

Harlan Goes Home

By

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V1.0

EXT. ROADSIDE- DAY

A CAR drives to the edge of a woods. HARLAN, a grown man in a DOG ONESIE, has his head sticking out of the backseat window facing the woods. His owner, JON, parks the car.

HARLAN

You saw that squirrel too, right?
That fuzzy idiot. You should've hit
it with the car.

Jon turns the car off and gets out. He opens the door for Harlan to get out.

HARLAN

Oh, thanks. But yeah, I've got this
theory that they're planning
something big.

Jon attaches a leash to Harlan's collar. On his collar is a brass tag in the shape of a bone with HARLAN imprinted on it.

JON

C'mon.

HARLAN

Yeah! Where're we goin'?

Jon leads Harlan into the woods.

EXT. WOODS- DAY

Jon and Harlan walk through the woods together, somewhere far from the road. Harlan is deep in conversation; Jon looks resigned.

HARLAN

...So if I'm right about my
squirrel theory, they really are
out to get you guys. I don't know
about us dogs, but they definitely
have it out for the humans.

Jon isn't listening; he doesn't understand Harlan. He rubs Harlan's head.

HARLAN

Thank you. I just wish you'd listen
to me when I'm clearly warning you
about this clear and present
danger. You see them outside all

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

HARLAN (cont'd)
the time, running around, you see
them-- hang on, one sec.

Harlan lifts his leg and urinates on a tree. He maintains steady eye contact with Jon, but Jon looks away.

HARLAN
You see them, I see them screwing
with the bird feeders. I chase em
off for you. It's a whole routine.
One of these days you're gonna need
more than that, they're gonna come
prepared man, they're gonna be
ready.

Harlan shakes his leg and sets it down. They resume walking.

HARLAN
Gosh, it's a nice day out. I
appreciate the walk, buddy. We
should come here more often.

Jon takes the leash off of Harlan.

HARLAN
What's going on? Are you gonna let
me run for a bit?

Jon takes off Harlan's collar.

HARLAN
Hey, I need that! What're you
doing, Jon?

Jon rubs Harlan's ears.

JON
I gotta let you go, old buddy.
You're gonna be a lot happier out
here. Chase all the squirrels you
want.

HARLAN
Well--that's cool and all, but--
Jon, I've known you for like 28
years, what's going on?

Jon begins to walk away.

HARLAN
Jon? Jon, c'mon man, come back, I
don't know what I did, but-

Harlan follows Jon

HARLAN

You're my best friend, Jon, you
can't leave me out here.

JON

Stay.

Almost involuntarily, Harlan squats down. He's visibly
struggling to disobey.

HARLAN

Jon! Don't go Jon, please! I've got
nowhere to go!

Harlan struggles, then stands up and goes over to Jon. Jon
sighs and digs a tennis ball out of pocket. Harlan freezes.

HARLAN

Jon. Don't you dare, Jon. That's a
dirty trick.

Jon raises the ball sharply. Harlan's focus snaps to it.
He's almost in tears.

HARLAN

Don't you do it, Jon, you-- you
jerk, You know I can't--

Jon throws the ball hard into the woods. Harlan bolts after
it, and Jon walks away in the opposite direction.

HARLAN

JON! STAY RIGHT THERE, JON!

Harlan chases after the ball. It lands in a mass of leaves.
Harlan digs frantically through the leaves.

HARLAN

This isn't happening. Come on, come
on, this can't be happening.

Harlan finds the ball. He stuffs it in his mouth and sprints
back the direction he came.

HARLAN

JON! I GOT IT, JON!

Harlan comes back to the spot where Jon left. Jon is nowhere
to be found.

(CONTINUED)

HARLAN

Jon?

Harlan runs around, sniffing trees and foliage.

HARLAN

Where'd you go, pal?

He finds Jon's scent. Harlan sprints off in his direction.

EXT. ROADSIDE- DAY

Jon enters his car parked on the side of the road. He starts it. Just before he can drive off, Harlan bursts through the woods.

HARLAN

JON!

But it's too late. Jon turns the ignition and drives away, not looking at Harlan. Harlan chases after him.

HARLAN

JON! PLEASE, COME BACK! JOO-OON!

Harlan slows down, watching Jon's car get smaller and smaller in the distance. Jon is gone. Harlan sits down, slumped.

HARLAN

I don't understand...

EXT. ROADSIDE- NIGHT

Harlan lays down in the same spot from where Jon left him, looking in the distance, tired.

