7]—they are more than ready to spread the word of what needs to be done at graduation. The epidemic replication of the supernatural meme proceeds for the most part offscreen, so we don't know exactly how it happens. But it's easy to imagine the small group fanning out, gathering friends, saying "Something big is gonna happen at graduation today. Buffy needs our help," and multiple versions of this earlier conversation:

Xander: Vampires are real; a lot of 'em live in Sunnydale. Willow'll fill you in.

Willow: I know it's hard to accept at first. . .

Oz: No, actually, it explains a lot . . . (Surprise)[8]

(22) Under the leadership of the gang, and with Angel's help, the whole class rises up to fight the Mayor and his vampire minions. It is the survival of the fittest. Although there are casualties,[9] the class as a whole survives because the gang has helped them make a successful transition from the normal to the supernatural meme. Buffy finishes off the Mayor by leading him on a chase through the halls of the school and eventually to the library where Giles has planted tons of fertilizer and explosives (after packing up his books, of course). With Buffy by his side, Giles throws the switch—and the library explodes.

The Center Cannot Hold

(23) The exploding library is symbolic of the information explosion itself. The normal meme is selfish, and has become so detrimental that the system can no longer compensate for it. As Xander says while regaling Giles' super-librarian status, "Everyone forgets, Willow, that knowledge is the ultimate weapon." ("Never Kill a Boy on the First Date," 1005). It is important that the traditional information provider to throw the switch:

Buffy (turns to Giles coming up beside them): "You feel up to it?"
Giles (taking off his glasses): "Ah, I suppose it should be I. It's strangely fitting in a grotesque fashion." ("Graduation Day, Part 2, 3022)

By spreading the supernatural meme and exploding the library, the librarian recognizes the transformation of information and its role within the system. It is no longer something to be protected, or to protect other from. As Fritz said about information and the Internet in a bit of first season foreshadowing, "Information isn't bound up anymore" ("I, Robot," 1008). His actions give the students the knowledge, the power, to defeat that which threatens their lives.

(24) The students move from denial, to awareness, to action—the crucial vector of transformation in the system. The information explosion causes the boundaries of the system to collapse so everyone can participate in their

own defense. Accept the meme, join the system, and defeat the threat. But this systemic expansion is temporary. While the knowledge that precipitated it cannot be lost or easily rationalize by the students, most of them will probably assume that the Mayor's death means that all of the demons have died, and they will go on with their lives as before. But the supernatural meme now floats free, and in its freedom lies the possibility for its survival.

SCIENCE AND MAGIC

(25) Since the information in the Buffyverse is no longer contained there is no way of knowing into whose hands it will fall. The government invades Sunnydale to try to subvert its resident supernatural power for its own ends. Like the überdemons that have come before, the government wants to take control of forces they don't understand to dominate the system. They don't realize that rules of their environment don't necessarily apply to this one. At the same time, Willow is expanding her enquiries into the supernatural world by enlisting others in her quest. She does not seek to transform the system but does succeed in transforming herself.

THE HEIGHTS OF KNOWLEDGE: LOVE AND MAGIC

(26) Willow's forays into magic have been (with a few notable exceptions) small and unsuccessful. Since Jenny's death at the hands of Angelus, Willow has had to explore the world of magic in isolation. She tries to join the Wicca group that meets in her dorm, but they are more concerned with bake sales than binding spells. But it does give her the opportunity to see Tara for the first time, a fellow student and practicing witch. Like Willow, Tara has been studying magic in isolation, since the death of her mother (also a witch). Neither one alone has confidence in their powers, or themselves. But combined, the mystical, physical, and emotional come together for them in a new way. Their explorations of the supernatural free them from many of their inhibitions.

(27) Unlike those who have gone before, Willow and Tara's relationship seems to actually remove noise from the system. When Willow brings up the subject of casting spells at Wicca group, the "wanna blessed be's" ("Hush," 4010) look on her with disdain, but Tara is intrigued. The two don't talk at that point because Tara's self-conscious stutter won't let her get a word out. So when the entire town loses their voices, Tara seeks Willow out, hoping they can do some spellwork to try to help. They meet up while the murderous Gentlemen are pursuing Tara, and take refuge in the dorm's laundry room. There is no lock, and they are unable to barricade the door. Willow tries to move the soda machine with telekinesis, but her powers are too weak to make it do more than shake. But when she and Tara join hands, they are able to fling the soda machine against the door, preventing the Gentlemen from coming in and stealing their hearts. This wordless manifestation of their combined powers hints at the powerful union ahead.

