

*Rating: PG-13*

***Characters/Pairing:*** Willow/Tara, Spike/Xander

***Warnings:*** *If you think girls kissing is icky, GTFO.*

***A/N:*** Dedicated to [whichclothes](#), my friend and muse. Happy Hanukkah.



## Happy Hanukkah

by  
**Emelye**

“Xander, you have to help me,” said Tara.

“Am I your only hope?”

“What?”

Xander was stretched out on the training room couch, attempting to nap and hide and failing on both counts. He sat up and clasped his hands together in demonstration.

“You know. ‘Help me Obi-Wan Kenobi, you’re my only hope.’ Only with the ear buns and the robe.” Xander cocked his head appraisingly at Tara. Her hair was the right length and color. “Willow always liked A New Hope best. She ever make you dress up like Leia?”

“What? No!” Tara blushed then appeared to consider it. “Though at this point I’m pretty sure I’d t-try anything to g-get her to lighten up.”

Xander’s brow furrowed. “Is everything all right?”

Tara sighed in exasperation. “Willow’s lost her mind. This morning, I was going to start putting up Christmas decorations and she lectured me for an hour about the cultural oppression of the indigenous people of Europe.”

Xander nodded understandingly. “She does that.”

“I just wanted to put out my angels.” Tara explained. “A seraph and two cherubs. They’re really pretty. Blue and white porcelain. My mother gave them to me when I was three. The seraph is a music box. She plays *f-fur Elise*,” Tara sniffled.

Xander patted the seat beside him and Tara sat down. He

put a comforting arm around her shoulder. “Willow’s parents kind of screwed her up. Most Jewish parents buy their kids toys for Hanukkah. Not the Rosenbergs.”

“They never bought her toys?”

“Well, they weren’t *monsters*. She got toys, just not for Hanukkah. They said giving gifts was a Eurocentric Christian tradition co-opted to appease children too immature to grasp the subtlety of theological nuance.”

Tara gaped speechlessly in response, mouth silently opening and closing several times. Xander continued.

“She really wanted this limited edition Barbie one year when we were six or seven. All the girls in class got them for Christmas. But by the time her birthday rolled around, you couldn’t find them anywhere.”

“Oh my god, that’s awful.”

“I think she’s been trying to justify it ever since. She used to just get a little snippy about Santa—”

“—But now she’s got all this ammunition from her comparative religion class.”

“Exactly.”

“So what do I do?”

Xander thought about it for a minute. “I’ve never seen her able to resist the power of the Snoopy dance.”

“I—I should dance for her?”

Xander’s eyebrows lifted skyward. “Not what I was thinking, but I gotta say I find the idea intriguing.” Tara swatted him and he grinned. “No, the Snoopy dance is my exclusive domain. But maybe we can break down her Scrooge-like defenses by bombarding her with the holiday stuff she likes.”

“You think that will work?”

Xander shrugged. “Can’t hurt to try. Hey, we’ll get everyone over to the apartment tonight for a viewing party!”

“Is Spike going to be okay with that?”

As if summoned, Spike barreled through the training

room door under a smoking blanket. Xander shot up and began patting down the singed bits of his boyfriend. “What are you doing here?” he asked.

“Those bastard stationers sent me two reams of the wrong bloody paper. Fortunately they had the right weight in stock and I was able to exchange it.”

Xander goggled. “You risked burning. For *paper*.”

Spike glared at him. “I know you’re not taking this seriously, but don’t mock me. And stop hiding back here. If you’re not going to be useful to your friends than the least you can do is come home and help me decorate. Those ornaments aren’t going to quill themselves, you know.”

“Yes, dear.” Xander rolled his eyes and frowned when he caught Tara stifling a laugh. “By the way, the gang is coming over tonight.”

Spike’s eyes widened in panic. “But we don’t have the tree done yet! And what are we going to serve? I haven’t time to mull wine *and* finish the decorations!”

Spike’s accent slipped ever further into Knightsbridge as

his agitation rose. Xander found it patently adorable but he'd learned the hard way never to mention it.

“Tonight’s the first night of Hanukkah and Willow’s on her seasonal rampage. You have a chance to spread holiday cheer to the truly deserving.”

Spike set his jaw. “Let it never be said William the Bloody backed down from a challenge. You want the mince pies thick or thin?”

Xander blinked. “What’s a mince?”

Spike muttered something that sounded like “heathen” and stormed out of the room with his blanket calling over his shoulder, “Xander? Home *sharpish*. Tell the others no earlier than seven.”

