



BUFFY comic book introduces new gay character

By GoPride.com News Staff

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Billy the first male (and gay) Vampire Slayer hits shelves in October!

CHICAGO, IL -- "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" has been off the airwaves since 2003 but alive in comic book form through publisher Dark Horse since 2007. Writers Jane Espenson and Drew Greenberg will be introducing the fictional universe's first male slayer, a calling which until now has only been held by women. Billy will be introduced this October in Season 9, issue 14: and he's gay.

The Buffyverse (so named by its fans and creators) has never shied away from LGBT storylines. On the TV series, the parallels between witchcraft and female empowerment served as a metaphor for lead character Willow's coming out process. This led to a budding relationship with fellow witch Tara, beloved by fans but controversial to the networks. In the comic book, even the title character herself explores her Sapphic side in a night of experimentation with a fellow female Slayer in Season 8, issue 12. So the addition of Billy, a teenage gay male who earns his Slayer status, is no surprise to fans.

"Batman doesn't have super powers," said Espenson in an exclusive interview with "OUT" magazine. "He wasn't gifted with an exotic foreign birth. So we take the Batman route; Billy is earning the Slayer mantle."

"He may not have the actual powers of the Slayers, but he's determined to be his own kind of hero," said Greenberg in the same interview. "In the process, I think he hopes to follow the lead of all the strong, powerful Slayers who came before him and live up to the standard they set."

As writers together on the "Buffy" TV-series, Espenson and Greenberg tried to find opportunities to add gay characters early on in their tenure together. It was from Espenson's work as co-writer and co-creator of the hit LGBT sitcom "Husbands" that Espenson drew inspiration for Billy.

"[There's] a line in Season 1 of 'Husbands', that Brad [Bell] wrote, that really struck me, about how [the character] Cheeks has an 'exotic femininity' that's equated with weakness," elaborated Espenson. "I thought, 'Gee, all the work we've done with Buffy is about being female, and how that doesn't mean that you are lesser.' It suddenly struck me: If being feminine doesn't mean that you're lesser, then liking guys also doesn't mean you're lesser. For very good reason, we've focused on the female empowerment part of 'Buffy', but I wondered, 'Did we leave something out?' What if someone in high school is looking up to Buffy as a role model, and we're saying: You can't be a Slayer."

Long known for its life metaphors such as "high school is hell," the introduction of Billy will stand as an inspiration for LGBT high school students facing bullies as Billy finds the strength to defeat vampires. Greenberg comments that Billy stops allowing others to define him, but instead defines himself in his mission to stand against evil.

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