

Not A Date

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For Katlinel. Fred, Willow and the knife Mayor Wilkins gave to Faith. Spoilers up to the end of Buffy and the end of season four of Angel.

There is a slight chance that this story might cause a cuteness overdose in sensitive readers. Although, if you're oversensitive to cute, you shouldn't be reading Fred/Willow in the first place.

Featured fandoms: Angel the Series, Buffy the Vampire Slayer

Featured pairings: Fred/Willow

A.S.S Story codes: ff

Story rating: R

"Of course you can!" was the first thing Fred said when Willow called and asked if she could stay over at Fred's place for a couple of nights.

"Why?" was the second.

"I need to find something, and we think it's in Los Angeles," Willow had said. "I could be there this afternoon. Would that be all right?"

"Yes, of course," Fred said, and when she'd put the phone back in its cradle she panicked. Her apartment looked like a disaster area. She'd barely been in it except to shower, change clothes and sleep a little since they took over Wolfram and Hart, and it really wasn't a place fit to receive guests in.

Particularly not pretty geeky girls who made her feel funny inside.

"I'll be gone for the rest of the day," she told her assistant as she ran past his desk.

"And tell Angel I'm taking a couple of days off," she added over her shoulder as she opened the lab door and left. This afternoon. When was this afternoon? It might be any time at all between noon and six pm!

All the way home, Fred's brain was busy optimizing an apartment-cleaning order that would get as much visible cleaning as possible done before her guest arrived.

By the time she walked through the door, she had the basics down for a mathematical formulation of house-cleaning strategies.

This afternoon turned out to be shortly before five. The doorbell rang while she was busy trying to vacuum out the dust that had gathered behind the books in the bookshelf.

"Hi," Willow said when Fred opened the door.

"I hope I'm not interrupting anything?" she added when she noticed the quite messy apron Fred had thrown on over her work clothes.

Fred looked down at herself.

"Oh!" she said. "No. No, it's fine. I'm just cleaning up a little. I had this theory on how to do it really efficiently, but it turned out not to work so well in real life. Come on in."

Willow entered, and seemed not to be too bothered by all the dust and clutter that Fred hadn't had time to remove yet.

"It's good to see you," Willow said. "It's awfully nice of you to do this on such short notice."

"No, it's fine," Fred said. "It was a good reason to get out of the office, 'cause I really spend much too much time in there these days. Not that I work in an office, really, it's a lab, but the building as such is an office building and it's sort of a figure of speech anyway isn't it."

Fred drew a deep breath. She was babbling. Babbling was not good. She made an effort to focus.

"Are you hungry?" she said. "I don't have much in the way of food here, but I know lots of good places that deliver."

"Sounds nice," Willow said with an apologetic frown. "But not tonight. I need to find and talk to a couple of people. I may not be back before midnight."

"Oh," Fred said. She tried not to show her disappointment.

"Well, you're here to work," she said. "So I guess you should do that. I'll make up the couch for you, and move the phone in here."

Willow looked confused. "The phone?"

Fred shrugged. "So you can, you know, call your someone."

Willow still looked confused.

"The one you said you're seeing, last time you were here?" she elaborated.

"Oh!" Willow said. "We broke up," she added. "Once the danger and the drama was over, we found we didn't really have anything in common. Except sex. Which, while nice, isn't really enough to build a relationship on. So, breakup. Amicable. Which was a nice change."

"Oh," Fred said. "I'm sorry."

"I'm not," Willow said, and the way she smiled when she said it made Fred feel all funny inside again.

That night, Fred found it impossible to fall asleep. She alternated between watching stupid TV, trying to read the latest *Metaphysical Review Letters* and lying in her bed staring into the darkness. Some time after midnight, she heard Willow return from wherever she'd been and reasonably silently get herself ready and crawl into her bed.

After that, Fred stopped watching TV and reading, and just stared into the dark and tried to hear Willow's breaths.

Eventually, when those breaths had become safely regular and deep, she stalked out of her bed and into the living room. It was dark, of course, but not quite as dark as her bedroom. She'd never bothered to install proper drapes in the living room windows, so some of the city's lights crept in. Streetlight yellow and neon-light red mixed into a murky orange, occasionally lightened to pale grey by the headlights of passing cars.

