

ROADS TRAVELLED

Part 2 - Road of Carnage

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EPISODE RATING

PG-13 (T) – R (M). Warnings for blood and hints of torture.

TIMELINE

Post the marauders last year at Hogwarts, and during the first war.

STORY SUMMARY

BTVS/HP crossover. With graduation come new responsibilities. Outside the safe walls of Hogwarts, Buffy and co. find themselves involved in a war against Voldemort. No one is safe, not everyone is loyal and there will be losses on both sides. Can love and friendship prevail against the darkness or will it crumble beneath the growing shadows?

EPISODE SUMMARY

An attack on Hogsmeade makes the Christmas celebrations come to an abrupt end and forces Mandy to tell her sister the truth about the Wizarding World. But can the marauders prevail in yet another battle, or will it end in disaster?

CENTRAL PAIRING

Buffy/Remus

OTHER PAIRINGS

James/Lily, Sirius/OC, Frank/Alice

THE CAST

STARRING

Sarah Michelle Gellar.....Buffy Summers
Bradley James.....Remus Lupin
Isla Fisher.....Lily Evans
Henry Cavill.....James Potter
Johnny Depp.....Sirius Black
Keira Knightley.....Mandy Walker
Sam Troughton.....Peter Pettigrew

SPECIAL GUEST STAR

with Eva Green as Eliza de Mort
and Richard Armitage as Severus Snape

GUEST STARRING

Rebecca Hall - Kelly Walker
Kate Winslet – Marlene McKinnon
James D’Arcy - Evan Rosier
Daniel Brocklebank - Avery Jr

ALSO STARRING

Gemma Jones
Helena Bonham Carter
with Michael Gambon as Albus Dumbledore
and Ralph Fiennes as Lord Voldemort



Episode 30 – Blood

Sirius, Mandy and Kelly were opening their Christmas gifts when Dumbledore's Phoenix patronus arrived, floating in through the apartment wall. Kelly stared in shock at the animal, and when the Headmaster's voice came from it, her jaw dropped:

"Voldemort and his Death Eaters are attacking Hogsmeade. Every Order member needed to help. Come quickly."

The message itself didn't seem to register until Mandy and Sirius jumped to their feet. "We have to go," Mandy said while pulling on her shoes hurriedly. "I'll explain later..."

"No!" Kelly exclaimed, jumping to her feet. "I've had enough of this nonsense! No more secrets! You're going to tell me what is going on *right now!*"

"There's no time," Sirius muttered.

"Then make time!" Kelly demanded, narrowing her eyes at him angrily. "You can take off if you want but my sister is not going *anywhere* until she tells me what I want to know." She grabbed Mandy's shoulder so she couldn't do a disappearing act through aboration or appitiation or whatever it was called. "Who is this Voldymort person? And what's the Order?"

Mandy sighed, realising that despite her best efforts, the truth was out, and there was no hiding it. "It's *Voldemort*. I suppose you can call him and his Death Eaters terrorists who are trying to take over the Wizarding World, to change it to their liking. That includes getting rid of those they think are of a lesser standing, such as non-magical people, or people born to them, like you and me. Sirius and I are members of the Order of the Phoenix, a group of resistance fighters against Voldemort and what he stands for. We're at war, Kelly, and that's why you being here is not a good thing."

Kelly gawked at her. "At war? You're at *war* and you didn't tell me?"

Mandy just looked at her tiredly. "Could you please let me go?"

Sirius was looking rather impatient. "We have to leave *now* if we're going to be of any help," he said.

"I don't care!" Kelly snapped at him. "I don't understand why Mandy has to go. Why is she involved in this? And if you love her, why are you letting her?" She glared at Sirius accusingly and Sirius flinched back, as if struck.

"Sirius isn't *letting* me do anything," Mandy snapped, trying to be patient. "I'm involved because I chose to be."

"Why?" Kelly asked desperately. "Why put yourself in danger like that? Why don't you just let the magical police deal with it?"

"We are," Sirius spoke. "The Aurors are doing everything they can, but it's not enough."

"I still don't see why you are a part of this," Kelly looked at Mandy pleadingly. "You're just nineteen years old!"

"My age doesn't matter!" Mandy exclaimed. "I'm involved with the Order because I want to help, Kelly. I'm sorry if you can't understand that, but it's a fact you're going to have to deal with." Kelly's grip on her arm slackened in disbelief, and Mandy took the

opportunity to pull away from her sister. "We can talk more about this when Sirius and I get back, but we really have to go now." She disappeared with a 'crack.'

