

Wizard in Time (drabble thing.)

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Have you ever thought what it would be like, to be a wanderer in the fourth dimension? To be an exile in the universe? If you could touch the alien sand and hear the cries of strange birds, and watch them wheel in another sky, would that satisfy you?

I'm not running away, you see, contrary to what you may think. This is one corner of one country on one continent on one planet that's a corner of a galaxy that's a corner of a universe that is forever growing and shrinking and creating and destroying and never remaining the same for a single millisecond, and there is so much, so much to see. It all goes so fast. I'm not running away from things, I am running to them, before they flare and fade forever.

Think you've seen it all? Think again. Outside those doors, there might be anything. New worlds, terrifying monsters, impossible things. And if you come with me... nothing will ever be the same again.

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“Come now, Dudley-dear, it’s only for a little while...” Aunt Petunia said carefully, glancing between her son and her husband, who was still coloured slightly puce, with his eyes narrowed as he moved with quick, jerking movements. “We will be back home soon, don’t worry...”

“But mum...”

Harry Potter, almost eleven years old, sat silently near the door of the little cabin. He was staring out of a small and grimy window into the rainy evening beyond, trying to make out details by the flashes of lightning that crisscrossed through the sky every minute or two. He could vaguely see the boat in the distance, the means by which they had arrived to this little island in the middle of nowhere, bobbing violently on the roiling water. He could see the rain spattering off the glistening rocks as the thunder crackled overhead.

Happy birthday, indeed.

“Boy – get away from there, now!” Uncle Vernon waddled over and grabbed Harry by the arm, dragging him over to the corner near the fireplace and depositing him in a rickety chair. The flames in the hearth were sputtering softly as water made its way down the chimney a few drops at a time.

“Don’t bother Dudley with anything, either. We’ve had quite enough of your-” He cut himself off, murmuring under his breath as he turned away.

Uncle Vernon did not like him; Harry knew that well enough from living with the Dursleys for years - his dislike was not quite as viscerally hateful as Aunt Petunia could get, but it was no less persistent. This time was different, though, and he had no real idea why. A simple letter had come for him, and the whole family had gotten into an uproar, especially when more and more letters kept coming. Dudley did not understand it, he was certain of that, but Aunt Petunia certainly did. She looked *scared*.

He looked over to the little window with a sigh, warming his hands by the fire. Perhaps here, out on a lonely rock, even those strange letters could not find him anymore. Today he would have another

lonely birthday, ignored by the Dursleys and forgotten by everyone else, and there was nothing he could do about it.

The noise of the storm outside made it hard to concentrate on what happened inside, but Harry honestly had little interest in what Uncle Vernon was muttering about. He wanted to go back and watch the waves crash in, to see whether or not the boat they had come with would smash to little bits in the wind, leaving them without a way back to Privet Drive. The idea of the Dursleys having to swim to mainland made him smile a little, but he quickly wiped it away when Aunt Petunia gave him a foul look.

There was a strange feeling, then – an odd sort of vibration in the air, and Harry perked up in surprise. The sensation was *familiar*, but he didn't know from where. There was a groaning noise, though it was hard to pick out over the wind, and Harry saw his Aunt stiffen. Even Dudley paused eating his snacks when there was a slight thump outside the door. The buzzing feeling faded, but did not disappear entirely.

"Stay back, boy," Uncle Vernon mumbled to Harry as he grabbed hold of his gun, clasping his fingers around it until the knuckles turned white. "We aren't letting those – freaks – into our house!"

There was a knock at the door. Then another knock, and more - the pattern was surprisingly rhythmic, and Harry thought he recognized a little lullaby. It was silent for a moment, then someone looked into the little window. The newcomer had a wide-eyed face with a rather large chin, seemingly used to perpetually smiling; he looked at each inhabitant of the cabin in turn, grinning all the while. Lastly he focused on Harry, and for a moment there was something like a spark in the air between them. That sense of familiarity came back, and Harry got up from his chair, barely realizing it.

"Oy, could one of you open the door for me? It's wood – wood's always a problem," the man half-yelled, knocking again. He moved aside for a moment, and there was a buzzing from beyond the door. "Yes, I figured as much. Such an inconvenient limitation, too. Embarrassing. Maybe I should think about carrying an actual screwdriver, too."

Before he could rethink his plan, Harry stepped towards the door. He was pretty sure that his uncle wouldn't fire that gun, but he cringed and sped up as the first angered yells of his family erupted when they realized his intentions. He unlatched the deadbolt before they could reach him, and as the door swung open and a wave of cold and wet air streamed in, they all ran back towards the walls, as if a demon was on their heels. Harry stood his ground, curious, as the odd figure in the doorway wrung out his hair, quite literally, and dripped onto the cabin floor.