She walked softly closer to the couch where Willow lay. Her hair was tousled. She lay on her side with her mouth slightly open, and her blanket had slid down far enough to uncover her shoulders but not so far that Fred could see her breast.

Fred couldn't decide if she was relieved or disappointed.

She stood there for a while, looking. Willow sleeping was even prettier than Willow awake. The temptation to reach out and touch her, stroke her cheek or play with her hair, was strong. But she didn't succumb to it. Instead, she returned to her own bed and finally managed to fall asleep.

She woke up to the smell of coffee. Confused at first, she wrapped a robe around herself and walked into the kitchen, where she found Willow sitting at the table. She wore a simple dressing gown, and she had a mug of coffee in her hands and the morning paper before her.

"Good morning," she said. "Sleep well?"

"Pretty much," Fred said. "You?"

"Yeah," Willow said. "Your couch is very comfortable."

"I've hardly used it," Fred said. "We got these *huge* pay raises when we got into Wolfram and Hart, and I thought that I could use a new couch, so I bought one, but now that I have it I'm hardly ever home so I never use it much."

Willow looked at her.

"There's coffee in the maker," she said after Fred had fallen silent.

"Thanks," Fred said. "Sorry about going on like that. I am getting better there, I really am."

"Nobody should have to be coherent before their morning caffeine," Willow said. "And I think it's cute."

Fred quickly turned her back and got busy pouring coffee for herself. She's just being polite, she told herself. She doesn't *really* think babbling is cute. And if she does, it's cute as in puppies or kittens, not as in I want to get you naked and drag you into bed right this instant.

Which was the kind of cute that Fred thought Willow was.

"Did you find the people you wanted last night?" she said.

"Yes," Willow said. "And they don't know what it is they have, so they agreed to let me trade it for some trinkets. I'll go get the trinkets today, and then I'll meet them and make the trade tomorrow night."

"What is it they have? Must be pretty important to get you down here from... from wherever it is you're living now that Sunnydale is gone."

"A knife," Willow said. "It's not even old or very specially made or anything. It just so happens that Buffy tried to kill Faith with it and nearly succeeded."

"That makes it special?"

Willow nodded. "We've learned a lot now that we have a whole bunch of Slayers to observe," she said. "A couple of them have really short tempers, so one thing we've learned is that when one Slayer uses a weapon to seriously try to kill another Slayer, a whole lot of power gets trapped in the weapon. Power that is particularly effective for making spells to hurt Slayers."

"Oh," Fred said. "I see. So you're free tonight?"

Willow finished the last of her coffee. She got up and put the mug in the dishwasher.

"Yes," she said. "I'm free tonight."

"So," Fred said. "Would you like to go have dinner somewhere and maybe watch a movie or something?"

Willow moved closer to Fred, so close that their clothes were almost but not quite touching.

"Dinner and movie?" she said. "As in a date?"

She smelled like lilies and sandalwood, and she made Fred's heart beat at a gazillion beats a minute.

"No," Fred said, trying her best to sound lighthearted. "Not a date. Just friends. Hanging out."

"Sure," Willow said. "I'd love to go on a not date with you."

She moved away a little. "I should be back no later than four," she said. "So dinner at, what, sixish?"

"Six will be fine," Fred breathed.

"Good," Willow said. She winked at Fred as she left the kitchen.

"If you need me in the next fifteen minutes, I'll be in the shower," she said.

Fred remained standing where she was. The mug of coffee remained forgotten in her hand, since her brain was much too busy alternating between thinking about what might have happened if she *had* said it was a date and naked Willow in her shower.

Once Willow had left for the day, Fred got busy with the phone directory. She didn't know any good restaurants at all. She knew lots of takeout places that would deliver after midnight without asking questions, but that was not at all what she wanted now. She wanted fancy and nice, with a good atmosphere, good service and good food.

She wished fervently that she could've asked Cordelia, who had always seemed to have an encyclopedic knowledge of all such places in Los Angeles and exactly where they currently ranked on the coolness scale.

In the end, she gave up looking and called Lorne. His knowledge might be a bit skewed towards the demon sort of place, but she trusted that he would recommend something suitable for the occasion.

"Fred, baby!" he almost sang. "You've got a date! You go, girl!"

"It's *not* a date!" she said. "We're just friends."

