Let Me Take You When I Go

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Let Me Take You When I Go

by orphan_account

Summary

AU set after The Last Battle. In which Edmund survived the train crash, and he and Susan struggle to cope without Peter and Lucy. Mild Edmund/Susan, mentioned Caspian/Susan

Notes

This is not my first fanfiction, but it is my first Narnia fanfiction, and the first fanfiction posted online. Spoilers for The Last Battle, though that book's ending is so well-known by now that it hardly counts as a spoiler.

I'm blatantly disregarding parts of canon, especially the part that Peter and Edmund weren't on the train, they were waiting at the station. If the books or films mentioned where the Professor's house is, I've forgotten it, so I chose Lincolnshire at random. I also disregarded the bit in Voyage of the Dawn Treader that said he lost his money and had to sell the house, because it fitted the story better if he still owned it, and the timeline is a complete mess.

This isn't edited, so any mistakes, anachronisms, etc. are entirely my own.

So, now that's out of the way, on with the story!
"The train's going awfully fast, isn't it?" Lucy asked, interrupting Eustace and Peter's discussion of how they could tell which pool in the Wood Between Worlds would lead to Narnia.

"Yes, it is," Peter agreed after looking out the window at the houses, trees and fields flashing by. "Still, the driver must know what he's doing. What was that you said, Eustace?"

As Eustace was explaining his plan that they ("Meaning Jill and I, of course") could try going halfway into a pool ("The way the professor and Aunt Polly did") and going back to the Wood Between Worlds if it wasn't the right one, the train turned a corner without slowing down and sent an assortment of coats, bags, suitcases and Lucy's lunchbox flying off the overhead rack at such speed that they fell in a diagonal line... straight onto Edmund, who was dozing on the seat opposite.

There are few less pleasant ways to wake up than having a large, heavy object with sharp corners hit you in the face and graze your cheek. Edmund yelped and sat bolt upright, and was promptly enveloped in Peter's coat.

"Stop laughing, you idiots, and help me!" he shouted, trying and failing to free himself from the coat.

Peter and Eustace recovered from their laughter long enough to pull the coat off him, while Lucy and Jill picked up the other coats, bags, suitcases and lunchbox and set them on the floor.

"It's safer than putting them back up," Lucy said, then gasped. "Ed, you're bleeding!"

"Am I?" Edmund reached up and touched his cheek. "Ow!"

"It's just a scratch, but you should still go and wash it," Jill said after surveying the situation critically.

Edmund got up and left the carriage, holding Lucy's handkerchief, which she generously lent him, to his face. Walking through a train carriage was difficult at the best of times. It was even more difficult when the train was moving at high speeds, and Edmund arrived at the bathroom with a bumped elbow, a scraped knee and in a considerably worse mood than when he left the carriage.

That was when the world exploded with a horrible screech and an earth-shaking crash.

Susan got ready for the party an hour before James was due to collect her. He was always late, which was why, when the doorbell rang, she was so startled her hand slipped and her lipstick left a red mark on her nose.

*James, early? What's come over him?* she wondered as she wiped the lipstick off.

The doorbell rang again. Susan put her coat and shoes on, checked her hair and make-up one last time, and ran to the door.

"Miss Pevensie?" the policeman said.

"Yes."

"There has been an accident. The train your siblings, cousin and parents were on derailed at the train station."
At those words, Susan's world disintegrated.

There were so many casualties that there wasn't room at the morgue, and the bodies were laid out in the police station's basement. Only family members of the victims were allowed to enter. Susan stepped through the door, saw the rows of bodies lying on the floor, heard the weeping of distraught relatives searching for their loved ones, smelled the blood and charred flesh, and nausea overwhelmed her. She turned and fled to the ladies'.

She forced herself to return, to follow a sympathetic policeman around the room, to watch as he pulled the covering off each corpse in turn. By the time she left, she'd identified Lucy, Jill, Eustace, Professor Kirke, and her father. Her mother, Peter and Aunt Polly she had to guess at, and in some dull, distracted way she hoped she hadn't made a mistake. She hardly realised that Edmund was nowhere among the bodies until one of the nurses milling around the car park in front of the police station stopped her as she walked past.

"Are you Susan Pevensie?"

Susan stared at her blankly. The question was repeated twice before she finally understood.

"Yes."

"Come with me, please."

The nurse led the way to a doctor standing beside an ambulance, talking all the time. Susan was too dazed to listen.

Why? she screamed over and over in her mind. Why did this happen to us? What did we do to deserve this?

"Your brother's injuries are severe, but not life-threatening," the doctor said.

