

Sooner or Later

Part 3 of 4

by Lynne C. (www.geocities.com/fic_girl_2003/index.html)

Rating: PG-13

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-*The Girl in Question* (AtS 5.20)

Summary: Spike doesn't figure Andrew can keep his secret, but can't seem to do anything about it.

Acknowledgements: The dialogue from *TGiQ* was taken from [Buffyworld.com](http://www.buffyworld.com/angel/season5/transcripts/5x20_tran.php) (http://www.buffyworld.com/angel/season5/transcripts/5x20_tran.php).

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~ *Inertia* ~

They were both leaning wearily, and disgustedly, and a bit dejectedly, against the edge of Angel's desk.

"So, what? We just have to live with it? Get on with our lives?"

"'Fraid so."

"Fine," replied Spike with a sigh, and perhaps the barest hint of a sniffle. "No problem. I was plannin' on doin' that anyway."

"Yeah, me, too."

"Actually, I'm doin' it right now. As we speak, I'm movin' on."

"Movin' on."

"Oh, yeah."

They were silent for a moment, before Angel asserted once again, "Right now."

"Movin'."

And so they had remained for some time, until Harmony had buzzed to inform Angel that some Grevlok demon was demanding to be seen right away ~ something about having some sensitive information that might be of interest to the High Relish King of a rival Grevlok family. It sounded to Spike like some tedious attempt at blackmail. It also sounded like she was trying to say, "High Rhyloshkn'q", and failing, utterly. Either way, it was nothing he cared to stick around and listen to.

His sigh, as he used his boot to lever himself off the front edge of the desk, was barely distinguishable from an extra-deep breath. Barely.... He hoped halfheartedly that he'd left a big shoe print in the middle of the polish that made the surface of the wood gleam. But, he couldn't care quite enough to look back and check.

He wished briefly that he still had the ability to pass through solid objects. Leaving a room without bothering to open a door could be convenient when one was supremely unmotivated.

He opened the door, not bothering to close it again. As he headed towards the elevator, he heard Angel's voice behind him, calling for Harmony to put the Grevlok into a conference room and get it some bile or phlegm or whichever of the humours that particular class of demon called a refreshment.

Spike was tired. Not lack of rest, tired, or just had a big fight and halfway-across-the-world chase tired. He was the kind of spirit-tired that communicated itself to the limbs, and stole every ounce of desire for movement. He felt sluggish, like he was wading through cement that grew more and more solid by the moment. Each step might be the last before it solidified and he'd be stuck mid-stride forever. Until some entity figured out how to chip him out, in hopes that he'd bring on yet another Apocalypse, or open a portal, or tear down dimensional walls.

He did manage a humorless laugh that sounded dull and flat inside the elevator that he rode to the garage. Except, he wondered further, if one incanted at his solidified form, what would be released at the end? A great cataclysm of lovesick pathos? Perhaps a flood of denial would cover the face of the earth? *Get it? Denial? Da Nile? Floods?* A snort of self-mockery was his answer to the little voice in his head.

When the elevator stopped, he stepped into the cool dark cavern that was the Wolfram & Hart garage. He surveyed the riches of horsepower laid out before him. Then, he leaned against the wall beside the elevator and closed his eyes.

*Where d'ya think you're gonna go? Get hammered 'n' whored, maybe? Yeh, that's movin' on a'right. Classic style, Spike, but won' change nothin'. 'Sides, don' fancy any second-rate stand-ins.*

His lean became a slide, and he found himself sitting on the floor of the garage.

It wasn't like he didn't know that she deserved some carefree years, without commitments of either the world-save-age or the settling-down variety. Not that he'd ever want her to truly "settle down." *But still...she's what? Twenty-two? No, twenty-three, now. She should dance, and drink (moderately),* Spike shook his head ruefully at how little alcohol she could handle, *and shag just because it feels good, and none of it fall into the life-or-death, be-all-and-end-all categories.* He **knew** all this.

