

Kristine Sutherland as Joyce Summers

Kristine had flown in from Italy to work in the last episode of the season.

WG2: "We know you've moved to Italy. That must be just wonderful! How long have you been there?"

KS: "We arrived last August, but we are only here for a year. The idea was to come for one school year."

WG2: "Are you just taking the time off when you're there, are you doing any kind of work over there?"

KS: "My husband and I decided to take a year off from work. It had been a longtime dream of ours for our daughter to learn a second language when she was young enough to learn it organically. You know, you talk about something forever and you have endless fantasies about doing it, but you wonder in that quiet place if you really have the guts to do it. One day everything just fell into place and not seizing the moment didn't even seem like an option.

"It was hard for me to leave the show, but here was this phenomenal opportunity that wasn't going to come again. You have to ask yourself, 'If I don't go, will I regret it at the end of the day?' It has been an amazing experience."

WG2: "So you just fly back when you have scenes in the episode and then fly home?"

KS: "Yes. fortunately in terms of what was happening in the show it was an okay time to leave, because with Buffy going to college and everything, for mom to drift into the background isn't so unnatural. When I first went to college I don't think I thought about my mom at all."

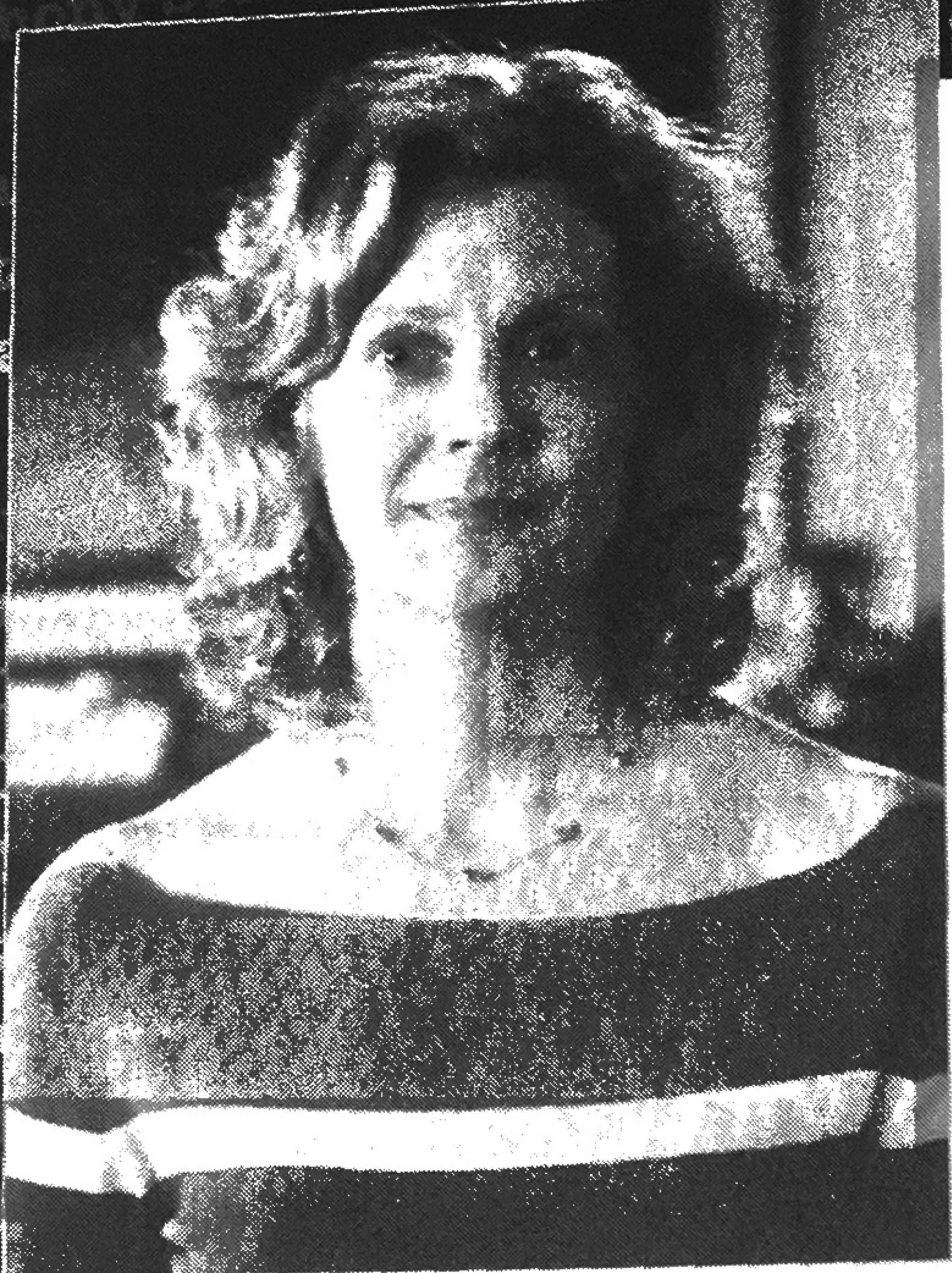
WG2: "We really liked when they had Joyce go off for Thanksgiving, and she left to go some place else, and we thought, 'Right on, Mom.' We thought of all those long Thanksgiving dinners and making the stuff and how nice that she just went off to visit somebody and Buffy had to fend."