Those words were the first thing that truly registered in Susan's mind since the doorbell rang - was it really only twenty minutes ago? It was as if she was drowning in a sea of chaos and someone had thrown her a rope.

"Edmund's alive?" she gasped, finding it as hard to speak as if she was dying of thirst and hardly recognising her voice as her own.

"Yes, but -"

The rest of the doctor's words flowed over her head. All she could think was, Edmund's alive. Edmund's alive.

Susan didn't know what she expected when she entered the ward set aside for victims of the train crash. In some vague way, she expected it to be as calm and orderly as the hospital usually was, so she was entirely unprepared to walk into a scene reminiscent of a war zone. Doctors and nurses rushed back and forth, some pushing trolleys with people lying on them, and screams of agony tore through the air. The metallic smell of blood combined with the normal sterile smell of a hospital hit her like something solid. Helplessly, she stared around her until a nurse saw her.

"Your name, please," she said briskly.

"Susan Pevensie. I'm here to see my brother, Edmund."
"Over here."

The nurse navigated the maze of people with amazing speed. Susan followed as if in a dream.

Edmund lay unconscious on a hospital bed, hooked up to a machine and on a drip. His hair was dusty and matted with blood, his face was grazed, and he had a black eye. Susan collapsed into the chair next to him and buried her face in her hands.

"Ed?" she whispered at last.

He didn't move.

"He has three broken ribs, a dislocated shoulder, and both his legs are broken," the nurse said, as gently as she could.

Susan fought to find her voice. "Will he survive?"

"Of course he will, but -"

But. But. That awful word again.

"But what?"

The nurse looked at her sadly. "He may never regain the use of his legs."

After she left, Susan reached over, rested her hand on her brother's, and began to cry.

"Su?"

Susan opened her eyes and met Edmund's.

"You're awake!" she exclaimed, sitting bolt upright. A wave of dizziness promptly hit her, making her wish she'd moved a little more slowly. "How do you feel?"

"Is that a trick question?" he asked with a wan attempt at a smile. "My head's splitting, my arms ache, it hurts so much when I breathe I feel like I'm going to be sick, my legs hurt worse than when that brute of a dwarf tripped me... How are Peter and Lucy?"

Susan froze. For the sake of her now very fragile sanity she ignored the allusion of Narnia, but how could she tell her brother that they were the only ones left?

"Su?" A note of alarm crept into Edmund's voice.

She forced herself to look up. "They... They're..."

Realisation and horror dawned on Edmund's face. "No. No, no, no. It's not true. They're all right. Please, Susan, say they're all right!"

She wrapped her arms around his chest and burst into tears.

Preparations for the funerals fell mostly on Aunt Alberta and Uncle Harold. Susan went through her days mechanically, applying herself to her job as a receptionist in a dentist's with unusual diligence,
refusing all invitations to parties, and going straight to the hospital the moment work finished for the
day. She and Edmund talked about the future, what they'd do when he was well enough to leave
hospital, anything that didn't make them think of their family or Narnia. Edmund tried to speak of it,
several times, but she always cut him off with, "Don't talk about those silly games now, please."
The devastated look on his face hurt her as much as if someone plunged a knife into her heart and
twisted, and she would have given anything to be able to apologise, say she didn't mean it, say she
remembered. But the memory of being essentially kicked out of the land she and her siblings had
ruled and fought for, the land so many of her friends and subjects had died for over a thousand years,
was still too fresh, and the look on Edmund's face reminded her far too much of the look on
Caspian's when he heard they weren't coming back.

Another problem Susan faced was the journalists. They were obsessed with the train crash and
hounded everyone who had a friend or relative killed or injured in it. As she had lost five family
members and three friends, they crowded around her like a pack of hungry wolves around a hurt
deer, and the hospital was the only place she was safe from them.

Edmund listened to her angry tirade against them one day when a mob of them had waited for her
outside the dental surgery where she worked. When she finished, he said simply, "You should take
up archery again."

She ignored the "again" and imagined the journalists running for their lives, discarding cameras and
notebooks in their haste to escape as she fired arrow after arrow at them. That was the first time she
laughed since what she'd come to think of as "that dreadful evening". Edmund joined in, and the two
of them giggled like school children, drawing odd looks from the patients, visitors and doctors
around.

That day, she realised two things. One, it was amazing how comforting laughter could be after
crying your eyes out every night for three days. Two, Edmund was very handsome when he
laughed.

It was Monday, two days before the funeral, and Susan got up an hour before dawn to get started on
the hundred and five mile drive from Finchley to Grantham, Lincolnshire, where the Professor's will
was to be read. She could have taken a train or a bus, but she avoided public transport like the plague
now.

