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Re-Buffered: New Comic Book Series Resurrects Vampire Slayer
Series starts in March, picks up where TV show left off.

By Jennifer Vineyard

So what if Buffy the Vampire Slayer has died twice? After all, nobody really passes away in the Buffyverse — there's always an afterlife for anyone with a good story line.

In March, Buffy will get resurrected once again, this time in a comic book series that picks up where the last TV season of "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" left off. "Buffy" creator Joss Whedon is overseeing a multi-episode comic book arc that plays out as if it were a new season for the show. The comic book series promises to be conceptually bigger and more fantastical than the show ever was, thanks to being freed from the restrictions of time, budgets and, oh yeah, those pesky actors.

(Click here to check out Buffy in the first comic.)

"Don't get me wrong: I'm tired of those people," Whedon joked. "I can't stand them. But seriously, there were certain things we couldn't do, and many things we couldn't afford to do [in the TV show]."

"There were financial limitations, as well as limitations with what you could do with CGI, at the time, for television. And time constraints," said "Buffy" castmember Amber Benson, who played Willow's wicca gal pal, Tara. "It was hard to get an episode done in eight days."

"So now we can do pretty much whatever we want, within the bounds of common decency," Whedon said. "Well, near the bounds of common decency."

For starters, Whedon gets to rewrite history. At the end of the TV series, Buffy (finally) had her whole life in front of her — after which the spinoff show "Angel" put her back to work and had her shacking up with the Immortal in Rome. But as we learn in the first few pages of the comic, that didn't necessarily happen like we thought.

"That's one of the great things about writing," Whedon said. "You get to play off on everything you've set up. 'Well, that was clearly a double, they didn't have Sarah [Michelle Gellar] there, and that Italy really looked a lot like the Universal back lot.' But you know, at first she was with the Immortal, and then I thought, 'I don't see her that way. I want to pick up [with] Buffy more like she was.' "

So Whedon decided that the "Scoobies" — Buffy's gang of friends and activated Slayer potentials — had expanded into 10 separate squads, with 500 Slayers and three Buffys, to spread confusion for those who might target our original Slayer. "One's underground. Literally," Buffy explains in the comic. "One's in Rome partying very publicly — and supposedly dating some guy called 'The Immortal.' That part was Andrew's idea. He did research on the guy, said it would be hilarious for some reason."

"I thought, 'If Andrew — who was there to counsel Spike and Angel in their time of grief when they realized Buffy found a new boyfriend — created the entire scenario just to mess with them, well, I find that delightful,' " Whedon said.

"What was great about 'Buffy' is that it was like a soap opera," Benson said. "What's going to happen next, who is going to sleep with who, who is going to turn into a vampire, who is going to die five times and come back. It leaves people on the edge of their seats because they're not sure what's going to happen, and they want to find out."

Without giving too much away, Whedon revealed that vengeance-demon-turned-Scooby Anya is "definitely dead" — "but that doesn't mean she's gone," he said — and we will only see Spike and Angel "sparingly." "Buffy and Angel were separated on TV, and for a reason," he said. "You can only play variations on 'Romeo and Juliet didn't die' for so long before you get bored. You know, a 'Romeo's Working Out to Get Rid of His Spare Tire' episode is not going to be that exciting. You want to keep the great passions but save them for

the big moments."

As for those big moments? Well, Dawn — Buffy's sister — is in the middle of an especially "big" one after having reached ginormic proportions because she lost her virginity. "Her first time and it all goes wrong, which I'm totally well-versed in," Buffy quips in the comic book.

Meanwhile, Xander is now a leader at Central Command — which, since Sunnydale was demolished, is now Scotland. And speaking of Sunnydale, did anyone really think no one would ever notice if an entire town was destroyed? Now the army is involved, deeming Buffy's squads terrorist cells. "They got power, they got resources and they got a hard-line ideology that does not jibe with American interests," one general rants. So in addition to her regular crew of monsters and vamps, Buffy's got a new battle coming her way.

And what about all those day-to-day doldrums that Buffy faced on the show? Trying to juggle a job while being a Slayer, for instance, or raising a sister on the side? How much of that side of her life will we see in this new Buffy series?

"The show was very mundane, deliberately mundane," Whedon said. "A comic has got to work on a grander, epic scale. We can really take the characters wherever we want, and of course, that means I can kill them. That's where the fun is, in revisiting these characters. It's like being with my old friends, but in actuality, not being with my old friends, because the actors aren't there to play them. It's a little different. This is bigger variations. It's a symphony based on the little tune we played."