Xander turned back to Tara, whose *schadenfreude* was exceptionally badly disguised, and shrugged. “I know you’d never think it to look at him, but that is a vampire who *really* loves Christmas.”

Tara laughed. “I guess so.”



“So you go to Xander’s every year to watch A Charlie Brown Christmas?” Tara asked.

Willow smiled in fond remembrance. “Xander was a very committed Shabbos goy.”

“We Harris’s have a long and storied tradition of enabling,” Xander confirmed, refilling Tara’s mug and taking another pie from the tray Spike passed around.

“You lighting the menorah tonight, Red?” Spike asked, conversationally. Tara choked on her mulled wine and Willow’s smile faded.

“I don’t observe anymore, Spike. I’m a witch now,” she said.

Spike looked unimpressed. “So?”

“So it’s a minor Jewish holiday. And since I no longer feel the pressure to conform to the customs of a secular culture rooted in religious oppression, I see no reason to celebrate.”

Spike’s eyes narrowed. Sensing the atmosphere’s turn for the battle-charged, those on the margins of the conflict

made their escape to neutral territory.

“More nog? Anyone? I think I want some nog,” Buffy announced awkwardly, heading for the kitchen.

“I’ll help,” said Giles, rushing from the room after her.

“I see,” said Spike.

“Look,” said Willow, setting down her glass. “I get why you’re all doing this. And I’m sorry, Tara, but I don’t feel comfortable being surrounded by the trappings of hundreds of centuries of persecution.”

Tara looked astonished. “I’m not trying to *persecute* you, Willow, I just want to put out mementos of my mother—there were so few h-happy times I remember from home, but those are part of them.”

Willow’s face fell. “Tara, baby, I can’t. I’ve been an outsider too much in my life to be okay with perpetuating a culture of exclusivity.”

Xander watched Tara’s lip start to wobble. “Spike, thank you for a lovely party. But I think I need to g-go home now,” she said standing.

“Tara—” Willow pleaded.

Tara held up her hand and stopped her. “Buffy? Mr. Giles, would you mind g-g-giving me a ride home?”

Buffy and Giles, emerging from the kitchen, nodded with solemn faces. “Sure, Tara, you can come with us,” said Buffy, extending a hand to touch her shoulder. “Guys? See you tomorrow?”

Xander nodded. Buffy, Giles and Tara left accompanied by the sound of Willow’s muffled sobs. Over her head he met Spike’s pointed look.

“What?” he asked.

Spike rolled his eyes. “Come on, luv,” he said, addressing Willow. “Let’s get you settled in the guest room.”



The next night Xander arrived at the Magic Box to find everyone in a dire mood. Willow was stonily pretending to flip through a spell book while Tara pretended to sort through a shipment of crystals. Giles and Buffy were

conferring with Spike over a pile of weaponry reclaimed from a vamp nest on the counter.

Usually there was a little more festivity in the air this time of year. Xander couldn't help the swell of irritation he felt with Willow for being so...Willow.

He dropped the doughnut box on the table in front of her.

She looked up from the book she wasn't reading and transferred her accusing look to Xander. "Don't think I don't know what you're doing, mister."

Xander frowned. "What?"

"With the doughnuts and the coincidentally bringing them on Hanukkah."

"Will, when do I not bring the doughnuts?"

"Okay, point. But I still think you're trying to make me compromise my principles and it won't work."

"Will, I would never want to make you compromise your principles. Are you principally opposed to jelly

doughnuts?”

“Well, no.”

“Okay, then. Have a doughnut and shut up. What?” he added for the benefit of everyone staring at him with wide eyes. Buffy and Giles quickly returned to the weapons. Spike just sighed and shook his head.

Willow grudgingly took a doughnut.

“Attagirl.” Willow gave him a wry half-smile. “Now go give Tara her chocolate and apologize.”

Willow’s glare returned. “What makes you think I have chocolate?”

Xander smirked. “You accidentally kicked me under the cafeteria table in fifth grade and were so overcome with guilt you gave me your dessert for three weeks. I looked like a chipmunk in my school pictures.”

Willow grudgingly conceded. “Fine. Mom sent extra gelt this year. I think she thinks I’m still dating Oz.” Xander snorted. “Anyway, I figured it’s a family tradition. She should have it.”

“What about her traditions, Will?”

Willow hung her head before nodding. “She should have those too.”



She pulled the small bag from her purse and Xander watched her walk over to the rack of crystals. Tara looked up from the aquamarine in surprise.

