

Happy Birthday To Me by Donna Bevan

Summary: It's Rogue's 18th birthday, and everyone at Xavier's is planning something...especially Logan.

Categories: **X1** **Characters:** None

Genres: Shipper

Tags: None

Warnings: None

Challenges:

Series: Adaptations

Chapters: 1 **Completed:** Yes **Word count:** 4065 **Read:** 3631

Published: 10/02/2000 **Updated:** 10/02/2000

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Author's Notes:
Dedication: For the birthday girl, Gowdie. :) And for Julia, who was sure her hubby was trying to think of a way to dump her the night he ended up proposing.

I'm sitting at my vanity table, staring at my reflection in the mirror. The woman looking back at me is a little strange to see, with her shining eyes and calm smile.

Today is my eighteenth birthday.

I've never really been big on birthday celebrations, you know. Back in Mississippi, my family never made much to-do about things like that. Mostly we had cake and candles and off-key renditions of *Happy Birthday* and that was about it. And, last year, I spent my seventeenth birthday in a diesel truck somewhere in South Dakota. So I guess you could say that it's been a while since anyone made a huge deal out of me turning a year older.

It's a huge deal this year.

I'm eighteen now, and that's important to me...and to Logan. We can finally enjoy being together without worry. No one here at the school has raised a fuss about me living with him, but we both know the law. The bald truth is that, until today, our relationship could have gotten him arrested. Thankfully, we no longer have to be concerned about that.

He ducks his head out of the bathroom, jarring me from my thoughts. "Hey, Marie... Can you help me with this thing?" he asks, indicating his necktie.

I rise from my vanity seat and walk over to him, smiling a little. "I could teach you how to do this yourself, you know," I inform him.

I am able to straighten the lopsided knot in his tie without completely redoing it. He grins down at me and shakes his head, his eyes softening. "Nah, I'd rather have you do it." Then he looks down at his tie and winks. "Thanks, babe."

I simply smile and nod, watching as he runs a comb through his hair. He's been acting pretty weird the last couple of days. I would chalk it up to relief over my newly legal status, but it's not his usual kind of Logan weirdness.

Like this afternoon... I walked out of our room and saw him huddled in a corner of the hallway, whispering with Jean. It was a little surprising, to say the least. Once upon a time, that kind of physical closeness between them would have bothered me greatly. But that was a long time ago, and I know that he loves me, so I wasn't perturbed by it. No, what bothered me was the fact that they stopped whispering when they spied me.

It was almost as if they'd been talking about **me**.

Actually, that's been happening a lot lately; it seems that whenever I walk into a room, silence reigns. It's not the "we've been discussing Rogue's mutation" silence, either; I've learned to recognize that one. It's also not the kind of giggling hush that I encounter when people have been gossiping about Logan and me. That one always gets me winks and goofy grins and even the occasional enthusiastic thumbs-up from Jubilee.

No, this is the "we're plotting something" kind of quiet, and I strongly suspect that "something" is a surprise party.

For one thing, no one has wished me a happy birthday or given me a single gift all day. Not that I've been expecting loads of presents, mind you, but not **one** mention of it all day long? It's odd...unless you consider that maybe they're saving it for the party.

Listen to me, talking about it like it's a done deal. Well, I guess there's one way to find out.

I move up closer behind Logan and slide my arms around his waist. It's kind of peculiar, this connection we have. Since we learned that we can touch for a couple of days a month, we've gotten pretty good at figuring out exactly when that is. Jean still wants to do all kinds of blood tests and temperature readings, but I don't need a basal thermometer (whatever the hell **that** is) to know when I can safely touch Logan. It's hard to describe, but it's sort of like I tingle all over. More than usual, that is.

How lucky for me that my birthday this year happened to fall during our "safe time." I guess I know what Logan's giving me. The mental image makes me snicker.

"What's funny?" he asks, craning his neck to look back at me.

"Nothin' in particular," I giggle. "Just...thinkin', that's all."

