

WATCHERS

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Monthly

SLAYER
VI JOSTON
A Sunnydale
Original

Telling Tales
Rupert Giles
Why Halloween is
dead for the undead

In The Kitchen
Andrew Wells'
Tasty Treats for
Trick-or-Treaters

How does the Watchers Council jump
start its morning...



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IN THIS ISSUE...

Issue 3. Vol 1. October 2006

Vi Joston - The Girl Next Door 2

One of the last remaining Slayers from the core Sunnydale group, Vi Joston talks about life then... and now.

In the Kitchen with Andrew Wells..... 4

Andrew Wells offers tips for your Halloween party and treats that the family will enjoy.

Telling Tales with Rupert Giles..... 5

Rupert Giles. talks about how Halloween is the one night of the year that's dead for the undead.

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The Girl Next Door...

Vi Joston



by Harold Iott

If you saw Violet Joston, Vi to her friends, you'd notice the petite redhead seems a bit shy and quiet. The perfect girl next door air with a warm smile and cute freckles can't help but make you want to grin. But make no mistake about it. Vi can be deadly if you're a demon looking for trouble. After five years on the job she's learned a thing or two about being a slayer. But she still tries to balance her duties with her personal life. And this year, like many people in the world, she lost someone profoundly close to her - an identical twin sister. She took a few moments to sit down and talk to us.

How did you find out about the Watchers Council?

About five years ago, like most of the world back then, I had no idea that vampires and other demons were real. But this man, who I later found out was Mr. Giles, came to me and told me that I might be in danger. I was called a *potential* back then, a girl who might get named, or chosen, as the slayer someday.

So you're one of the original Sunnydale Slayers?

Yes, I'm one of the last along with my friend Kennedy. During that time at Buffy's the girls pretty much stood by each other because we were basically running for our lives. When you might be dead at any moment you tend to form close bonds.

Where are the other girls from the Sunnydale team?

Some of them left after the threat was over, many of them died in the battle and the few that did stay on board...well...I had a very good friend from the group named Rona. But she died because of some booby trap the Presidium set up for us. To say I took it hard was an understatement but it gave me the determination I needed for the battle.

You mean the demon organization that was hell-bent on taking over earth when you first arrived in Cleveland?

I wouldn't say they were demons exactly but evolved humans who used magic. At least that's the way Willow Rosenberg describes it. But yes, we all walked into a cave and...well, Rona never walked out.

It must be difficult - forming such close friendships and knowing how dangerous the job is?

Absolutely. I loved Rona. She was my best bud in Cleveland. I was close to Kennedy too at the time but she was often hanging out with the 'higher ups' I call them - people like Faith and Willow, who was her girlfriend at the time. But now...well...it's just me and Ken. We're really the last two that are left or still with the council. We're pretty good at what we do so I don't plan to leave anytime soon. Besides, I've got a great beau who was a core 'scoobie'.

Yes, Xander Harris. Tell us about him?

He's handsome and funny and a sweet guy. I hear the girls talk about how there aren't any good guys out there but I found one so I'm hanging on to him as long as he'll let me.

Wedding plans perhaps?

I think our plan at this point is if it's not broke don't fix it. ~giggles~ I'm happy being Vi Joston right now that I don't need to be Mrs. Harris yet. But I never say never. Just not right now. We're both pretty young, well, I'm pretty young compared to him. ~laughs~

How old is he? One hundred?

~laughs~ No but there is a five year difference. Of course with all I've seen and done I'm more mature and experienced than most other 21-year-old gals out there.

So what drives you to do your job?

Years ago it was doing the right thing. You know, helping people, protecting them but...I'm not as great as I thought since I couldn't protect my sister.

What happened to your sister?

I have, well, had an identical twin sister, Angie. She came to visit after college ended for the summer last spring. When the fighting started she insisted on helping like other people were doing at the time. I was concerned for her safety but she was always the athletic one, more than me, so I knew she could handle herself. In truth if anyone should have been named a slayer in the family it should have been her. But I got the calling.

How did your sister die?

Well...we got separated. I lost sight of her and when I found her...it was too late. She was already dead, killed by a demon. Xander was there and at first he thought it was me. He didn't know Angie had left the council and I found him cradling her in his arms. So...even though I wasn't there, she didn't die alone. She had a very loving gentle man at her side...I take the bit of cold comforts where I can.

So where do you go from here?

I've asked myself that question quite a bit but like I said, I've got Xan and I've got good friends like Ken at the council. They've both lost people close to them. Xander lost a former fiance and Ken, who lost her watcher that she was close to. It seems like if you work with the council either you've lost someone close to you or you will sooner or later. But really, that's true of everyone I think. Only a hermit never loses someone they love.