HARLAN

Any minute now. He'll be back. With a... a hot dog, or bacon. Something good to make up for this.

The wind blows.

HARLAN

Any minute now...

EXT. ROADSIDE- MORNING

Harlan wakes up.

HARLAN

Jon?

Silence. Harlan continues his watch.

His stomach growls. He growls back.

EXT. ROAD- DAY

Harlan is walking down the road, supposedly in the direction Jon left. Cars pass by him occasionally- None of them Jon. He tries to wave them down, but none of them stop.

HARLAN

I'm coming home, Jon. You're gonna love me again, you jerk.

A car slows down. Driving it is ALLIE. She stops the car and rolls down her window.

ALLIE

Aww, you lost, buddy?

HARLAN

Yes! Jon left me here, can you take me back to his house?

Allie parks the car and steps out. She offers Harlan the back of her hand to smell, which he does.

HARLAN

Allie, is it? Take me back to Jon, please, Allie.

Allie gingerly ruffles Harlan's head and ears.

HARLAN

Ooh, that's nice. Thanks.

ALLIE

You're a friendly guy, huh? You wanna come home with me?

HARLAN

Yes, I would very much like that. Take me to Jon, please.

Allie opens the door to the backseat of her car.

(CONTINUED)

ALLIE

Come on!

Harlan enters the back seat. Allie gets inside, opens the window for Harlan to poke his head out of, and drives off.

INT. ALLIE'S HOME- DAY

The front door opens, and Harlan steps inside, looking around and sniffing the air.

HARLAN

Nice place.

Allie follows him from behind.

ALLIE

Let's get you clean.

INT. ALLIE'S BATHROOM- DAY

Harlan is in the tub, patiently getting bathed by Allie.

HARLAN

...He's usually busy during the day, but he'd take me for walks at night around the neighborhood. But no matter how busy he was, he'd always feed me and give me whatever food he didn't eat. Also--

Harlan shakes his head, spraying the bathroom in water and foam.

ALLIE

Hey--!

HARLAN

--After our walks Jon would sit on the sofa to watch movies, and sometimes-- not every time, but sometimes-- he'd let me up on the sofa with him and I'd just be smelling him the whole time-- oh, those were the best times.

INT. ALLIE'S LIVING ROOM- NIGHT

Allie is laying on the couch watching a movie absent-mindedly while looking through her phone. Harlan gobbles down shredded chicken on a paper plate in the kitchen across from her.

HARLAN

Thanks for letting me spend the night here. I like this place. Not as much as I like Jon's place, but I mean it's not like it's a competition. And Jon usually gives me ham, but-- you know what, this is fine, I appreciate boiled chicken too.

Harlan finishes his food and notices an empty spot on the couch beside Allie. Harlan hesitates, then clears his throat and approaches her.

HARLAN

Yeah, I really appreciate all this, Allie. Can't wait to tell Jon about this when I go home.

Harlan sits by Allie's hand. She lazily scratches behind his ear.

HARLAN

Yeahhh, that's nice. But, uh, you know what would be really nice?

Allie doesn't respond- she's absorbed in her phone.

HARLAN

It would, uh, be nice- if--

Harlan jumps onto the couch.

HARLAN

If-I-can-lay-here-with-ya-okay-thanks--

Harlan spins around trying to find a good spot to settle. Allie lays upright.

ALLIE

No, get down.

She gently pushes Harlan off the couch.

(CONTINUED)

HARLAN
Ah, alright, fine. Worth a try.

Harlan lays down beside the couch. Allie lays back down and resumes her lazy head-petting.

HARLAN
This is nice too.

INT. ALLIE'S KITCHEN- DAY

Harlan is chowing down on shredded chicken on a paper plate laid out on the floor by Allie. Allie sits at the table on the phone.

ALLIE
Hey, do you know if anyone lost a dog recently?

Harlan perks his head up.

ALLIE
Alright, just thought I'd check. I found a stray by the side of the road.

Harlan sullenly goes back to his meal.

ALLIE
No, he didn't have a collar on. Don't know, lemme check.

Allie sets down the phone and inspects Harlan's crotch and ear.

ALLIE
No, don't think so. Maybe he's from one of those puppy mills? Mm. Yeah, I'll make an appointment. Yeah, come by and see him tonight! I'm still thinking about what to call him. Alright, bye.

Allie hangs up as Harlan finishes his food.

HARLAN
Actually, I belong to Jon, can you take me to him now?

Allie looks up a number on her phone, then makes a call.

(CONTINUED)

HARLAN
I appreciate the food, Allie,
really I do, but I have to get back
home now. so...?