KS: "Yes. My mom actually did that. I think it might have been my freshman year of college or maybe my last year of high school. My parents were divorced and my mother left. I'm not sure where she went. She left us with the house and my father. And I had to cook Thanksgiving dinner."

WG2: "In 'Band Candy,' when you were sixteen, was that how you were at sixteen, or did you just sort of create a composite of what sixteen-year-olds are like?"

KS: "It was sort of a composite although I have to say that I was not into Burt Reynolds when I was sixteen.

"That was a really interesting episode. I always think that I remember very clearly what it was like to be a teenager, but to actually walk it, talk it, and inhabit it, it was so much more intense than just sitting around remembering what you were like. And it was interesting because I have to say some of it was really fun, and some of it was painful. It brought up feelings that I hadn't even thought about in so long.



"Like the scene with the music, it was that thing of being a teenage girl and wanting to make a connection with the guy and he's into the music, and he's into cigarettes, and he's into the scene, and you want to make a connection with him but you don't quite know how. You're just going along with him because he's leading you into that place. I hadn't even really thought about that so much until we started doing that scene and suddenly all those feelings came back to me of what it was like to be in that given circumstance. But it wasn't until we sat down to really do it that it hit me."

WG2: "Is there anything that you've wanted to do on Buffy that you haven't gotten to do yet?"

KS: "I don't know. One of the things we talked about early, early on was the possibility of an episode where Joyce is possessed and becomes the mother from Hell. And I just thought that would be just really interesting to explore and do but I guess that hit the floor and got cut some where along the line."

WG2: "Are you going to be in Season Five?"

KS: "Yes, as far as I know I am supposed to be in Season Five. I don't know exactly what Joss is preparing, but he always has great and interesting stuff to look forward to."

WG2: "What about 'Gingerbread'? Did that remind you of anything in your own life?"

KS: "No, nothing really in my own life personally. I think the children's death touched her deeply. You know, I think, once you are a mother, you experience children's suffering so personally. So even though it was a spell, there was a lot of her own passion there for getting behind this and doing something. And because of the spell, she felt that what she was doing was the right thing, and needed to be done, and that somebody had to take a stand."

WG2: "Do you have any mythology you've created about how Joyce gave birth to a Slayer? Do you believe there is anything about Joyce that made that be what happened to her? Because we don't really know how the Slayers are picked."

KS: "No, I've actually always sort of seen it as the opposite. That the way I as Joyce see Buffy as the Slayer is sort of symbolic, when you look at your child and realize that they are a totally different person then you are and that they have different gifts and a different calling. It's a separation thing. In this case it's just more extreme and because it isn't just that she's an incredible pianist."

"It's something that has a moral cause behind it and so it brings dual feelings. 'I'm your mother and I'm older and I'm wiser but yet you're my daughter and you're this really spectacular person who's going places and wrestling with things that are beyond what I'll ever have to do in my lifetime.'"

WG2: "How was it different, when Joyce didn't know that Buffy was a Slayer versus now that she knows? Has it made it harder to play her or is it just something that's built into the way you approach your role?"

KS: "It's been much easier, although it was never hard for me as an actress to play that I didn't know that she was the Vampire Slayer. And a lot of people used to say to me, 'Oh, that must be so hard for you,' and I didn't find it hard at all because I think we have a natural built-in mechanism that allows us to deny the things that it's not the right time to see. And I think, a mother, a good mother needs a good healthy dose of that!