(28) Their skills develop in parallel with their relationship. In some cases they use their powers much as Willow used the computer in the past—to gather information from a safe distance. They locate demons, cast spells, and in "Who Are You?" (4016) they are the first to realize that Faith has taken over Buffy's body. Together, they are able to progress into more active magic, which lets them create a talisman that Buffy uses to reclaim her body from Faith. Their powers provide them with a manner of communicating that emotions facilitate rather than hinder.

She blinded me with science: The Initiative

(29) On the other end of the supernatural spectrum is the Initiative, a government shadow project whose purpose is to study and harness the power of supernatural beings. Composed of scientists and commando types, they capture vampires and demons of all sorts and, after study and tests, implant the "hostile sub terrestrials" ("hostiles" or "HSTs" for short, in "Doomed," 4011) with anti-violence chips to neutralize the threat they pose to humans.

(30) While this may not seem to be as overt a takeover of the system as those engineered by the Mayor and the Master, the potential is there. After escaping from the Initiative's underground lab, Spike (a.k.a. "Hostile 17") teams up with Buffy and the gang to fight back, despite the fact that any attempt at violence against "any living creature [produces] intense neurological pain" (Riley, in "The Initiative," 4007). It is not long before Spike discovers that he can fight other demons without any painful consequences. Soon he is eager to vent his pent-up aggression on other supernatural beings—a breach of demon-loyalty that he is resoundingly beaten for later in "Goodbye Iowa" (4004).

(31) It is unclear if the Initiative is aware that the anti-violence chip would let implanted demons attack other demons, but having neutralized hostiles acting as collaborators to aid in the capture other demons is an advantage

they could not help but exploit. The Initiative's activities bear a striking resemblance to the Nazi research agenda in WWII: white-coated scientists in an underground bunker perform excruciating tests on individuals they believe to be less than human (including Oz, who is human for all but three days a month). When Spike is first captured by the Initiative, he makes this association instinctively. An anonymous vampire in the next cell tells Spike not to drink the blood they give him because it is drugged. He says that after you're unconscious "that's when they do the tests." Spike replies "And, uh, they are? The government? Nazis? A major cosmetics company?" ("The Initiative," 4007). Even the fact that Spike is labeled "Hostile 17" is suggestive. In the movie *Stalag 17*, a POW captain is suspected by his fellow prisoners of being a Nazi collaborator. This is a kind of foreshadowing of Spike's demon-beating activities, although he does it in collaboration with Buffy and the gang, not the Initiative.

(32) It is inevitable that the Initiative and the gang will come into conflict, despite their early attempts to work together. The Initiative makes no effort to distinguish between the supernatural and its evil components. To them, demons, werewolves and vampires are nothing more than valuable lab rats. This doesn't sit well with a group of people who have had intimate relationships with just such entities. The gang knows there is more to a supernatural being than just bloodlust and fangs. So when Dr. Walsh tries to have Buffy killed, the two camps get ready to face off. But there is a threat that neither group expects—one that will require significant changes on all sides.

Frankenstein's Demon

(33) The Initiative has a shadow project within its shadow project. Room 314 houses Dr. Walsh's creation, Adam, a man-like creature assembled from various demon, human and machine parts. We do not know if this is part of the Initiative's plan, or just Dr. Walsh playing at Dr. Frankenstein. Adam's function is unclear, since he kills his "mother," before she has a chance to set her plans in motion. Using the disks on which Dr. Walsh kept her journals, Adam decides that his purpose is to kill, "to extinguish all life wherever I find it" ("Who are You?" 4016).

(34) Adam is a threat unlike any other the gang has faced, not just because he is a hybrid creature. Adam is a pure union of mechanics and biology, driven by a demonic need to kill. He has knowledge, but by killing Dr. Walsh and her colleagues, he has cut himself off from the source of that knowledge, the intellect behind his creation, and any perspective on him they may have provided. He intends to fulfill his perceived destiny by recruiting a pack of vampires to help him build a master race of demon/human hybrids like himself. Adam also employs some "human" assistance: he reanimates the corpses of several Initiative members (including Dr. Walsh), and enlists Riley via the behavior-modification chip Dr. Walsh had implanted in him. Through these actions, Adam begins to build a network of his own, composed of hybrid beings. In order to fight this new threat, Buffy and the gang must also become a kind of hybrid system.