"I still don't understand why she's a part of this," Kelly told Sirius, tears appearing in her eyes. "What if something bad happens to her?"

Sirius gave her a grave look. "I promise to care of her. I'll keep her safe," he swore, and then, he too, disappeared. Kelly stared at the spot where he'd disappeared.

"You better," she muttered into the empty air, before sinking down in a heap on the floor, confused, saddened and terribly afraid for her sister.

"What took you so long, Pads?" James yelled at Sirius as he arrived, a few seconds after Mandy. "Kelly again?"

"Who else?" Sirius asked grimly, throwing himself into the battle, moving to defend the *Three Broomsticks*. Looking around for his girlfriend, he spotted Mandy fighting alongside Peter and Remus, Buffy a few feet away battling vampires. Certain Mandy was alright, with her back covered by their friends, Sirius focused on his own duelling. "Where is Dumbledore?"

"Still contacting Order-members, I'd imagine," Lily spoke. "But he'd be of better use here. At least Voldemort isn't here this time. It could be worse."

At that moment, the Dark Lord himself apparated into the alley, surrounded by ten more Death Eaters.

Sirius threw a wincing Lily a blank look. "It's worse," he deadpanned, quickly moving to block a spell sent from a cackling Death Eater that could be no other than Bellatrix.

"Hello again, cousin!" She screeched. "Want to dance?"

Sirius was immediately forced to use all of his power to battle the crazy witch, his focus zeroing in on her only. He couldn't get distracted if he wanted to stand a chance. "I'm more of singer," he retorted. "*DIFFINDO!*"

Bellatrix pouted as she ducked, the spell grazing her arm and drawing blood. "Now, that was not nice!"

And the duel was on for real.

Lily quickly threw herself to the ground to avoid a spell sent by Voldemort. "Lily!" James apparated to her side, defending her against the Dark Lord as she got to her feet. "Are you alright?"

Lily nodded, and then threw a large spell at Voldemort's feet: the place at which Voldemort stood erupted in a shower of rocks as the spell hit the road, and the Dark Lord was forced back a couple of steps. Once he recovered, he glared angrily at the two Potters.

"Why do you two insist on *getting in my way?*" Voldemort hissed.

"Someone has to," James spat out, hazel eyes burning as he gripped his wand tightly, pointing it at the Dark Lord.

"You two and the Longbottoms...you're just as suicidal," the Dark Lord spoke as the three began to exchange spells yet again. "Death is too easy to grant you."

"Yeah?" James smirked. "That's why you have difficulties killing us? Because it's *too easy*? It makes total sense now."

The Dark Lord's eyes flashed. "If I wanted you dead, you would be," he assured them through gritted teeth. "But you deserve the most painful torture *before* I send you on to the afterlife, since you insist on opposing me. Before I am done with you, you will *beg* for death."

Lily snorted while blocking another spell. "I'm sorry for laughing, but your entire speech is just too cliché. Did you get it from a book or something? *'The beginner's guide to being a fearsome Dark Lord,'* perhaps?"

Voldemort snarled, and it was probably lucky for Lily and James that Dumbledore appeared then, engaging him in battle, distracting him from the two Potters who immediately focused on fighting the Death Eaters around them.

As Buffy fought the vampires in the village – luckily they weren't as many as in Diagon Alley - she was mentally telling herself not to freak out, with mixed success. Whenever her stake hit the heart of a vampire, she saw the human she had killed in her mind's eye, and half expected the vampire she was fighting would turn out to be human as well.

Because of this, she hesitated slightly before driving the stake home, losing precious time and focus in her battle. Her movements didn't have their usual rhythm or grace, nor did her attacks have their usual strength and determination behind them. She wasn't using any puns and quips. Her heart wasn't in the fight, nor was her head.

That cost her.

Before Buffy could react, one of the vampires in the group she was fighting took the opportunity when she was distracted: a second when her stake was pointed at another vampire's heart without actually moving in to kill him, the vampire moved in: "Ah!" Buffy let out a loud scream of pain, accidentally dropping her stake as sharp fangs pierced her throat, blood flowing from the deep wound, down her shoulder, and into the vampire's eager mouth.

As the vampire slowly began to suck her dry, Buffy's survival instinct kicked in, and she did her best to fight him off, kicking and scratching, her hands and arms trying to push him away. But the other vampires held her down, making it virtually impossible, especially as she grew weaker with the blood loss.