"So I didn't find it difficult as an actress to do that, but at the same time, in terms of my relationship with Sarah, it just became so much richer, it opened up so many more possibilities and experiences for my character to move beyond that. Then that whole Season Three was about adjusting to the idea, and get a sense of what she does."

WG2: "And then you even have more layers with Giles because you could be resentful and he wasn't just that nice man who saved you from the barbecue fork or came to visit you in the hospital."

KS: "Right. There's a battle between us somewhat over her, and a sense of a faith on my part, of knowing that she's going out at night patrolling and the kind of danger she's putting herself in. So there's so many more possibilities for me and my character since knowing. So I'm very happy to know."

WG2: "If Joyce could help Faith, what would she do?"

KS: "I think in Season Three, as a mother, I couldn't help but look at Faith and go, 'If she just had a home. If she wasn't living in that horrible hotel, if she had someone to look after her, we could soften those edges.' But I don't think that I feel the same way necessarily after my experience with her this season."

"But in Season Three I think that's what I would have done. Invite her for Christmas, invite her for Thanksgiving, let her come over for a hot meal a couple of times a week. Joyce really liked Faith. She liked her and enjoyed her but the experience of being held hostage by her, I think shattered that."

WG2: "What about if you were a vampire? What if they made Joyce a vampire? Have you ever wanted them to vamp you out?"

KS: "No, I've never wanted to be a vampire! I'm a little claustrophobic. I just have to say I've never wanted to endure the makeup."

WG2: "Can you tell us any kind of like behind-the-scenes story?"

KS: "This wasn't so much of a funny story, but it was really interesting, because when we were doing 'Gingerbread,' the actor who played the demon was so amazing looking. He just seemed so adorable. He was this fabulous guy who'd walked out of a fairy tale, and he was the loveliest, gentlest man. I wanted my daughter to see him because I thought she would get such a kick out of him."

"So I called the baby-sitter, because my husband was working that night, to come bring her and drop her by the set. And I bring her into the room where he is, and the moment that she laid eyes on him she stopped, her body went completely rigid, she dug her heels into the ground and she would not take another step, she was absolutely terrified of him. She just couldn't go near him."

"I said, 'Oh, but honey, he's so nice,' and he talks to her and she could hear that he was a really nice man but she just was so dumbstruck by this towering monster giant."

"I realized that it's because we're adults and we look back on it and think, 'Oh, isn't it great, he's a fairytale monster.' But to her, she's still a child, and so he was like the guy who was going to be under her bed and eat her. She also came to the set when we had all the millions of mummies ['Dead Man's Party']."

"She thought that the mummies were just the best! She wasn't afraid of them at all. She was chatting them up and she was sitting on the curbs with them. To this day she talks about them. She loved the cheerleader from that episode and the guy who had one eye. She still talks about them. It was just so amazing to me that she was afraid of the seven-foot monster but had no problem at all with the dead people!"

WG2: "When you knew that Buffy was gonna come back, I mean when you go to the door in the season opener of Season Three, and you saw her standing there, was it truly for you an emotional moment?"

KS: "Yeah. That was a hard moment because it just sort of came out of nowhere, you know, and was the first episode. It's funny because I remember more after that, you know, when she's finally come home, because it took a lot of preparation. It's pretty amazing thing to imagine what it would be like to spend a summer not knowing where your daughter is. Reviewing their relationship and questioning and worrying and being angry and all that. You can only hope that you pulled it off, but it's such a huge preparation for that moment, to imagine what that summer had to have been like."

Sarah Michelle Gellar Anthony Stewart Brown
"But I think it was the next episode, 'Dead Man's Party', and what I remember so vividly emotionally about that was coming down after her on the stairs, and just getting all of the anger and the upset off your chest."

WG2: "I know that a lot of people are hoping that Joyce has her own story lines in the future not just as "Buffy's mom."

KS: "I hope so too, and just, you know, the little rumors and whatnot that I hear about Season Five, I'm hoping that will happen more. I think it's part of the natural progression of your relationship with your mother, too. You're seeing Joyce through Buffy's eyes, so what changes is really her perception of her mother. I remember very clearly my perception of my mother through those years, and how it changed, and I feel like the show has very much followed that. As you separate, emerge, and leave home the more you realize that your parent is a person and that they have their own life and their own interests, and somewhere on the other side of college you start the beginning of your real relationship with them."

"As adult to adult they're still your parent, but you've grown up and it starts on a whole different footing."