

The Island Escape

Petunia Dursley sipped at the cup of tea and smiled as the warmth flooded her veins. Sitting back, she surveyed the small teashop. There were few customers, and so it didn't really matter that she wasn't wearing any shoes.

Taking a bite of the carrot cake she'd ordered, she smiled indulgently as she thought of her husband, still on the island. She couldn't help feeling a little guilty, though...here she was, enjoying a nice cup of tea and cake, whilst her poor Dudders was going hungry.

But Vernon, well, he deserved it.

She took another bite of the cake and thought back on the day's events.

Oh yes, he deserved it.

Vernon Dursley was what you would call a proud man. He was the Managing Director of a successful drill company, owned his own house, had the latest car and always liked things just so.

Which was why, when Petunia Dursley awoke on the lumpy mattress, blearily rubbing sleep from her eyes to hear her husband shouting and swearing and, by the sounds of it, *splintering* something – well, it was a shock indeed.

It took her a couple of moments to wake up properly and get her bearings, during which she looked around at her bleak surroundings. Dudley was sleeping on the floor next to the rickety old bed, a grubby, thin blanket pulled up around his neck, and he was snoring heavily.

Several seconds later, blinking the last of the sleep from her eyes, her mind caught up with the situation and she remembered the events of the previous day. That, that...giant had turned up and told *him* that he was a Wizard. And then he'd given poor Dudley a pig's tail!

Petunia covered her mouth with her hands, trying to stifle a gasp. How anyone could have done that to her poor, defenceless Dudders, she didn't know. Another crash sounded from the cramped living area of the hut, and Petunia gasped again.

What was her husband doing? Were the giant and the boy still there? Her eyes widened as a horrible thought crossed her mind – what if...what if Vernon had been so angry, he'd gone and done something stupid?

He had a terrible temper sometimes, and in a fit of anger could be impossibly strong. Dread flooded her veins, as she crawled to the end of the small bed and listened at the door.

“Stupid! Bloody! Oaf!”

“Vernon?” she called tentatively. “Vernon, what are you doing?”

“He’s taken the bloody boat! That idiot giant has taken the bloody boat!”

Petunia didn’t know whether to be relieved that Vernon hadn’t done anything stupid, or angry that the giant – Hagrid, as he called himself – had taken their boat.

Slipping off the end of the bed, careful not to wake Dudley – he needed all the sleep he could get, poor love – she opened the door to see her husband using the bent rifle to smash holes in the sparse furniture.

“Vernon! Stop it!”

“He’s taken the boat, Petunia! We’re going to be stuck on this ruddy island for who knows how long!” He raised the rifle and smashed it into the table once again.

“Vernon, stop it! You’ll wake Dudley!” She reached out and laid her hand on his shoulder, which seemed to calm him down a little.

“Well, yes, well I don’t want to wake Dudley. He’s going to be upset enough when he wakes up as it is – with no way off this island, he’s going to miss his favourite television programmes for sure.”

“Well, how about if we sit down, have a drink, get dressed, and then we’ll try and work out what to do.”

“Yes, yes, good idea.” Vernon sank down onto the now broken sofa and put the bent rifle onto the floor.

“Well, I’ll go and get us a drink,” Petunia said, wringing her hands together, “there’s probably some apple juice left in the flask.”

She disappeared into the bedroom, careful not to wake Dudley just yet, and found the flask of juice. She took it out to her husband, before getting dressed and gently shaking Dudley awake.

“Dudders, love, it’s time to wake up,” she whispered.

“Huh?” Dudley murmured sleepily, “is it time for Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles?”

“No, sweetums, we’re not at home. Remember what happened yesterday?”

Dudley’s eyes widened, and then his hands reached beneath the thin blanket, and his eyes filled with tears.

“Mummy, I’ve got a tail!”

An hour later, Dudley was sitting gingerly on one half of the broken sofa, complaining that he was hungry.

Vernon was pacing up and down the small room, muttering about something or other, and Petunia was sitting at the rickety table, her head in her hands.

“How are we going to get off this island, Vernon? It’s got to be at least a mile and a half back to shore!”

“Be quiet, Petunia, I’m trying to think!”

Petunia sank down onto the other half of the broken sofa, reaching out to pat Dudley’s hand.

“I’m hungry,” he complained, “can we go home now?”

“We don’t have any food, sweetums,” Petunia replied, “and the fool of a giant and *that boy* took our boat. So Daddy’s trying to think of a way to get us off this island, all right?”

“Can’t he just swim back to shore and get us another boat?”

“Well, erm, I’m not sure that would be such a good –”

“That’s it!” Vernon interrupted suddenly, “I’ll swim across and bring another boat back! Dudley, my son, you’re a genius!”

“Vernon...” Petunia began, hesitantly.

“Yes?”

“I don’t think you should –”

“And why not?” he boomed, as he began removing his shirt. “It’s the best idea we’ve got!”

