These Wounds

by snarkymuch

Summary

After Jack returns from the Year that Never Was, Jack finds out Ianto has been in an unhealthy relationship.
A/N: I was watching a little Torchwood and had a plot bunny. I think it will remain a one shot, but I wanted to write it and so here it is. Enjoy and apologies about any errors.

These Wounds

Ianto buttoned up his waist coat, feeling the sharp stab of pain of his bruised ribs beneath. He wasn’t going to show the pain. The team wouldn’t understand. Joseph hadn’t meant it. He never did, but maybe that was just something that Ianto told himself enough he had come to believed it. Joe had a hard job. He came home with stress and liked to drink. It was only happened when he was drunk. He would get jealous of the Jack—of the relationship Ianto had had with him. There was nothing to be jealous of though. After Jack came back, Ianto couldn’t bear the pain of going back to him. It was strictly professional. He hadn’t told anyone at work about Joe. He didn’t want to hear the comments from Owen and the girls wanting to pry for details, but hiding his injuries was becoming more difficult.

Straightening up, Ianto grabbed his keys and made his way out of his flat to the Hub, each breath burning as he drove through the foggy morning air to work. The morning sun was just starting to brighten the sky when he pulled into the lot. He was later than usual. Normally, it was dark when he arrived.

The Hub was empty when he got inside but he knew they would be there soon. The air was cool and Ianto shivered, regretting it as a sharp hot pain stabbed his side. Without thought his hand went to his ribs, resting over the bruises. He slowly let out the breath he was holding. The pain began to subside, so he lowered his hand and adjusted the cuffs of his sleeve. His head turned as he heard the cog door opening and he saw Owen, Gwen, and Tosh walking in. They were laughing and joking. They stopped when they saw Ianto and the Welshman wondered if they could see his pain for a moment. Ianto was frozen under their stares.

After a moment, Ianto found his senses and he lifted his chin and turned. Ignoring the stares, he walked to the coffee maker. He listened for them to say something, but thankfully, after a second, he heard them walking down the steps. He wondered if they saw the strain of pain on his face. It wasn’t like him to slip. Hiding things was a talent of his. The only person he’d ever had trouble hiding from was Jack. It was like the man could look in your eyes and see your soul. It was once something Ianto found enchanting, but now it felt exposing. Maybe that’s because of how things had changed between him and Jack. After he left, Ianto collapsed into himself. The darkness of loss nearly consumed him—until he met Joseph. Joseph pulled him out of the darkness at first, until things changed, until Jack came back—sending everything spiraling into chaos. Jack had a way about creating a whirlwind around him. It was easy to get drawn into it. Ianto didn’t want to get pulled back again. He didn’t think he could handle losing Jack twice.

“Oi, tea boy, you gonna get some coffee made today or what?” Owen hollered from his desk.

Ianto glanced over, seeing him sitting in his chair with feet kicked up on the desk.

Ianto rolled eyes. “Shall I remind you there are three coffee shops between your flat and Hub?”

Owen scoffed. “I don’t get paid enough to buy my own.”

Ianto sighed and went back to making the morning coffee. He normally liked to have it prepped and ready before the team arrived but the fight he had with Joseph the night before had gone on into the
wee hours of the morning. Once he’d gotten to bed, he was exhausted and slept through his alarm.

Yawning, he filled the mugs, making each cup to everyone’s specifications, then pausing, turning to face the open space. “Has anyone seen Jack?”

Gwen walked by, hands full of files. She paused and grabbed her coffee, taking a sip. “He’s probably out checking some odd thing or another. I’m sure he’ll back soon. You need help with something?”

“No, I’m fine. Thank you, Gwen.”

Ianto left Jack’s mug unfilled, grabbing the other two and making his way to hand them out. He walked over to Tosh’s desk and passed her the mug and then went to Owen, handing him his with a nod.

“Thanks, mate,” Owen said, biting at his pen. “You look … tense. You okay?”

“I’m fine, Owen.”

Owen looked him over. “You know, you’re due for an exam.”

