

Immortal

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: post- *Chosen* (7.22) ~ no real episode spoilers...just setting.

Summary: Dawn makes peace with Spike, in absentia

Acknowledgements: Thanks to WeBoB-er PJzallday for her beta. Check out her website (at <http://members.shaw.ca/pjzallday/Main.htm>)...it's very cool!

(For those not in the know, WeBoB stands for *We Band of Buggered*, a YahooGroup
– at http://tv.groups.yahoo.com/group/We_Band_of_Buggered/ –
– of Spike fans)

My Website: www.geocities.com/fic_girl_2003/index.html

It had come so easily at first. She'd hated him with a blind passion that nearly choked her it was so palpable. She might not have a lot of power to **do**, but she certainly had power to **feel**. Xander said seeing was her gift, but he was wrong. Where Buffy had learned over the years to deaden her emotions, hers were sometimes shattering in their ferocity.

She wondered, on occasion, when she reflected on such things, if she was tapping into her Key energy somehow. Probably not. Probably just hormones. Or whatever.

Thoughts like that, though...they threw her. In the beginning, after he'd first left, and she'd learned why, they reinforced her rage because it was like her own subconscious defying her -- sounding like him. Reminding her what she'd lost...what he'd taken away.

Because, as much as she pretended that hers was a righteous indignation on behalf of her sister...it wasn't. That was there, too, but...there was too much else to call her motivations pure.

The Scoobies all tended to forget what things had really been like, so that the complexity of her feelings afterwards never even seemed to occur to any of them. The summer of Buffy's death, she'd been held together by the finest of threads. And they all tried to be there for her, with their pitying looks at the orphan girl, and their platitudes about how time would make it better. But, they all had someone they could share their real grief with: Willow and Tara, Xander and Anya...Giles and Glen Fiddich. And so, she and Spike had had each other. That summer had turned their friendship into something much deeper, though indefinable. He had never treated her like a fragile, stupid little child, so she never had to maintain a front with him. She could lay herself bare and know that he'd judge her feelings as an equal. And, he offered his own broken heart back to her, unashamedly, in return. They'd become one another's refuge when the sea of grief and self-blame threatened to drag them under, and they'd clung together in the sometimes shattering emptiness of their shared loss.

Her trust in him had become a foundation on which she'd begun to rebuild her life. He was the brother she'd never had, the father she missed, the cool boyfriend she hoped to have one day.

And, it wasn't that she didn't know that he'd done terrible things...she begged him for stories of his exploits, after all. She'd thought it was a sign of her mature open-mindedness that she could separate the Spike she knew from the monster he was in his yarns. He was only following his nature, after all. And it was in the past, so who cared!?

That house of cards had come crashing down on her that awful night of Tara's death and Willow's wrath. On top of everything else, she'd lost Spike, too. She'd felt so stupid to have trusted him, like -- like what she'd been: a gullible little girl who didn't know enough about the world to guess that a monster was always a monster.

So, a lot of her anger at him was really anger at herself. And hurt that he could do such a terrible thing when he knew ~ he **KNEW** ~ how much she relied on him to be there for her ~ to help her through the hard stuff, with his sarcastic and uncensored language, and his naked emotions. It wasn't just Buffy he'd hurt, it was her, too. Not that hurting Buffy wasn't enough, but...

But then, he'd come back, and she hadn't hesitated to let him know where he stood with her. Like the spoiled brat she knew deep down she was, she let him think it was for entirely altruistic reasons. But seeing him again brought back everything she'd felt six months earlier, doubled...tripled. Her rock had abandoned her, betrayed her trust in him, hurt her sister, and disappeared, grinding a chunk of her heart under his boot as he went.

She sensed right away that he was different, though didn't understand how or why. Didn't **CARE** how or why, because **nothing** that he did mattered to **her** anymore. She had Cut. Him. Out! But then she'd learned about the soul and he'd moved into the house and was...so much like she remembered, but more so...and not. Quieter sometimes, but still capable of that eye-twinkle she'd loved so much.

Not that she was going to be won over as easily as all that! He was going to have work for it. She could forgive his leaving, if she looked at it objectively, in light of what he'd gone off to do. But, he was still responsible for what came before, and for going without a word! So, yeah, she'd played hard to get. And it had backfired completely.

He'd evidently agreed that he didn't deserve her forgiveness, wouldn't ask for it, wouldn't seek her out, accepted her hatred of him as his just desserts. She could tell that he didn't think he deserved Buffy's forgiveness either. Difference was, even if she never admitted any of it aloud, Buffy'd had the guts to give it to him anyway. She'd been willing to give him the chance without really punishing him first. So they'd had the time to patch things up. Way beyond, it seemed. By the end...

The end...

After everything, she'd really come to think he was truly immortal. Not just the live-an-indeterminate-time-that-might-stretch-to-forever-immortal, but couldn't-be-killed-immortal. She'd taken it for granted. But one-by-one, the survivors had emerged from the school, Buffy last of all ~ without him.

