



SEASON EIGHT
WILLOW
\$3.50

Joss Whedon Karl Moline

WILLOW

Buffy
the vampire slayer

DIRECT SALES



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W I L L O W

Based on the television series created by Joss Whedon

Willow Rosenberg has played many parts—a shy computer geek, a loyal friend, a passionate lover, a fierce Wiccan, and a *dark Willow*.

Since the destruction of Sunnydale, Willow's powers have grown exponentially. She can fly. Teleport. And she may or may not be immortal.

Even the people closest to her wonder how Willow's become one of the most powerful witches in the world. The answers begin here, at the end of her mystical, post-Sunnydale walkabout, with the sultry, powerful serpent lady who hides in the shadows of the Slayers' great crisis . . .

This story takes place before the events of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* Season Eight.

Cover by Jo Chen

Alternate Cover by Karl Moline, Andy Owens,
and Michelle Mudzen

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GODDESSES & MONSTERS

THE JOURNEY
BEGINS...

...AND ALREADY I'M
OUT OF MY DEPTH.

GODDESS...

IT'S... SO...



Joss Whedon Karl Moline Andy Owens

• STORY • • PENCILS • • INKS •

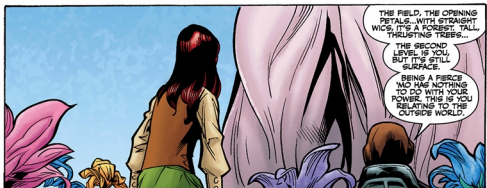
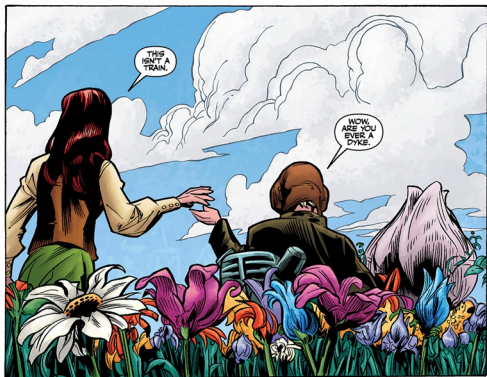
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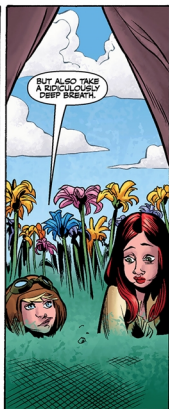
• COLORS •

Richard Starrings & ComiCraft's

Jimmy Betancourt • LETTERS









three days earlier





"FORGET
ABOUT HER."



WHAT
DO YOU
MEAN?

IT'S ANOTHER
LAYER THAT HAS
TO BE PEELED
AWAY.

NO CONNECTIONS,
NO RESTRICTIONS... YOU
HAVE TO LIVE WITHIN IF
YOU'RE TO TRULY WORK
THE WOUND.



WOUND?

I THOUGHT THE
FLOATABOUT WAS
JUST NORMAL WICCY
TRAINING? NOBODY
SAID ANYTHING
ABOUT...

I HAVE A
WOUND?



YOU HAVE
A PART
OF IT.

SO CLARITY NOT
THE CATCH OF THE
DAY, HUH?

RELAX.



THE
DARKNESS WILL
ILLUMINATE.

CAN I HAVE
WHEELY-GIRL
BACK?





STOP!



NOT THIS ONE. NOT THIS TAINTED WRETCH.

IT'S VERY NICE TO DON'T MACE ME.



WHY DON'T WE CALM DOWN, LOVE...

ALLUWYN, ARE YOU MAD? YOU KNOW WHO THIS IS!

YOU DO? DO IT?



THE PATH IS NOT RESERVED FOR THE RIGHTEOUS.

WE BOTH KNOW WHERE THIS LEADS.

AND I WOULD BE WHO NOW?



WHAT WE KNOW IS THAT NOTHING IS SET. WITH THE RIGHT GUIDE--

YOU? ALLUWYN, YOU ARE GAGA VASUKI--YOU THRIVE ON CHAOS. YOU'D LOVE TO SEE HER CORRUPTED.

AND I WOULD KNOW ME FROM...?





YOU HAVE TO FIGHT BACK, CHILD.

WHY? AND WHY CAN I ONLY SPEAK LIKE OLD-PERSON RADIO?

I BELIEVE I CAN FLY!



YOU HAVEN'T LET GO OF THE SURFACE, AND IT'S CAUGHT YOU IN A LOOP.



IT'S A STUPID LOOP!

DO YOU REALLY WANNA HURT ME?