“Vernon,” Petunia insisted, “don’t you remember that holiday back in 1979? In Lanzarote? You tried to go swimming in the sea, and you ended up in hospital with breathing difficulties!”

“Yes, well, the less said about that the better,” Vernon blustered, his face reddening slightly, “but that was twelve years ago, I’m fitter and stronger now.”

Petunia raised her eyebrows slightly, but didn’t say anything, simply standing up and folding Vernon’s clothes, clad as he was in only his boxer shorts.

He opened the door to the little shack, blinking in the bright sunlight.

“Good, good,” he said, “nice summer’s day, perfect for swimming.”

Petunia bit her lip, just as her husband stepped onto the rickety wooden jetty, which creaked ominously beneath his weight.

“Vernon, be careful!” she called.

“I’ll be fine,” he replied, and he’d almost reached the end of the jetty when there was an almighty splintering sound, followed by a loud splash and a murderous yell.

Petunia watched in horror as Vernon flailed in the water, spluttering while he tried to reach what was left of the jetty.

“Vernon!” she called again and stepped tentatively onto the jetty as he heaved his bulk onto the other end.

“Petunia...help me...I’m bleeding!”

“Oh Vernon!” She reached out and pulled him into a standing position, before they both edged back onto the rocks. “Where have you cut yourself?”

“There,” he pointed at his leg, “I think I caught it on a rock.”

Petunia looked down at his leg and saw a small cut the size of a sewing needle.

“Is that all?” she asked.

“Is that all?!” Vernon roared, “*That* is extremely painful, I’ll have you know!”

“All right, all right, but there’s nothing we can do about it. Come on, let’s go back inside, get you dry.”

Vernon sighed and followed his wife back into the hut, glaring at Dudley, who was peering out of the small window, laughing hysterically.

“Can’t you stop that infernal racket?” Vernon yelled, as he listened once again to the sound of his son’s stomach rumbling.

“I can’t help it, Dad, it’s not my fault I’m hungry and there’s nothing to eat!”

It was now well past two o’ clock in the afternoon, and the Dursleys were no closer to getting off the small island than they’d been three hours earlier.

They’d tried going outside and shouting until they were hoarse, and they’d tried tying Vernon’s white shirt to one of the legs from the broken table and waving it around, in the hope of attracting someone’s attention.

But no luck. There weren’t even any boats around, which Vernon had found unusual, but Petunia had reminded him that it was Cowes week on the Isle of Wight further down the coast, and perhaps all the boats had gone there.

Whatever the reason, there just didn't seem to be anybody around to help them.

"We're never getting off this island, are we, Mummy?" Dudley said and began to cry, fat tears rolling down his face and onto the collar of his shirt.

"We will, snookums, eventually we will."

"But I want to go home now! I'm missing The Simpsons! Can't you try to swim across, Mummy?"

"I, er, I can't swim, love. But I'm sure your Daddy will think of a way to get us across eventually, won't you, Vernon? Vernon?"

He didn't answer, just continued staring at the table, resting on its side, as it only had two legs.

"The table..." he murmured, "yes...that might work..."

"Vernon, have you thought of something?"

"Yes!" he said triumphantly. "Petunia, help me take the other legs off this table."

He flipped the table so the legs were pointing into the air, and, without much effort, removed the remaining two.

"I don't understand, Vernon, what are we going to do with a table?"

"That, my dear Petunia, is our ticket out of here. And it's not what *we're* going to do with it, it's what *you* are going to do with it. It's a raft, see?"

"That won't support all of our weight."

"No, it won't," Vernon said, reddening slightly, "but it'll support you. And that's all we need, eh? Just one of us to go and let the coastguard know. We'll have to say that we didn't moor the boat properly and it got washed away in the storm last night or something, but this will work."

"I'm not going out on that! I can't swim, Vernon! What if I fell off?"

"You won't," he replied. "This is good strong wood. Sturdy stuff. Now come on, the quicker you get to shore, the quicker we can get home."

Sighing, Petunia removed her shoes and helped her husband lift the tabletop out of the door, and together they lowered it into the water.

"Are you sure this will be safe?"

"Yes," Vernon replied, "and if you do fall off, hang on to the side, and I'll have a go at swimming again."

“Well, that’s reassuring,” Petunia murmured as she stepped gingerly onto the wood bobbing on the waters surface.

She sat down in the centre of the table, and Vernon handed her one of the table legs.

“Here, use this to row.”

And she set off, pushing the makeshift oar into the water and gliding towards the shore.

Brushing the crumbs from her lap, Petunia thought that perhaps they’d been left to suffer long enough, and so she paid the bill (good thing she always kept some money about her person!), and left the teashop to go in search of the coastguard.

As she strode towards the coastguard offices, she thought that it had certainly been an eventful couple of days; there was no doubt about that. And it didn’t look like it would be getting any less eventful either.

Not when there was Dudley’s pig tail to deal with...

A/N: This fic was originally written as a response to a challenge set on the HPFF forums. Thanks to LoonyPhoenix for the beta, and thanks for reading!