"Such terrible weather. It must be a Tuesday," the man muttered. "Sorry to barge in on you all like this, but since you're pretty much the only house in miles, and I hate to get my feet wet..." He pulled off his jacket and put it over an old chair next to the door as he took in Uncle Vernon, still holding his gun. "Would you put that down, please? It's terribly impolite to wave those things around, and it only leads to trouble."

"We – don't – want – *FREAKS*," Uncle Vernon burst out, glaring at the new arrival with his beady eyes. "We won't let him go to your weird school, you hear? I won't let him be taught by some ancient whackjob!"

"Hmmm?" The odd fellow raised his eyebrows. "Ah, I see. What we have here is a case of mistaken

identity. I get that all the time, really. Being John Smith so many times, it does get a bit confusing..." He spun on the spot to face Harry. "Let me guess, he's talking about *you*."

"Um... Yes, sir..." Harry said carefully. "Who are you?"

"Ah! A good question. Not enough of those, I think. Most people are happy to ask the really silly ones, like 'Isn't the weather terrible?' or 'Why is the sky blue?'. Boring questions, boring answers." He bowed slightly to match heights. "As for my name... Well, call me the Doctor."

Harry blinked. "Just that?"

The man, apparently the Doctor, grinned and nodded. "Right you are. So, you're waiting for someone, seeing as your... father? No, definitely not, I doubt there's a blood relation there. Caretaker? The fellow with the gun, since he mistook me for someone else." He gestured over his shoulder. "So, who are you waiting for? Anyone interesting?" He dropped into the chair next to Harry, ignoring the Dursleys entirely. Uncle Vernon seemed uncertain of what to say to their new guest, staring at him while keeping a strong hold on his gun. "You look like you're, what, nine or ten years old? What's so important that you'd be out here? Surely you don't live here, with *these* people?"

"Ah... they're my relatives," Harry said slowly. He looked at the clock. "Also, I'm almost eleven."

The Doctor nodded soberly for a moment, then his smile was back. "By almost you mean tonight, don't you? Fantastic, I haven't celebrated a birthday in ages! Way too many of them to keep track, you know. Old people, it's how that works. By the way - you never told me your name, did you?"

"You don't know it? You're not one of *them*, are you?" Aunt Petunia asked, squeaking a little as she narrowed her eyes.

"Them?"

She glanced at Harry, and bit her lip. "From that school?"

The Doctor raised his hands. "Oh, no, I'm not a teacher - well, I have been in the past, but that was special." He smirked as he glanced back at Harry. "I wasn't quite myself at the time. Well, doubly not so, I suppose. It's complicated. Which leads me back to your name."

"I'm Harry Potter," Harry said slowly, and he saw the Doctor's eyes widen momentarily before he nodded in understanding.

"Why are you in this house?" Petunia demanded. "What - what do you want from us?"

"Oh, it's just happenstance, circumstance, fate," the Doctor said, gesturing carelessly towards the door. "I arrived just a few dozen meters from here, and usually there's a good reason for ending up someplace. I figured, since I've never been here before, and there's not a lot of things around, I might peek inside. See if there's any monsters, you know."

"...Sir? Doctor?" Harry said softly, tugging on the man's sleeve. "Do I know you? Do you know me?" He cocked his head to the side. "I swear..."

"Well, I don't think we've met," the Doctor answered, frowning. "Why?"

"It's..." He tried to articulate the strange quiver in the air, or the fact that he was completely relaxed now, even with the Dursleys right there. It was as if someone had come and plucked the nervousness out of the air and bottled it up. "You're *familiar*... I swear, I must have seen you before, but it's strange, I can't imagine when..."

The Doctor hummed under his breath, as he looked back at Petunia, and he stood up suddenly. "Finish what you were saying, please. Who are these 'them' you're referring to? Not humans, I take it?" Aunt Petunia's breath hitched, and the Doctor nodded. "Figures. So, what are they? Nothing particularly weird, I'm thinking, or there probably would be a few horns or tentacles. Harry here is one of the other species, I suppose?"

"Not – humans?" Harry squeaked nervously, glancing between the Doctor and Aunt Petunia. "What do you mean by that? What else is there?"

"Yes, he's one of *them*," Petunia spat with narrowed eyes. "Like his parents."