"Toots, if it's friends you eat ordered-in pizza, drink beer and watch all seven Nightmare on Elm Street movies on crappy old VCR tapes. If it's a date, you take them out to the swankiest restaurant you can afford and the newest coolest hippest movie there is. Now, I can either get you a table for two at a restaurant so exclusive there's a waiting list to even know that it *exists* and seats at a showing of a movie so new it hasn't actually been *made* yet. Or I can give you the number to my favourite pizza delivery place and courier over my old Elm Street tapes. Your choice, baby."

"Restaurant and movie," she whispered. "Please."

The restaurant didn't look like a restaurant. It looked like the home of someone extremely rich in the 19th century, except it had every modern amenity one could think of cleverly hidden in the decor. It had stucco decorations, crystal chandeliers, gilded everything, lots of paintings and handmade carpets. Their table was the only one in the room, and it was set with plates and cutlery that looked a whole lot like they were actually made out of gold. From the high windows they had a lovely view of the city, and candles and gaslights gave the room a slightly magical feel. The reception as they arrived was absolutely impeccable, and as far as Fred could tell they were the only guests in the place.

"Wow," Willow said, clearly impressed. "I had no idea places like this existed. If the food is anywhere close to the setting, this is going to be quite the experience. Although..."

Her voiced trailed off.

"Although?" Fred said, worried. "Although what? Is something wrong? Do you want to go somewhere else?"

"Goddess, no!" Willow said. "This is, well, totally amazing. It just makes me wonder what sort of place you take people to when you *are* on a date."

"I never do," Fred said. "These days, I mostly just work."

"We'd better make sure you have a really nice night tonight, then," Willow said and smiled at her in that way that made her feel all funny. Again.

"I think we should order," Fred said. "I'm kind of hungry."

"Sure," Willow said. She looked at the menu. "Wow," she added. "I could eat from this for a long time. When do we have to be at the movie theater?"

"Whenever," Fred said. "They, um, start when we get there."

Willow stared at her. "Private movie theater?" she said, sounding like she didn't believe what she was hearing.

"Yes," Fred said. "Lorne has contacts."

"Dare I ask what movie we'll be seeing?"

"Peter Jackson's version of The Left Hand of Darkness," Fred said. "I thought you'd like it. With the gender issues and all."

Willow frowned. "I've read the book," she said. "But I never heard of a movie version of it, much less one by Jackson."

"It won't be made until 2015," Fred said. She looked a little ashamed.

"Lorne has *contacts*," she added.

"When I saw that wine from 1814 on the wine list I thought it was a misprint," Willow said. "But now I'm not so sure."

Fred giggled. "Let's order it and see," she said.

Their seat at the movie was a two-person-wide sofa-like one, right in the middle of a theater with only a handful of other seats, all of which were empty. There were little tables next to their seats, handy for putting popcorn cartons and soda mugs on. Apart from the obvious exclusivity, it looked pretty much like a normal movie theater.

The movie started precisely when they'd got in and made themselves comfortable. Not a moment too early, not a moment too late. There were no ads and no trailers. They were immediately thrown into the world of Gethen and the experiences of Genly Ai on that cold and inhospitable planet.

At some level, Fred was quite aware that the movie was fantastic. The visuals were totally amazing, and Jackson had done a wonderful job translating LeGuin's themes from written text to moving pictures.

But in spite of this, she couldn't concentrate on it. She was far too aware of the woman sitting next to her, so close that they were almost but not quite touching. It was as if there was some kind of electrical field around Willow that Fred could sense, a field that threw all her usual reactions totally out of whack. She wanted to grab her and press their bodies together, kiss her and just feel the warm and soft presence of her. But she didn't dare. Her brain kept showing her these scenarios where she made a bold and forward move, and Willow would be all polite and understanding and not reciprocate in the slightest and it would all be very, very uncomfortable and unpleasant. So instead she just sat there, looking more at Willow than at the movie screen. Looking at her pretty face, her slender neck and the gentle bulge of her bosom under her white blouse. At her red, soft lips as they parted to receive more popcorn. At her face as it broke out into laughter or hardened into worry, as the events on the screen warranted.