Remus and Buffy usually did their best to block out the empathy they shared during battle as the other's emotion was a distraction that made it difficult to focus on the fight at hand. Today, however, Remus let his connection to Buffy remain somewhat open, since he was worried that what had happened in Diagon Alley would affect her negatively in this battle.

As the werewolf duelled side by side with Mandy and Peter, he tried not to let Buffy's clear feelings of hesitation impact his own abilities. So far, it had worked – he couldn't say he was fighting at his best level, but enough to manage. However, when his hearing caught Buffy's scream of pain, and it was accompanied by her sheer fear and panic in the back of his head, he faltered in his movements and he turned to look in the Slayer's direction.

Seeing a large crowd of vampires holding a struggling blonde down, as one of them was feeding on her, made him see red. "Buffy!" He yelled, abandoning the duel with the three masked Death Eaters he had been holding off with Peter and Mandy.

Snape's eyes flashed in triumph behind his mask as Lupin left, leaving only Mandy Walker and Peter Pettigrew to fight. He threw a quick nod towards Avery and Rosier – the other two masked Death Eaters and the companions he'd chosen for this particular mission - and they returned his nod subtly. Knowing they were prepared to act, Snape sent off several stunners at Pettigrew, who wasn't fast enough to avoid and block them, and fell to the ground, taken out of the fight. Snape sneered. '*Pathetic,*' he thought.

In the meantime, Avery and Rosier ganged up on Mandy, increasing the force and speed of their spells, forcing the brunette to go on the defensive. Desperately, she looked around, trying to find someone to help her, but no one was close by: Remus was the closest, and he was fending off several vampires from an unconscious looking Buffy.

When Peter fell, the third Death Eater joined up with the other two, and it only took a few more seconds before Mandy was incapacitated, disarmed. The three Death Eaters grabbed her physically, their larger size allowing them to ignore her angry kicks and punches, and disappeared.

Voldemort felt his fury grow as he battled the Headmaster of Hogwarts. Glancing around the ruined village, he finally caught sight of something that made him feel extremely pleased: Pettigrew had been taken down - perhaps even on purpose – he would have to question the man later. If it had been intentional, he deserved some sort of recognition for taking his own initiative for once and simplifying Snape's mission, even if it was unknowingly. But then again, it was just as possible it *hadn't* been on purpose: Pettigrew was pretty useless in a duel, after all. Three Death Eaters, presumably Snape and two others, had grabbed Walker, and then, they disappeared.

"Well, it's been fun, as usual, Dumbledore," Voldemort drawled. "But I have other appointments to keep." He disappeared, certain his followers would do the same once he was gone.

Leaving disaster in his wake.

"Mandy?" Sirius looked around the village, dust and ash flying through the air, making it difficult to see. "James!" He caught sight of his friend, looking bloodied down with large black smudges on his face. "Have you seen Mandy?"

James shook his head. "No. Have you seen Lily?" The Auror's voice sounded panicked. "We got separated after Dumbledore arrived..."

"James!" Lily's clear voice rang through the air and James' shoulders sagged in relief.

"Never mind," he told Sirius. "I'll tell you if I see Mandy," he added, hurrying off towards the direction of Lily's voice.

"Remus!" Sirius shouted, walking over to the werewolf who was leaning over Buffy's body. The Slayer's face was white as chalk, and she was lying still as death, blood pouring from a bite mark on her neck. Remus was checking her pulse, lips pursed in worry.

"She needs a Healer," Remus muttered to Sirius while ripping of a piece of his t-shirt, pressing it against the wound. "Buffy!" He yelled. "Talk to me!" He didn't get an answer, and Remus swore. "She needs a Healer," the werewolf repeated without looking up. "Are there any Healers here yet?"

"No idea," Sirius said. "Where is Mandy?"

"I-I don't know," Remus stammered out, eyes stuck to the unconscious Slayer. It had taken a long while to reach her, and the only reason he had succeeded was because Voldemort had left, and with him, his followers, including the vampires.

"How can you not know?" Sirius demanded to know, gripping Remus' shoulder harshly, forcefully turning the werewolf's attention back to him. "Last I saw, you were fighting beside her!"

"Well, I got a tad distracted!" Remus exclaimed, eyes wild as he gestured towards Buffy, shaking off Sirius' hand.

Sirius' eyes narrowed dangerously at the werewolf. "Mandy better be alright, Remus," he said through gritted teeth before stalking off, shouting Mandy's name: "Mandy!"