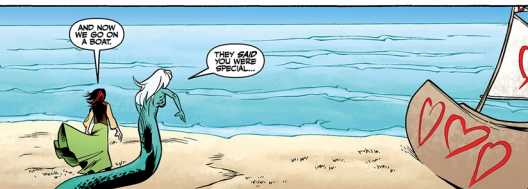


CAN'T YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT A THREAT YOU POSE? CARE YOU NOTHING FOR YOUR WORLD?



DON'T GO BREAKING MY HEART.





AND NOW
WE GO ON
A BOAT.

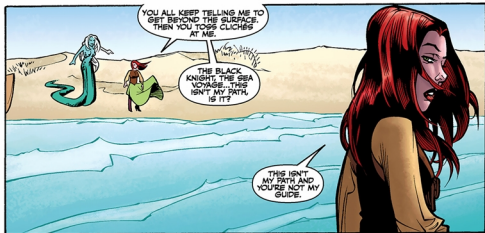
THEY SAID
YOU WERE
SPECIAL...

YEAH.
NO
THANKS.

YOU'LL NEVER
FINISH THE JOURNEY
IF YOU'RE AFRAID TO
GET WET.



THAT'S
NOT THE
JOURNEY.



YOU ALL KEEP TELLING ME TO
GET BEYOND THE SURFACE.
THEN YOU TOSS CLICHÉS
AT ME.

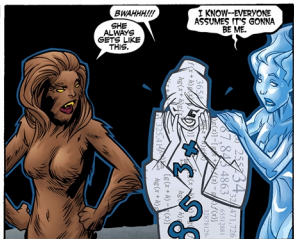
THE BLACK
KNIGHT, THE SEA
VOYAGE... THIS
ISN'T MY PATH,
IS IT?

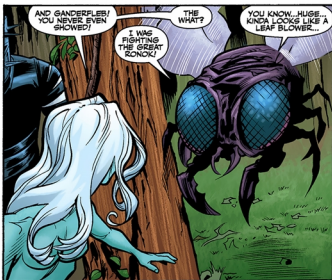
THIS ISN'T
MY PATH AND
YOU'RE NOT MY
GUIDE.

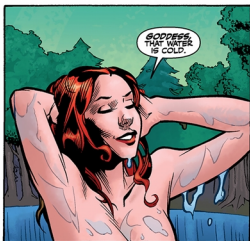






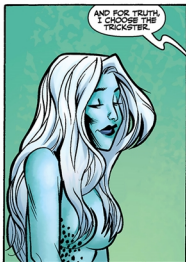








THERE IS NO
JOURNEY.
THERE
IS JUST
WITHIN.
SO MY PATH IS
WHERE NONE'S
BEATEN...



AND FOR TRUTH,
I CHOOSE THE
TRICKSTER.



YOU'RE PUTTING
YOURSELF IN MY
HANDS?

I EXPECT
IT WILL COME
TO THAT.



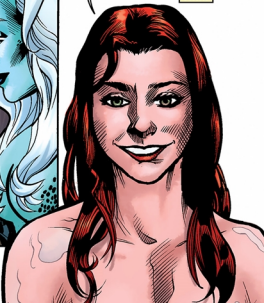
I'LL
KNOW IF
YOU LIE.

I
ALWAYS
LIE.

THAT'S
HOW I'LL
KNOW.

SO
HOW DO WE
START?

finis



SLAY THE CRITICS

c/o buffy@darkhorse.com | Check out the Buffy Zone at darkhorse.com

When we were lining up the One-Shot Wonders program, releasing a series of standalone comics featuring many of our biggest characters, I asked Joss if we could include Willow, drawn by Karl. Joss graciously agreed, and even jumped in to write it himself. I have a lot of things to thank Joss for, and making time to write this is a big one. And it's of course always great to bring the Fray team back together.

Dear Scott,
I just want to say thanks to everyone for *Buffy* Season 8. Oh, how I cherish these comics. I love the little stories (Dawn, Faith, Giles) and the big story (*Buffy*, the Potentials, etc.). We wouldn't be able to get all this detail if it was on TV. I know most of us want it on TV, but this is just as good (in my opinion). Whedon is a genius. It's just that simple. I can't wait to see where things are going with Dawn and Faith, and having Willow and Kennedy back is amazing. Being a lesbian, I want to thank everyone again for getting *Buffy* in bed with a girl. It's been in the back of my mind ever since Willow came out (same for a lot of other people). So thank you! Keep up the amazing work, and I look forward to every issue from here until eternity. I wonder if my comic-book shop will let me preorder that far in advance?