Ianto stiffened. “I’m behind on reports. It’ll have to wait.”

“They can wait. Come on.”

“I said no!” Ianto snapped and skirted by Owen, jogging down the stairs towards the archives.

The archives were damp and cool. The lighting left something to be desired though, a few poorly placed bulbs hung from the ceiling, flickering every so often. Ianto often wondered if it was some type of residual energy causing it, like a haunting. There was enough death in Torchwood to have a spirit or two linger, and after all he’d seen, it didn’t seem that farfetched.

He walked down to the far corner where he had a desk of his own. It had little on it, a few papers, folders and a stapler. There was an ancient, green, reading lamp that Jack had given him when he first joined after he complained of it being like a cave in there.

Ianto sighed as he walked up to the desk. It was another reminder of him and Jack. The two of them had spent many lunch breaks using it for less than professional purposes. Ianto used to like his desk just because of that reason—a reminder of Jack. Now he hated it for that same reason. It hurt to think of him. He didn’t want to explore his feelings. He didn’t want to admit maybe part of him loved Jack, or always had. He was hoping meeting someone new would fill the hole that Jack left. Ianto tried to tell himself that Joe was enough, that Joe loved him, that Joe cared, but it was hard. Joe wasn’t a bad guy if he just wouldn’t … Ianto didn’t want to think about things that had happened, or the things he had done. He was just glad he had managed to evade Owen’s exams for as long as he had. He wouldn’t have answers for the scars, the bite marks, the bruises. He’d rather take off and run than be exposed. It made him feel weak. A man didn’t let another man do that to him.

He pulled the chair out from the desk and sat down carefully, feeling not just his side but something else hurt as well, something that made Ianto feel ashamed. It had been consensual. It was, he told himself. It was just Joe would get rough, after a fight sometimes he would want to make up, but he was drunk, and it was rough, and he didn’t take time to prepare Ianto like he should—or at all. When Ianto went into the bathroom after to get cleaned up, he found blood. It wasn’t the first time, but it was the worst time so far.

Swallowing back his discomfort, he went about working his files. After about a half an hour, he
couldn’t sit any longer. The constant throbbing pain was getting to him. He pushed himself to stand, and his façade slipped, and he winced.

“Looks painful,” came an all too familiar voice. Jack. It had to be Jack with those eyes that could look through you and see your soul.

Ianto straightened, regaining his composure. “I’m fine. Back was stiff.”

Jack nodded, raising his brows at the same time. “Seemed a little more than that.”

“No, sir. I assure you. It was nothing,” Ianto said. “Unless you need me for something, I need to get these filled.” He lifted a stack of folders.

“Actually,” Jack said, taking a step forward and putting his hands into his pockets, “I need you in med bay. I noticed you’re due for medical evaluation.”

“You noticed?”

“I read the reports,” he shrugged, “and Owen seems concerned. He said he hasn’t seen you in over four months. Not sure how you evaded him that long. You of all people know that’s breaking protocol.”

Ianto shifted his weight and licked at his lips. He was cornered. “I can assure you I am in peak form, sir.”

“Drop the sir, shit, Ianto. Peak form? I saw you wince. Ever since I got back you have been distant. What’s going on?”

Jack’s eyes were cutting through him and he had to look away. He heard the Captain walk closer and then there was a hand on his arm.

“Talk to me, Ianto.”

“I can’t do this, please, Jack,” Ianto whispered. Just being that close to him, smelling him, it brought back all the pain of the past. He just wanted to get away, but he knew Jack wasn’t going to let that happen.

Silence hung in the damp air and Ianto swallowed the lump forming in his throat.

“I told you before why I had to leave, but I’m back and not going anywhere. Talk to me, just as friend, Ianto. Talk to me. I know something is wrong.”

Ianto looked at Jack, really looked and saw the concern in his eyes. “I can’t talk about it.”

“Why?”

Ianto could feel his body beginning to betray him as tears began to build in his eyes before rolling down his cheeks. Something about Jack could always melt Ianto’s well-constructed defenses. He had to hold it together. He couldn’t let anyone see how broken he was, how weak he was.