She and Mrs. Macready were the only people there.

"I'm sorry for your loss," Mrs. Macready said in stilted tones.

Susan couldn't think of anything to say, so she nodded and was silent.

_Queen Susan the Gentle would have known what to say_, a treacherous little voice whispered.

She ignored it. Queen Susan the Gentle would never have taken the coward's way out and denied
Narnia.

The Professor left the historical artifacts and a sum of £5,000 to Mrs. Macready. He left the house, its
grounds and the rest of his money to the Pevensies. Susan went into the solicitors' office the owner of
a small flat and enough money to live comfortably. She left it rich, the co-owner of a large country
house, and she would gladly have given it all away in an instant if it could bring her family back.
"Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust," the preacher droned away in the background.

Susan gazed at the coffins as they were lowered into the graves. She’d had a week to reconcile herself to the fact that her parents, her brother and her sister were dead. This was the first time it truly sank in that they were dead. Gone. They were never coming back.

Edmund, sitting in a wheelchair the hospital provided for the occasion, reached out and clasped her hand in both of his.

"We'll be all right," he said quietly as the gravediggers began filling in the graves.

Susan set her free hand on his shoulder and tried to ignore the dull thud of soil hitting the coffin lids. He was too obviously trying to convince himself for her to believe him.

Another two and a half months passed before Edmund was declared well enough to leave hospital.

"Under no circumstances are you to attempt walking for at least another three months," Doctor Groves said on the day Susan came to collect him. "And as for going down to Lincolnshire, don't even think of it until this time next year."

A helpful trainee doctor stowed the wheelchair in the car's boot and showed her how to take it out when needed, while another lifted Edmund bridal-style into the front seat. He said nothing, but Susan knew by the set of his jaw and the blush staining his cheeks that his dignity was wounded.

"Not a word," he warned as she got into the driver's seat.

"I knew you couldn't go up and down flights of stairs in a wheelchair, so I asked Mrs. Vincent if I could have a flat on the ground floor instead, and since there was one empty she agreed," Susan told him as they drove home. "There's only one bedroom, but it's big enough to put another bed in and we can get a curtain to use as a door. Have you decided what to do about your studies yet?"

"I wrote to Oxford and asked if it's possible to study law via correspondence course. They haven't answered yet. Wait, stop here."

Startled, she puled over to the side. Then she saw what he'd seen: the graveyard.

Reassembling a wheelchair wasn't as easy as that medical student made it look, and Susan spent the entirety of their walk up to their family's graves worrying if it would suddenly fall apart under Edmund.


Helen Mary Pevensie, née Lewis, 1902-1947.

Peter David Pevensie, 1924-1947.

Lucy Emily Pevensie, 1929-1947.

The gold letters on the black marble of the headstones were woefully inadequate, as was only to be expected of anything written by Harold and Alberta Scrubb. They still brought tears to Susan's eyes.
Edmund stared at them for a long time.

"Where's Eustace?" he asked at last.

"Aunt Alberta and Uncle Harold had him buried in Cambridge."

They stayed at the graves for a long time after that, each lost in their own thoughts.

Life fell into a kind of routine after the first few days. Susan would get up, make breakfast for them both and go to work. Edmund would study one of the law books he'd bought until work was over for the day, when he would go down to the office to meet her. How he got in and out of the wheelchair on his own was a mystery; Susan suspected Mrs. Vincent or one of her sons ran odd jobs for him. It would certainly explain how he got the most up-to-date textbooks and most recently published mystery novels. Then they would go to the graveyard with a bouquet of flowers and divide them between the four graves.

It wasn't anything like life had been before, but it was the new normal, and it was enough.

Susan woke up with a start, sure she'd heard something. She listened, but there wasn't a sound.

A bad dream, she decided and lay down again.

Then the sound came again. There was no mistaking it this time; it was crying.

She got up, decided against putting on her dressing gown or slippers, and pushed back the curtain separating her part of the bedroom from Edmund's. Her brother lay face-down on his bed, sobbing into his pillow.

"What's wrong?" she asked, sitting down on the mattress beside him.

He jumped violently and reached for a sword that was no longer there before he realised who it was.

"I'm sorry I woke you," he whispered hoarsely, dashing his tears away with the back of his hand.

"It's just... It's not fair!"

Susan had been telling herself the same thing over and over since that terrible day. "I know."

"No, you don't. I was on that train with everyone else. Why did they die and I didn't? Why did Aslan let them?"

She pursed her lips and bit back a long tirade on how Aslan had never cared for them and all the ways he had wronged them. Coward's way out or not, forgetting was easier. But that was beside the point; right now, she had a tearful little brother (the fact he was twenty didn't matter; he was still younger than her) who desperately needed her.