Keep slayin',
Necie Wilson
Franklin, Indiana

Scott,
I love *Buffy*. I started watching the show with my parents and sister when I was eight, and I am now eighteen, so it's safe to say I grew up with it. For my proud fanboy father, it was a blessing: something in the realm of cult fandom that we all enjoy. Yet, while his library of comic books is ever expanding, I have remained uninterested in the majority of what it has to offer. I can't concentrate on a story when it's populated by beefcakes and Barbies in really, really tight clothes. That said, when Season 8 came out, I was thrilled. Dad and I enjoy it thoroughly, but I am disappointed in one particular area. The women don't look real. At all. Why? I am not trying to attack the artists. The illustrations are often beautiful and/or very cool, but *why*? Characters drawn to resemble

the gorgeous actresses from the show appear leggy, bustier, and even thinner. In what world do the already enhanced women of Hollywood require all these enhancements? Bizarro World? You've got a whole Slayer army, which is a great opportunity to show a wide spectrum of lady shapes. Instead, my eyeballs are accosted by a homogenous gaggle of corseted silhouettes. Am I supposed to be thankful that they at least fight in pants? If this were just any comic book, I would put it down and move on, but it's *Buffy*! She is my favorite fictional hero, and Joss Whedon is one of my only living male heroes. The story itself has done so much to empower girls across the globe that I hate to see it take even the tiniest baby step backwards. You can talk to me about how it's in the tradition of the art form, and a distinct style, and blah blah blah. I don't care. If you can think up a good reason why female characters must be drawn in such a way, please let me know. Thanks.

Morgan Stewart
Memphis, TN

It does have a lot to do with the styles of the artists, blah blah blah. But let me have an artist chime in. Georges Jeanty had this to say—

I'm kinda surprised that *Buffy* is receiving criticism about unrealistic body shapes. This is something that I have paid particular attention to from the beginning. I strive to make sure that *Buffy*, a book about many different types of girls, has a diversity not normally seen in comics. Given that the majority of books published today have little or no regard for how females—or males, for that matter—actually look, *Buffy* is drawn with a sharp eye for the individual form.

That said, most of the lead actors of the *Buffy* show do have amazing figures! It can get difficult to promote diversity when many of the characters have been in the pages of *Maxim*. It's no secret that society and television tend to favor really good-looking girls for lead roles, and women like Sarah Michelle Gellar and Eliza Dushku have a certain body type, which you're going to see frequently drawn, because they are the leads.

But there is diversity. You'll notice that *Buffy* and Dawn have different body types. None of

Joss's characters are particularly chesty, and I think I've stayed true to that. Whenever I'm drawing these characters I use reference photos to make sure I'm getting not just actors' faces, but also body types. As for the other Slayers, I have tried to include girls of all ethnicities, shapes, and sizes. Now, if these distinctions aren't readily visible, that's because most of the Slayers are either dressed for battle or too far in the background to really be defined by their form.

I agree that more often than not in comics girls are objectified and aren't true representations of the female form, but I know in *Buffy* I am making a conscious effort to keep the girls diverse.

There you have it. Again, I'm sure those who have the issue with the book remain totally unsatisfied with our answers—how'd you put it, Morgan? "You can talk to me about how it's in the tradition of the art form, and a distinct style, and blah blah blah. I don't care." We do care, and we've strived to be respectful. Recently a piece of art came in from another artist and Georges pointed out to me that a main character's breasts were too large. All of this is very subjective, very much in the eye of the beholder, and we let our consciences guide us, but in the end, the high concept has always been a beautiful blond who fights monsters.

Dear Joss and Scott,
Hi there. I've been a *Buffy* fan since I was eight years old, when the film came out. I'm twenty-three now. Even back then, I knew *Buffy* was going to be something bigger than that movie. I was ecstatic, but not surprised, when I saw the first promo for the show years later (a memory pleasantly cemented into my brain). As a male feminist, the whole idea of *Buffy* was enthralling. When the show started I was instantly drawn to Willow. I very much related to her insecurities, her awkwardness. Willow's coming out was timed perfectly in my life. Seeing my mother's positive reaction to Willow and Tara's relationship made me feel more relaxed about being gay, which in turn led to me coming out. I love the direction Season 8 is going in; to me, it's just the show on paper instead of a TV screen.

That's why it's been hard for me to write this letter. I know how good a storyteller Joss is, and as a screenwriter myself, I know the process of creating a story can't be too influenced by your audience. But hmm, let's see. Here are four things I'd love to see injected into the *Buffyverse* someday (ideas, not demands!): Introduce a

strong, nonstereotypical, gay male character. Give Andrew a boyfriend. Bring Marcie Ross back. Bring Tara back.

