

## Commentary on the Black Widow Graphic Novel by Bogwitch

Bear with me.

This is my first stab at a commentary as I have a lousy memory and I'm not sure people are that interested in how I agonised over synonyms for 'dark' for six months, but the Black Widow graphic novel (for that is a posher term than 'comic') is a bit different in that I can at least explain a bit more about what I did to produce all the photographs (there being a visual memory jog for me!) so I thought I would take a stab at letting anyone actually interested know how I did all this and maybe expand some of the picture out a bit so that some of the detail in the sets can be seen.

I did make a lot of things for the sets, but I also bought um...rather a lot of bits and bobs. I can't say how much it all cost, but somewhere in the region of £200-£300+ would not surprise me. Some pieces were also borrowed from my friend's daughter R and I might have forgotten to give some of it back...

Anyway this commentary assumes you also have a familiarity with the original fic.

### Creating the Graphic Novel

First of all, I took the original story and hacked it about, taking out anything I didn't need and keeping dialogue and anything I couldn't show that would push the story along or give it that Black Widow flavour.

Stylistically, a lot of the personal pronouns I had left out in the original story to suit the gritty noir style I was writing, went back in as the lines really didn't track anymore in the graphic novel format. I actually kept a surprising amount of the story as it was – at least at first.

The numbers are designed to match up with the boxes on the storyboard.

1

(A) (The bunk protests. Springs shriek in time with ragged breaths and the rise and fall of Buffy's hips. Standard Army issue mattress. Rough blanket beneath her knees. Light metal frame that shakes as she fucks the vampire beneath her)

She's close.

Just a little more.

She quickens the pace. Grinds her clit against the pubic bone of her undead lover. Needs the friction. Needs his cock.

(B) The Army lets her bring them back. They don't give a damn as long as she dusts them when she's done. Stops the incidents the base personnel will only gossip quietly about. Keeps her occupied.

(C) But this one is almost spent. Can't do much now but lie there while she takes what she wants. She's had a couple of hours, tops. Not nearly enough.

(D) The camera whirs above her. Tracks in detail across her body. Doesn't miss a thing. Zooms in for close up where the vamp slips inside her. She smiles into the lens. Knows it's up there. Gives them a show. Knows the DVD will be all over the base by tomorrow. Doesn't care. Let them see. Let them find out what makes a Slayer tick. She could tell them if she wanted. Fighting and fucking. That's all there is. But it's more fun this way. Let them work it out.

(E) A couple more thrusts...

(F) She's there. Gasps loudly. Stretches back. Spine tight as a bow as she comes. Throws herself forward as she shudders. Her hips keep a languid rhythm to draw out the pleasure to its max.

(G) She leans in close to the vamp's face. Tempting him with her young-hot blood. Yellow eyes burn with hate, with wickedness. He growls. Been in game face the whole time. He's starving. Ravenous. He pulls weakly against the chains that secure him to the bed. Falls to get free. Just like every other time he's tried this week. He strains desperately towards any part of her he can get at. Her neck, her chin, her breasts. Pointless. Yesterday, she stuffed a rag in his mouth and pulled out his fangs.

(H) Her hand reaches under the pillow. Searches for a moment, patting the mattress until she finds what she's looking for.

(I) Got it.

(J) Leans back again. Pelvic muscles squeeze him until his eyes roll back. Stakes him as he comes. Leaves her kneeling naked in greasy dust. Sly smile. All done. The kill feels as good as the climax.

(K) She gets up. Stretches. Grabs a towel. Washes away the sweat and the semen from between her thighs. She's adjusted well to life bunker bound. Her quarters are private. She has her own shower, her own privileges. But they don't like her mixing with the soldiers on base. She's dangerous and some of the lunkheads have the scars to prove it. She's an experiment, not personnel.

(L) She remembers only a little of her past life before the Government wiped it away. A few stray images that leak through her programming now and then. Faces she doesn't recognise. Places she doesn't know. They don't make sense.

(M) But all that really remains are impressions of disconnected emotions she can no longer feel. A bitter turmoil of grief, fear, love... Toss. They make her cry in her sleep and when she wakes she doesn't understand what she's seen. So she pushes them away out of thought.