"Just thinkin'," he repeats, turning to wrap his arms around me. "'Bout what?" He drops his head to trail light kisses across my cheeks and nose.

"Mmm.What time did you say our dinner reservation was for?"

He stiffens a little, and his eyes narrow. Hmm. "Uh, seven-thirty." He is quick to ask, "Why so curious?"

I lower my eyes so he can't see the amusement lurking in their depths. "I was just wonderin' if maybe we could call and change 'em. 'Cause I kind of want to stay in for a while." His face is still close to mine, and I stand on my tiptoes so I can whisper in his ear. "I kind of want **you**."

His hands on my waist tighten, a low growl emerges from his throat, and his mouth seeks mine. "Later, Marie," he mutters against my lips. "We'd better get going."

Uh-huh. I let go of him and step back into the bedroom to fetch the shoes that go with my new black dress. Now I **know** something's up. The Logan I know and adore would never pass up the chance for some horizontal frolicking for dinner reservations. I sit on the bed and lean over to fasten the straps of my shoes. Yep, something's going on.

He waits by the door as I finish buckling my heels. I stand up and do a little turn. "How do I look?"

As if the expression on his face wasn't telling enough, he whistles. "Jesus, Marie."

"You don't look so bad yourself," I grin. Honestly, he looks breathtakingly gorgeous in his navy suit. It's the first time I've seen him in it, and... Well, damn. I have no doubt that every woman we encounter tonight is going to wish she was me.

Life is good.

Logan hesitates in opening the door, and he looks like he might change his mind about staying in, after all. I have to fight the urge to laugh. "Come on, big guy, let's get this party over with and get the hell back up here." At his shocked look, I smile and add, "What? They're all waitin' for us downstairs, aren't they?"

His mouth opens and closes a couple of times, then he frowns at me and grumbles resignedly, "Will ya at least **try** to look surprised? Jean and Ororo busted their asses organizing this thing."

I hook my arm though his. "I will be the very picture of astonishment, sugar."

Logan wasn't kidding when he said that Jean and Ororo put a lot of work into this party. My heart swells as I look around the ballroom. They decorated everything, from top to bottom, with streamers and balloons. A buffet table by the far wall is laden with hors d'oeuvres and drinks, as well as a huge ice swan...courtesy of Bobby, I'm sure. Another table is overflowing with beribboned gifts of all shapes and sizes.

Music is playing over the speaker system. Scott looks quite happy playing the role of deejay, although Jubilee seems to be horrified by the very thought. "Figures," she mutters. "They put the school's biggest dork in charge of the tunes."

"Be nice, Jubes," Kitty admonishes. She looks quite happy herself, what with Bobby hanging on her every word and looking quite the lovesick puppy.

"He's playing a bunch of moldy oldies," Jubes complains lightly over the sound of the Four Seasons singing *Oh, What A Night*. "No techno in sight, Kitty. Back me up here, Rogue."

I shrug. "It could be worse, Jubes. He could be spinnin' somethin' by A Flock of Seagulls."

She almost drops her punch and flashes me a glare. "Bite your blasphemous tongue, missy."

I grin and glance around the room, looking for Logan. He's standing near the door, talking to the Professor. They seem to be having a rather serious discussion. He glances up, and his eyes meet mine as a new song begins.

It takes Jubilee's hysterical giggles to break my focus on Logan. "What?" I ask her. "What's so hilarious?"

"This...song," she gasps, laughing and pointing in the general direction of the ceiling speakers.

I listen, then groan. *Young Girl* by Gary Puckett. Cute. I can practically hear Logan growling from across the room, and I stare in helpless amusement as he flashes Scott his middle claw.

I swivel my head to catch Scott's reaction. He's grinning like an idiot and laughing his ass off. I watch as Jean stalks over and punches him on the shoulder. I don't know what she's saying to him, but Scott's moving awfully fast to change the music. Score one for Dr. Grey. I'll have to remember to thank her later.

Even though *Midnight Train To Georgia* is now playing, Jubilee is doing her own a capella version of the previous song, much to my chagrin. "Young girl, get out of my mind... My love for you is way out of line..." she sings gaily.

