The Crow, the Owl, and the Dove

by for_t2

Summary

There's a lot of things Faith doesn't need, but there's one thing she does. And, with Buffy, maybe she has a chance at it

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

This is the last time.

This is absolutely the last time.

Faith isn’t supposed to be a killer. Not anymore. But sometimes she often thinks that once you’re a killer, you’re always a killer. So you might as well make yourself useful. And she knows that she’s not the only that thinks that. So when Willow comes to her with news of another slayer gone rogue, Faith makes herself useful.

It always ends the same way – a standoff, a few threats, a fight, and then blood. And each time, Faith comes out on top. Every time, Faith survives. And every time, Faith wishes she didn’t.

She’s not supposed to be a killer.

But you can’t change the past.

Willow knows. Whenever they team up for a mission, whenever Faith’s allowed to spend a night hanging out with the gang, Faith sees it in the way her steps are a little too awkward, the way her
eyes shift just out of her line of sight. It’s been the same way ever since that long night driving away from L.A. She’s a killer too.

It’s why they went through a period of mutual avoidance – neither of them wanted to be reminded of what they’ve done. But at least now, even if they still do it sometimes, they have a friend they can talk to. Sometimes.

It’s kinda funny, Faith thinks, how they’ve both ended up the same. Buffy’s best friend and the only person to ever make Buffy a victim, the witch and the slayer, both killers. Both trying to walk the long rocky path to redemption.

But as much as they’re the same, they’re different. And Faith hates it. No, Faith is jealous of it. Jealous of the way Red seems to have figured things out and made some sort of peace with herself. The way she manages to keep her head high and happy, to return to magic, to make friends, to fall in love again. To be better. To be close to Buffy.

“You’re thinking about her again.”

At the sound of her voice, Faith snaps her head up. Finds Willow staring at her from her usual distance, all concerned and pitying. “Always thinking about her, Red,” she replies. “Especially—”

“We’ve talked about this, Faith.”

“Talked about what?”

“About…” Will gestures at the other slayer. The former other slayer, now just another decaying corpse to add to Faith’s list.

“I’m fine.” Faith gets up. Stretches. Grabs her sword. “Let’s hit the road.”

Will doesn’t move as Faith starts to walk away. “It’s not her.” And that’s enough to make Faith stop just long enough to regret everything again. “Buffy knows you wouldn’t kill her.”

“Sure you got a lot of paperwork.”

This time, Faith doesn’t wait for Will to answer. And as she marches off to her next mission, she spots a crow staring down at the body. All proud and… watching her. Which, she realises, is probably how Willow keeps track of her.

Smart.

But Faith doesn’t need it. She has to find her own peace. Her own path through the woods.

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Faith doesn’t like to wait.

Maybe it’s because she spent almost three years in prison, where all you do is wait. Or maybe it’s because of the magic coursing through her veins, edging her to fight – to slay. Either way, she’d rather jump right to the action.

Angel, on the other, loves to wait. He’s old and patient like that. Hell, sometimes he broods for so long, he forgets that he’s brooding.

“Are you making fun of me?” He asks at the sound of Faith’s snicker.
“Me?” Faith puts on her best look of innocence. “Never.”

“I’ve tripled check, and I promise this spell isn’t going to turn us into hamsters again.”

“You sure?”

“90% sure,” he replies. To which Faith just raises an eyebrow. “70%,” he mumbles a few seconds later.

“But is your girlfriend sure?”

“She’s not my…” He says back, way too quickly, before trailing off at the sight of Faith raising her other eyebrow. “She’s sure.”


Of course, Faith’s pretty much the same way when it comes to Buffy, so…

“You should talk to her,” Angel says, out of nowhere.

“Talk to who?”

“Buffy.” He gives her that special Angel look that tells her that he knows way too much, way too experienced.

“Talk to her about what?”

And he gives her that special sigh. The one that tells Faith he’s almost disappointed in her.

“Has something happened?” Faith can’t help but let a little shiver of fear spread through her nerves.

