

Bring On The Day

by Lynne C.

Rating: G

Disclaimer: It's all Joss' – I worship at the altar of his genius, and acknowledge that he owns all these folks and everything that they do and say.

Setting/Spoilers: Between *Bring On The Night* (BtVS 7.11) and *Show Time* (7.11))

Summary: My first fic!!! This was written during the mid-season re-run hell, as my way to stave off the temptation to spoil myself for what was comin up next. It worked.... Behold, the power of fanfic!

Acknowledgements: Quotes come from [Buffyworld](#).

Bring On The Day

"I'm beyond tired. I'm beyond scared. I'm standing on the mouth of Hell and it's going to swallow me whole...

"And it'll choke on me. We're not ready? THEY'RE not ready. They think we're gonna wait for the end to come, like we always do? I'm done waiting. They want an apocalypse? Oh, we'll give 'em one. Anyone else who wants to run, do it now, because we just became an army. We just declared war. From now on, we won't just face our worst fears, we will seek them out. We will find them and cut out their hearts, one by one, until the First shows itself for what it is. And I'll kill it myself. There's only one thing on this earth more powerful than evil. And that's us."

She looked around at her "army". "Any questions?"

Silence fell as the weight of her words sunk in. The implications of going on the offensive against this amorphous and, seemingly, all-powerful evil were far-reaching.

Kennedy finally spoke. "Guess that means more weapons, huh?"

"Yes. Yes, er, I suppose it does...." Giles replied, vaguely, staring fixedly at his slayer as though taken aback by her declaration. "But, how do you propose --"

"I hate to be Mister Negative Guy, here," Xander interjected, "but how exactly do we take this fight to them...it...whatever?"

Buffy looked at him for a moment. "I guess that's the question."

"Uh, well, then...brainstorming session?" suggested Willow weakly. "But, Buffy, you -- you're not in any shape to confront this thing again, yet."

"I know...at least, not with fists or weapons. That's why we need ideas. And some sort of training for the potentials."

"Fine, training...ideas...brainstorming...but not now." Anya stepped forward as she spoke, fists on hips, allowing for no argument. "Now, I say everyone gets a couple of hours of sleep. Then, we plan."

Buffy nodded faintly. "Anya's right. We've been going for days. And there's no telling..." she paused, then shook her head. "Yeah, two hours, then lots of coffee. And, Happy Christmas Eve, guys."

With that, Buffy turned towards the stairs, scarcely registering the low rumble of voices that broke out behind her. She longed for the oblivion of sleep, to escape this new crisis, however briefly. When she reached her room, she lowered herself gingerly to the mattress, seeking a position that would minimize pressure on her injuries. If she'd had the strength or energy, she might have laughed at the futility of the effort. Instead, she just arranged her pillows and coverlet and Mr. Gordo as best she could, and shut her eyes.

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"Do you know why you're alive?" It was Drusilla's face that addressed Spike, but now her tone had become serious, without wavering or her crazy, sing-song ramblings.

"Never figured you for," Spike, sprawled against the berm of the pool, beaten and too weak to move, paused to cough. "...existential thought, luv. I mean, you hated Paris." The faintest hint of a smile accompanied his words.

"You're alive for one reason, and for one reason only. Because I wish it. Do you know why I wish it?" The First smiled coldly at him. "Because I'm not done with you."

"Give it up." Spike turned his head, spitting out blood. "Whatever you are, whatever you get away with, I'm out. You can't pull this puppet's strings any more."

"And what makes you think you have any choice?" it spat back at him. "What makes you think you will ever be any good at all in this world?"

Spike lifted his head, defiantly. "She does," he said, his calm voice suggesting a contentment utterly at odds with his current situation. Then, he let his head fall back, too tired to hold it up any longer. "Because she believes in me." He stared at the entity a moment longer, a small smile lifting the corners of his mouth, before he slipped back into unconsciousness.

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Buffy sank down into the dark abyss of sleep.

For a short time, she floated in the dark, but then out of the void, she could make out shapes and sounds. Her room grew bright with the afternoon sun. She could hear many voices drifting up to her from the floor below. She turned where she stood and saw the bloodied shirt she'd worn in her last confrontation with the Ubervamp, the Turok-han, Giles had called it. She picked the shirt up and walked to the laundry hamper in the hallway, but paused to look at the bloodstains before dropping it into the basket. They shimmered and danced in front of her eyes, changing shapes, as though mocking her with her weakness. A blood drop in the shape of a wheel rolled across the collar. She opened the hamper, pulled out a clothes hanger, carefully draped the shirt on it, and then placed the hanger on a hook inside the hamper.

"Buffy...come down...we're all waiting for you." She moved towards the stairs and Joyce's beckoning voice.

She descended to the living room, where everyone was gathered. Joyce hugged her daughter, then approached the Christmas tree in front of the living room window. "We couldn't put the star on without you, Buffy. You have to be here for it, to tell us how to do it. You're the only one that can make it work."

Buffy took the star from her mother's hand, and stepped up on a chair that had appeared next to the tree. She fastened the ornament to the top of the tree, ignoring the pine needles that pricked her skin. "The star is bent,"

she said, "it may be broken. There may be internal bleeding. How can we fix it?"