"Sirius!" Sirius turned around when he heard Eliza's voice.

"Eliza," Sirius greeted tersely as he approached her. "Have you seen Mandy? And is Wormtail alright?" The French girl was kneeling beside a dazed looking Peter, who was slowly sitting up.

"He was unconscious when I found him, but otherwise, he seems fine," Eliza answered.

"Is Mandy alright?" Peter asked Sirius, blinking as he looked around, confused. "She was right beside me when I got stunned..."

Sirius staggered back, his face rapidly paling. "MANDY!" He shouted loudly, looking around the village in utter desperation. "*MANDY!*"

"I'm sorry, Sirius." Sirius spun around as he heard Marlene's voice, and he turned to meet her eyes which were rapidly filling with tears. "Mandy's gone."

Sirius' eyes widened in disbelief. "What do you mean, *she's gone?*" He snapped out. "*Merlin, don't let her be dead, please...!*"

"I saw what happened," Marlene said, sniffing. "But I was too far away to do anything. When Peter got stunned, Mandy was overwhelmed by the Death Eaters they were fighting. They grabbed her and disappeared." Sirius stared at her stupidly, not wanting to comprehend what Marlene was saying. "They took her," Marlene clarified. "I don't know why, but they did. I'm really sorry."

As Marlene walked away, Sirius sank to his knees, looking at nothing, feeling overtaken by numbness.

How could this have happened?

CRACK.

The three Death Eaters apparated into one of the Dark Lord's strongholds, a wildly kicking and punching Mandy held in their arms. "LET GO OF ME!" she screamed and to her relief, the Death Eaters let her go.

"She's a menace!" One of them muttered, grasping his arm where Mandy had bitten down with her teeth in her fury. "It's a wonder we didn't splinch ourselves, considering the way she was fighting us."

Mandy glared at him, before she tried to apparate away. The second Death Eater smirked. "There's no escaping from here," he said, sounding amused. "Only people with the Dark Mark can transport themselves in and out unescorted."

"There are other ways to escape than with magic," Mandy spat.

Two of the Death Eaters chuckled. "Good luck with that," they said.

"Enough," the third Death Eater spoke and pulled off his mask.

Mandy stared in surprise. "*Snape?*" She exclaimed in disbelief as she recognised her assailant.

"*Stupefy.*" Snape pointed his wand at the brunette dispassionately and she fell, unconscious to the cold floor. "Take her to the dungeons," he ordered.

"HOW COULD YOU HAVE LET THIS HAPPEN?" Sirius yelled at Remus. The marauders had gathered at Hogwarts in the hospital wing while waiting for news on Buffy, who was being treated by Madam Pomfrey. The rest of the Order, including Dumbledore, was still in Hogsmeade to help with the clean-up and transport the rest of the injured to St. Mungo's.

"I didn't *let* anything happen," Remus said tiredly. "And keep your voice down. We're in a hospital wing."

"I don't bloody care," Sirius hissed dangerously, fists clenching. "If you hadn't been distracted - "

" - Buffy was in danger!" Remus exclaimed. "What would you like me to have done?"

"It's not like your presence helped her any!" Sirius snapped. "She's just as injured anyway, but if you had stayed with Mandy and Peter, perhaps she would be safe instead of with the Death Eaters, probably being TORTURED!" The last word was screamed out.

"Sirius, please!" Lily exclaimed. "Let's all calm down. This is not Remus' fault - "

" - THEN WHOSE FAULT IS IT?" Sirius screamed, looking rather mad, his eyes wild. "Am I supposed to blame Peter, who we all know isn't a very good fighter? Between him and Mandy, of course they were overwhelmed! We all know we can't count on him in a fight!" In the background, Peter flinched at the unintentional jab. "But if Remus had stayed with them, like he was supposed to, Peter wouldn't have been knocked unconscious, and Mandy would be okay," Sirius continued.

"You can't know that. Perhaps you should place the blame with the Death Eaters who took her," James said quietly. "Lily is right. This is not Remus' fault. I'm sorry for what happened, Padfoot, but we can't point fingers at each other. Remus couldn't have known what was going to happen. It's not like anyone here planned it."

"Are you sure?" Sirius asked icily. "Can you really be sure of that James? I thought we could trust each other with our lives – with our friends' lives – apparently I was wrong."

Remus paled. "What are you saying, Padfoot?" He asked, swallowing.

"What does it sound like I'm saying, *Moony*?" Sirius asked, an eyebrow raised in question.