The other end of the line picks up.

ALLIE
Hi, I'd like to make an appointment
to have my dog neutered?

Harlan's head tilts.

EXT. ALLIE'S HOME- DAY

Harlan BURSTS out of Allie's front door, running from the house at full speed. Allie steps out onto the porch, bewildered.

ALLIE
Hey!

HARLAN
No! No thank you! Goodbye!

Harlan dashes from her front yard. Allie watches him go.

EXT. SUBURBS- DAY

Harlan wanders the neighborhood, sniffing around for Jon.

HARLAN
Jon? Jon, where are you, bud?

A jogger passes by Harlan.

HARLAN
Hey! Have you seen Jon?

The jogger passes him by, not noticing him.

Across the street on the sidewalk, a pedestrian walks the opposite direction. Harlan crosses the street to them.

HARLAN
Hey, do you know where Jon lives?

The pedestrian leans down to pet Harlan.

(CONTINUED)

PEDESTRIAN

That's a good boy. I don't have anything for you.

The pedestrian keeps walking.

HARLAN

Well, thanks anyway.

Harlan spots a MAN IN A DOG ONESIE and his WALKER out on a walk.

HARLAN

Finally, someone I can talk to!

Harlan strolls up to them. The man tugs at the leash to get a look at Harlan.

WALKER

Benny! No!

Benny ignores her.

BENNY

God, I hate that name. Whaddya want?

Harlan comes up to Benny, and they sniff each other.

HARLAN

I'm looking for my owner, Jon. Have you seen him?

WALKER

Come on.

Benny continues to walk, and Harlan walks alongside Benny.

HARLAN

Please. I have nowhere to go.

Bruce concentrates.

BENNY

You're Harlan, right?

HARLAN

Yes! Yes, I am! Have we met?

BENNY

Mmm, no, I don't think so. But I remember hearing someone calling your name a few weeks ago, was that him?

(CONTINUED)

HARLAN

I...Yeah! Yeah, I remember, I got into the trash cans and he yelled at me for it. Maybe that's why he...

BENNY

Why he what?

HARLAN

He left me at the woods on my own.

BENNY

Ouch. That's something you'd better work out with him.

HARLAN

Yeah. I'm willing to forgive him, but only if he promises not to do that again.

The walker tugs at Benny's leash. They walk faster. Harlan matches their pace.

BENNY

...Yeah. Uh, I gotta wrap this up, she's losing patience. I think the house you're looking for is about a mile this way, then a left on Hoffman Drive. Keep going and you should find him.

WALKER

Benny, let's go!

The walker tugs again and crosses the road with Benny to the sidewalk on the other end.

HARLAN

Thanks Benny! I owe you one!

BENNY

Man, I hate that name...

Benny and his walker walk away from Harlan on the other side of the street.

HARLAN

I'm coming for you, Jon!

Harland SPRINTS further down the road, passing by rows of houses.

EXT. JON'S NEIGHBORHOOD- DAY

Harlan continues his mad dash through the suburbs. He STOPS at a particular street sign. He sniffs it, then sniffs it again to be sure.

HARLAN

I've been here before... I know
where this is!

Harlan continues his run, sniffing the air and pointing out different landmarks as he passes them by.

HARLAN

That's Mrs. Jefferson's house! And
that's where Tony lives! Over
there- that's where that stupid cat
tried to scratch me! I'm coming
home, Jon! I'm--!

EXT. JON'S HOUSE- DAY

Harlan stops outside of Jon's home- His home. He gazes at it with reverence at first-- until he sees FITZ, a grown woman in a cat onesie laying on the porch, cleaning herself. Harlan's face falls. Fitz looks up at him.

FITZ

'Sup?

Harlan gingerly approaches.

HARLAN

What are you doing here? This is my
home!

FITZ

Thought I smelled a dog here.

HARLAN

Who are you?

FITZ

Name's Fitzcarraldo.

HARLAN

What?

Fitz sighs with impatience.

(CONTINUED)

FITZ
Just call me Fitz.

HARLAN
Get off my porch.

Fitz confidently stands up on her feet.

FITZ
Make me.

Harlan hunches his back and growls. Fitz, in turn, arches her back and hisses. Harlan approaches slowly.

The front door opens. Becca steps out.

BECCA
Fitz! What're you--

Becca sees Harlan. Fitz dashes inside the house.

BECCA
Jon? There's a stray dog out here.

JON (O.S.)
Oh, God...

Jon steps out onto the porch beside Becca.