"Jubes." Kitty hisses, eyeing me sympathetically. "Stop it already."

She doesn't halt her performance. "Better run, girl... You're much too young, gi--" She breaks off abruptly and clamps her mouth shut, staring past me nervously. "Uh, gotta motor. Catch ya later, Rogue." Then she's off like a shot, scurrying across the room.

"Rogue." I turn as I hear Professor Xavier speak to me. He and Logan are standing behind me, and the expressions on their faces tell me they caught the tail end of Jubes's little song

recital. I flush with embarrassment, but the Professor merely smiles at me in that kind way of his. "I believe it may be time for you to open your gifts."

I can honestly say that this is the first time in my life I've ever received so many presents at once, and it's a little overwhelming. Ororo is standing next to the table, handing me box after brightly wrapped box, and I can do nothing but accept them awkwardly with quietly murmured thanks.

It's staggering, really, that everyone got me such wonderful things. Kitty and Bobby got me a beautiful sweater that I've had my eye on for a while, and Jubilee chipped in with St. John for a new shirt that she made me try on the last time we went shopping. Jean and Scott got me a sizeable gift certificate to my favorite clothing store, and Ororo's gift is an exquisite jewelry box of lacquered wood. By the time I have all the presents opened, I am surrounded by an array of presents, from knick knacks to clothes. One of the younger students even presented me with a teddy bear sporting gloves and a scarf.

Ororo winks at me as she hands me one last gift. It's a velvet jeweler's box, and my gaze immediately slides to Logan. He's standing off to one side of the group, arms crossed over his chest, staring at the floor.

My eyes mist over as I slide the ribbon off the box and lift the hinged lid. Inside is an elegant gold bracelet with delicate engraving. Squinting in the low light, I read the inscription aloud. "All my love forever, *chere*."

Oh God... Remy. He's staring at me from his place next to Bobby and St. John, a sad smile on his face and his heart in his eyes.

A hush falls over the crowd, and several people cough uneasily, eyeing Logan. Then Professor Xavier speaks, his deep voice carrying easily to everyone's ears.

"All right, everyone. I'm sure Rogue would like to say a few words now."

I nod, swallowing past the lump in my throat. I struggle for the right words to express how grateful I am to everyone. "Thank you all so much. I don't know if I can even tell you how much this all means to me." Tears well up in my eyes, and I blink rapidly. "My family never really did a lot of celebratin' on days like this, and... Well, I spent my last birthday on the road, y'know? I'm eternally grateful to Fate for leadin' me here to the school, and to all of you." I pause and smile shakily. "Y'all have become my family, and...I love you all."

Kitty snuffles and rushes forward to envelop me in a careful hug. "We love you, too, Rogue. We're so glad you're here."

"I'll second that any day of the week, girl," Jubes adds, throwing her arms around us.

Laughter ripples through the group, and Scott steps forward, grinning widely and rubbing his hands together. "Okay, what do you guys say to more dancing? I've got Three Dog Night's greatest hits ready to go," he proclaims proudly.

"Is he actively trying to torment us?" Jubes asks with a whimper. "Make him stop, Dr. Grey, I beg you."

I can't help my tearful smile at Scott's wounded look. "How about some slow songs, Scott? I could go for some dancin'," I add, casting a meaningful look at Logan.

Scott smiles at me. "Anything for the birthday girl."

I detach myself from Kitty and Jubes, and they go in search of dance partners. I, for one, don't have to look far to find mine.

"Great party, eh, Marie?" His voice is quiet, his tone subdued.

I catch one of his hands in mine and nod. "It's wonderful," I tell him as soft strains of music begin playing. "Dance with me, Logan?"

He walks me to the floor, clutching my hand closely to his body. Then he pulls me against him and folds an arm around me, swaying to the music.

*At last, my love has come along
my lonely days are over
and life is like a song...*

For long moments, he says nothing, simply presses his lips to my temple. One of his hands is spread wide across my back, and the other holds my hand between our bodies, over his heart. It's heaven, being held against him this way, and I close my eyes, savoring his warmth and scent.

