the last of us

by wearethewitches

Summary

the teleport takes them somewhere a little different.

“No, not since a long time ago,” she says.

Ryan asks, “How did you cope with that?”

*I didn’t, the Doctor wants to say. I packed it all away and I didn’t cope. I mourned my wife the entire time I knew her. I denied my daughter for too long in the short time I knew her. I abandoned Gallifrey and the House of Lungbarrow. I even left Susan on Earth, so stupidly of me. Except-

“I carry them with me,” she says, “What they would have thought, said and done. Make them a part of who I am. So even though they’re gone from the world, they’re never gone from me.”

-she has to say something. Anything. The words leave her mouth and somehow, each of them is true. *This brain is fantastic, the Doctor thinks, even as she reminisces on old times. There are more questions asked and more answers said.

Eventually, they end up in the workshop again. There’s a microwave hooked up to a teleport and her new friends are holding batteries, wires and plugs. *I’m almost going to miss you, she says to Graham, to Yaz and to Ryan.

“Deep breath,” she says to herself, rushing to continue as Ryan heeds her words, “Not you lot, me.” She points to herself, hoping that this teleport works – that she won’t be stranded in the depths of space with oxygen bubbles forming in her veins, that she hasn’t got this wrong.

Her sonic is warm in her hands, all unfamiliar and *hers. She looks away as she activates the
teleport and-

-and of course it’s horrible, it’s cheap space travel, the only thing worse is a vortex manipulator and-

-and she recognises the dirt under her feet. The Doctor wobbles and falls and the rocks and mud under her palms are familiar. She grabs at them, holding them tight before letting them go to pick up the sonic from where it had fallen, looking up to the familiar dawn as it rises over Darillium.

“I feel like I’m going to be sick,” Yaz says. That’s not right.

The Doctor stands, only to realise her new friends standing here on the planet surface with her. Oh no, she thinks, knowing that – like many of her other friends – she’s kidnapped them too, now. Graham gets to his feet with Ryan’s help, who wobbles himself, probably noticing the difference in gravity faster and easier than the others would, what with his dyspraxia.

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“Okay. Alright. Didn’t mean to do that.”

“We’re on an alien planet,” Graham startles, looking around and marveling. To be fair, Ryan and Yasmin share similar expressions, but Yaz does looks like she’s going to be sick at any moment.

The Doctor opens her mouth, about to apologise, knowing that until she got her TARDIS back they’d be screwed, but another voice interrupts her – a familiar voice and not like how Darillium is familiar. This familiarity is borne from hundreds of years of marriage, from twenty-four years spent in a tiny blue house that sometimes dematerialised to take them on sojourns off-planet, from whispered confessions of love.

“Well, what do we have here?” River questions, clearly curious – clearly not recognising them. The Doctor doesn’t move, in fact she stays facing her friends. “Newcomers? This estate is private – everyone knows not to venture here. Who are you?”

“Blame her,” Ryan says, pointing at the Doctor. “Her teleport brought us along for the ride.”

“Stenza technology,” she points out, “I had no idea it would do that.”

“Why use Stenza technology to make a teleport?” River asks, seemingly amused, “The layers are complexly idiotic.”

I agree, the Doctor thinks, tucking her sonic away into her pocket and crossing her arms as she finally turns around to face her wife. The Doctor doesn’t expect to be basically two feet from her, for River to be within arms length. To make it worse, River has her hair up, loose strands pulled back with a flowery bandana that the Doctor knows she got from a concert in nineteen seventy-two.

“She made me leave her here,” the Doctor thinks, doing a full three-hundred and sixty degree turn. This is where the TARDIS used to sit, when it looked like a house. She looks to River, whose vortex-manipulator sits snugly around her wrist, a backpack flung over her shoulder. She’s in her old leather jacket, zipped tightly over a grey dress and leggings. Walking boots and – of course – a gun slung around her waist.

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“Where are we?” Ryan asks.

“Old Man’s Rest,” the Doctor replies, glancing behind River to see the village with the Restaurant risen high above it on the nearby cliff. “You’re the Professor, the one who lives here with the Old Man himself. Where’s your house gone?”
Just like that, the Doctor is once again playing a game of chance. River doesn’t recognise her, seemingly. Her eyes are sad, sadder when the Doctor mentions the forever-gone TARDIS.

“Away, along with the Old Man. Were you looking for him?” River asks, “I’m afraid the Doctor and I don’t live here anymore. You didn’t answer my question, though – who are you?”

“John,” the Doctor says. “These are my friends, Graham, Ryan and Yaz. They helped me out when I was hurt. You’re River Song.”

“That I am,” River replies magnanimously, before brushing past her to where Yasmin is swaying slightly. “Nasty business, teleporting for the first time.”

Yaz looks to the Doctor, pursing her lips together. “Yeah. Are- are you an alien, too?”

“Something like that,” River smiles at her, before suddenly twirling the Doctor’s new sonic screwdriver between her fingers. “Do you know what this is?”

“Hey!” the Doctor reaches into her pockets, groaning, “No! No more empty pockets, I can’t stand it!”