And in his loss, she'd had to him. Because this was but for an undisputedly noble vampire!

How did his sacrifice change gave her some perspective, time, and "perspective", and bring a certain peace. And She was angry all over again,

She thought of him all the them had reached out to the that she'd been less petty or in the face of her seeming she at least had some carefully purged her personal might have smacked of her eventual bond forged in love even wished that Buffy hadn't gone quite so easily as she her sister dreamed about him throes of a nightmare or two

Though Buffy was much feelings, and being less she was grateful for the unique relationship that it with Spike. Now she could that summer without the end, he'd made up for that.

So, she grieved for him, around and see his bleached cherry of his cigarette burning window. She knew she did that mean anyway? He was with that? Any more than she others...except Spike -- with in the end, he was the one expected would always be there, come what may. And she'd been wrong about that, twice now. In a world where nothing is certain, nothing can really last, what **does** one use for a foundation? Not parents, not superhero sister, not immortal vampire-friend-protector....

She'd struggled with missing him, and with self-recrimination for not making things right with him, for months. Until a girlfriend, the daughter of an employee at the US Embassy, and a schoolmate, had loaned her a CD. She'd listened to it casually, flipping as she did so through an Italian fashion magazine. But when she got to the track that seemed to have been written for her, alone, the rest of the world fell away. The words induced a revelation, as she lay there on her bed, headphones firmly affixed, tears streaming from her eyes.

She suddenly understood that some of the essence of growing up was learning to live with your sorrows unresolved ~ absorbing your damage into the saddlebags that are your life, and continuing the journey. Her feelings for Spike weren't ever going to be tied up with a nice tidy bow, so that she could then go back to being regular old Dawn. Her foundation had to be

My Immortal ~ Evanescence

*I'm so tired of being here
Suppressed by all my childish fears
And if you have to leave
I wish that you would just leave
'Cause your presence still lingers here
And it won't leave me alone*

*These wounds won't seem to heal
This pain is just too real
There's just too much that time cannot erase*

*When you cried I'd wipe away all of your tears
When you'd scream I'd fight away all of your fears
I held your hand through all of these years
But you still have
All of me*

*You used to captivate me
By your resonating light
Now I'm bound by the life you left behind
Your face it haunts
My once pleasant dreams
Your voice it chased away
All the sanity in me*

*These wounds won't seem to heal
This pain is just too real
There's just too much that time cannot erase*

*When you cried I'd wipe away all of your tears
When you'd scream I'd fight away all of your fears
I held your hand through all of these years
But you still have
All of me*

*I've tried so hard to tell myself that you're gone
But though you're still with me
I've been alone all along*

*When you cried I'd wipe away all of your tears
When you'd scream I'd fight away all of your fears
I held your hand through all of these years
But you still have
All of me*

again adjust her feelings for **GONE**-gone. And by choice, purpose. Stupid, selfless, dusty

any of what came before? It maybe. The trouble was that maturity were **supposed** to she just couldn't seem to find it. but in whole new ways.

time. She wished that one of other while there was time ~ that he'd been less complacent indifference. She wished that momento of him. But she'd belongings of anything that earlier hero worship and their and loss. She wished...she come to terms with his being had. Then again, she knew that ~ had awakened her from the concerning his end.

better about sharing her own judgey in return...and though change...she missed that seemed had always been there remember the way they were bitterness of betrayal. In the

constantly expecting to turn head over her shoulder, or the a hole in the darkness under her needed to let him go, but...what gone, and how could she be okay could be okay with all the him it was even worse. Because, being in all the world she'd really

herself, something she now recognized as inherently impermanent: someone new was born each time she knew a joy or a heartbreak ~ someone into the fiber of whose being had been woven the emotional and physical sensations of those highs and lows ~ someone that hadn't existed before because the parts that carried those experiences hadn't been fashioned yet.

Those monks may have made her, and given her and everyone around her a lot of memories to make it seem that she'd been there all along. But because they'd chosen to make her human, and not a ficus or an amoeba, they hadn't left behind a completed work. So, in a way, Spike would always be a part of her, not in that hackneyed way that everyone said when there was a death, because you "carry the memories." But because over and over again, he had helped to forge her into her new self. And even though she couldn't stay this Dawn forever either, no one could ever take away what he'd been for, and to and with her. For good and for ill, she was herself, because of him, and everyone else that had ever caused her to love or laugh or suffer. —

She wept for a long time, tears of exhausted gratitude that she had at last figured out that she didn't have to "get over" her heartaches, as long as she didn't let them hold her back, or make her less than she had been. As long as she made sure that what happened to her ultimately built on what was there before, it was all okay, and happening the way it was supposed to.

So, in the end, even with the missed opportunities and the regrets, she would always be his Nibblet. And he would always be her Immortal.