

Father and Son

an *Indiana Jones* fanfic

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for *pressdbtwnpages*

“NOW, JUNIOR, tell me about your day,” Henry Jones Sr said when he returned from his lectures that evening. His wife Anna sat in her armchair by the fire and worked on a shawl. Indiana, the family dog, slept next to her feet.

Henry Jones Jr had a lot of stories to tell. He babbled about his day at school, and complained to his father at length about how boring it was, before he told of his schoolyard adventures with his new peers. His father barely paid any attention, staring into the fireplace absentmindedly and nodding now and then. Henry was used to it. His father always asked questions but rarely listened to the answers, and he didn't mind so much. Today, it even worked to his advantage. He hoped to hide the big news in a sea of other little facts and stories.

“Oh,” he tacked onto the end of a story about his new friends. “We also decided that we needed better names, so we each chose one for ourselves.”

Suddenly, his father's attention turned sharp, and Henry's heart sank a little. But he had made a decision, and he wasn't a coward who would back down after one stern glance.

“What's wrong with the name Henry Jones?” his father asked.

“It's boring,” Henry replied.

“It's my name.”

Yes, Henry thought, and you're boring too. “I just wanted something nicer. Something with a bit of pizzazz.”

“And what name is so superior to Henry that you decided to go by it instead? Hank? Hal? Harry?” his father scoffed.

“Indiana!” The dog that slept next to Indiana's mother raised his head and perked up his ears.

“That's the dog's name!” Henry Jones Sr cried.

“But I like it!”

“I won’t allow it!”

“You can’t stop me!” Indiana said with a pout.

Father and son stared at one another and Indiana was determined not to give up. He just didn’t like Henry. Everybody was called Henry, and he didn’t even have an interesting surname like some of the other boys. But nobody would forget an Indiana, he was sure of it. What was so special about the name that his father had to get all up in arms about it?

“Henry, let him,” his mother interrupted. “He’s a boy. Boys have nicknames.”

His father grumbled something that sounded suspiciously like *but they don’t name themselves after their pets* before raising his voice again. “I’ll be in the study.”

“Don’t let him bother you,” his mother told him. “Your father can be a little old-fashioned sometimes, Indiana.”

Indiana smiled at her. At least she understood him.

- 2 -

Indiana Jones knew something was off when he arrived back home after playing with Stevie and Mozzie, who lived down the road. They had pretended to hunt for a sunken treasure at the pond in the woods behind Stevie’s place. But all thoughts of the black stone with the pretty spots that sat in his pocket were gone when he saw his parents sitting at the dining table waiting for him. Neither of them said a word and they didn’t look at each other. His mother looked pale and sad, like she always did recently, but she still smiled at him and beckoned him to take a seat.

“Shepherd’s pie, Indy, I hope you’ll like it,” she said.

Indiana didn’t pay any attention to the taste and instead wolfed his food down as fast as he could. All he wanted was to bolt from the table and hide in his room. The silence that he normally enjoyed was almost oppressive.

But he couldn’t run. The moment he put down his fork and knife, his mother asked him to stay.

“You too, Henry,” she asked his father, but Henry Jones Sr. shook his head and ground his teeth together.

“I have work to do.”

And with that, his father disappeared from the room. The atmosphere brightened a little, but Indiana still felt as if something bad was about to happen.

“What is it, Mom? I still haven’t done my homework,” he said. Normally, any mention of homework was enough to get permission to go to his room.

“I have something to tell you, Indy,” his mother said. She smiled sadly and reached out over the table to take his hand into hers. “I’m afraid there’s no good way to say this: I’m dying.”

It felt like getting punched in the gut. All he could do was stare at his mother’s face, at the pale skin on her face and the bags under her eyes. “No” was all he said.

“Yes,” she said. “It won’t be long now, and I need you to prepare for it. Both of you.”

Indiana’s head shot around and he stared at the dining room wall. Behind it was the hallway, and on the other side was the door to the room that Henry was so rarely allowed to enter. Professor Jones’s study was a *terra incognita* to him, with its reproductions of ancient books and maps. He imagined his father as he sat behind his desk, staring down at his manuscripts and muttering about the grail.

“He should be here,” he said without thinking about it. “He shouldn’t be working, Mom, not when you’re ... you’re ...”