It seems like if you work with the council either you've lost someone close to you or you will sooner or later. But really, that's true of everyone I think. Only a hermit never loses someone they love.



So what's the solution?

For getting over losing people who've died? I can't say anyone has the answer. Not even me. But I find I take it one day at a time. I have good days and bad days but I think staying connected to life, having a purpose, that helps. I joined the council to help strangers but I couldn't even save my own sister. But as hard as that fact is to accept I have to because I know the work I'm doing can save someone else's sister instead. And that's what drives me today. Angie will never go home again but maybe because I'm out patrolling then someone else's loved one will get to come home. That makes the job I do worthwhile.

I have to say you're right. You are a mature young lady.

I have my moments but there's a part of me that's still a big kid at heart.

And you can still smile.

Yeah, I can still smile because Angie would want that for me. I know that if the situation was reversed that I would want the same for her. Just because my life was over doesn't mean that she should stop living hers.

So how do you enjoy life? What do you like?

I like working out lately. I think it helps relief the stress of everything. I like to bake too.~giggles~

Why is that funny?

I don't know of any slayers who are handy in a kitchen and when they read this I'm sure they'll never let me hear the end of it. I'm sure the Betty Crocker comments will be on the way shortly. ~laughs~

What's your speciality?

Depends on who you ask I think. Xander likes my brownies and Willow likes my sugar cookies. I make my own frosting and everything...Oh god, I can't believe I'm telling you this.

Why not? Cooking is an art and it's not something everyone can do.

So I'm told. Robin says that Faith can barely boil water and Buffy's idea of making breakfast is pouring cereal in a bowl so they better not tease me when they read this.

Well, if they do they'll have to answer to me.

Thanks Harold but I don't think you'd be too much of a threat to either one of them.

True and that brings up an interesting point. What's it like to have a Council head who was once a slayer?

Well, it's not really any different then when Rowena was doing the job. Both of them did a fine job with what they had to work with. Not that Rowena never cared about the girls in the field but Buffy has a different perspective. She's been there and done that, you know? So I think that makes a difference when it comes to policy today.

How So?

Rowena had to do a lot of work with training new recruits - both slayers and watchers. Now that many have been trained Buffy's been putting watchers and slayers together based on her experience with Giles. Some of the girls have been complaining about their assignments but really, I think Buffy knows what she's doing. If a team is going to work you're going to need a ying to a yang, so to speak.

So what's new on the horizon for Vi Joston?

Like I said, I'm just taking one day at a time and that's all anyone can do right now. It's been a weird world to me for the past five years but eventually you learn to live in the reality of the world and not the imagination of what you've always perceived. Easier said than done, I know, but soon life will be 'back to normal' for everyone...even me.



Angie will never go home again but maybe because I'm out patrolling then someone else's loved one will get to come home. That makes the job I do worthwhile.



In the Kitchen

with Andrew Wells



If you're planning a Halloween party I've found that these three items in particular are always a favorite and even freak out the slayer-ettes (girls in slayer training). Consider them for your Halloween party this year:

Halloween Black Punch

To make a frozen hand, wash a disposable glove, fill with water, seal with a rubber band and freeze until hard. Stir together 1 (.13 ounce) grape soft drink mix, 1 (.13 ounce) orange soft drink mix, 2 cups sugar and 3 quarts water until solids are dissolved. Combine with chilled 1 liter ginger ale just before serving. Dip the frozen hand briefly in warm water, then peel off the glove. Float the prepared hand in the punch bowl for a ghastly effect.

Eerie Eyeballs

Makes 9 dozen bite-sized eyeball treats
3 oz lemon gelatin (can be sugar-free)
1 cup hot water
1/2 cup miniature marshmallows
1 cup pineapple juice
8 oz cream cheese (can be lowfat/Neufchatel)
1 cup mayonnaise (can be fat-free)

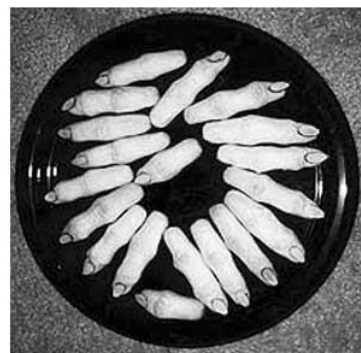


Dissolve lemon gelatin in 1 cup water in double boiler, add marshmallows and stir to melt. Remove from heat. Add pineapple juice and cream cheese. Beat until well blended. Cool slightly. Fold in mayo. If you have a truffle candy mold or round ice cube trays, pour the mixture in the molds and leave to set in the fridge. Otherwise pour into a deep ceramic dish and chill until thickened or firm enough for scooping into eyeballs. Using a melonballer, scoop full balls of the mixture and set aside for decoration. To decorate, use liquid food coloring and an old detail paintbrush and get creative. You will need black food coloring for the pupils. Also, if you are in a hurry, instead of painting the colored irises, you can carefully dip the ball in a small pool of food coloring to approximate the iris, but still paint on the pupils.