Xander eavesdropped and didn't feel particularly bad about it.

“I'm sorry,” Willow said. “I was really out of line. You can put out your angels. I don't want to take that from you.”

Tara smiled beatifically and grabbed her in a tight embrace. “You're forgiven.” Tara pulled back and looked at the bag in her hand. “Is—is this—”

“Gelt,” explained Willow, sheepishly. “I always got good gelt.”

“Godiva gelt,” Xander chimed in as Tara unwrapped a

coin from the bag.

“Well it wasn’t like they were going to shell out for Happy Holidays Barbie,” Willow muttered in response.

“The important thing is that you’re not bitter,” said Xander.

“Do you have any idea how much those things are worth now?” Willow stormed ahead heedless of Xander’s sarcasm, already lost in her diatribe. “More than my textbooks, I can tell you that!”

“Sweetie, I thought you called Barbie a freakishly misproportioned brainwashing tool of a misogynistic patriarchy,” said Tara in obvious confusion.

Willow’s face crumpled. “She *is*. But she was so *pretty!*”

Xander saw a tear fall with alarm. “Wills?”

Willow sniffled. “I’m sorry. I really wish I could get into the spirit with you guys. And it’s really immature and I’m a bad Jew but all Hanukkah’s ever meant for me was missing out.” Willow was crying in earnest now. Tara reached out to hold her but she pulled away and strode

back to the table.

Xander reached out to her, “Willow—” but she quickly gathered her things and was out the door in a flash.

Tara looked stricken. “I-I’ll go after her.”

Xander was about to offer to go along when, surprisingly, it was Spike who spoke.

“Let me talk to her, Glinda.”

Xander’s immediate instinct was to respond with a resounding, “NO!” Spike was many things, but tactful was rarely one of them and his Willow needed a gentle touch. He didn’t say no, however, because he still had a vested interest in getting some touch from Spike. He did say, “Are you sure?”

Spike grinned as if every word of Xander’s inner monologue had been broadcast in Dolby surround. “If it’s all right with Tara, yeah.”

Tara and Xander exchanged a look of shared helplessness. “Sure,” she said evenly.

With a glance at Giles and Buffy, who waved him off with varying degrees of surprise, he left, and Xander wished him luck.

Forty minutes later, a vampire with a large evergreen tree entered Stevenson Hall.

Willow heard the knock on her door, threw aside the box of tissues and removed Miss Kitty from her lap.

“Who is it?”

“Spike, luv. Open up.”

Willow sighed and opened the door to Spike and his large, coniferous companion.

Before she could even protest, he was wrestling it in the door, knocking over several small statues and knick-knacks in the process.

“Spike! What are you doing?” she asked as she rushed to pick up a felled tower of books.

Spike finally stood the tree proudly in a relatively free corner of the room and stood back to admire his work.

He seemed utterly perplexed by Willow's question. "It's a Hanukkah tree!" he announced, as if it should have been the most obvious thing in the world.

The "Hanukkah tree" was a scraggly balsam draped haphazardly with white lights, blue and silver beads and various other seasonal flotsam. Her floor was covered in shed needles and was that *sap* on her idol of Ishtar?

Willow snapped.

"THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A HANUKKAH TREE!"

Spike scoffed. "Sure there is. It's got a star of David up top and everything."

Sure enough there was at that. Willow thought she might be getting a migraine. Or an aneurysm. "You can't just reappropriate a bunch of Christmas decorations and call them Jewish," she attempted to explain.

"Don't be ridiculous. What's more Jewish than assimilation?"

"Tradition!"

“And survival, yeah? Look,” Spike plunked the tree down in the corner. “Holidays aren’t about religious observance for most folk. They’re about who you are.”

“You’re talking about cultural identity,” Willow surmised.

Spike shook his head impatiently. “Call it whatever you like. I’m talking about finding something to celebrate and *hang* everything else. I’m a vamp sure, but I’m also a Victorian Englishman and this time of year, that trumps, you follow?”

Willow thought she did. “I’m a witch, but I’m also Jewish. And I’m culturally American, which means Snoopy dances and gift giving and—” Spike smirked as she grimaced with sudden realization, “I’m a total bitca for not letting Tara decorate, aren’t I?”

Spike clapped a friendly hand on Willow’s shoulder. “Think she might like to decorate a Hanukkah tree?”

Willow laughed ruefully. “You know, I bet she would!”