(N) That stuff isn't important. Doesn't want to know what they mean.

(O) She's all fixed now. Her mind feels cleaner. Uncluttered. Unburdened. The turbulence of all that emotion has gone. Life's simple. She lives to fight and to kill and to fuck. Doesn't want anything else.

1

From that initial script, I created a (really) rough storyboard, which formed the basis of the structure I built up in Powerpoint.



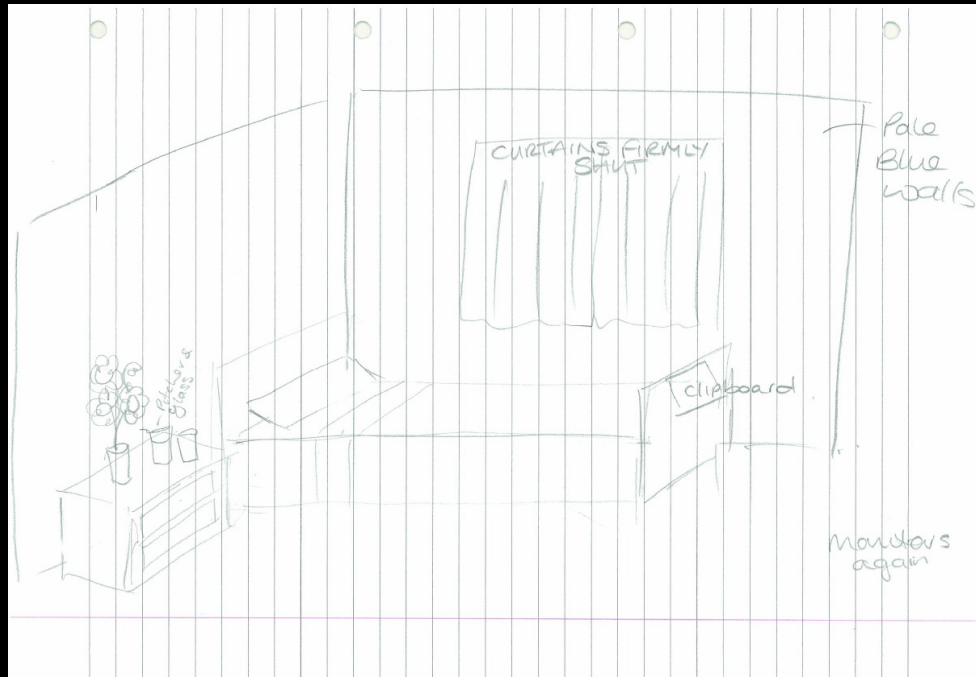
Eventually, I ended up with a blank version of the comic with all the elements in place without the pictures.

Then the long process of making the sets, trawling Ebay for props and taking the pictures began. I found a few concept drawings:

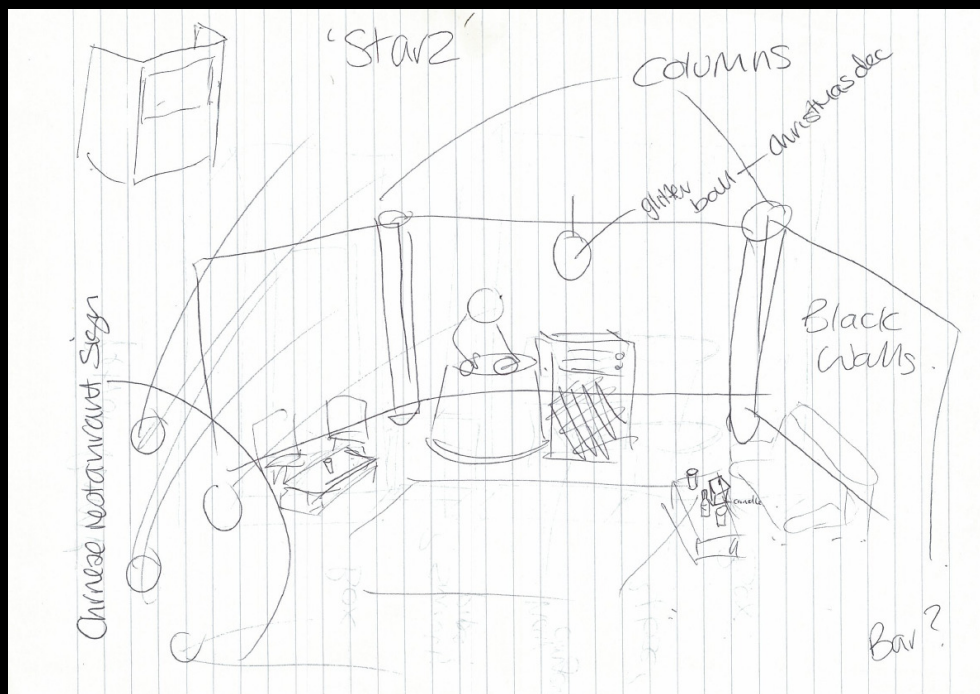
The alley:



