

Strange Candy

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On the turn of Charlie's twelfth birthday, a new threat to the factory arises. Charlie learns how important a friend can be. Wonka learns how difficult mentorship can be. Wonka/Charlie friendship, non-slash. Wonka/OC.

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Chapter 1 - A Promised Promise

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Summary: On the turn of Charlie's twelfth birthday, a new threat to the factory arises. Charlie learns how important a friend can be. Wonka learns how difficult mentorship can be. Wonka/Charlie friendship, non-slash. Wonka/OC.

Notes: Can't say much here. I loved the 2005 remake of Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory. I loved the original, too, as a kid. But Burton's adaptation of Wonka is what inspired me to write this fanfiction. Unbelievable as it may seem, it has nothing to do with the attractiveness factor of Johnny Depp or any of his characters. It's Wonka, the character, who's key.

Oddly enough, this is a tragedy. Odd, not because I never write tragedies (I write them quite often, you see.) Odd, simply because there are many points of the story that might seem rather funny. And sappy. But we all like sappy, so long as it's not out of character, right? Right. Heh.

Read and review, or not. I like reviews, but I won't drag them out of you. Just give this fic a chance, yes?

Oh, and the first chapter *is* quite short. Rest assured, none of the other chapters will be as short as this. Much longer, actually. That's a promise. Seeing as I have like...three other chapters already written. (shrugs)

Disclaimer: Roald Dahl, people. I own no one. Except April Banks. You'll get to know her later on.

Chapter One: A Promised Promise

Charlie woke with a start. He knew exactly what day it was. He always remembered. Today was the day he looked forward to all year, whether or not it was sunny or raining, warm or cold. It was his birthday.

He threw off his covers and surged out of bed, nearly tripping over the sheets as they tangled around his feet. After a moment of furious kicking, he managed to free himself and dashed over to his closet. He'd thrown off his bed wear and dressed himself in a matter of seconds, running over to stand in front of his brand new mirror. He ran a comb through his hair, smoothed it down with his hands, and practically flew out the door.

"Good morning, Dad!" he cried jovially, bouncing off the last rung of the battered ladder. His father, who sat at the empty table, looked up from his paper and returned the greeting just as enthusiastically.

"Happy birthday, son," he said affectionately, putting the newspaper down to clap the boy on the shoulder. "Feel any older today? You're twelve now, getting a little too big to be sleeping in those old rafters."

“Not really. Not yet,” Charlie said excitedly. His next immediate target was the single bed sitting where the old one used to be. The only occupant of the bed happened to be Georgina at the time, so he set upon her with a heartfelt embrace. “Good morning, Grandma Georgina.”

“Good morning, Charlie. Congratulations,” she said wistfully, returning the hug with her featherlike arms.

Charlie beamed happily. “Thanks,” he said. “Where’s Grandpa Joe and Grandpa George? And Mom and Mr. Wonka?”

His grandmother did not seem to hear him at all, but that came as no surprise. His father stood up from the table and folded the paper away. “Grandpa Joe and George both went to fetch groceries for your mother. She and Mr. Wonka should be home any time now.”

As if on cue, there came a dull thud from the door and a split moment later, it swung open on its crooked hinges to reveal one proudly smiling Willy Wonka and a weary-looking Mrs. Bucket. With the diligence of a glassmaker and the cheeriness of a boy younger than Charlie, Wonka paused just inside the door and offered Mrs. Bucket a violet-gloved hand. She took it, for being eight-months-something pregnant was trouble for someone thirty-two years of age. Grateful for the chocolatier’s assistance, she stepped through the awkwardly shaped door and into the house.

Mr. Bucket was instantly by her side to help guide her to the table. Wonka stood back, straight and tall, both hands on his cane and two careful eyes surveying the surrounding room. Ever since the news of Mrs. Bucket’s pregnancy had been spilt, he’d acted nothing less than an overprotective older brother to Charlie’s mother. Charlie always assumed that Wonka was just as excited to have a new addition to the family, seeing as the Buckets were nothing unlike a new family to Wonka.

“There you are, Charlie!” the chocolatier said, upon spotting the boy. “Isn’t it great? Me and the Oompa Loompas have this great, big birthday present just waiting for you, just sitting there all ready to open and eat...”

“Mr. Wonka, it can’t really be a surprise if you tell him all about it,” Mrs. Bucket interjected with a faint smile. Mr. Bucket was also smiling, his hand giving his wife’s shoulder a slight squeeze.

Wonka tilted his head towards her. “A surprise doesn’t stop being a surprise unless the surprier tells the surprisee that’s what the present is,” he retorted in a know-it-all way. “It just happens, Charlie doesn’t know it’s a surprise, so the present must be a surprise!”

“It sounds like fun,” said Charlie, before anyone else could comment on his unusual, circular logic. “Thank you very much, Mr. Wonka.”

“You’re very, very welcome,” came the enthusiastic reply. “I know, let’s go and open it now! The Oompa Loompas have been very excited ever since they started making it. They’re really quite anxious to see you today, Charlie.”

Charlie was aware that both his parents were beaming at him – apparently because they

knew what the secret was behind this surprise. He felt the familiar boiling of anxiety in the pit of his stomach; he could hardly refrain from appearing too eager, as he didn't want to hurt Mr. Wonka's feelings if something wrong happened. He was also a little disappointed, for it was clear that the chocolatier had forgotten his promise from a few days prior.

Luckily for him, his mother still remembered. "Aren't you and Charlie going into the city today?"

Wonka looked a little startled. "The city? Why would we ever want to do that?"

"It's tradition," Charlie explained, for what seemed to him to be the thousandth time. But he understood fairly. Mr. Wonka was not keen to constant traditions, especially when it came to family ones. "Every year on my birthday, my parents buy me a Wonka chocolate bar from the city. Then they wrap it up and give it to me as a birthday present."

"Well, why didn't they ask the Oompa Loompas to make you one?" Willy asked with honest confusion. "I mean, there's an entire chocolate river just right outside the door."

"I think Charlie was hoping that...you would take him this year," Mr. Bucket explained. "It's more of a tradition to buy the chocolate from a store than get it from the factory. Is...that all right?"

There came a lengthy pause in which Mr. Wonka received this notion. Slowly, he uncurled his fingers from his cane and looked straight at the waiting boy. "Well sure...okay, but...is that what you really want, Charlie?"

Charlie nodded without hesitation. "I'll try to explain it on the way. Thank you for understanding."

"Well then, let's not waste another moment!" Wonka turned around in a spontaneous display of gusto and stepped outside again. Suddenly, he stopped dead in his tracks, frozen by some unseen reason. Tactfully, he reached out and prodded the empty air with his cane, drooping with relief when nothing out of the ordinary happened. "Okay," he said brightly. "Just making sure." And he started forward again.

The Buckets exchanged glances, but Charlie just shrugged, and launched forward to catch up with the ever-impulsive chocolatier.

Sneak Peek: A morning in town, a chocolate bar, a very short argument and a detour. And food. Sort of.