

Kel McIntyre

Breakdowns

Sex, drugs, rock n roll, and food. It was our saying. We wrote it on our bleached-out, torn up jeans, on our Keds, in our slam books. The addition of food was Chris's thing. She was (the) creative (one).

I have the same birthday as Buffy Summers, the vampire slayer. I figured this out after doing some major analysis of (her) birthday episodes. The first clue came when her snarky remark to the questions, "What are you?" was "Capricorn on the cusp of Aquarius." I didn't know the exact date, but I had a feeling.

Things my mother cannot do (part 1)

1. Change a light bulb
2. Pump gas
3. Act rationally

"Will you pack my clothes?" my mother wanted to know.

Fuck. "I thought Heather was going to pack for you yesterday."

"Well, she didn't."

"I don't know, Mom. I'm on my way from work to school right now and won't be home until after 7:30. The kids have to be in bed by 8:30, and we have to eat dinner."

"I forgot you had school tonight." Of course she did.

"Can I ask you something? If you know how to fold clothes and put them in a drawer—which you do—how can you not know how to pack?"

"Forget it, Kelly. I'll do it myself."

"Seriously, Mom. Do you think I took some packing class that you don't know about? If I can do it, you can do it."

"I said I'll do it myself."

We were twelve when we discovered Bill and the music that would make us. We loved Poison, Bon Jovi, White Snake, Keel, Cinderella, Dokken,...but there was one band to rule them (us) all: Mötley Crüe.

The music made us

feel

hard.

It was summer in Florida.

Bored,

hot,

sticky,

rebellious,

we wanted

rock n roll.

Being a vampire slayer must be terribly stressful.

My high school romance was insane. My boyfriend, Louie, was insane. I was insane. Everything was insanely extreme. In high school, there are no in-betweens.

We watched the *Mötley Crüe Uncensored* video over and over, read *Circus* and *Hit Parader*,
put pictures of band members
posing,
playing,
shirtless,
sweating
sex
all over our walls.

Things my mother cannot do (part 2)

1. Drive on the expressway
2. Follow directions
3. Exhibit strength

When I was four, I fell through my friend's door. I screamed exactly the way one would expect a child to scream with a bloody arm full of glass; my friend's mom rushed to get a towel to stop the bleeding; my sister, Heather, and my friend, Danielle, gaped at the blood and glass and the screaming me in shock. My mother ran away.

I try like hell but I'm out of control

All in the name of,

all in the name of rock n' roll, all in the name of rock

all in the name of rock n' roll, all in the name of rock

For sex and sex I'd sell my soul

all in the name of, all in the name of rock

- Mötley Crüe, "All in the Name Of," *Girls, Girls, Girls*

Louie used to sneak me into the house through his bedroom window. One time, in the middle of the night, his mother came into his room, sat on the bed, stroked his hair and called him Luby while I lay, curled into a ball, under his six-foot-two, two-hundred-pound body, terrified that I'd be caught, naked, in his bed.

Chris never let me forget that when I first saw him, I thought Bill was a girl—tight pink jeans on a boy? Hello! Not only was he not a girl, he was one of the *fine guys* who lived in the row of town houses perpendicular to mine. Chris, Hope, Heather, and I used to sit on the couch and watch them through the cracked blinds and giggle, afraid to go outside. What do you want? We were twelve.

When I was sixteen, my father came home early and found Louie and me *in the most compromising of positions* (if you know what I mean...and I think you do). He was understandably upset. Later that night, while Chris and I sat with him at the table, he thundered, "There you were, on your hands and knees, like animals!" Chris and I couldn't look at each other because we knew we would laugh. Laughing is no good when you're being reprimanded by your father

for having sex with yet another boy under his roof.

I had a hard time lovin'
When love was all about
I went down on Cherry Lane and wow I found out
She was so wild and young
All it took was just another little slip of the tongue
And nothing takes like cherries
Gotta cut me another slice

-Keel, "Cherry Lane," *Keel*

Buffy had to kill Angel, her one true love, to save the world. She told him to close his eyes, she kissed him, and then she stabbed him in the stomach with a sword, sending him to Hell.

My mother has had sex with two people. She was married to both.

We talked to Bill the day we saw him on the road. He told us his name, that he was seventeen, and that he lived with his best friend, Kurt. He became our friend. We started hanging out at his house watching taped recordings of Dial MTV, lying around in his waterbed, talking. He liked Chris.