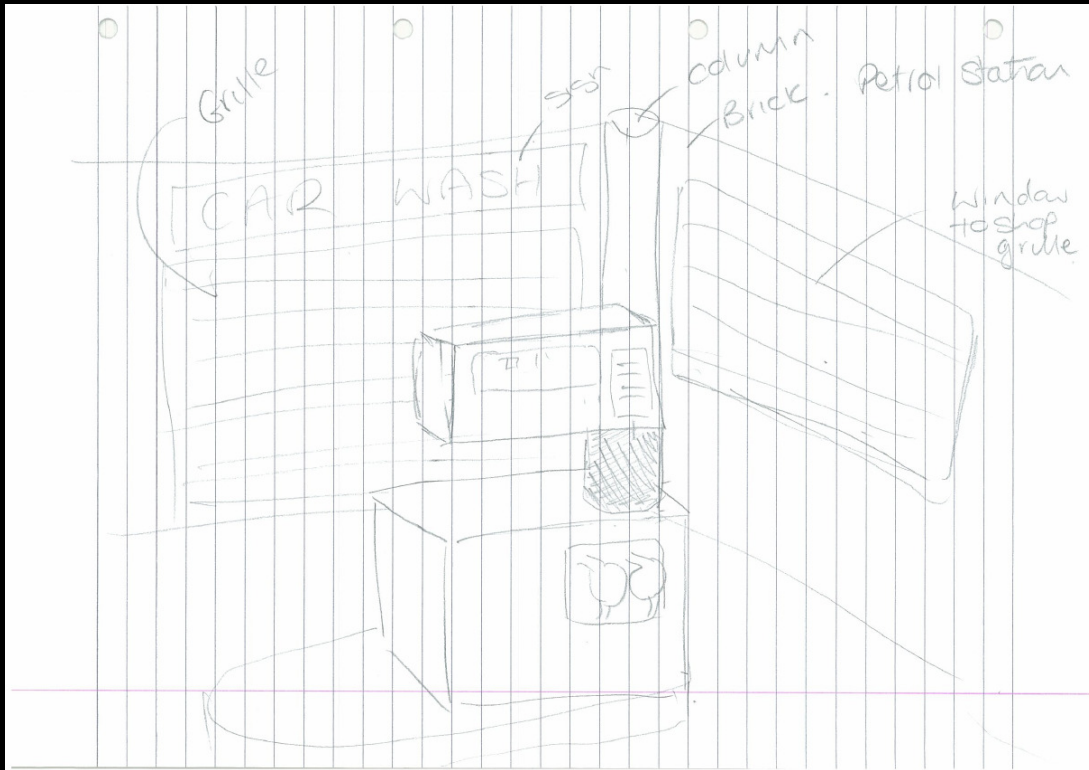
The hospital:



Starzz:



The petrol station (which was cut because the pump was too tricky and it was all a bit elaborate for just a couple of shots):



I would take a few pictures, both in close up and long shot, then transfer them into Paintshop Pro for re-sizing, cropping, editing and adding of any details like dust or yellow eyes. The results would then be put into the appropriate box as a fill. This process took well over two years on and off.

### Page by Page

Cover: 'Pale Pony Press' – yes, it's a weak gag.