I found rubber ice cube trays worked beautifully with much less waste than the melonballer technique. I sprayed the rubber trays with non-stick cooking spray beforehand like you would any gelatin mold, let the gelatin mixture sit in the refrigerator to set, then I was able to carefully pop the eyeballs out to paint them. Some of the eyeballs did break, and they do have one flat side, but that actually works, since then they don't roll around while you are trying to paint them. I have found that Wilton truffle candy molds are even better, since the swirl design on the top is the right size for the cornea shape on the eyeball. When using the truffle molds, one recipe makes about 9 dozen eyeballs - plenty for a party crowd!

Creepy Witches Fingers

Makes 5 dozen cookies
1 cup Butter, softened
1 cup Icing sugar
1 Egg
1 tsp Almond extract
1 tsp Vanilla
2 2/3 cups Flour
1 tsp Baking powder
1 tsp Salt
3/4 cup Almonds, whole blanched
1 Tube red decorator gel (optional)



In bowl, beat together butter, sugar, egg, almond extract and vanilla. Beat in flour, baking soda, and salt. Cover and refrigerate 30 minutes. Working with one quarter of the dough at a time and keeping remainder refrigerated, roll heaping teaspoonful of dough into finger shape for each cookie. Press almond firmly into one end for the nail. Squeeze in center to create knuckle shape. (Accompanying picture showed long rolled shape with bulge at center for knuckle; you puff it out rather than squeeze it in.) Using paring knife, make slashes in several places to form knuckle.

Place on lightly greased baking sheets; bake in 325F oven for 20-25 minutes or until pale golden. Let cool for 3 minutes. Lift up almond, squeeze red decorator gel onto nail bed and press almond back in place, so gel oozes out from underneath. You can also make slashes in the finger and fill them with "blood." Remove from baking sheets and let cool on racks. Repeat with remaining dough.



Telling Tales

by Rupert Giles, Former Head Watcher



Believe it or not Halloween is actually the one time of the year that the demon population stays home and avoids crowds. Although we usually have some type of unexpected events, for the most part, the population in general rarely sees a real 'spook' on Halloween.

Perhaps it's traced back to the Pagan rituals of centuries ago such as the threat of All Saint's Day and cutting things too close to the stroke of midnight on Oct.. 31st. Demons, much like humans, are a superstitious bunch. Regardless, demons rarely pose a problem on Halloween.

In fact many of the 'misadventures' we've found ourselves at the council on Halloween have been thanks to the human element – enchanted costumes, psychotic ex's or just Halloween pranks. These types of events have been the most we've endured. Very rarely have we had a real 'monster' problem at Halloween.

Of course we can't assume that vampires won't feed on a night such as Halloween but as with any other night of the year it's important to remember to keep your children safe. In truth, the chance of you being attacked by a vampire on Halloween isn't any greater than other nights of the year.

It's been this way for centuries but for those just learning about how the demon world operates it's obvious why some parents might be apprehensive about taking children out for treats.

The best rules to follow for Halloween are the same ones that you've been hearing for years now: make sure your children are with an adult or teen at all times, make sure they don't get separated when in a group, be certain that they never go into a strangers home and also inspect candy carefully at home.

Halloween has always been a time of myths it seems. Reports of poisoned candy or razors in apples have been exaggerated over the years. In fact, the only real reports of these events happening have been at the hands of family giving these items to kids, not receiving them from total strangers. To compound matters, these events, again, rarely occur at all, but it's the few that people remembered...without receiving all the facts.

It seems the myths that now are starting to surround Halloween seem to be just as great, with no one knowing the whole story.

Consider the following: Last Halloween the human population had no idea that vampires truly existed. This year, people have been educated. If you were a vampire would you run the risk of trying to 'eat out' when many parents will probably now be armed with wooden stakes? The answer is no, they wouldn't.

Vampires exist because they blend into our society. Although a few of them have tried to become infamous for their deeds, the breed on the whole tries their best to fit into human civilization, not stand out.

So it could be said that this year Halloween will be safer than it's ever been.

The slayers of course, will be patrolling the cities as they do every night but now people will be able to protect themselves since they know the true story and the fact vampires do exist.

Having a daughter myself who is addicted to chocolate and sweets thanks to her 'Aunt Willow', people have asked whether she and I will take part. I can say that, yes, we too will be seeing that she takes part in the holiday. Halloween is almost like a rite of passage for American children, in particular.

With so much happening in the world now and with so much changing it's important that we manage to hold onto some of our traditions - Halloween being one of them.

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