

## Back to Life

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# Back to Life

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## Summary

“I’m glad the demon didn’t get your skin off.”

“Me, too.” Willow adjusted on the bed, grunting a little with the pain. “Is this the part where we have to do the long, slow, important process?”

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Everything is the same except Tara is alive. Happy femslash February!

## Notes

this is because i was at seeing red in my buffy rewatch and it made me sad

There was a lot that Willow missed about Sunnydale. The weather, for one thing. England was nice, but not as nice. And she missed her friends. Buffy, and Xander, and Dawn. They all called once a week, and Willow and Giles would sit around the speakerphone, trying to make themselves understood.

But Willow missed Tara the most.

She kept thinking of Tara, alone in that hospital bed, bandages covering her chest. Tara didn't have the Slayer healing that Buffy did, and Willow hadn't known that Tara had survived until she was already in England.

Tara called sometimes, but their conversations were short and awkward. There wasn't really a great way to say, "Sorry I abandoned your injured and dying body in favor of skinning a man."

So she spent her days riding horses in the countryside, remembering how Tara had said once that she'd take Willow riding. Willow wasn't scared of horses anymore, but then again, she wasn't scared of much. Everything bad had already happened to her.

And then she got the call from Buffy. *We need you here.*

Suddenly, Willow was scared of lots of things. She was afraid of Buffy and Xander, who hadn't seen her since she had threatened to end the world, and she was afraid of Tara, who maybe didn't like her anymore, and she was afraid of herself, because she wasn't ready to go back.

Still, Buffy needed her, and Willow was the kind of person who didn't let Buffy down, so she got on the plane and flew alone all the way back to Sunnydale. It was a long flight with a stop in New York and another one in Chicago. Willow spent the travel time alternating between worrying and meditating, all the while scratching out answers to the crossword in the in-flight magazine.

Finally, she was in Sunnydale. She got off the plane, feeling adrift in the busy airport, and looked for her friends.

They weren't there.

She wandered around the airport for a while, wondering what had happened, and then she tried to call Buffy's house from a pay phone, but no one picked up. It took all Willow had to not start crying in that moment. She missed her friends, but maybe they didn't miss her so much.

She went through a whole day in Sunnydale without seeing her friends once. She slept listlessly on Buffy's couch, remembering the sleepovers they had had there in high school, and the research they had done there in more recent years. She got up in the morning and made herself breakfast with Buffy's food, and then she realized she should probably be worried.

First, she tried to call Giles, but the council wouldn't let her, and then she wandered down the streets of Sunnydale, where she ran into Anya, who was her usual helpful self. And then there was a skinned body and a demon and all the things that Willow *didn't* miss about Sunnydale all at once, and then she was lying on the floor of a cave, looking up at Buffy, and Xander, and Anya, and Tara. And everything hurt, but it was okay, because Willow was with her friends.

It was a good thing, too, because she was in so much pain that she couldn't really walk, so Buffy had to carry her all the way home and up the stairs to her room, where Xander bandaged her up while Dawn expressed her gladness at having Willow back in a language that was about half English and half squeals. All in all, it felt like home.

And then Xander finished bandaging her up and Dawn realized she had homework to do and Buffy went downstairs to make dinner, and it was just Willow and Tara, alone together.

"Are you all right?" Tara asked, taking a few steps towards Willow.

Willow forced a grin. "Just peachy!" she said. "I've always dreamed of having my skin torn off in strips."

"I'm glad the demon didn't get your skin off."

"Me, too." Willow adjusted on the bed, grunting a little with the pain. "Is this the part where we have to do the long, slow, important process?"

Tara smiled. "I think it might be. But I missed you."

"Me, too," Willow said. "I missed you too."

"And you're really doing better? With the magic?"

Willow shuddered. "I don't know if I was ready to come back," she said, quietly. "I'm afraid."

Tara sat on the edge of the bed and took Willow's hand in hers. "I'd be worried if you weren't," she said. "You kind of went mega evil. I mean, I don't really remember, but--"

"Yeah," Willow said. "I know. World-ending and all that."

"And, I don't know. It makes sense that it's going to take you a while to trust yourself again." Tara paused. "I trust you, though."