Page 1: Meet BlackWidow!Buffy. She doesn't look an awful lot like SMG I'm afraid, but the truth is, part of the whole idea of attempting a photo comic with Black Widow was triggered by me acquiring this CY doll which kind of reminded me of Buffy in the story, with the black bob and whatnot.

Page 2: I think the first thing everyone is going to notice is the ginormous size of 'Buffy's' breasts. I like to think that the army must have given her a boob job as well as implants in her head. CY dolls tend to be a bit, um, over-endowed by their nature. You will also note how she also has thighs about as wide as SMG's waist. We'll just have to pretend she's been working out big time with the army.

As we'll see later, the set for this scene was very simple, just my duvet cover (unironed!) draped over some cardboard. The bedding is made from an old T-shirt. R lent me the bed, which is a little tiki-themed for a army bed, but it was that or a tissue box at the time. The camera didn't

need much doing to it, but I put some clear nail varnish into the front to build up a lens.

The font for the title is Walrod, pretty isn't it?

Page 3: I obviously couldn't get Ken into game-face so yellowing his eyes a bit in photoshop had to suffice. The (working!) mini-handcuffs came from a necklace I had. I made a new screen for the laptop.

Page 4: The iconic moment from *The Gift* is recreated using cotton wool and Christmas lights. The picture isn't really in focus. I would like to say that was deliberate, but I just couldn't get the camera steady enough when shooting from above, I don't think it matters a lot though as it's a pretty hazy moment for this Buffy anyway.

Dawn is played by a High School Musical doll. Because she isn't immediately recognisable to the reader and Buffy doesn't remember who she is, the green of the key is there to clue the reader in. of course, it's also a clue that Buffy is not in her right mind.

Obviously, I didn't recreate Rivello Drive in matchsticks, so that's just a tweaked photo.

Page 5: Buffy tucks into a lovely meal of sweet and sour chicken in the mess. At the time I shot this I didn't have any other food for her and certainly no other cutlery hence the military issue chopsticks (because I am perverse like that, of course I would have a set of chopsticks for the dolls before I ever had a knife and fork). However, as I had originally intended to set Black Widow in Japan (I can't remember now why I changed my mind), they do make a nice nod to that - for me at least.

The Doctor is Dr Fuller from 'Limblessly in Love'. I had already completed this scene when I wrote that so I definitely knew what I had in mind. She is also a CY doll.

The dollhouse brick paper was a great Ebay buy as I think it looks quite nifty. The background for all these scenes is a large bit of card folded over with the brick on one side and white paint on the other so I can just flip it over as needed.

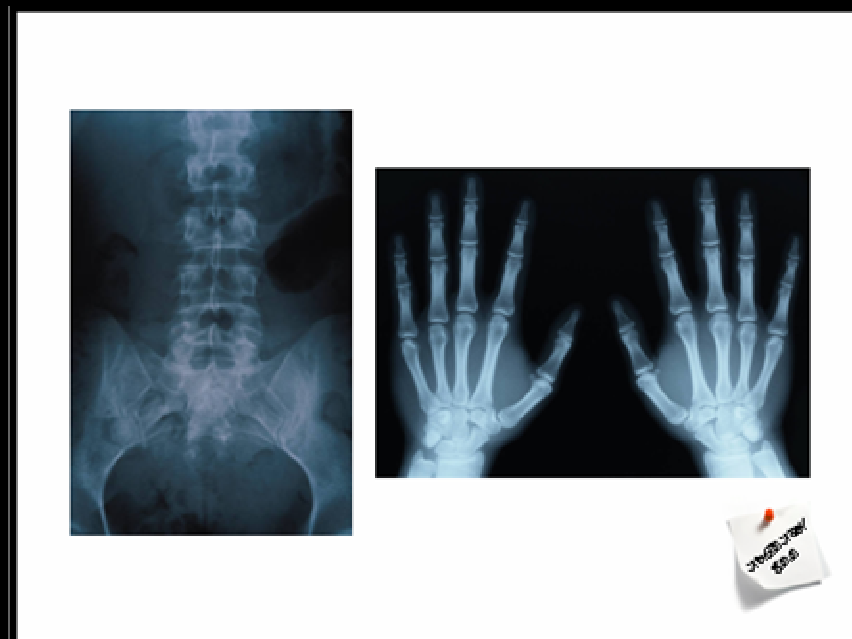
Page 6: I was very tempted to re-do this scene again as I didn't have a lot of props at the time and I had to make quite a lot (like the noticeboard (which is more readable than I'd planned!), the pencil, the screen of the laptop, the cupboard, the 'wires'). I think it could look even better now. However, I held fire as I found that even though I put as much detail as I could into the sets, I was still mainly taking pictures of faces and the details tended to get left out anyway, plus I had already re-done it once before.