Things my mother cannot do (part 3)

1. Wrap presents
2. Work her remote control
3. Display appropriate behavior

"Keep eating, Kelly," my mother would laugh, pointing out people who were fat. My mother thinks she's funny. "I can't help it if people don't get my sense of humor," she says. A boy named Jason who I think is dead now used to call me Orca as I walked home from school. My mother is not funny.

Bill kissed Chris. Bill kissed Hope. Bill kissed me. Bill was a really good kisser.

Buffy's mother, Joyce, doesn't understand. She doesn't want to understand, not any more than Buffy *wants* to be a vampire slayer.

Buffy: (steps closer) Open your eyes, Mom. What do you think has been going on for the past two years? The fights, the weird occurrences. How many times have you washed blood out of my clothing, and you still haven't figured it out?

Joyce: (raises her voice angrily) Well, it stops now!

Buffy: (raises her voice also) No, it doesn't stop! It *never* stops!
Do-do you think I chose to be like this? Do you have any idea how lonely it is, how dangerous? I would *love* to be upstairs watching TV or

gossiping about boys or... God, even studying! But I have to save the world... again.

Bill fucked Chris in the middle of the night in the back seat of some typical eighties sleaze ball car, like a Camaro or Trans-Am, over Labor Day weekend after first making out with Mary and then with me. When it wasn't one of our turns in the car, we drank Budweiser from a can and practiced cheerleading moves on the side of the road. We finally felt like the girls from the songs.

One day I spent two hours in Louie's closet in a state of complete undress when his father came home unexpectedly. I am now a little on the claustrophobic side.

I met this girl around quarter to ten
We made it once, she said "Make me again."
She wrapped her love around me all night long
In the mornin' we were still goin' strong
Now let me tell ya, it sure feels good
First time I saw that girl I knew it would
Now let me tell ya, it sure felt right
No pullin' teeth, she didn't want to fight, she said
Shake me

- Cinderella, "Shake Me," *Night Songs*

Things my mother cannot do (part 4)

1. Buckle her own seatbelt
2. Open an e-mail attachment
3. Forget

January 29, 1988—the last night of my first life.

I walked into my house to find my parents sitting at the dining room table with a watered down bottle of Jack Daniel's between them. I knew it was watered down because I had added the water myself that afternoon. My mother told me the story of the girl who had just turned thirteen. The girl was a whore. She had had sex with not one boy, but two, in her parents' bed earlier that day after drinking her father's Jack Daniels. My mother knew the story of this girl, this whore, because she had eavesdropped on the phone while one of the boys told Heather the story. My mother listened with sick fascination as the boy described the things the whore had done, and then she was on the floor on her hands and knees, sick, empty belly filled with disbelief and disgust.

Bill must have soaked himself in Drakkar. I cannot smell Drakkar without thinking of him even though I have not smelled him in almost twenty-five years.

Buffy died at the end of season five. Her friends resurrected her in season six. She was never the same. The show was never the same. Buffy's light disappeared—darkness everywhere.

Now I'm not lookin' for a love that lasts

I need a shot and I need it fast
If I can't have her, I'll take her and make her
Hey, sweetheart, slide on in here
No, not in the front, jump in the back
Why?

Cause there's something back there I want to show ya

-Poison, "I Want Action," *Look What the Cat Dragged In*

The first time I was in the mental hospital, I was thirteen-going-on-fourteen. A bottle of pills (penicillin, silly me—my pee stunk for a week) and a mother's disbelief were involved. A rape occurred, too, but somehow, that doesn't seem so important.

Buffy always had some type of emergency.

No downtime in Sunnydale.

The second time (and last, thank you very much) I was in the mental hospital, I was sixteen. Louie-related drama sent me over the edge. No pills were involved, but a slight breakdown did occur.

Things my mother cannot do (part 5)

1. Turn on the stove in her house
2. Make coffee
3. (*Insert positive verb here*)

Bad time in May of oh-nine:

Husband left me for my inability to remain in a committed relationship and then subsequently fell in love with a twenty-one year old girl? Check.

Teenage lover unable to commit to a relationship and have to be home to Mommy and Daddy by eleven o'clock? Check.

Trying to manage as a single mother of two boys who go to different schools that start at two different times that both happen to be after I have to be at work and getting no help from estranged husband who hates me as a result of my teenage lover who won't commit? Check. Reprimanded at work several times for behavior and appearance not exactly becoming to a teacher? Check.

Precariously close to stay number three at the mental hospital? Check.

Told by my mother that she can't believe at thirty-four years old I'm still getting into trouble with my shenanigans and that she should have nothing to do with me anymore because she can't take it, she can't take it? Check.

By the time Buffy was seventeen, the demons were everywhere.