“I can’t, Jack,” Ianto choked. His wall was crumbling, and he couldn’t hold the bricks from falling. Jack was gonna find out. Ianto’s heart began to pound. He tried to step away, move around Jack, but he couldn’t. Jack was there, wrapping his arms around him and pulling him tightly against his chest.

Ianto cried out in pain, dropping the files he was holding. He folded from the pain, wrapping his arms protectively around his ribs.
“Ianto!” Jack said.

“It’s okay,” Ianto breathed through the pain.

Jack gently placed a hand of Ianto’s back. “Just breathe, then you have some explaining to do.”

Slowly, Ianto got control over himself again and straightened. Jack’s hand fell away and Ianto felt a pang of loss. He missed Jack’s gentle touch.

Ianto drew a shaky breath and let it out slowly, traitorous tears running down his cheeks. Jack was just watching him, looking him over, studying him like some alien and he felt exposed. He never really thought out how this would play out and that wasn’t like Ianto. He was unprepared. He wasn’t ready to face Jack. He didn’t want to see Jack’s face when he realized the truth, that he was weak, that he was used and undeserving.

“Look at me, Ianto,” Jack commanded. “Talk to me. Whatever is going on, we can fix it.”

Ianto shook his head, wiping his tears. He couldn’t look at Jack.

“Please, Ianto.” Jack reached out and gently lifted Ianto’s chin.

Hesitantly, Ianto looked at the older man. He stared into his eyes, and his resolve began to waiver. He wanted Jack. That spark was still there, and right then, in pain, ready to fall apart, he just wanted to cry against the Captain’s chest and let it all go. It had been so much to carry alone. He was tired, and he was tired of defending what Joe did, but he just didn’t know how to find the words to explain or where to start. He didn’t know if Jack would still want him after knowing what Joe had done to him, what he’d let him do.

“How long has he been hitting you?” Jack asked.

Ianto swallowed. He knew he either told Jack or Jack would find out on his own. He was in too deep now.

“I met him after you left,” Ianto explained. “He doesn’t do it on purpose.” He found himself saying the same lies he told himself and Jack’s face seemed to darken and become hard. “I should have told you I was seeing someone. I didn’t want anyone to know.”

“How long has he been hitting you?”

Ianto looked down. “Since you came back.”

Jack scrubbed a hand over his face. He looked hurt. “I should have seen it.”

Of course, Jack would blame himself. Ianto hadn’t thought of that. It made him feel worse.

“How bad are you hurt?” Jack asked.

He looked up Jack. He didn’t want to answer. He didn’t want to see anymore hurt in Jack’s eyes, but he knew he had to come clean. This was Torchwood, and this was Jack. He wasn’t getting out of this now. The truth had to come out.

“I don’t know.” He didn’t have the strength to say it, to say he had let another man beat him and use him like he had.
Jack seemed to study his face before bringing a hand up to cup Ianto’s cheek. “Ianto, talk to me. If you don’t, I’m getting Owen, and I may still get Owen depending on what you say.”

Ianto’s heart began to pound in his chest again. He drew a breath. “It’s mostly my ribs this time.”

“Mostly?” Jack asked softly.

“Nothing else too important,” Ianto lied. Jack could never know about the rest.

“It’s important to me.”

“I’m fine. Can I get back to work?” Ianto shifted and tried to step around the Captain but the older man stopped him, putting a firm hand on his chest.

“Why are you suddenly ready to run?” Jack asked, looking Ianto over.

Ianto could feel himself beginning to sweat. He was getting dizzy.

“Easy, slower breaths,” Jack said.

It wasn’t until then that he realized he was nearly hyperventilating. He needed to get away. Jack wouldn’t let him though. He was right there, blue eyes watching him.

“Ianto, I’m going to ask you something and I want you to just answer yes or no, okay?”

There was no doubt he could see how tainted he was. The tears were back and Ianto couldn’t fight any longer. He couldn’t get away.

“Please, Jack. Let it go.” He couldn’t breathe. He collapsed to his knees, arms wrapping around his head and clawing at his hair. The pain of everything felt like it was consuming him.