*At last, the skies above are blue
my heart was wrapped up in clover
the night I looked at you...*

"You're the best thing that ever happened to me, Marie," Logan whispers softly in my ear, and I smile.

"Same here, sugar. I knew it when I saw you in that cage in Laughlin City."

He snorts. "You did not."

I smile up at him. "Oh yes, I did. Why else would I have followed you outside that bar, Logan? I looked at you, and I felt..." I trail off, searching for the right words.

"What?" His question is restrained, almost hesitant.

"I felt like I'd found my home," I tell him honestly, and his arm tightens around me.

*I found a dream that I could speak to
a dream that I could call my own
I found a thrill to press my cheek to
a thrill that I had never known...*

"I wanted you," he admits. "I took one look at you, and I wanted you, Marie. And that was so wrong."

"No," I hasten to correct him. "It was right, Logan. Don't ever think it was wrong."

His smile is warm and loving, and it makes me catch my breath. Good God, there is nothing I wouldn't do for this man, this magnificent, wonderful man.

*You smiled, and then the spell was cast
and now here we are in heaven
for you are mine
at last...*

The song fades, and *When A Man Loves A Woman* takes its place. I am about to suggest that we retire upstairs for the night when I feel a hand on my gloved elbow.

"Can I have a dance, *petite*?"

Logan growls faintly, then releases me, glaring at Remy. "Don't be too long, darlin'," he tells me. "We've got some unfinished business to take care of." With that, he stalks toward the buffet table.

Remy slides an arm around me, conscientiously maintaining a respectable distance between our bodies. His eyes are sorrowful as he stares down at me. "I'm sorry, *chere*. For the bracelet."

"It's beautiful, Remy, but you shouldn't have."

He nods and gives a little laugh. "I know. It seemed like a good idea at the time, but now... Eh, not so good."

"You pissed Logan off, y'know," I inform him teasingly.

He raises both eyebrows and nods solemnly, with no hint of humor. "Yeah, dat's one way of putting it. Your man, he's gonna gut me first chance he gets."

He looks so worried that I have to laugh. "No, Remy, he's not. He just..."

Finally, he smirks. "He ain't too fond of ol' Remy moving in on his girl, yeah." Then his grin fades, and he steps back, his arms falling away from me. "*Je t'aime, fille*. I love you. But I don't have a chance."

"Remy... We've talked about this before." I reach out to him instinctively, seeking to ease his heartache. "I love you, but not like--"

"Am I interrupting something?" Logan's voice is hard, angry. His face is fierce as he stares Remy down, and I can tell that he's dying to take a piece out of the younger man.

"Logan, don't."

Remy holds up both hands and backs away. "Don't mind me, Wolverine. I was just sayin' *adieu*." He walks away without another word.

I turn to Logan, whose eyes are still full of animosity. "You didn't have to be so mean to him, Logan. He's just hurtin', that's all."

His fury withers, and he takes my arm. "Come on, Marie. We need to talk."

He drags me out of the ballroom and down the hall. He reaches for the first door he sees, and stalks out onto the terrace. I immediately begin to shiver in the cool air of the night, and he yanks off his jacket, wrapping it around my shoulders.

He looks troubled, and that scares me. Whatever is on his mind, it can't be good. "What is it, Logan?"

He shoves a hand through his hair and, when he speaks, his voice is grave. "We need to talk about us, Marie. About our relationship."

Oh God. Oh no. "I don't know what you mean, Logan."

He paces in front of me for a few moments before finally coming to a stop and resting his hands heavily on the stone balustrade. "The way things are... I don't... Shit, this is hard."

It's getting difficult to breathe, and I suddenly want to be anywhere but where I am right now. "Logan--"

"The way we are right now, Marie... It isn't right." He is staring out into the night, his features grim.

It all makes sense now. His strange behavior over the last week, his anxiety, everything. It's all clear.

He's been trying to think of a way to break things off and not kill me in the process.