"Interesting," the Doctor mumbled as he glanced back at Harry, who had no idea what to say. "Looks human enough - but then, so do I. Well, technically you folks look like *me*, temporally speaking, but that's irrelevant right now..." He frowned. "Could be that his looks are hidden away, I suppose, like those fish-folk in Venice..."

"Witches and sorcerers," Vernon hissed suddenly, narrowing his eyes. "Freaks and creeps, the lot of them! He's one of *those*. We didn't ask for him!"

The Doctor ignored the fuming man, staring at Petunia with raised eyebrows before turning to Harry. "That explains a few things. So you *are* human, just not quite. Slightly divergent subspecies, right? Capable of advanced manipulation of space-time through bio-energy, a surviving remnant of the long-lost Neanderthal civilization? I thought you fellows had gone extinct somewhere in the 17th century. I suppose some strains of their DNA might have endured, though. Marvellous!"

"We didn't choose to take him in." Petunia spat as she stared at Harry. "He was dropped on the doorstep by his - his *kind*. We already had a child, we didn't ask for another one, and certainly not one like that." She scowled, and Harry edged away. "Take him away from here."

"I'm sorry, I must have misunderstood..." the Doctor said, cocking his head to the side in confusion. "Did you just order me to take your - nephew, I assume? That's not a very familial thing to say, is it? Why, I would call it downright *not nice*."

Petunia shook her head sharply. "Leave, and take the freak with you." She gestured at Harry. "I've had enough of this insanity, and I don't need any new strangeness added to it. Take him away, and leave us alone." She stood up, gesturing to the door, which was still slightly open, her step uneven and her finger quivering in rage.

"Now, see here- " the Doctor began. "This is not how civil people-"

"Please...?" Harry said, unable to keep silent as he stared at the Doctor, unflappable, facing off against the Dursleys. The Doctor turned to him with a curious expression; Harry just looked at Aunt Petunia, on that hateful glint in her eye, and the gun in Vernon's hands. "Can I go with you? I won't be a problem, I promise."

The Doctor sighed. "You're ten year old- well, *almost eleven*. I can't just drag you away from your family. I don't take children along anymore, since it's dangerous to go out there..." He suddenly looked decades older as he looked away. "People don't always come back, when they go with me."

"I don't care," Harry said strongly. "Please? I promise I'll cook and clean, and all the other stuff around the house..." He looked back at the Dursleys. "Just... can you take me away from here? As a birthday present, maybe? *Please?*" He marvelled at his own courage, and wondered where that had come from. Yes, he disliked the Dursleys, but to just go along with a stranger? Yet, even as he thought of them, a chill ran down his back. No, he definitely would not stay here if he had anything to say about it.

The Doctor's featured softened at Harry's pleading tone, and he nodded. "...For a little while, alright? I can just bring you back here, to this moment, just in case..." He sighed. "Come along, Potter. Before I change my mind."

Before the Dursleys could react, the Doctor strode back out into the rain, barely taking the time to acknowledge them again - Dudley was still just staring, and his parents were barely any more responsive. Harry hurried after him, shivering in the doorway for a moment. He looked back to his family, but he could honestly not say he was sorry to leave.

He grabbed the Doctor's jacket off the chair as he passed it, and left the warmth of the cabin for the windy outdoors. There was a blue box there, positioned right on the path down to the boat, and light streamed out from the entrance, warm and inviting. He rushed over to it, and was about to enter when the Doctor stopped him at the door.

"Ah, I knew I'd forgotten *something*," the Doctor exclaimed as he took his jacket. He looked back at the cabin; Uncle Vernon slammed the door closed. He sighed for a moment, then turned to Harry with a piercing gaze. "Are you sure you came because you want to go with me, or were you just fleeing from *those* people? Which is understandable, given how unlikeable they are. I haven't told you anything, yet, so that's not an issue... I could put you with the right people, they would take care of you, like these people clearly didn't."

"Anywhere's better than here," Harry said quickly. He put his hand on the edge of the door to look inside, and his eyes went wide as images suddenly flashed before his eyes. He jerked his hand back, staring at it in confusion. "...It's called a TARDIS?"

The Doctor stared.

Harry shook his head as he stared at his hand. "...Weird."

"Curiouser and curiouser," the Doctor murmured, and then nodded decisively as he gazed speculatively at the almost-eleven-year old, taking a step back into the interior of the TARDIS. "Well, come in then. If you're going to be a passenger, you might as well help me out with the destination, right? There's all of time and space, every moment there ever was... where do you want to start?"

Harry followed, and blinked, eyes wide. "It's bigger - "

The door closed itself behind him..

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