"You can't honestly believe I *intentionally* let Mandy get taken?" Remus exclaimed, eyes wide.

"I don't *want* to believe it," Sirius corrected. "But I thought I could count on you."

"And you can! We're *friends*!" Remus was staring at Sirius in utter disbelief, as did Lily. James, who had heard Sirius' suspicions before was only observing the scene tiredly, shoulders slumped. He wasn't surprised this confrontation was taking place, but he had hoped it never would. He hadn't believed Sirius to be right about Remus then, and he didn't now, but it was apparent Sirius was too upset to see reason. The only thing he could do was to let this play out...and hope things could be fixed afterwards.

"So I thought," Sirius said, jaw tense. "I've had my suspicions of you before, Remus, but I let them lie, for our friendship's sake. But now..." he shook his head. "This is one coincidence too many."

Remus was shaking his head. "I can't believe I'm hearing this. What do you want me to say? Deny your accusations?"

"That would be a start," Sirius said coldly.

"Fine," Remus said shortly, his temper rising with every second. "I'm not a Death Eater. Is that enough for you, or do I have to show my arms too? I can do that." He pulled up his sleeves, showing his bare arms for Sirius, devoid of a Dark Mark. "But wait," he laughed humourlessly. "Perhaps I should undress completely. The arms are such an *obvious* place to put Voldemort's mark. *Anyone* could think to check there." He ripped off his sweater, not caring about the buttons flying everywhere. Sirius didn't stop him, only watched him coldly.

"STOP IT!" Lily exploded once Remus began to unbutton his jeans. "This is ridiculous! No one here is a Death Eater!"

"Obviously, Sirius thinks so," Remus said, crossing his arms over his chest. "And I have a feeling that he will continue to, even if I were to stand here *naked*. After all, what's to say I have a mark at all? Since I'm supposedly a *secret* agent."

"I have my reasons for believing it," Sirius said coldly.

"Then by all means, share them!" Remus exclaimed. "At least give me a chance to defend myself. Or are they too embarrassingly *stupid* to say out loud?" Sirius was silent. "But I suppose it doesn't matter what I have to say," Remus continued bitterly. "You're already determined to think the worst of me. What about you, Lily? And you, James? Peter? Do you think I'm a spy as well?"

"No, Remus, we don't," James said, sighing. "And neither does Sirius, deep down. He's just upset - "

"DAMN RIGHT, I'M UPSET!" Sirius shouted and James flinched. "And don't tell me what to think! I know what I know, James, and don't try to convince me otherwise!"

"You're being unreasonable!" Lily exclaimed, pleading. "Think about it. The only reason Remus left Peter and Mandy was because Buffy got hurt. If I had been hurt, James would have done the same thing. If it had been Mandy, so would you. Does that make you a Death Eater?"

"You're missing my point, Lily," Sirius said through gritted teeth. This is not just about today - "

" - Isn't it?" Lily countered. "You said it yourself: you had suspicions before, but today was the last straw. Because it's Mandy. Mandy got taken and you need to blame someone. Remus makes the easiest target because he's here and available for your anger. We get that."

"You don't get anything," Sirius said, eyes darkening. "You're too blinded by your friendship - "

" - And you're too blinded by your love for Mandy," Lily said, refusing to back down. "If she was here, she would tell you how thick you're being herself. Remus is no more a spy than James and I. Or perhaps you don't trust us either. We've confronted Voldemort three times now, and lived. Isn't that suspicious? Perhaps we should *all* show our arms." She pulled up her sleeves as did James. "You too, Sirius," the red-head ordered. "After all, you're being a little too insistent that Remus is a Death Eater. How are we supposed to know you're not trying to cover your own arse?"

Silently, Sirius pulled up his sleeves. Just like his friends', they lacked a Dark Mark.

"So, now that we've all proved none of us are Death Eaters, at least not one who carries the Dark Mark, can we please start focusing on *why* Mandy got taken and how we can get her back? We're not helping her by fighting amongst ourselves."

"I don't *need* your help," Sirius snapped out, pulling down his sleeves. "And I definitely don't want *his*," he jerked his head in Remus' direction and then left the hospital wing.

"I'm going to check on Buffy," Remus mumbled, summoning his ruined sweater from the floor with a silent flick of his wand, and then left, to join Buffy and Madam Pomfrey in the private side-room of the hospital wing.

Lily sighed, for a moment looking twice her age. "We're falling apart, James," the red-head whispered tiredly as her husband embraced her from behind, his head resting on top of hers. "And I don't know how to stop it."