Hands were on his, pulling his arms down. Jack was whispering soothing words.

“Ianto, did he do more than hit you?”

Ianto let out a cry and that was enough of an answer for Jack.

“He won’t get away with this.” Jack was knelt in front of Ianto. He cupped Ianto’s face and lifted his head, pressing his lips to his forehead. “I’m sorry,” he said. “I’m sorry I left. I’m sorry he did this to you,” Jack breathed against Ianto’s skin. “Tell me you’re okay.”

“I don’t know.”

“It’s okay. We’re gonna fix this.” Jack said. “His life is over. You know that, don’t you? I won’t kill him, but I will find a reason to let UNIT make him disappear.”

A sob broke from Ianto and he leaned into Jack, breathing in the smell that was Jack. He clung to him and let himself go. He let out all the pain he’d been holding. He felt Jack’s arms wrapped around him and they stayed there, together, clinging to each other, holding onto whatever they had left between them. Ianto keened in his arms. The mix of physical and emotional pain blurred. Jack didn’t ask another question. He just whispered soothing words and rubbed circles on his back. Maybe Ianto was going to be okay after all.
Chapter Two

Slowly, Ianto's tears began to dry but Jack kept his arms around him—the warmth of Jack a stark contrast to the cold concrete that he knelt on. His knees were beginning to hurt, and his ribs were burning with every breath. Ianto knew this time Joseph had broken some ribs, and as for the other injury, he couldn't tell Jack. It was just something he would have to live with.

Jack was resting his head on Ianto's, humming something that he could only assume was some lullaby from a distant future. Ianto shifted his weight and Jack loosened his grip, letting his arms fall from around him.

The Captain ducked his head to look at him. "How are you feeling?"

A half sob, half laugh broke from him, sending pain through his chest. "This floor is filthy, my suit is wrinkled, and I just cried like a child on my boss's shoulder. How should I be feeling?"

Jack laughed. "Worried about all the wrong things."

"Jack, could you help me off the floor? I think my legs are asleep and my ribs … I don't think I can do it on my own."

Any humor fell from the Captain's face and he nodded. The reason they were on the floor was back hanging in the air.

Jack stood up and walked around behind him. "Which side is the worse?"

Ianto sighed. "Both."

"Maybe I should get Owen."

"No!" Ianto snapped, then looking apologetic. "I mean. I don't need Owen. I'm fine. I just need help getting up."

"Ianto …" Jack said.

"I'm fine. I can do it myself." He tried to push himself from the floor only to fall back in pain, drawing ragged breaths. It was getting harder to breath.

"I'm getting Owen. This isn't an argument."

Ianto could hear Jack's footsteps moving away toward the stairs. A surge of adrenaline passed through him, and gritting his teeth, he clambered to his feet.

"Don't, Jack. Wait."

Jack was already up the first few steps. He turned and looked at Ianto, sighing. He ran a hand through his hair. "Ianto … You need a doctor. I'm sorry."

"Please, Jack. I don't want them all knowing. I can't … I just … Please, Jack," Ianto begged.

"What if it's just Owen? I'll send the girls home, give them the day off. I'll be right there with you."
That's what Jack didn't understand. Ianto didn't want anyone seeing him. He didn't know how to explain the bite marks, the scars, and bruises. What would they think of him? He couldn't let anyone see it because it made it real and that meant Ianto had really let it all happen. He should have fought. He was raised to be a strong man. He worked for Torchwood. The shame made him feel sick.

"Please, Jack. Just let me go home. I'll rest. I'll take care of myself. Don't make me."

Jack walked over to him. "You're scaring me, Ianto. What is so bad we can't help you? I already know what he's done, or do I?" He reached up and brushed the back of his hand against Ianto's cheek. "What are you hiding?"

Ianto closed his eyes and breathed in Jack's smell, letting it calm him. When he opened them again, he saw Jack looking back with nothing but worry.

"Talk to me," Jack said.

"If you see, you'll know. You won't want me. No one will want me if they see."