As the movie drew to its conclusion and the credits began to roll, Fred's heart sank. Somewhere deep inside, she'd hoped that at some point during the evening something would happen, something that would give her a chance to get much closer to Willow. But no such something had happened by itself, and she had been too afraid to make one happen. And now the evening was nearly over. They'd get back to her apartment, and they'd talk about the movie a little. Maybe they'd have a late night snack, although that seemed unlikely after the amazing dinner. And then they'd go to bed. She in her own large, empty bed and Willow on the made up couch.

And that would be that.

"Let's walk home," Willow said when they'd left the movie theater. "The weather's nice."

Fred was about to protest that it wasn't safe, but thought better of it. Between her fighting experience and Willow's magic, they should be able to handle anything short of a small army.

"All right," she said.

Maybe she'd get lucky and they'd get attacked by a *large* army, so she wouldn't have to face another night of having Willow so near her and yet so far away.

They walked through the night city, and Willow kept gushing about how amazing the movie had been, and how amazing it was that they'd got to see it at all. She elaborated on the differences between the source text and the movie version, and made judgments on the appropriateness of each and every one of them.

Fred hummed and nodded and agreed to whatever she said.

"You know," Willow said when they'd reached the lush area around the block where Fred lived and was standing under a handful of palm trees.

"If this was a date, I'd do this."

She grabbed Fred by the front of her top, pulled her close and pushed her mouth firmly against Fred's. She probed a little with the tip of her tongue, and Fred eagerly let her in. For a few more than wonderful moments, all Fred's world was full of the smell and taste and feel of Willow and the hot night air. When the redhead let go, Fred gasped for air and had to shake her head to clear it somewhat. Her skin felt like it was on a very good sort of fire.

"But it's not a date," Willow went on, "so I guess I won't do that, after all."

She took the stunned Fred's hand and pulled gently at it.

"Come on," she said. "Let's go home."

Neither of them said anything while they entered the building and rode the elevator up to the apartment. Fred didn't because her brain had sort of locked up and was looping the memory of the kiss over and over again. Why Willow didn't say anything, she couldn't even guess. She might have been able to if her brain had been working, but since it wasn't, no go. Somehow, she managed to get enough spare brain capacity to unlock her door and get them both inside.

"Willow?" Fred said. She was leaning against the inside of the door. Willow had gone a few steps farther into the apartment and dropped her purse on the floor. She turned around.

"Yes?" she said.

"If this was a date," Fred said. "What would you do now?"

Willow smiled. She walked back to Fred and leaned close enough that their breaths mingled but not quite close enough to touch, supporting herself by placing her hands against the door on either side of Fred's waist.

"First, I'd kiss you long and hard," she whispered. "Then I'd push those little straps off your shoulders so your top fell down to your waist and revealed your lovely breasts to me. I'd run my hands over them, and kiss them, and maybe gently bite your nipples, until I heard you moan. Then I'd drag you into the bedroom, and we'd go on from there."

"Something..." Fred said

She moved her head a fraction of an inch forward, so her lips met Willow's. She slid her arms around Willow's waist as her mouth opened and their tongues met again, pulling her into a firm embrace. She basked in the wonderful feeling of being so close, to touch, to taste.

She broke the kiss and let go of Willow's waist. She forced her hands in between their bodies, and started undoing the buttons of Willow's blouse. Once she realized what Fred was doing, Willow leaned back a little, giving her room enough to work. The blouse fell open, revealing pale, smooth skin and, as Fred pushed the cloth

further aside, the beautiful hills of Willow's breasts, topped with small, rosy nipples. Fred ran her hands over the warm, wonderful smoothness of her, from the top of her jeans all the way up to her throat. She cupped the breasts, feeling the nipples stiffen against her palms. Willow closed her eyes, her breath deepening. Smiling, Fred dipped her head and took a hard nipple into her mouth. She prodded and played over it with her tongue and ever so gently bit it, all the while rolling the other one between a thumb and forefinger.

It didn't take long at all before she heard Willow moan out loud.

All at once, she let go and leaned back against the door.

"...like that?" she finished her sentence.

Willow blinked and swallowed.

"Yes," she said. "Something like that. Exactly like that."

Fred smiled. She put her hand at the buttons of Willow's jeans, pressing at the mons beneath them and undoing them one by one.

"Maybe," she said. "Maybe this *is* a date after all."