"Neither do I, Lils," James answered. Neither do I."

Neither saw Peter, who had been sitting unnoticed in a corner of the room during the entire confrontation without pulling up his sleeves, slip out of the room.

"Remus!" Madam Pomfrey stood up from Buffy's bed. "What were you yelling about out there? I was just about to go out there and give you all a piece of my mind! And why are you only half dressed?"

Remus sighed, ignoring the matron's question. "Will she be alright, Poppy?" He asked, taking the place by Buffy's bed that Poppy had just abandoned, taking the Slayer's hand in his. She seemed so frail...

The medi-witch harrumphed. "She lost a lot of blood, but I've given her several blood replenishing potions and the wound is clotting nicely, without my aid. Yes, Remus, she will be fine."

"At least that's one good thing to come out of this mess," Remus muttered.

"If you don't mind me asking...what happened in Hogsmeade, Remus?" Poppy placed a gentle hand on his shoulder.

Remus swallowed. "Everything that shouldn't have," he whispered. "It all went wrong, Poppy. And Sirius thinks it's my fault. And what's worse is that he's right to blame me." He looked up to meet Poppy's concerned face. "I messed up. If I had stayed with Mandy and Peter... Sirius is right – it's not like I were of any help to Buffy. I couldn't reach her until the battle was over anyway." He sounded bitter. "I let myself get distracted by my feelings for her."

"That doesn't make you at fault, Remus. That makes you human," Poppy said gently.

"Then maybe I should try to be less human," Remus muttered.

"Don't..." Remus' and Poppy's attention snapped to the bed, and Buffy, who had spoken. "Don't talk like that," Buffy croaked out. "What happened?"

"Don't worry about that now," Remus said hurriedly. "It doesn't matter."

"Of course it matters. You're upset. I can feel it." Remus inwardly cursed and immediately blocked off his bond to Buffy. The Slayer frowned. "And now I'm even more certain something's wrong. What happened?"

Remus sighed. "It's Mandy...she got taken by Death Eaters."

"But she's alive, right?" Buffy asked weakly. "Then there's still a chance. Look...I'm not sure what makes you think that it's your fault - "

" - How long have you been awake?" Remus asked.

"Long enough," Buffy answered. "We'll get Mandy back. And if what happened to her is anyone's fault, it's mine."

"I'm going to leave you two alone," Poppy said, leaving the room, unnoticed by both Remus and Buffy, who were too involved in their conversation to pay any attention to their surroundings.

"How can it be your fault?" Remus asked in disbelief. "You got hurt."

"Exactly," Buffy smiled weakly. "And apparently that distracted you. I heard enough to know that. I haven't...been myself, since Diagon Alley. I knew that, but I went to fight in Hogsmeade anyway, because I wanted to prove to you that I was okay. To prove to myself that what happened in Diagon Alley doesn't have a hold on my anymore. But I wasn't ready. I was being stupid, and stubborn." She grimaced. "And that's why I got hurt. That's why you got distracted. And that's why Mandy got taken."

"You're not invincible," Remus said.

"I know that. But I wasn't at the top of my game. I wasn't focused on the fight. I hesitated. I wasn't being the Slayer. I was acting like a scared little girl who wanted to be anywhere but there. The vampires didn't beat me because they were better. They beat

me because I wasn't trying my best. Because I was afraid. Until I get that under control...I shouldn't be in another battle. I shouldn't have been in this one. It's as simple as that."

"It's never simple," Remus mumbled, climbing up into Buffy's bed. The Slayer immediately moved aside to make more place for him.

"I suppose not," Buffy agreed, then frowned. "Why are you half-naked?" She quirked an eyebrow at Remus' bare chest. "Not that I mind..."

Remus sighed. "That's a long, sad, *Sirius* story..."

Kelly jumped up from the sofa when she heard the door to the apartment open and then close. "Mandy?" She rushed out into the hall, confused and worried when she only saw Sirius. "Where is my sister?"

"You should probably sit down," Sirius muttered, pulling a hand through his hair.

Kelly's eyes narrowed. "I think I'd rather stand, thank you. Tell me where my sister is, right now, Black, or so help me..."

Sirius chuckled humourlessly. "That temper... Sometimes, you and Mandy are rather alike, you know."

"Of course I know! I practically raised her," Kelly snapped. "Now stop stalling and tell me what happened!"

"Things..." Sirius licked his lips. "Things didn't go according to plan."

"What does that mean?" Kelly demanded to know.