HARLAN
JON!

Harlan dashes up the steps and almost knocks Jon over with his affection, nuzzling him and pawing at him. Becca covers her nose and mouth.

JON
Down- Down!

BECCA
I thought you said you didn't have a dog.

JON
Uh--

BECCA
I need to go inside before I break out.

Becca goes back inside and closes the door behind her.

JON
Dammit, Harlan, why'd you come
back?

Harlan steps back from Jon.

HARLAN
Wh-what?

JON
Stay.

Jon goes back inside. Harlan stares in disbelief at the door. He looks at the window and meets the gaze of Fitz, looking out from the inside. Fitz moves away from the window.

HARLAN
Jon?

EXT. JON'S HOUSE- NIGHT

Harlan is laying on the lawn in front of Jon's house, staring at the building. Warm orange light shines from behind the curtains to the windows, music playing inside. Harlan looks heartbroken, betrayed.

FITZ (O.S.)
Hey.

Harlan's head whips around- Fitz is sitting a few feet away from him.

HARLAN
How did--

FITZ
This really was your home, wasn't
it?

HARLAN
Yeah. Until you showed up.

FITZ
Don't blame me. Becca dragged me
here. I didn't have a say in the
matter.

HARLAN
Huh?

(CONTINUED)

FITZ

She's got a thing for that... ugh,
'man' in there. That idiot.

Harlan gets up into a sitting position.

HARLAN

What thing?

FITZ

I mean they're probably getting
married or something. He's always
over at our house. You're Harlan,
correct?

HARLAN

Right.

FITZ

We're in the same position, Harlan.
Our owners drag us around, not
caring about what we think or feel.
We're just objects to them.

Beat. Fitz licks her hands.

FITZ

And Becca's allergic to dogs.

Harlan concentrates.

HARLAN

So... Jon--

FITZ

I'm guessing Jon didn't want Becca
finding out about you so he
wouldn't jeopardize things with
Becca. Becca, in turn, decided to
take things a step further and move
in with that moron.

HARLAN

How do--

FITZ

I'm very observant, Harlan, try to
keep up. My theory is that Jon saw
no other option other than to
remove you from his life to let
Becca in instead. And me,
unfortunately.

Harlan's gaze falls to the ground.

(CONTINUED)

HARLAN
Jon abandoned me...

FITZ
I think so.

HARLAN
That... That BASTARD!

Fitz looks up in shock.

FITZ
Since when do dogs swear?

Inside the house, the music turns off.

BECCA (O.S.)
Is that that same dog?

JON (O.S.)
I'll go check.

Jon opens the door to the house.

JON
GO! GO AWAY!

HARLAN
JON, YOU SON OF A BITCH! LET ME IN
RIGHT NOW!

Jon picks up a small rock from a planter beside him. He hesitates, then throws it at the ground by Harlan.

JON
Now get out of here!

Harlan, utterly betrayed, is speechless. They share a hurt look-- then Jon closes the door and locks it.

BECCA (O.S.)
Have you seen Fitz?

Harlan lays back down.

HARLAN
I don't understand.

FITZ
Humans can be like that. You're a
cherished member of the family one
day, left at a shelter the next.
That's what happened to me.

Harlan looks at Fitz sympathetically, sitting up. Fitz has a thousand-yard stare.

FITZ

You have a golden opportunity,
Harlan. I'm a cat. I can't defend
myself, or hunt. I'm... I've been
declawed.

Harlan winces and looks away.

FITZ

I need Becca to stay alive, even if
I have to live with that dork she
likes. But you, you're a dog.
You're strong. An alpha male. And--

Fitz sniffs the air gently.

FITZ

...You've got all your bits.

HARLAN

I can't do this alone. I need--

FITZ

You don't need anyone. You're off
the leash now- embrace it. You've
got a freedom so many pets wish
they had, and the entire world
ahead of you.

Fitz looks Harlan sagely in the eyes.

FITZ

Don't waste this opportunity.

Fitz walks off towards the house, slipping around the
corner, vanishing.

FITZ (O.S.)

Maybe someone better will take you
in.

Harlan thinks on all this, looking back at the house. He
hears laughter inside.

JON (O.S.)

Becca! I found Fitz!

BECCA (O.S.)

Oh, good! C'mere, Fitzzy-!

Harlan looks away, tearful. He closes his eyes.

His expression turns to one of determination. Harlan stands up and walks away from Jon's house.

HARLAN

See you around, Jon.

Harlan disappears into the night.

FADE TO BLACK

END