"What would I have done, if you'd died too? All we have left are each other. If you'd died, I'd be all alone."

Edmund's sobs died down, and he allowed himself to be pulled against her. They stayed like that for what might have been a minute or an eternity, his head on her shoulder and her chin resting against the top of his head. She absently noted his fingers were stained with something that looked like ink.

Note to self: tell him to spend less time poring over those old books, she thought, as a draught of
chilly air hit her bare feet and reminded her it was midnight in April.

"Move over," she said, swinging her legs up onto the bed.

He gave her his patented "you-are-doing-something-spectacularly-stupid-and-don't-expect-me-to-help-you-when-everything-goes-to-hell" look. Its effectiveness was somewhat marred by the semi-darkness and the dried tears on his face. He moved over anyway.

They fell asleep curled up against each other.

Next morning was Saturday, and Susan should have known something odd was going on from the way Edmund snatched the morning paper out of her grasp at the table and frantically flipped through it. She dismissed that incident as another of her brother's oddities, which included getting so caught up in a Sherlock Holmes book while pouring himself a cup of tea that he flooded the cup, the saucer and his lap, writing notes on his hands and arms, and practicing sword fighting with the poker.

She knew there was something odd going on when he pulled her toast out of her hands (just as she was about to eat it, too!) and shoved the paper into them.

"Read that," he ordered, jabbing his finger at a paragraph.

Frowning, she obliged. How strange. The paragraph he pointed out to her was the start of a story, but he knew she didn't have time for stories.

**The World in the Wardrobe**, was the title.

Uh-oh. An ominous suspicion dawned on her.

By E. J. Pevensie, was the next line.

She threw the paper down and glared at her brother, who grinned like a cat that went after one jar of cream and got an entire dairy.

"EDMUND JACK PEVENSIE! What is the meaning of this?!"

"Read the rest of it."

Susan gave him another glare for good measure, but read on. It was the story of Rose, Charles, Emma and Paul, four children who were evacuated to a mysterious old manor during the war, and how Rose found a wardrobe that led to another world, and met a faun named Mr. Tumnus. It was a recounting of their adventures in Narnia with nothing changed except their names. To the people who thought it was fiction, it would be a nice children's bedtime story. To Susan, every word was an accusation, demanding to know how she could pretend to forget, how she could deny the world they ruled.

She set the paper down and stared unseeingly out the window.

"What do you think of it?" Edmund asked.

Anger and hurt rose up in her and she lashed out at him.

"You did it on purpose, didn't you? You were trying to make me remember, was that it? Or did you want to hurt me for forgetting?"
Edmund drew back as if she slapped him.

"I did not! I just wanted to earn some money of my own, and I thought I might as well write about Narnia because everyone would think it was a story! I thought you'd like it!"

"Like it? Like being reminded how he gave us a world and then took it away without even a "do you mind"? Why are you staring at me like that?"

"You do remember."

Oh. Susan looked from him, to the paper, to her cup of now-cold tea.

"Why did you pretend you didn't?"

_Damn Edmund for not leaving well enough alone. Damn Aslan for ever bringing us to Narnia._

..._Damn me for ever denying it._

This was going to be a long day.

"I thought you loved Caspian."

"What has that to do with it?" Susan was honestly baffled. They'd just had a very loud, often angry discussion on whether pretending to forget Narnia counted as treachery, and now he brought up Caspian?

"If you loved him, why did you pretend he didn't exist?"

That question hung, unanswered, over them for the next three months. They went on with their lives as before, talking only about the most mundane things, studiously ignoring the elephant in the room, otherwise known as Narnia. Edmund kept writing his story. Susan said nothing. She was losing the only remaining member of her family, and she didn't know how to make things better.

"I wish you were still here," she said to Peter's grave. "You were always so much better at dealing with him than I was."

She could have sworn the breeze that swept past her pressed a feather-light kiss to her forehead.

Edmund traded in the wheelchair for a pair of crutches and a well-known publishers' offered to buy his book, Susan left her job for a better-paying one in a department store, and they still hardly spoke to each other. It was like sharing a house with a stranger.

"This is ridiculous," Edmund said one night while she was washing the dishes and he was drying them. "Do you want me to leave?"

"What? No! Of course not!" Susan was horrified. The thought of her brother leaving had never occurred to her.

"Then why do you act like I'm not here?"