"Oh God, um..." I stumble slightly and lean against the railing for support. I'm shaking, and I clench my hands together. There's a pain in my stomach that keeps growing, spreading out all over my body. My head is throbbing, and I think I'm going to throw up. How could I have been so wrong about his feelings for me? How could I have been so blind to this?

I'm going to throw up.

He seems to be waiting for me to say something, but I have no idea what. Does he want me to take this upon myself, to tell him that I feel the same way, to say it for him so he doesn't have to? Is that what he wants? Or does he want for me to plead with him not to do this to me?

"I just... I don't know how to say this, Marie, so...I guess I'll just say it." He turns to me and takes my trembling hands between his.

I close my eyes, tears slipping from under the lids, my decision made. "Please, Logan... Don't do this."

"I have to," he whispers, the words full of fear. "Marie... Isn't this what you want?"

I open my eyes, and I can barely make out his face because of the tears blurring my vision. "No! God no, anything but this!" I choke on the words, and I wrench my hands from his grasp. "Don't say it, Logan, please."

He speaks again, this time forcefully. "**I have** to, Marie. You can tell me to go to hell if you want, but...I have to say this." His words drop to a pained murmur. "I have to."

I squeeze my eyes shut again. The look on his face is killing me, the combination of fear and longing he wears. He wants me, but for some reason I don't make him happy, and he's so afraid of hurting me that he can't even...

"Marry me, Marie."

My eyes snap open, and I look down. He's on one knee, holding an open box in his hand. Inside is a shining platinum band.

"I'm no good for you, but I can't live without you. Please." His eyes are glistening, and I burst into tears, dropping to the ground in front of him. "Oh God, Marie... What's wrong?"

I do the first thing that comes to mind - I slug him in the chest as hard as I can. "You...you asshole!"

He's truly bewildered now, and I don't care. "Marie, baby--"

"You moron." I sob as I grab his face and press kisses everywhere I can reach. "You scared the hell out of me!"

"What?!"

"I thought you were tryin' to get rid of me," I mumble against his neck, relief flooding me. "You sounded so serious and worried."

He's grinning now; I can hear it in his voice. "Why in hell would I ever want to get rid of you, baby?"

"I don't know, but don't ever scare me like that again." His arms are around me, his mouth on mine. I can't stop kissing him, can't stop reassuring myself that he's still here with me, that he still **wants** to be.

"I guess that's a yes, then?" he asks against my lips as he runs his hands over my back.

"Yes," I whisper, and he stands abruptly, pulling me with him. He startles me by picking me up and twirling me around.

"Logan!" My head is already spinning wildly, but I guess I'm giddy, because I can't stop laughing. "Stop!"

He does, putting me back down on my feet and crushing his mouth to mine again. "I'm gonna make you so damn happy, Marie. I don't care what it takes, or how long."

"Mmm, it had better take the rest of your life, sugar," I inform him firmly. "No more, no less."

He drags the glove off my left hand and slides the ring into my finger. It's a little on the loose side, but otherwise perfect. "I love it, Logan."

"I love **you**," he says, and if I didn't know better, I'd think he was about to bawl like a baby. "Now come on... We've got to celebrate your birthday for real now." He gives me a wicked wink and starts walking, and my heart starts skipping wildly.

I can't resist asking, "And how are we gonna do that?"

As soon as we are through the door and inside the mansion, he slides one arm around my waist and the other under my knees, hoisting me up against his chest. My surprised yelp makes him grin widely. "Let's just say that I saved your best gift for last." His eyes are full of longing and desire, and I know they match my own.

"Well, well... Happy birthday to me," I breathe, leaning over to nip his earlobe. I'm rewarded with a growl, and I giggle.

Jubilee and Kitty are walking out of the ballroom as Logan stalks past with me in his arms. Jubilee hoots, and Kitty yells out, "Hey, where are you going?"

I don't answer, because Jubilee does it for me. "Where do you **think** they're going, Kitty? Geez Louise, don't you ever watch late-night cable?"

Like I said.

Life is good.

end

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