

This Definitely Isn't Croydon

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/8599321) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/8599321>.

Rating:	General Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	Gen
Fandom:	Doctor Who & Related Fandoms
Relationship:	Sarah Jane Smith/Harry Sullivan
Language:	English
Collections:	Public Call - Doctor Who fic exchange 2016
Stats:	Published: 2016-11-20 Words: 1,196 Chapters: 1/1

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Summary

The Doctor has left Sarah Jane on Earth, and it isn't in Croydon. Yet somehow, it's where she needs to be.

Of course this isn't Croydon, thought Sarah Jane Smith. It would be bloody Aberdeen!

She leveled more than a few mental curses at the Doctor (some in alien languages picked up during their travels). She followed that up with a few mental curses leveled at the TARDIS, who (and Sarah Jane was very very sure of this) had deliberately left her here, the jealous witch.

Now what?

Sarah Jane didn't know quite how much money she had on her person, but she doubted it was enough to get her back to London. She might be able to phone someone for assistance. Whatever it was she needed to do, she needed to decide quickly, before any of the local foot-pads or pickpockets decided she looked like a nice ripe target. She spotted a telephone box, and sighed with relief. She started walking towards it, when -

“Sarah Jane? Sarah Jane Smith? Is that you, old girl?”

She turned around.

“Harry! Oh, my God, Harry, is it a relief to see you!” She flew into his arms and impulsively kissed him directly on the mouth. “I – I just – that is to say – well, I just got dropped off here in Aberdeen. What are you doing here?”

He blushed a bright crimson. Clearly he was not used to women he knew ambushing him out of nowhere with kisses. Although he didn't seem to mind it too much.

“Conference,” he said. “I'm heading back to London tomorrow. Why don't you come with me? Conference is over, I'm just killing time, we'll have a nice supper and I'll get you a room at my hotel. We'll head back to London in the morning.”

“I don't know if I have enough money for that, Harry,” Sarah Jane said, scrunching up her face doubtfully.

“Not to worry, old thing. I'm on a UNIT expense account. I expect they owe you a favor or three. We're not far from the hotel, and you can clean up and rest before your supper.”

“Come on, now, old girl. At least *try* the haggis. It's no worse than any number of things the Doctor prepared for us in the TARDIS. Remember the Gallifreyan stink-pear preserves?” said Harry.

They sat in the corner of a tiny restaurant, one that Harry had said served up authentic Scots cuisine much better than anything that could be had in the tourist district.

Sarah Jane shuddered.

“I don't know if a Time Lord palate can handle things that we can't, but that jam was the vilest, most disgusting thing I've ever eaten.”

“Then surely you can handle a bit of haggis. Trust me on this. The Brigadier loves it!”

“The Brigadier is a Scotsman and doesn't wear pants underneath his kilt even when it's below zero outside.”

“Scots people do tend to make everyday things an act of bravery.”

“My point,” retorted Sarah Jane. They both laughed. “All right, Harry, I'll try the haggis. At least I know what whisky to order.”

“Oh, do you?” he said.

“Who do you think taught me about that, anyway?”

“Ahhh, yes. Good old Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart.”

She smiled. “How is he?”

“Newly married and blissfully in love. It's an interesting side of him.”

“And yourself?” she asked.

He shrugged. “I've moving more into research lately. Virology. Working with your aunt, actually. She's quite a gifted lady.”

“Indeed.”

The waiter came to the table just then. Harry ordered the haggis, and Sarah Jane did as well. She ordered a Fettercairn, neat, and Harry went with Royal Lochnagar for the whisky. She had never had Fettercairn before – mostly she'd gone with Glenfiddich and Glenmorangie – but found that the Fettercairn was very smooth indeed, going down like fiery silk. And later she found that Harry was right about the haggis – it was nicely spiced, crumbly, and rich all at once.

Finally, as they finished their suppers. Sarah Jane accepted a Drambuie in lieu of a dessert.

“I hate to ask, Sarah Jane,” Harry said shyly, sipping another Royal Lochnagar, “but how is it that you pitched up in Aberdeen, all alone?”

Sarah Jane blinked. Normally she had a good head for alcohol – but it had been awhile since she'd had any at all. Two drams of whisky with dinner and halfway through another of

Drambuie, and her head was feeling more than a bit light.

“The Doctor had to leave me,” she said finally, slowly. “He was summoned back to Gallifrey. They – they don't allow humans. He said – he said that...”

Here a tear fell from one eye.

“He wouldn't forget me. But it was so sudden. And he promised that he'd leave me in Croydon!”

At this more tears fell down her pretty face.

“Steady on, old girl,” said Harry, softly, and handed her his handkerchief. He stood up – with a care, he too felt a bit light-headed – and went to her side of table. Without any self-consciousness he pulled his chair over and folded Sarah Jane into his arms as she cried.

Finally she stopped.

“Oh, dear,” she sniffled. “What you must think of me!”

“It's all right, Sarah Jane,” he said. “It's going to take some time to get used to Earth again.”

“But what do I do now?” she said.

“Now?” said Harry. “Now, we pay the bill and go back to the hotel and you go to your room and get a good night's sleep. Anything else, we'll think of tomorrow, all right?”

“All right,” she said.

In the morning they checked out of the hotel and got on the train to London. Over the course of that eight hours, Harry kept her busy telling her all the gossip she had missed out on. Apparently Mike Yates had settled down with a nice young gentleman. That didn't surprise her in the least. Sergeant Benton was still there, and had the reputation of quite the ladies' man – though lately he'd been seeing one woman with whom (at least so Harry claimed) he seemed ready to settle down. After all, one could only do so much carousing and skirt-chasing, right?

“And what about yourself, Harry?” asked Sarah Jane.

“Oh, I haven't met the one yet, old girl. But she's out there.”

She smiled.

“I don't doubt it, Harry.”

“What about you, Sarah Jane? Are you looking....”

She laughed.

“No, Harry. There's only one man for me. And he's a very tough act to follow.”

He nodded. “Listen, though – don't isolate yourself. You have friends. You have Aunt Lavinia, and the Brigadier, and....”

“And you, I hope?” she said.

He nodded.

“Look, Sarah Jane. I may not be *the* Doctor. But I'm *a* doctor. You can call me anytime. And I'll even make house calls.”

“Well, what more can I ask for, then?”

At that moment, they both laughed – not cynically, but of shared happiness. Both knew that the friendship they'd built would endure through time.

And the Doctor? He might appear again. He might not. But even without him, they felt his approval. And in that moment Sarah Jane revised her mental curses on the TARDIS. Because she might be a jealous old girl, but she had taken Sarah Jane exactly where she had needed to be.

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