"Mandy..."

"Mandy *what*?" Kelly was trembling with anger and fear.

"The Death Eaters...Voldemort's followers...they...took her."

Kelly stumbled back. "Took her?" She repeated. "What do you mean, *took her*?"

Sirius swallowed. "Just what I said. They took her and left."

"Why?" Kelly's voice broke. "Why would they do that?"

"I don't know yet. But I'm going to find out. I'm going to get Mandy back, Kelly. I'm going to make it right, I promise," Sirius swore.

"You'll have to excuse me if I don't believe you," Kelly said coldly, even as her voice shook with suppressed tears. "You also promised you would keep my sister safe, and look at how that has turned out."

Sirius' shoulders slumped. "I know."

Voldemort stared dispassionately at the young woman who was sitting tied to a chair in a cell in his dungeons, still unconscious. "So...this is the girl," he whispered. "Mandy Walker."

"Yes, my Lord," Snape said. "If I may ask...now that you have her...what do you plan to do?"

"In a week or so, I will...send Black an...*incentive*," Voldemort said with a smirk. "After that, I expect him approach us, to try and bargain for Walker's safety, if not before. I will give both Walker and Black a chance to join me - "

" - My Lord!" Snape protested. "You promised - "

" - I know what I promised," the Dark Lord snapped, red eyes glaring at Snape who flinched. "Don't forget your place."

"I apologize," Snape mumbled, though inwardly he was seething. Voldemort had promised Black would die...had he lied?

"Like I said before you so rudely interrupted, I will give both Walker and Black a chance to join me. I expect neither of them to accept. For that, of course, they must be punished." He gave Snape a meaningful look.

Snape immediately lowered his head. "I am sorry for doubting your honesty, my Lord."

"As you should be. I promised Black's death would be yours. And it will be. Once he declines my very generous offer, you are free to kill him whenever you wish."

Snape's lips curled in satisfaction. "And what about Potter? And Lily Evans?" He refused to call her by her married name.

"They have defied me, Snape. I cannot let that go unpunished. You must understand that."

Snape swallowed. "Yes."

"James Potter will eventually die at my hand. It will be painful, humiliating and he will curse the day he dared to stand against me before I am done. As for his wife...she will go to you."

Snape looked at the Dark Lord in surprise.

"Yes...I still intend to keep my promise. Lily Potter will be yours. I imagine the death of her husband and the knowledge that she will forever be a slave to your wishes shall be punishment enough. Now, wake her up." Voldemort nodded in Mandy's direction, changing the subject.

"*Rennervate*," Snape intoned, pointing his wand at Mandy, who woke up with a gasp.

"Welcome back," Voldemort said, smirking at Mandy who was staring up at him in terror.

"Go to Hell," Mandy said shakily, wishing her voice would sound more confident.

Voldemort chuckled, quite amused by her daring. "Get Bella, would you, Snape?" He asked the Death Eater. "I am certain she would *love* the chance to get better acquainted with her cousin's little lover?"

Snape bowed and then left the room, soon returning with Bellatrix, who looked at Mandy in utter delight.

"Oooh!" She clapped her hands together. "Such a pretty gift! And just for me!" She looked up at the Dark Lord with adoration and Mandy shuddered.

"Now, don't get overexcited," Voldemort admonished her with a smirk. "We want her to last, after all." He left the room with Snape, the cell door slamming closed behind them.

Bellatrix turned crazed, glinting eyes to Mandy who gulped, staring up at Bellatrix in terror. She knew enough about Sirius' cousin's exploits to be afraid – deathly afraid. "Now, pretty..." she pulled out her wand, smiling widely. "This may hurt, just a little."

"I-I wish for an audience with the Dark Lord," Peter told Rosier and Avery, who were engaged in conversation, stepping up to them boldly.

"Good for you," Rosier said with a raised eyebrow.

"Now," Peter added when it seemed Rosier and Avery were about to return to their conversation.

"He is busy with our newest guest," Avery said. "Now, go."

Peter's eyes narrowed. "No. Why was Mandy Walker taken?"

Avery cocked his head. "Don't worry your pretty little head about it, Pettigrew, and you'll live longer," he advised.

"I want to know!" Peter insisted.

"Pettigrew..." a silky voice from behind him said, and Peter froze, slowly turning around to face the Dark Lord who had just arrived, coming from the stairs to the dungeons. "Getting bolder, I see."

"My Lord..." Peter gulped.