And he wanted her to be happy. He **really** did. But it was different to **see** her happy and know that he had no part in it, and to suspect that that happiness would be extinguished if he made her aware of his continued existence.

Times like this made him wish it really had just all ended in the Hellmouth. In that moment, they understood each other completely. He had released her, and had committed himself to doing that "far, far better thing" than he'd ever done before. He'd wanted her to live, and live **completely**. But then, he hadn't expected that he'd be having to live with the idea of her living happily without him.

Maybe this was part of his penance. To have to back those sentiments up with action. Or, in this case, with inaction.

*She's got a right to know, though, don't she? She's always hated folks what's made decisions for 'er, even if for 'er best interests....Resents it, 'n' gets mighty pissed off.*

*Bugger!*

It was almost Hamlet-esque, this internal debate, and his ongoing inability to act. Now, here he was, sitting on a garage floor, wrestling with the thing again! So much simpler when the "thing" was something whose arms could be ripped off, for use as a club against it. This, on the other hand...emotions, and right and wrong, and lesser of evils...things you couldn't put your hand on, but that gnawed at the gut and the heart as surely as any monster in the night would.

His instinct from the first moment had been just to run to her – wherever she was, however he needed to find her. But he'd been stymied by the details – and afraid of the variables. And finally, just thwarted by roadblocks when he **had** tried to take decisive action.

Maybe that was his answer. Circumstances had seemed determined to keep her ignorant of him. Why fight it?

He now realized just how much had changed in a year. The Andrew of the failed-funnel-cakes was not the Andrew he'd just seen in Rome. This Andrew probably wouldn't spill the beans accidentally. He'd keep his word, at least until such time as there was a good reason to do otherwise. And, of course, it had been the Andrew wild-card that had begun him on his campaign to Let Buffy Know in the first place....

Spike leaned his head back against the smooth wall of the garage. One forearm rested on an upraised knee. His other leg stretched out in front of him.

The words of the song he'd sung under Sweet's influence returned to him: *"Let me rest in peace...." 'S what I need. T' just find some peace.*

He was motionless for many minutes, trying to absorb the cool quiet of the subterranean chamber into himself, to lay it like a blanket over the loneliness he'd been contending with for months, and the mis-placed sense of rejection that had been added to it when he'd realized Buffy had chosen to be with someone else. He mentally smoothed that calm over her not needing to be saved. He tucked it around the corners of her not needing him.

He took a deep, slightly shaky breath, and blinked away the dampness that had gathered in the corners of his eyes. He slowly picked himself up off the floor, just as the elevator dinged, announcing a new arrival.

"Oh, Spike! I, er, thought you'd left some time ago."

"Yeh, well, couldn't think where t'go. Just been 'ere contemplatin'. Where you off to?" Spike noted the weariness that seemed to have become a permanent feature of the erstwhile Watcher's face. They all ached over Fred's loss, but seeing Wesley's struggle since then was almost more painful, if for no other reason than that it seemed there would be no end to it.

Wesley stopped and stared off into the distance, through the wall of the garage, at god-only-knew-what.

His gaze finally returned to Spike. "I really don't know either. Just away. From here. For a little while."

*Guess there's always a sadder-sack than one's self somewhere...*

"Oi! I heard of an indoor shootin' range in town. Could go blow some shit up...."

"Yes. Yes, I suppose it couldn't hurt."

So, Spike put one foot in front of the other, falling into step with Wesley, and found that he had moved on, at least to the degree that it was within his nature to do so. Without consciously making a resolution, he realized that he felt capable of putting in one day at a time, enjoying as much as he could along the way, suffering her absence all over again by times, but soldiering on, living and fighting and waiting. Sooner or later, The Fates would bring their paths to a crossing. And then...well, that wasn't a thought for today. Sooner or later, but not today.

~ / ~

*Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day  
To the last syllable of recorded time  
~ Macbeth*

To be continued?

Yep, one more. Not sure when I'll get to it. Sooner or later...but not today!

~ Lynne C. ~