The Tomorrow People

(35) With his ever-present reductionism, Xander sums up the solution to the problem, "all we need is combo-Buffy—her with Slayer strength, Giles's multi-lingual know how, and Willow's witchy power" ("Primeval," 4021). Willow (spirit), Giles (mind), and Xander (heart) use an enjoining spell to call upon the strength of all of the Slayers who have come before, in order to spiritually join with Buffy (the hand) and lend her their strength, knowledge, and power to defeat Adam. The term "enjoining" has a dual meaning. In the obvious sense it means to join, or to yoke together. But it can also mean to prevent, or forbid ("I enjoin you from telling a lie"). Both meanings are active here. The group joins together so that Buffy can enjoin Adam from moving long enough to rip his uranium-based power source from his body, thereby killing him.

(36) This transfiguration is the latest and most dramatic evolution of the Buffyverse, allowing the gang to transcend the temporal and spatial boundaries that separate them from the knowledge and powers of their ancestors. For a brief time, the Slayer is no longer "one girl in all the world"—she is a network, a continuum of Slayers. Like the temporary expansion of their system on graduation day, it allows the gang to incorporate resources they do not normally have access to. But this is an evolutionary step that cannot be sustained if the system is to survive. The enjoining spell ends when Adam is destroyed, and the four revert back to their individual selves. The system continues as before, interdependent, working with Riley and the other commandos to stop the slaughter that is happening in the Initiative's lab.

(37) This teamwork stands as a foil to the government's desire for ultimate control. During the dénouement of the episode we hear a voiceover of some military-types reviewing the failure of the Initiative: "The Initiative represented the government's interest in not only controlling the otherworldly menace, but harnessing its power for

our own military purposes . . . the demons cannot be harnessed. The end result cannot be controlled" ("Primeval," 4021). By acknowledging the failure of the Initiative, they recognize the impossibility of dominating the system.

(38) The gang's brief transfiguration causes a sort of backlash. In the odd, yet frightening, final episode of the fourth season, Sineya, the first Slayer, haunts the dreams of those who dared to call upon her power. She represents the contradictory force wielded by the Slayer, which can both protect and destroy. A Slayer joining with others to fight the supernatural enrages Sineya. "Alone," she insists. But Buffy maintains her commitment to the system and its evolution. "I don't sleep on a bed of bones" ("Restless," 4022). The two Slayers fight in the dreamscape, but there is really no winner. Buffy and Sineya are not enemies, merely fighters of different times. Once they acknowledge each other's power, life returns to normal.

(Joyce enters, wearing a bathrobe.) **Joyce:** I'm, uh, guessing I missed some fun?

Willow: The spirit of the first Slayer tried to kill us in our dreams.

Joyce: Oh, you want some hot chocolate? (Everyone says "yeah" or "yes please.")

This primordial dream episode also serves to remind us of the legitimacy of the balance between human and supernatural in the system. "As long as there have been demons, there has been a Slayer." ("The Harvest,") It is a reminder that the supernatural has existed as long as humans have, both within the Buffyverse and without. And perhaps a reminder that, with no external forces, no demons to fight, the only battles left would be with ourselves.

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[1] All dialogue, unless otherwise noted, is taken from Psyche's Transcripts, HTTP://WWW.PSYCHE.COM

[2] Dawkins, Richard. *The Selfish Gene*. 1976. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

[3] In *The Pack*, Buffy does tell Giles that he was the last one she expected to "Scully" her, when he tries to write off Xander's behavior as adolescent male hormones, when he is actually possessed by the spirit of a hyena.

[4] "Game face" is how Buffy refers to Angel's vampire face, as opposed to his normal human appearance. ("Prophecy Girl," 1012.)

[5] Buffy stopped him from killing himself, thinking that he was planning a massacre at the school (*Earshot*).

[6] Percy is the basketball player Willow turned around academically when her vampire twin beat him up. (*Doppelgängland*).

[7] Larry is the chauvinist football player who Xander thinks is a werewolf, until he comes out to Xander as being gay (*Phases*). In the fight on graduation day, he is with the flame units.

[8]Golden, Christopher and Nancy Holder. *The Watcher's Guide*. (Pocket books: New York, 1998) 40.

[9] We find out in the 4th season that Harmony was turned into a vampire (*The Harsh Light of Day*).