"I've been meaning to talk to you anyway. During the attack on Hogsmeade...did you let yourself get knocked out?"

"Y-yes, my Lord," Peter answered and that was the truth. He had been afraid his fellow Death Eaters might do him some real damage, since only a selected few knew he was truly on their side.

"Good work," Voldemort praised and Peter swelled up with pride. "Nice initiative...I like that. It made it easier to grab Walker."

"About her...why did you grab her? What use is she to you?"

"Wormtail, Wormtail..." Voldemort shook his head. "You should not ask so many questions."

"I am sorry, my Lord, I just want to know why."

"Let's just say she's a means to an end."

"Will you kill her?" Peter asked bluntly.

Voldemort raised an eyebrow. "Do you want me to?"

"No!" Peter exclaimed. "No," he repeated more calmly. "She's a friend. Well...kind of."

"Then I won't," the Dark Lord said, and Peter relaxed. "You are a good friend, Peter. I only wish they were better friends to you as well." He left, after patting Peter on the shoulder.

"Yes...me too," Peter muttered.

31 December

Sirius was sitting alone, in his apartment, watching the fireworks light up the sky through the window. It was only a few minutes left until New Years, but to be honest, he could care less. He could care less about anything. Anyone. Except Mandy.

Since Sirius had stormed out from the hospital wing after the attack on Hogsmeade, he hadn't been in contact with any of his friends. As for Mandy's sister... Kelly was still in England, but the day after Christmas, she had moved into a hotel, unwilling to stay in the apartment with just Sirius. Perhaps it was just as well: Sirius was certain they would have killed each other before long. And the Order...the only one he had contacted was Dumbledore.

He had asked the Headmaster what could be done regarding Mandy, and the answer he had gotten had been far from satisfying: nothing. Dumbledore – the Order – could do nothing – *would* do nothing.

While they had an agent within the Death Eaters – an agent whose name was still secret to the Order at large – that person couldn't do anything without risking his or her position. Apparently, the spy was still very new and not in anyone's confidence.

Dumbledore had then went on to give Sirius' empty platitudes – that what had happened to Mandy was unfortunate, but that she had known what she was getting herself into when she joined the Order. That they couldn't risk everything just for her. The greater good, he had called it. And it wasn't like they knew where to look: all of the Dark Lord's strongholds were under something called the Fidelius charm.

Sirius clenched his fists. He couldn't lose her. And if Dumbledore and the Order were unwilling to help him...well, then he would just have to take matters into his own hands. Sirius swallowed deeply, trying to think. The Death Eaters must have taken Mandy for a reason. And one of the few reasons Sirius could think of was that they wanted something from him – their relationship wasn't exactly secret. That theoretically meant that Sirius was the only one who could convince Voldemort to release Mandy.

Decision made, Sirius walked over to the desk, posing a quill above an empty parchment. Slowly, he began to write: it wasn't a lot – what he needed to say could be summarized in only a few sentences. All in all, the letter ended up short, and to the point. All that was left to do was to send it, and then, he would have to wait for an answer and hope for the best. Sirius snorted to himself at the irony: he had never been very patient, and lately, he hadn't been feeling very hopeful either. And yet, hope, while fragile and wavering, was all he had left. It was the only thing keeping him from breaking down.

I burned with conviction, once, that everything would turn out alright. Now, I am not so certain and all I want is for this carnage to end, to put a stop to the suspicious glances, the mistrust and the smell of death. The smallest glimmer of hope is hung onto like a lifeline that can be ripped away at any moment. I am afraid, terrified. Not for myself, but for everyone else. For Lily. How much will we be forced to sacrifice before this war is

finally over? Can things ever go back to the way they were? Can the marauders? Can a broken friendship ever be completely repaired?

Right now, it seems impossible. Right now, everything does.

- James Potter

**To Be Continued
in
Road of Sacrifice**

A Note From the Author

So that's it – the second part of *Roads Travelled* completed, along with the first part of the first war. It had sort of a sad, cliffhanger ending which will have its resolution in the next part: *Road of Sacrifice*. Like the title witnesses, the story will not be any less dark than what *Road of Carnage* has been, but I hope it will not put you off reading it, and there will be light moments - for example, the birth of Harry! After all, for there to be light, there must be dark as well.

*Much love,
Ida (ladyvisionary)*

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<http://www.tthfanfic.org/Story-21722>
<http://www.fanfiction.net/s/5805563/30/>

Trivia

- The episode art features Sarah Michelle Gellar as Buffy Summers.