“Uh,” Yaz looks to Graham and Ryan. “Not- not really? She made it, to help get these bombs out of our necks-”

“Yeah, that Stenza alien was going to blow us up!” Graham nods in agreement, face sad. “Brilliant, she is.”

“Aw, thanks Graham,” the Doctor says with something of a smile.

“I see,” River hums, before chucking her sonic back to her. The Doctor catches it with some difficulty, nearly dropping it. “Want to tell me why you’re here then, John? Disregarding your friends.”

“Uh,” the Doctor pauses, not having got that far. “I…I was looking for help. Finding something. Yeah – finding something. I’ve lost my ship, see, fell right out of her into a train.”

“Gave us a fright, she did,” Graham adds.

“Sorry,” the Doctor crosses her arms over her chest. “Anyway. River Song – you’re fantastic, I’m sure you can help me.”

“And why would I do that?” River raises an eyebrow, “You already said you have empty pockets. What are you going to do – pay with your friends?”

“Of course not!” the Doctor frowns, “They’re my friends. Yaz only lets her friends call her Yaz.”

“We became friends under duress,” Yasmin then says, before glancing at River. “Who’s the Doctor?”

“Oh, my husband,” River says flippantly, like the Doctor’s new friends don’t know exactly who she is, now. Ryan’s eyes go wide and he looks to the Doctor, who glares lightly. “He likes to save planets and the universe, sometimes. Legendary across the galaxy.”

“When people need help…” Yasmin mutters and doesn’t the Doctor feel embarrassed now? River, you need to shut up, she thinks without venom. They don’t even know I travel through time, yet.

“The Doctor’s the one to call,” River smiles fondly. “I’ll take you three home, then come back
here to help your friend. Gather round, children."

“I’m far from being a child,” Graham murmurs.

“And I’m over two hundred years old,” River replies with a grin, to his bewilderment. “You really are new to this, aren’t you? Come now – vortex manipulators are rough, but reliable. More reliable than the Doctor’s TARDIS, anyway. He can’t fly very well. You’re more likely to end up in the Victorian era than you are the twenty-first century.”

“What?” Yasmin questions.

“Time and relative dimensions in space,” the Doctor quickly says, before stopping this hoo-ha. Stepping forwards, she takes River’s wrist to type in the right space-time coordinates. “You’ve never met me in this face before, have you?”


“Don’t know. I regenerated inside, fell out the front doors,” the Doctor says, slightly miserably, before River reaches to take her chin, looking down at her.

“You used to be taller,” River murmurs, resting their foreheads together. “You should have just introduced yourself, silly old Time Lord.”

The Doctor can’t help it, hands coming to grip River’s jacket, clinging to her wife like there’s no tomorrow.

“How long has it been since you last saw me?” River asks her. “Please don’t say it was thousands of years again.”

“No, nothing like that,” the Doctor says, smiling slightly. River smells the same and it’s a comfort that makes her brain turn to mush. “I love you so much.”

River’s lip curls, “In front of your companions, my love? I didn’t know you’d gone so soft.”

The Doctor glances at said friends, who look at them both curiously. A flush rises on her cheeks, before she remembers Grace. She finds herself stepping away from River, not standing so close as she finishes typing in the right coordinates.

“I’ll wait here,” she says. “Maybe the TARDIS is flying back somewhere familiar.”

“Let’s hope,” River says gently, before gathering the three humans around her, disappearing with a crackle a moment later. The Doctor stands there, waiting – and then she’s back.

They stand there, looking at each other. The Doctor doesn’t know how to act, how to move or speak. Everything with River was always so easy – her old self met her when she had no clue who he was, earning her trust until the final curtain was pulled back and his identity revealed. Her floppy-haired self was worse and somehow better – back to front, it was a war for both of them, figuring out how to live that complicated, back-to-front life.

Now, the Doctor stands there with River and doesn’t know what to do.

“Hi,” she eventually says.

“Hello, my dear,” River smiles. “How was life- after?”

“After was…” the Doctor thinks, remembers, unable to stop the words coming out of her mouth, “I
accidentally adopted a grandchild. Her name’s Bill. She’s an immortal puddle now, travelling time and space with her puddle girlfriend.”

River blinks, before letting out a breathy laugh, all too soon losing her head. The Doctor sniggers, then giggles, joining in and somehow, they end up holding hands and it feels right, laughing with River, touching her.

“My wife,” the Doctor says.

“My wife,” replies River. The Doctor leans forwards, pecking her on the lips, wondering what Bill would think of her now – Missy would probably roll her eyes. Nardole would probably clap.

Then-

“I know that noise.”

The Doctor looks around and another laugh escapes her as the TARDIS materialises around them.

“Home,” River says, before kissing her again. Their lips collide as a new console appears, eyes closing as warmth and home envelops the both of them.

“I love you so much,” the Doctor says when they part, hands at River’s neck, thumbs wisping across her jaw. River’s lipstick – red as always, so bright and so much more stark in the new interior versus the orange of Darillium – is smudged beyond reason and the Doctor’s sure there’s some staining her lips, too. “I love you,” she says, again, so hopelessly outgunned by this beautiful woman who she will forever lose, who will forever be lost – just like the rest of her family.

“I love you.”

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