

Jessica Hautsch: Blackwater in the Battle Against Evil: The Moral Implications of Slayers as Hired Guns in *Buffy Season Nine* and *Angel and Faith Season Ten*

Season 9 of the *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* comics introduces Deepscan, a private security company set up by Kennedy. At first glance, Deepscan seems like worthy employment for Slayers: It was begun by one of their own, and in a capitalist world where many of them lack marketable skills (a problem that Buffy herself faces), the corporation provides Slayers considerable monetary compensation for the use of their strengths. However, more importantly, as Kennedy notes, Deepscan gives these Slayers a purpose, something that many Slayers lack after magic and interdimensional travel is destroyed at the end of season 8.

At different points in *Buffy* and *Angel and Faith*, the titular Slayers engage in a brief sojourn with the company, and they both leave because of ethical qualms with Deepscan's operation and an inability to assimilate to its culture. This dissatisfaction is linked to Deepscan's profit-driven *raison d'être*, similar to the ethos espoused by Milton Friedman; although not as outright immoral as Wolfram and Hart or the Dollhouse, Deepscan's profit-driven motives are shown to be at odds with Buffy's and Faith's moral code and MO.

This paper will examine how the comics' presentation of Deepscan offers a continuation of Whedon's anti-corporate ethos. Additionally, given that Faith refers to Deepscan as "Blackwater on estrogen" in the final issue of *Angel and Faith Season 9*, it would seem that the series invites discussion of how Deepscan's practices align with those of the more notorious Private Security and Military Firms (PSMF), most notably a lack of concern about social benefits and a focused interest that favours the wealthy. It is this contradiction of privatized capitalist militarization versus the seeming socialist morality associated with the Slayer ethos that this paper explores.