“It’s not a menorah, I know,” Spike said, seriously. “But it’s got lights. An’ maybe if you try an’ make do with what you have now, a great miracle will happen here, too,” he

added cryptically. Spike ducked back into the hall for a moment and returned with a brightly wrapped package.

“For under your tree, yeah? Happy Hanukkah, luv.”

Willow took the present, but before she had a chance to thank him, he was gone.

Willow sat with the package on her lap for a long time before she dared to open it, knowing even before the first corner of the paper was torn what she would find.

And for the first Hanukkah in memory, she wasn't disappointed.

Barbie was *beautiful* in her sparkly red dress. Willow's finger traced the outline of the silver bow through the packaging, the little rosette at her waist, the beautiful blond hair.

Willow couldn't say how long she sat just *looking* at her or when the tears had started falling, but by the time she looked up, Tara was standing in the doorway.

Willow tossed the doll on the bed and in two quick strides, Tara was in her arms and they were kissing.

They only just managed to get the door closed before Tara was being rapidly and methodically undressed.

“Willow,” Tara gasped, breaking the kiss long enough to take air. “N-not that I’m complaining, but are you all right?”

Willow grinned. “I hate latkes!”

Tara blinked and laughed. “What?”

Willow pulled off her shirt and guided Tara to the bed. “Potato pancakes? Actually, they’re pretty yummy, but have you ever had to make them? You grate your fingers to the bone preparing the potatoes, get burned when the oil splatters and everything smells like a French fry for days. I *hate* making latkes. As far as oil-related traditions go, I think I’m happy to give that one a miss.” Willow removed Tara’s camisole and kissed her exposed collarbone. Tara shuddered. “You know what I really like?” Willow murmured into her ear. Tara shook her head minutely. “The massage oil you made me for my birthday.”

“Oh,” said Tara, somewhat breathlessly.

Willow gently bit her earlobe. “And I feel like celebrating. Have you ever played strip dreidel?”

Tara’s sudden inhalation spoke for her approval, but a moment later she was disengaging from her position beneath Willow and shrugging on her blouse.

Willow tried not to sound as hurt as she felt. “Tara?”

“Hold that thought!” she said, as she began rummaging through the bag she’d dropped inside the door, before eventually sounding a triumphant, “Ha!” and telling Willow, “Close your eyes.”

Willow did so gamely—no longer afraid she was being rejected—if with some lingering frustration.

“Okay, you can open your eyes now.”

The silver menorah now gracing their window was obviously an antique. The beautiful patina glimmered in the light of the beeswax Shamash candle and the absurd twinkling of Spike’s Hanukkah tree. In Willow’s eyes, none of them outshone the woman glowing beside them. Tara was radiant, golden by candlelight.

“Tara, what is this?”

“S-sometimes, tradition is important. My Hebrew is pretty bad,” she quipped. “Would you recite the blessings?”

Willow was touched. “You didn’t have to do this. Spike was right. We have a lot to celebrate and we should make a holiday of our own! Tonight should be about starting new traditions.”

Tara picked up the dreidel from the windowsill and blushed. “A-and I’m all for that. But you don’t always have to throw out the old with the new. This is a part of who you are.”

“The candles *are* pretty,” Willow conceded. “But you’re not Jewish,” she protested, not even sure why.

“No,” Tara agreed, smiling shyly, “But I believe in miracles. I believe in light. And I believe in you.”

There just wasn’t anything Willow could say to that. She took the Shamash and lit the candles for the first two nights.

*“Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech Ha-Olam Asher Kidshanu B'mitzvotav V'tzivanu L'hadlik Ner Shel Hanukah.*

*“Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech Ha-Olam Sheh-Asa Nissim Lah-vote-ay-nu bah'yamim hah-haym ba'zman ha'zeh.”*

Willow looked up at Tara who smiled encouragingly. She shrugged apologetically. “That’s it. Last night there would have been another blessing.”

“Oh,” Tara looked concerned. “Can you do a make-up blessing?”

Willow grinned. “I don’t think it usually works that way.”

“Oh,” she replied, embarrassed. Willow wanted to kick herself. Gently tucking Tara’s hair behind her ear, she said, *“Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech Ha-Olam She-he-che-yanu v'ki-ye-manu v'he-gi-yanu la'zman ha-zeh.”*

Tara smiled. “It sounds so pretty. What does it mean?”

Willow swallowed against a lump in her throat and

circled her arms around Tara's waist.

“It means thank the Lord for getting me this far to be here right now.”

Tara smiled and leaned her forehead against Willow's. “I do.”

Willow sealed Tara's blessing with a kiss.

**The End**