She lay awake that night, repeating those words over and over. _Why do you act like I'm not here? Why do you act like I'm not here?_
"Edmund?" There was no answer, but she knew in some strange, hard-to-define way that he was awake and listening. "I didn't mean to act like that. I didn't mean to pretend Caspian didn't exist. I just... I wanted... We couldn't go back, so what was the use of remembering? It helped, at first. It was so hard adjusting to our world again and my memories hurt too much, so I stopped thinking about it all and life became easier. Then all three of you wouldn't stop talking about it, and you and Lucy went back when we couldn't, and it hurt me so I pretended it was all just a game we played, and then it became harder to speak to all of you, and... and..."

She stopped and choked back a sob. "I'm so sorry, Edmund."

As she drifted off to sleep, she heard him whisper, "I'm sorry, too."

"What a most unhygenic place to live," said Aunt Alberta with a sniff.

Susan bit back an angry retort by reminding herself of how kind their relatives had been in arranging the funerals.

"I'm sorry it doesn't meet your approval," Edmund said, far too sweetly, grabbing his teacup to hide the way his fingers twitched. Susan knew what that meant; it meant he ached to grab a sword, a crossbow or anything that might cause grievous bodily harm and use it on them.

Uncle Harold and Aunt Alberta snorted in unison, sounding like a pair of pigs.

"I hope you're enjoying your time in London," Susan said as the silent stretched out into minutes.

Aunt Alberta frowned. "If it is possible to enjoy a visit to such a wicked, immoral place for unavoidable reasons, then yes, we are enjoying it as much as humanly possible."

"That reminds me," Uncle Harold said. "While I had a poor cup of tea in an extremely shoddy restaurant, I happened to look through a rag masquerading as a newspaper (as there was nothing else to read), and I saw a foolish little story written by someone with your initials and surname, nephew. You should take that person to court for maligning your name with such worthless tripe."

Edmund set the cup down slowly, a sure sign he was trying very hard to keep from flinging it at someone's head. "I wrote that story."

Uncle Harold's jaw dropped. Aunt Alberta swallowed her tea too fast. Susan didn't dare look away from the clock on the other side of the room, knowing she'd burst out laughing if she met Edmund's eyes.

One rant from Uncle Harold about idiots who wasted their time writing fairy tales when they could be doing something worthwhile, one outburst from Aunt Alberta about how the youth threw their lives away nowadays, and one very calm, very forceful speech from Edmund that boiled down to "Get out and stay out" later, the flat was mercifully free from unpleasant aunts and uncles.

"Do you think that was such a good idea?" Susan asked when she recovered from her fit of giggles. "After all, they came out of their way to see us, and we're bound to see them again some day."

"I've wanted to do that since those awful months we spent with them." Edmund picked up one of his crutches and eyed it speculatively. "Su, do you think this would make a good bludgeon?"

At some point, Edmund started asking Susan for her input into his books. After that, they talked
more freely about Narnia. And somehow, they ended up sharing a bed and working together well into the night on the next chapter of *Across The Great Desert*, sequel to *The World in the Wardrobe*.

"But we don't know what Shasta and Bree said to each other when they were alone," Edmund objected one night.

"We'll just have to use our imagination, then," Susan said practically. "It's silly to have them go on a journey across Calormen and never speak to each other. I'm sure they'll understand."

The next night, Edmund threw his pen and notebook at the wall. "I can't make the damn thing flow straight!"

"Then let it flow crooked," Susan joked, and dodged the pillow he aimed at her.

"It's not funny! How am I supposed to finish the book by the deadline when I don't even know how it will end?"

She smiled reassuringly and kissed his cheek, ignoring his half-hearted "Eww!". She left work early the next day with the excuse of "family reasons", and shut herself in the nearest library with every book she could find that gave advice on writing.

He was sound asleep at the table when she got home, his hair a mess, his face and fingers ink-stained. She left the pile of books on the table next to him, smiled and softly kissed the top of his head.

Life would never be the same as it was before, but they had each other, and that was enough.

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**End Notes**

Title is from RED's *Of These Chains*, which I listened to while writing it.

Edmund's books are, obviously, *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* and *The Horse and His Boy*.

The background to this story is... complicated. After finishing The Last Battle, which remains the only Narnia book I've ever thrown at the wall in disgust, I hated the idea of Susan losing her entire family just because Aslan said so, and I decided to invent my own ending where no one died. At the same time, I thought it was odd that Susan and Edmund never really interact in the books, except in *The Horse and His Boy*, so I started wondering what their off-screen (off-page?) conversations might be like, and the two ideas combined with all the Problem of Susan fics out there and mutated into this.

It's a sort of experiment in writing for this fandom, and I'm not sure I like the ending, so it remains to be seen if I'll ever write any more.

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