I look forward to the rest of Season 8, and on to Season 9, and on and on. The *Buffyverse* will live on, always.

Your pink-haired fan forever,

Mikey Russo

*Hey, Mikey—sorry, probably not gonna take you up on those ideas, with little room to introduce, a lot of new characters at this point. Again with Marcie Ross, though. I find the *Buffy* fandom interest in Marcie really interesting—not that much to her, but she made an impression on a lot of you.*

Next month, Joss is writing again, with Georges, as we clean up the mess at the end of "Retreat", while heading into the messiest arc yet, written by Brad Meltzer. If you're a comics reader, you've probably read Brad. If not, you're in for a pleasant surprise.

Either way, you're in for some pretty big surprises . . .

Scott Allie



Buffy #31 on sale January 6, 2010:
More Goddesses!



DECEMBER 2009



HORSEPOWER!

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO LAST MONTH, a slightly forbidding bunny rabbit made his first appearance, in the pages of an unassuming comic book called *Albedo*. It was the second issue of that independent black-and-white title. The bunny, who was featured on the cover, wore traditional Japanese garb and sported a pair of swords, his ears tied in the trademark topknot of a samurai warrior. The comic book, published when Dark Horse was still just a glimmer in Mike Richardson's eye, originally sold for a buck and a half. By all accounts, they could barely give it away. Now long out of print, it's worth many hundreds of dollars on the collectors' market.

Since then, Stan Sakai and his creation, Usagi Yojimbo, have weathered four different publishers, burrowing into the Dark Horse stable, finally, in 1996 with a three-issue *Space Usagi* series, followed by nine or ten issues, year in and year out, of the ongoing *Usagi* comic book—for a total, now, of one hundred and twenty-five issues! That's a singular accomplishment in and of itself in the history of comics, beating even Jack Kirby's legendary run on *Fantastic Four*. But adding in the pre-Dark Horse *Usagi* comics brings that number up to almost two hundred issues—so far! Not to mention *The Art of Usagi Yojimbo* as well as the twenty-three volumes of *Usagi* trade paperbacks and limited edition hardcovers, all of which have resulted in countless awards both here and abroad, including the prestigious National Cartoonists Society Award. Yeah, Stan Sakai loves comics.

Usagi isn't in the movies or on Saturday morning TV—except, that is, for guest appearances with the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. The rabbit ronin hasn't spawned a line of designer clothing, multiple action figures, or other licensed products—though, at one time or another, there have been all of these. Stan Sakai doesn't work in Hollywood, nor is he a rock star—except to his fans, who are legion and include such heavyweights as director John Landis, artist Geoff Darrow, and writer Brian K. Vaughan. What Stan *is* is a hardworking cartoon-

ist, a guy who is at the drawing board every single day, and has been for twenty-five years, crafting the tales of his samurai bunny in order to bring them to you, dear reader—on time, every time—because Stan Sakai loves comics.

In casting about for a special project to mark the occasion of Usagi's 25th anniversary, I asked the book's designer, Cary Grazzini, what he—the quintessential Usagi fan—would like to see. Cary didn't skip a beat before answering, “a full-color, painted graphic novel.” Stan agreed and set to work on *Yokai*, a 56-page standalone story in which Usagi encounters the monsters, spirits, and demons of Japanese folklore, all of which are gorgeously rendered in lush, vibrant watercolor. Rounding out the handsome 64-page hardcover is an interview with Stan about his creative process, conducted by assistant editor Brendan Wright, and excerpted from a much longer interview which you can read right now on the Dark Horse website, in the Usagi Yojimbo Zone . . . because we love comics, too!

Diana Schutz
Executive Editor



Usagi Yojimbo: Yokai original graphic novel in stores now!

Dark Horse Comics © 2009 Mike Richardson

YOU LOVE COMICS! WE LOVE COMICS, TOO!



Uncle Creepy may call him “Atrocious” **Angelo Torres**, but it's an odd nickname for the friendliest, most warm-hearted guy you'll ever meet. Angelo was among the best and most prolific of the original Creepy artists and spent almost forty years making sure *Mad Magazine* stayed funny. Now he's back in Creepy's dungeon of doodlers, giving comics fans even more reasons to smile.



Cloud City Garrison, part of the nationwide *Star Wars* Costuming Group The 501st Legion, is a 100% volunteer-operated organization servicing Oregon and southwest Washington. They have over fifty members, all concerned in supporting local charities (they've raised over \$9000 this year alone), and interested in creating movie-accurate costumes.

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