Willow looked up at Tara, trying to see herself in Tara's eyes. "How can you?" she asked. "I've hurt you so much."

"And you're getting better," Tara told her. "You're working so hard. Even the fact that you're afraid means you're trying."

"Thanks," Willow said. "I think I needed that."

Tara smiled. "I'll leave you to rest," she said.

Willow closed her eyes as Tara walked out. She cleared her head and focused on healing.

The next morning, Willow went down the stairs to find Tara and Dawn in the kitchen, making pancakes. She stood awkwardly in the doorway, shifting from foot to foot. "I thought you lived at UC Sunnydale," she said.

Tara flipped a pancake and turned to Willow, spatula in hand. "I graduated last year, remember?"

"Oh, yeah." Willow shrugged. "Sorry. Sometimes you miss things when you have to go to evil magic rehab."

"I've been living here. Helping out. I got a job at Sunnydale Elementary-- I teach art to the kids."

"Where to you sleep?" Willow asked. "Are you-- were you in my room? Did I kick you out? Where did you sleep last night?"

"We put a cot in the basement," Tara explained. "I didn't want to make things complicated."

"I told her you wouldn't mind," Dawn said, over her shoulder.

"Tara, you should have a place to sleep," Willow said. "I can go in the basement. I don't want to displace you."

"It was your room first," Tara said.

"It was Joyce's room first," Willow reminded her. "We're nothing but a whole big bunch of room-stealers around here." She paused. "And... I get it if you don't want to share, but I don't want to take your room."

Tara smiled. "We can share if you want."

"Are you sure? It's really okay if you're not comfortable. I was evil."

"And I missed you," Tara said.

She and Willow held eye contact for a moment, and then Dawn said, "Awww!" and ruined the moment.

Willow and Tara both laughed.

"How are these pancakes looking, Dawnie?" Tara asked, turning back to the stove.

"Not as good as you two together," Dawn answered, flipping a pancake onto a plate.

"Willow, you want that one?"

Willow took the pancake and sat down, feeling a little more like her life was back together again.

It was still awkward, of course, to have Tara around. Willow was walking on eggshells around her, but then again, she was walking on eggshells around everyone. It was just weirder when it was Tara.

Some things were just like they had been before Willow and Tara even broke up. They fell asleep together every night, and woke up together every morning, and sometimes they even did spells together, when Buffy needed it. And the more spells they did, the more sure Willow was that she was okay, and the warmer Tara seemed to be towards her.

“You seem more balanced,” Tara said to her one night, after they had spent the day helping Buffy catch a demon. “Like you don’t need the magic like you did.”

“I hope not,” Willow said, shuddering. She was in her pajamas, typing on her computer.

Tara sat down next to her.

“What are you doing?”

Willow looked up. “I’m making a demon database. I was thinking, it would be good to know what we’ve seen, and where it lives and everything, right?”

Tara smiled at her. “That’s really useful.”

Willow looked up from her computer, at Tara. “I hope so.”

“You’re really better.”

Willow nodded. “Sometimes I think I might be,” she said. She shivered. “But then I think about my history, and my magic, and how do I know for sure?”

“You can’t,” Tara said. “But you can know for sure enough.” She leaned in and kissed Willow, and Willow kissed her back.

Willow had forgotten how nice it was just to cuddle Tara, all night long. She never felt safer than she did when Tara was holding her. And then she woke up in the morning with her face closer to Tara’s than it had been in months, and the first thing she saw was Tara’s eyes fluttering open, and it was really nice. And then Tara kissed her before untangling herself, and Willow closed her eyes for a moment, trying to save the moment in her mind forever.

“You going to get up?” Tara asked.

“I’m good here,” Willow replied, burrowing further into the covers.

A moment later, she felt the gentle pressure of Tara’s hand on her shoulder from behind, and she rolled over, into the touch, and before she knew it, Tara had lifted her right out of bed and onto the floor. Willow giggled, still clutching Tara’s shoulders for balance, shrieking, “That’s not fair!”

“All’s fair in love and war,” Tara teased.

Willow smiled, and Tara smiled back, and there was a moment of peace.

“So,” Willow said, “are we... you know. Are we back?”

“I think... yes. We can be back.”

Willow felt like she had been waiting years for this moment.

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