Jack rubbed his thumb back and forth over Ianto's cheek. "It doesn't matter what he did to you. It doesn't change how I feel. I will always want you, Ianto. You'll always be perfect to me."

Ianto wanted to believe him, but in his heart, he knew that once Jack saw the scarred bitemarks and bruises, he would see him for what he was—used goods.

"Look, I'm gonna go send the girls home and talk to Owen."

Ianto wanted to argue, but his chest was hurting straight through to his back. His ribs felt like they were being kicked every time he drew a breath. "Do you have to tell him what happened?"

Jack nodded. "Despite your differences, he cares about you. He needs to know how it happened. I'll come get you once I talk with him. Will you be okay for minute by yourself?"

"Yeah, I'll be okay." Ianto closed his eyes and focused on his breathing while he awaited Jack's return.

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Jack jogged up the stairs from the archives. He could see Tosh and Gwen both leaning over a computer, talking and glancing between a paper and the screen. He ran up the stairs to them and smiled.

"So, what do you say, how about a day off?" Jack said, feigning cheerfulness. "Go home early for a change."

Gwen looked at him confused, glancing at her watch. "It's only nine o'clock in the morning Jack. What's going on?"

Jack sighed. "Nothing. Can't I just ask you two to head out early?"

"I don't want to go against you, Jack," Tosh said, "but I agree with Gwen. We are working on a project and the day has barely started."

"Hey," Owen called from the below. "Why are they getting to go home early? Little sexist just giving the girls the day off, don't you think?"

"Quiet, Owen," Jack shouted over the rail.
"I see how it is, no one appreciates me. Give, give, give. Owen doesn't need a day off," the Londoner grumbled.

Jack crossed his arms over his chest. "Look, I need you two to pack up for the day—like now."

Gwen went to speak but Jack cut her off.

"That's an order."

"Yeah, alright then," Gwen said. "I guess I can see what Rhys is doing."

Tosh looked flustered like she didn't want to leave her work. "I guess I can bring some of these files with me and work from home, if that's okay?"

Jack nodded. "Thanks. I'll see you tomorrow."

The girls grabbed their things and made their way out the cog door. Once they were gone, Jack went down the stairs to the medical bay to see Owen.

"If you're looking for a shag, Ianto's in the archives. I've got work to do." He grabbed the trolley full of tools and dragged it across the small space. "You give them the day off and what? I get to stay here, dissecting dead aliens."

"Owen, I sent them away because I needed privacy."

Owen turned and looked at him. "What would you need privacy for? You're the least private person I know. I've seen you naked in your office and I'm not even shagging you."

"The privacy isn't for me. It's for Ianto."

Any sign of scowl disappeared from Owen's face and was replaced by concern. "What about him?"

"He's been hurt. He's in the archives—"

Owen was grabbing his field bag and heading toward the archives before Jack could finish.

"Wait, Owen. There's things you need to know."

Owen spun. "Seriously? You left an injured man in the archives. What is going on? Spit it out."

"He's been seeing someone, and he's been abusing him … not just physically. I'm pretty sure he forced himself on him, too. He's fragile. He doesn't want help."

Owen's face hardened and his jaw set. He stared at Jack for moment before nodding and heading towards the archives. Jack followed him.

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Ianto leaned against the cool wall. His ribs hurt. He didn't need Owen to know they were broken. He leaned his head back and closed his eyes, his breaths coming in pants. He waited there, counting his breaths until he heard hurried steps coming his way. He braced himself for what was to come—the pity in their eyes. He glanced toward the doorway and waited to see who would be first. It was Owen, jogging to his side, looking concerned and serious, Jack trailing behind.

"Hey, Yan," Owen said softly, setting his bag down, looking Ianto up and down. "Wanna tell me where you're hurting?"
Ianto groaned. "Didn't hurt this much earlier."

"Right, can you explain a bit more?"

"I think I broke some ribs. Hurts to breath." Ianto kept his eyes closed, breathing in pants.

Owen knelt and reached into his bag, pulling out his stethoscope. "I'm gonna listen to your chest. Is that okay?"