Below: A wider view of the lab:



I don't think that x-ray is of a human skeleton, a hellhound perhaps?



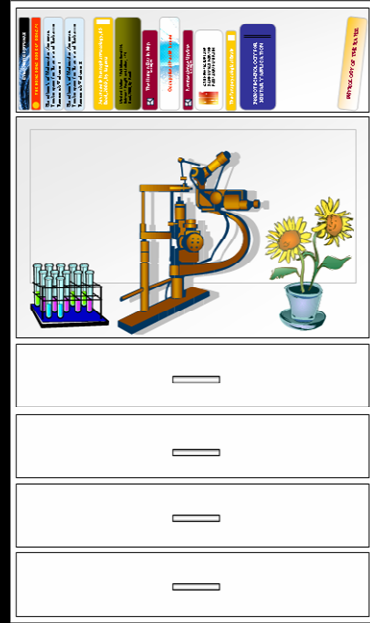
(Psst, The note is in gibberish).

Page 7:

The Colonel is a lot younger than his counterpart in 'Limblessly in Love' as Mattel doesn't tend to do paunchy older people in their Barbie range. Maybe I should have shoved a cushion up his jacket...

The 'books' on the 'shelf' include the titles of some real books I got out of an academic book catalogue and of course, the essential tome, the *Hong Kong Book of Kung Fu*! The ones I made up are:

*Physiology of the Slayer* (I suspect Dr Fuller might have written this one)  
*Nanotechnology for Military Application*  
*The Paraphysiological Brain*  
*Cybernetic Implant Schematics for the Post-Mortem Brain*  
*Cybernetic Software*



Page 8:

The boots don't allow the doll's feet to attach to her legs when she has tights on. This proved very tricky when she had to stand up as her ankles kept giving way and she'd fall over and knock down the set. *Then* her head would fall off.

Joss never had to put up with that problem with actresses.

An accidental flash picture shows the set for this scene and the previous one with the vamp in all its basic glory:



Page 9:

Nightclub! This is all lit with old-fashioned fairy lights which allowed me to take photos that looked dark but still had depth. Later on after the lights



packed in and I found this light impossible to achieve again. Of course fairy lights are all LED now and the light they give is too harsh and white. I bought some more on Ebay and I broke those as well.

You can't see the sign on the DJ booth, but the nightclub has the very naff name of 'Starzz'! It's not meant to be a classy establishment, as you can now see:





Page 10: I got these two High School Musical dolls in a car boot sale. To be honest, I doubt that first one is all that interested in girls.

Page 11: To make the set look like a restroom, I lined the cardboard set with red and a mirror paper. The mirror paper came from a craft shop and has many uses. It's a shame I seem to have lost it now.

There was also an attempt to make a mirror, but it wasn't very good:



Page 12: The towel holder was made from tissue and a tic tac box painted white. The things I do on a Saturday afternoon!

Page 13: I made the dispenser out of a case for a sewing kit. It dispenses Vikingz condoms - 'condoms for real men', Fairy Hammox towels and Bliss Tampons - 'Enjoy Your Period!' (someone has written 'fuck that' in lipstick over the sign for those). It's a shame you can't read the sign in the photo.



Page 14: The couch glows strangely. It's not really meant to. Perhaps it's haunted.

Page 15: I don't have a lot to add about this page.

Page 16: The gang! Three Barbie Fashionistas, a Blaine (not Ken!) doll and another chap from the High School Musical car boot collection for a little racial diversity; of course, he gets killed like the other one, so maybe I didn't do so well there.

Page 17: Blaine has such bad haircut, it's no wonder Barbie dumped him to go back to Ken. I think this guy must have been turned in 1992.