Tears had begun to roll down his cheeks and something was caught in his throat that kept him from completing his sentence. When she saw his devastated face, Anna Jones carefully stood up, as if her bones were made of glass and she was afraid of breaking them. She walked around the table and wrapped her arms around him as he sobbed. She shouldn’t be comforting him, he thought. He wasn’t the one who was dying.

“Your father is doing his best,” she explained. “This is a difficult time for him as well, my dear. We all deal with our grief differently. One day, you will understand.”

But Indiana didn’t. He spent the next few weeks glued to his mother’s side, trying to put on a brave face and memorizing every second of the time they had left. He helped her when the pain became too much and when she was too weak to eat. His father was a ghost in their house, and by the end, Indiana had learned to resent him.

“Dad,” Indiana Jones said one evening while they both sat at the dinner table. They only ever seemed to see each other over dinner these days, and Henry Jones never had anything to say, so they mostly ate whatever the cook had prepared in silence. “I have decided on what I want to study.”

“Have you?” Henry said absentmindedly and took another bite out of his roast.

“I have.” Indiana took a deep breath. “I’m going to study archaeology.”

“Oh.”

That was all his father said. “Oh.” Not “Good for you, son,” or “I’m proud of you,” or “Why not medieval literature?” Just “Oh.” As if Indiana had just told him that he’d seen a coyote on his way home that evening or as if he’d said the roast was a little dry today.

“Is that all you’re going to say?” he asked, hating how petulant he sounded. He was almost an adult, for God’s sake!

“Well,” Henry Jones said, finally looking his son in the eye. “What do you want me to say? That it’s a bad idea? That there are better subjects out there? That you should study one of them? You know all that already.”

“And so you’re just going to say ‘Oh.’”

“Yes.”

Indiana banged his fists on the table, despite the knife and fork still clutched in them. “Well, I’m going to study archaeology anyway.”

“Of course you are.”

“And you don’t care at all?”

“It’s your life. You’ll do with it what you will.”

Indiana stared at his father, who had gone back to eating his dinner as if nothing had happened. Sometimes he really hated the man. Didn’t he care at all?

“I don’t think I’m hungry anymore,” he said, putting down the silverware and stomping out of the dining room.

“Always so dramatic,” he heard his father sigh before he was finally out of earshot.

“Well, you really fucked this one up, son,” Henry Jones told his son as they were sitting in some dive near the university. “You couldn’t just wait until I got here to talk you out of this mess either. No. You just had to call off the wedding with only one week to go. Poor Marion.”

“Thanks for taking my side, Dad,” Indiana Jones sighed into his glass of bourbon. Morosely he thought of Marion’s shocked face and took another sip. He shouldn’t have let it get as far as it had in the first place.

“Oh, I’ll take your side if it’s the right one. In this case, it isn’t.”

“It was the right decision,” Indiana maintained.

“No, it wasn’t. Deciding to marry her was the best thing you ever did and you had to ruin it.” Henry turned to the bartender. “A scotch, if you have one,” Henry told him. Thirty seconds later the glass stood before him and Indiana wondered if he should ask the man to give him another soon too.

“How kind of you to say. My doctorate, my job at the university and the work I do for the museum are meaningless, then?”

“That wasn’t what I said. But Marion ... I got the impression that she was good for you.”

Indiana sighed again and emptied his glass. “Yeah, well, I don’t think I was good for her.”

“That is quite possibly the dumbest thing I’ve ever heard you say. Is that really why you called off the wedding? Tell me you didn’t just ruin your life because of *wedding jitters*.”

“What do you even know about it? You met her once!”

“And she was a charming young woman your mother would have loved to have as a daughter-in-law.”

“Don’t drag Mom into this!”

“She would have been ashamed of you, if she’d seen how you treated Marion.”

Indiana really didn’t want to get into this argument, because he knew he’d lose it. He had treated her abominably, he knew that, but it had been the right decision. His father just didn’t understand.

“You know what, Dad? How about you just stay out of my business and I stay out of yours? I think that would work best for both of us.”

Henry Jones sighed and shook his head. “Let me know when you’re

reasonable again, Junior.”

Then he paid for his drink – still half full – got his hat and jacket and left the bar. Probably for the best, Indiana thought. He really couldn’t stand it when his father got on his high horse.

- 5 -

“You just had to stare at the wall instead of looking out for pursuers, didn’t you?” Indiana Jones griped as he and his father were cowering behind a fallen column. Bullets were flying over their heads, ruining the fresco on the wall behind them.