Xander offered her duct tape and a hammer in answer to her question. "It won't be pretty, but smashing things feels better..." he volunteered. Buffy took the tape and wrapped it around the frame on the back of the star. "I can't make it new again...but it should glow for a while," she assured him, and stepped off of the weapons' chest that had replaced the chair under her feet.

She stood back then, to look at the tree. It was kind of lop-sided and lean-y, but looked like a very sincere tree, so she sighed and nodded at Tara who waited to plug it in. The lights came on, and her father snapped a picture with a box camera. Willow coughed as the smoke from the flash curled around her head, but continued about her errand of tucking large chocolate chip cookies into the pockets of all the guests.

Giles began to play his fiddle, and Buffy watched as her friends and family joined hands and skipped around the tree. She watched them pass, counting them, knowing that something was wrong...that someone was missing.

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"Bring a thing from where it belongs to where it doesn't - things don't do well in strange places." Buffy felt relief flood her as Spike spoke from behind her shoulder.

"I thought you were lost. I was looking for you. You should have been here."

"Sorry, luv. Had to give blood."

She turned to look at him, and saw the bruises and cuts on his face and torso. She trailed her fingers over the scars on his chest, tracing the signs of the zodiac that had been cut into his flesh. She left fresh blood, and Spike took her hand, turning it palm up to the light. He touched his fingertip to hers.

"You cut yourself."

"It was just the tree."

"Tree doesn't like being here. It wants to go back where it belongs. Back where it's friends are. But it stays until someone comes for it. Maybe it will die here...."

"I tried to come for you. But I don't know where. And I'm not strong enough to open the door."

"I opened a door. Din't mean to. It made me fly over the door, and pour myself out on it, and it opened. Tried to stop it, I did...but the ugly evil crawled up anyway." He let go of her hand then, and shoved his own hands into the pockets of his jeans. "You tried to stop it, too...it left marks on you." He pointed to the shirt she wore, where the bloodstains had begun to move again.

She looked down at the pentagram on the sleeve that spun in circles and then turned into a pyramid. It made a sharp clicking sound as it moved. "I should put some seltzer on the stains. That takes stains out, doesn't it?" She looked back up at Spike, and saw that he was staring at his hand as he passed it in and out of the beam of late afternoon sunlight that flooded the room.

"Warm," he said in wonder. "Warm. That's how it feels to be a man. Been cold a long time, Buffy." He held his hand steady in the sun, marveling at how the light shone on his pale skin, making it tingle pleasantly. "It's cold here..."

Buffy clasped his hand in both of hers. "I want you to be warm. How can I help you?"

"Cold here..." Spike repeated.

Cold. With a deep, reflexive breath, Spike woke, feeling his aching chest expand. *Bloody hell, that hurts!!! How many ribs is that? Four or five? More? Damned hard to tell....* He lay for long moments remembering the warmth of the sunlight and of Buffy's hands...the dream had felt so real, being in her house and feeling safe. Safe in her belief in him. Not hard to see what that dream meant. Fine, he'd hold on to that as long as he had to. He knew she'd try to find him; even if he was utterly destroyed by the shapeshifter or that insensate thing that IT called a "real" vampire, he knew she was looking for him, and that was enough. Spike closed his eyes again as the Turuk-han returned to the cavern.

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She swam back up through the darkness of sleep as Willow shook her shoulder gently. "Time to get up, Buffy...I let you sleep as long as I could, but now...." Willow stepped back as Buffy woke and sat up much more quickly than she'd expected.

"Will, the seal was opened. That's where that Uber-...the Turuk-han came from. Andrew said they needed blood to open it...I think they used Spike...."

Willow blinked in confusion as Buffy painfully stood up and made her way to the dresser. "But, Buffy...how do you --"

"I had a dream. There was a lot in it that didn't make sense, but there was a lot that did." She rummaged in a drawer, pulling out a change of clothes. "I'm pretty sure Spike is still alive." Her voice wavered almost imperceptibly, then steadied. "If he can hang on, he'll be able to tell us a lot about what we're dealing with." She was pulling on jeans now, trying to ignore the all-over ache, punctuated as it was by isolated sharp reminders of the punishment her body had taken.

"Okay, then...I guess we're in full problem-solving, search-and-rescue mode, then. Thing is, the girls seem pretty down about our ability to do anything.... But-but, Anya's making breakfast and I'm looking up spells that might help us get some information...if I can get up the gumption to try it again, that is."

Buffy pulled a sweater down over her t-shirt, and looking into the mirror to brush her hair out of her eyes, caught sight of her friend's downcast face. She turned to look at her directly.

"Will, I don't know what's coming next. This may kill us all, no matter what we do. But the biggest mistake we can make is to do nothing -- to let our fear of what might happen paralyze us. I feel like I was given a hint for a reason. Something to hold onto, or -- or a clue to what we should do next. I can't really explain it. I just know that we have to move forward, wherever that is."

The redhead took a deep breath and gave her friend a lopsided grin that didn't entirely reach her eyes, but did help to steady her nerves. Then, the girls turned together to go downstairs and inspire their meager army, rescue the improbable knight, and try to save the world. Again.

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