Page 18: Blu Tack proved very useful for keeping stakes in the heart in place.

Page 19: This whole back room scene had to be detailed otherwise it wouldn't have looked like a storage area. I even threw in the kitchen sink! It never did match the image I had in my head though - I needed a lot more crates with bottles for that. I made the crates for the Coca Cola bottles, but I had to buy the bottles to go in them – and can you even see them?

This scene was completely re-done because, as Quinara pointed out, the natural light was all wrong:

Original layout:



Revised version lit with LED Christmas icicle lights and some electronic tealights to try to soften the whiteness a little:



The new layout also has a staff rota board as I wanted to have more things at head height:

Staff Rota Board							
	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
John			•	•	•		
Barry		•	•	•		• •	
Martha				•	•		
Brad			•	•	•	•	
Gary							
Cara		•			•		
Mark				•	•	•	
Janine			•		•	•	
Joe		•			• •	•	
Nora			•	•	•	•	
Alphonse		•		•	•	•	

Gary is making Barry and Joe do double shifts to cover his holiday.



Page 21:

This scene is lit with a standard lamp and an angle poise lamp. It's a shame they don't give anything like the depth of darkness I got in the nightclub scene, but if I was ever going to finish this, I had to plough onward.

The light also put a lot of red into the images, this was later removed in Paintshop Pro when I also darkened then to make it look like night (even though I took the pictures at night in really low light).

The chainlink fence doubles as my paper bin:



Page 22:

I made the binliners from binliners stuffed with binliners funnily enough. Bit The glass is crushed up biro and the dust baking powder.

Page 23:

I made a better door than this for this set but it turned out to be too small, so I just used a bit of black card in the end.

The Chinese place is called Hong Kong Garden because, as anyone who has spent any time at sb\_fag\_ends will know, I had to get the Siouxsie and the Banshees reference in there somewhere.



Page 24:

Spike looks like he was smoking a Camberwell Carrot. It's just a bit of rolled up paper with the end enhanced with orange felt tip.



Page 25: The bin liners make another star appearance as alley debris. Scattered about are some other bits and pieces I have accumulated which have come out of the 'split' sack.



Page 26: Ah the sword. Look how it glints! The sword was another nice Ebay find. It's metal and gleams beautifully for the camera. I like the sword very much; as does my friend's nine year old daughter to makes a bee line straight for my Barbie weapons chest every time I play with her. Yes, I do have a Barbie Weapons chest.

Page 27: The dumpster was made from a box of envelopes covered in green paper and grunged up with distressing ink.

Page 28: Getting these two dolls just to stand up convincingly was an on-going nightmare due to her ankle and head issues and his bandy, wobbly legs – which is why a lot of the action takes places close to walls! So if standing was tricky enough, you can image somersaults might take a bit of time to get right, but actually turned out to be a lot easier than I imagined it would be. I just propped up against a speaker that could be cut out of frame. Looks painful though, I bet she'll have a headache in the morning:



Page 29-38: I don't have a lot to say about these pages, only that getting these two to look like they were actually kissing was trickier than getting her to

somersault, though sometimes I was quite impressed with the range of emotions I could get out of these dolls considering their faces don't move.

This leg hook thing was tricky; again the speaker (and a torch) comes in useful:



Page 39: Those terrible bedsheets are enough to make Buffy think she's woken up in a rather dated B&B.

Buffy is sporting the latest in designer tissue bandages.

Page 40-47: This set was relatively easy. I already had the sink from doing the nightclub restroom scene, so it appears again dressed with flowers, blood samples and some bottles of cleaning products. I had also acquired a new bed by this point, which is at least a bit more functional looking than the tiki one.

I also made a nice, simple side table to lay out some towels and medical items, but you can't even see it! Except now you can!





Page 41:

Would you trust these two poking around in your bonce with that drill? Dr Fuller's staff includes these two unnamed junior doctors, one of whom looks awfully young for the job – probably fresh out of med school.

I'm not clear about what the racial make up of the other one is supposed to be with that dark skin and reddish hair; is she tanned? Indian? Hispanic?



The sink makes its third appearance as Dr Patel takes a blood sample.



And that's it. I hope you enjoyed!

Boggy.