“I’ve been on a date.” He replies. “You haven’t.”

“Haven’t found the right person,” Faith shrugs.

This time, it’s Angel’s turn to smirk. “You still haven’t figured out how to lie.”

And before Faith can reply, the hoot of an owl echoes through the flat. A hoot that means that the ritual spell is ready. That it’s time for action. And not a moment too soon. Dating advice with Angel is always interesting, but maybe not what Faith needs right now.

But she’s working on it.

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“Popcorn!”

Faith’s stomach gives an appreciative growl at the sight of Dawn carrying two large bowls of popcorn towards her. This week, it had been Faith’s turn to put the watcher-in-training through the steps. There was patrolling, investigating, fighting, researching, the whole lot. And, credit where credit’s due, the kid kept up. Of course, she’s not a kid anymore, but, still, she’s B’s little sis, so that makes her the kid in Faith’s eyes.

“What do you want to watch?”
And, of course, since it was Faith’s week to help train her, it was also Faith’s week to celebrate with her. “Got anything horror?”

Dawn winks at her. “Don’t tell Buffy.”

Faith can appreciate a good secret. And Dawn’s good taste in movies. “Lips are sealed.”

Once the second movie of the night starts, the third bowl of popcorn halfway empty, Dawn yawns. Leans up against Faith.

“You quitting on me already?”

“Just resting my head for a moment.” But Faith can tell by the way her words are slurring that she better move quickly if she doesn’t want to be stuck on the sofa under a sleeping Dawn all night. “You know,” Dawn continues, “you’d make a pretty cool sister.”

“Probably a spell for that.”

“Or you could just marry Buffy,” the words stumble out of Dawn’s mouth dreamily, followed by a smirk. “Oh my god, imagine her reaction.”

Faith’s not going to admit that she has. That she’s imagine a thousand different reactions Buffy could have.

“But you can’t marry Xander.” Dawn continues, even sleepier. “You can have Kennedy. But not Xan…” And she’s asleep.

“Dawnie?” Faith prods her, to no avail. Which means Faith is stuck again. If Dawn tries to drag her out to the park again way too early tomorrow morning to see the stupid flock of doves that like to hang out there, Faith can’t be held responsible for any grumpiness.

It’s impressive, Faith thinks. She knows Dawn is an adult like the rest of them these days, but sometimes, Faith can’t help but envy the way her heart has stayed open. It makes Dawn pretty damn extraordinary.

But Faith isn’t Dawn. Faith has to learn how to open up her heart all over again. Has to learn to open it up for the first time, really. And that’s a challenge of its own.

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There’s something beautiful about the night.

It has a way of making everything seem so different, so new, and it has a way of making the air feel so fresh and so alive. And then there’s the stars. Faith didn’t have much of a childhood, but one memory she’ll always try to remember is the memory of the libraries. It was always one of the first things she’d stake out when her mother crashed at a new place. It was a place where Faith could get away. And she always read about the stars. Always dreamed about flying off to them.

Growing up wasn’t easy on Faith, and she quickly learned to drop fantasies. But these days, now that her mind’s mostly screwed on properly for once, now that she’s found reasons to not just live, but to enjoy it, now that she’s found her freedom, sometimes she lets herself go back and do it again.

Of course, it helps that she’s met something – someone – that might even be better than the stars.

Faith doesn’t need Buffy. She doesn’t need Buffy to love her. She’s not going to let herself make
that mistake again – not going to let it consume her again until there’s nothing left inside but an empty shell. But she wants it. And, when they’re out on patrol together, when they have a moment to talk, to just be together, Buffy tells her she wants it too.

To her, being someone who Buffy can love is worth more than anything in the world. And, this time, Faith isn’t going to disappoint her. This time, Faith is going to do it right. And maybe Faith isn’t the best, maybe she's still finding redemption, but that’s not going to stop her from trying. Not today, not tomorrow, not next week, not ever.

Because that’s what Faith needs.

End Notes

Inspired by the Nightwish song

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