

Arrival

by Marcus Rowland

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Rating: K

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Kansas, 19??

It could have been any time in the twentieth century, the road would have looked much the same. Night was falling, and Jack wished that he hadn't left Topeka in such a hurry. Next time Torchwood sent him abroad on a job he'd be a little more careful, and make sure that he had good transportation. The bad thing about being stuck in the past was that it was all so primitive, and everything was so unreliable. Take cars, for example; better than horses, but that's about all you could say for them. His was in a ditch a few miles behind him, the engine still smouldering. Presumably there was a town somewhere along the road, but he couldn't see any lights ahead.

For the last few hours his wrist-computer had been vibrating; while it didn't work as a time machine these days, it could still detect temporal anomalies. Maybe The Doctor was visiting Kansas, maybe something else was interfering with history. He knew that there was something familiar about the date, and as he trudged along the road, he'd been trying to remember why. When he was a Time Agent he'd learned endless thousands of years of dull facts, finding exactly the right one was always the hard part.

Somewhere behind him he could hear the noise of a car... no, a pickup truck. He stuck out a thumb, and hoped that they'd see him in the twilight. With a squeal of brakes it came to a stop.

"Hi," said Jack, "Headed towards town?"

"Sure," said the guy in his thirties who was driving the truck. "Martha, make some room for the man."

"Of course," said Martha, a nice-looking woman about the same age, sliding over towards the centre of the seat. "Walked far?"

"A couple of hours," said Jack. He climbed in, and the driver started the truck again. "Car broke down; I'm not even sure where I am."

"About twenty miles from Smallville," said the driver. "That's where we're headed."

"That's fine, mister... um..." said Jack. He knew the name of the town all right, and he had a sudden uneasy feeling he could guess the surname, and exactly what evening it was. He was pretty sure that he recognized their faces.

"Kent. Jonathan Kent. Interesting coat you're wearing."

"Jack Harkness," said Jack, thinking, 'Okay, I'm screwed. History's screwed, if I don't get out of here fast.' He thought fast, then said, "It's an RAF greatcoat. Some friends and I are making an amateur movie about the American pilots in the world war before the US got involved." He didn't specify which war. He looked out of the window, orientating himself with a landscape he dimly remembered. "I think I know where I am now... yeah, if you could let me

off at the junction about two miles up ahead, that's where my friends are supposed to meet me, I was supposed to follow their car to the airfield but they can give me a lift. I'm still a little early despite everything."

"Are you sure?" asked Jonathan. "It's a long way from anywhere."

"Absolutely," said Jack. He didn't try to invent an explanation, beyond what he'd already said; let them come up with their own. It wasn't like he was asking them to do anything illegal. After a couple of minutes the car stopped at a crossroads. "Thanks," says Jack, climbing out. "Drive safely now. Goodnight."

"Goodnight," said Jonathan and Martha. Jack waved as they drove off, hoping that his brief presence in the truck hadn't done anything to change history. There was still a gentle tingle from his wrist, but it seemed to be dying down as the blaze of a descending meteor passed overhead, parallel and a little to the right of the road. Jack dug into his pockets and found a small telescope. On the flat terrain he could see for miles. Somewhere up ahead there was a flash of light and a dull thud, followed a few seconds later by brake lights on the road. They'd seen it, all right, and it looked like they were stopping to investigate.

Over the next few minutes there were five separate temporal signatures, none of them the Tardis, all of them leaving. The time-stream slowly settled down to normal. Maybe someone had been stopped from messing with time; maybe it was just tourists filming the event. Whatever, he'd stay well clear.

Jack thought back to his last visit to the twenty-eighth century. The land hadn't changed that much, though in the future it was a ten-lane highway. Just about there would be where they had the statue, about a hundred feet tall, of Ma and Pa Kent and the baby. The step-parents of Utopia, for some values of Utopia, for the centuries it lasted.

"Hi, Kal-El," said Jack. "Welcome to Earth." He pulled out his hip flask and drank a nip of Scotch to celebrate.

No point hanging around these parts and running more risks. They'd soon forget him, with the excitement of a new baby, and that was the way he wanted it. He set off down the side road, away from the action. After a while he started whistling.

End.

This is part of a sequence of stories featuring the immortal Captain Jack Harkness and his journey from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century. This is the only part set in the DC universe.

The full collection of stories is archived as <http://www.tthfanfic.org/Story-13327/MarcusRowland+Five+Pit-Stops+on+the+Way+to+the+21st+Century.htm>

An earlier and slightly different version of this story is archived on the Lois and Clark fanfic archive, <http://www.lcfanfic.com/>

I've left the date open due to the numerous resets of the DC universe.