“It had very interesting graffiti!” Henry Jones all but screamed. Gunshots echoed between the walls of the hallway. “Did you know that men scrawled obscenities about their rivals’ sexual prowess onto walls even two millennia ago?”

“I’m an archaeologist, Dad!” There was a lull in the fire and Indiana used it to quickly dart to the side and shoot two of the men that had boxed them into the crumbling hallway. He took refuge behind one of the columns that were still standing. Then the gunshots started again. Still, two, no, three men left.

“Does that mean you knew?”

“Yes!” God, Indiana really hated his father sometimes. They’d learned to get along after the grail, but looking at it now, he really wondered why the hell he had thought it would be a good idea to take his father along for an expedition to Greece. *I know a lot about the Atlantis myth*, his father had argued. *And my Ancient Greek is still better than yours*. Fat lot of good that did when the man was too busy staring at walls instead of doing his job. He had one job, and instead he read insults.

“Well, it was new to me,” Henry Jones replied.

Indiana rolled his eyes and poked his head out from cover again. He got the one with the Luger in the head, and the man with the brown shirt in the torso. Both fell to the ground, but he didn’t get back behind cover in time to avoid the next shot from the last man – who fell as well, with a hole in his temple. Silence fell and Indiana looked back at his father, who looked pleased with himself. His gun was smoking.

“Did you get the artifact?” Henry Jones asked.

Indiana simply stared. “No,” he drawled. “I got a little distracted when the shooting started because someone didn’t warn me that we had company.”

“Well then go get it!”

Indiana did, but he swore to himself that this was the last time he listened to his father. He’d never come along on another retrieval mission. Never.

- 6 -

Indiana Jones found his father sitting in one of the many rooms hidden in the bowels of the castle they were currently in. He was getting old, Indiana thought, coughing incessantly with all the dusty tomes around. Some were on shelves, some on the ground in neat and not so neat stacks. Currently, he was staring at one of the medieval manuscripts the Nazis had hidden away in the middle of nowhere, Bavaria.

“Ah, Junior, just who I was looking for earlier,” Henry Jones said when he saw him. He stood up a little awkwardly. “Can you look at this, please? I don’t know why it ended up in a crate here when it should have been stored in one of the artifact rooms. A genuine Tibetan figurine or a fake?”

His father held up a little figure depicting a Bodhisattva or Lama. It was made of iron and barely taller than a hand, but the level of detail and the way it was fashioned ... “Genuine, probably, or a very good fake.”

“Good,” his father said. “A little out of my area of expertise, I’m afraid. I may be able to tell a fake Ming vase from the real thing, but this ... there’s a reason I’m sticking to books. Most of these are quite easy to determine the origin of.”

“Really, you can tell who a book belongs to just by looking at it?”

“If they have library stamps, I can,” his father joked, with a twinkling eye. “That stack over there belongs to the National Library. And that is from Arthur Roth’s private library. He was kind enough to let me look at some of his books about the grail legend some fifteen years back. Pity what happened to him.”

“That’s not why I’m here, though,” Indiana said. He held up the bottle of Scotch he’d saved in anticipation of this day, and the two glasses he’d brought. “The Germans have capitulated. The war is over. In Europe, at least.”

“Hah!” his father exclaimed. “That is good news indeed. Now don’t just stand there. Take a seat and give me some of that. We need to toast!”

Indiana smiled and sat down on the second chair while his father moved some of the old books out of the way to make room for the bottle and the glasses.

“To Hitler,” his father said, “may he rot in hell.”

Their glasses clinked together and they both took a gulp.

“To victory,” Indiana toasted when it was his turn.

They sat together for an hour at least, talking about sorting through various artifacts and books in different parts of the castle alongside their colleagues. They even talked about Elsa, which they hadn’t done in years. Stupid, foolish Elsa. In the end, the bottle was almost empty when the sun set over the Bavarian Alps.

“You know, Junior, I don’t think we argued all day,” Henry Jones said in a pensive voice.

“Maybe because for once, we just talked,” Indiana observed. No work together, no criticizing the others’ choices and decisions. Just a friendly talk of the sort people who knew each other had all the time. It was a first, certainly.

“Maybe we should do this more often.”

“Probably,” Indiana agreed, although privately, he thought the chances of that happening were slim.

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