Ianto nodded. Owen's touch was gentle and fast.

"Good news, your lungs sound okay," Owen said after a moment, hanging the stethoscope around his neck. "I still need to get a look at your ribs and anything else that might be hurting."

"It's really not necessary."

"Says the man who can barely breath," Owen said sharply, then softening. "Sorry, I just mean there could be more damage. I need to take a better look."

"Ianto," Jack said. "Do it for me."

Ianto closed his eyes. "Fine."

"Right then, Jack. Get the stretcher. I'm not taking chances."

Ianto's eyes snapped open. "I can walk."

"And I'm the doctor and get to decide what happens so suck it up, buttercup. For all I know, you've got a rib ready to dissect your aorta or puncture a lung."

Ianto narrowed his eyes, but gave up. He was honestly too sore to walk, he just didn't want to admit it. The breakdown he'd had with Jack had strained his ribs.

Jack appeared beside Owen with what Ianto imagined had to be a World War Two relic. He hadn't even noticed Jack leaving. When did Jack leave? The pain was getting to him. He focused on his breathing. It was so much worse than this morning.

"Alright, lay it down right here," Owen said, kicking his bag out of the way. "Then get around beside Ianto. Gently get an arm around. Don't squeeze. Just support as we get him to the ground. I want this nice and smooth."

Ianto braced himself as Owen and Jack slipped their arms around him, helping him to the stretcher. He winced and gritted his teeth as they laid him back.

"Hang on, almost there," Jack soothed.

"This hurts more than standing," Ianto growled.

"Can you put your legs straight?" Owen asked.

Ianto tried to straighten his legs but it pulled painfully. "I'd rather not."

Owen's brow furrowed. "Alright, let's get you up to the med bay. Jack, on three. One, two, and three."

Ianto grabbed for the edges of the stretcher, feeling like he was going to fall. He started thinking
about the probabilities that the stretcher was, in fact, over fifty years old and likely to fall apart beneath him.

He kept his eyes closed as they moved him, thinking of what Jack and Owen would think of the bitemarks. There was no escaping it. They were going to see.

"Here we are," Owen said.

Ianto felt the stretcher get set down on something hard—the autopsy table. He cringed inwardly. The light above suddenly came on and he blinked, blinded by the bright light. He brought up a hand to shield his eyes. Owen's hand knocked it down.

"This isn't necessary," Ianto tried again.

"Jack, you might want to turn up the heat. Ianto's about to get chilly."

"What?" Ianto said, trying to sit up, but he fumbled, and Jack tried to grab him. He slipped with the stretcher and went crashing to the floor, landing in a heap as he cried out. He heard Owen curse and some metal clang, then hands were there, poking and prodding. Ianto tried to draw a breath but couldn't. He felt like he was being suffocated. He gasped for air. It was a chaos of voices around him then he felt his clothing being cut away as Jack held him. The expression on Jack's face did nothing to soothe him. The Captain looked panicked. It began to feel like the ground was swaying. There was a warm darkness trying to envelope him and he was okay with that. The darkness was peaceful, the chaos was drifting away.

Then suddenly, there was pain, like someone stabbed him in the chest. He gasped, air filling his lungs. The darkness retreated, and he saw Jack's face above him again—he was crying. He tried to reach up to him, to wipe away the tears away, they shouldn't be there, but hands kept him still.

"I think that's enough from you," Owen's voice came from somewhere. "Have a good sleep, mate."

Ianto tried to move but suddenly his limbs went heavy and his eyelids drifted closed. The darkness was back, and he slipped off into its embrace.
Chapter Three

The sounds of soft bustling and faint beeping began to invade Ianto’s mind. He didn’t want to wake, but the noises were growing louder, and the hard edges of reality were creeping in. He could feel the dull ache of pain in chest. It felt like something was digging into his side. He tried to lift his hand to feel the spot the pain was coming from, but something was holding his hand in place. He began to panic. His thoughts were still cloudy and unsure. The fragments of what happened were still floating disjointed through his mind. The beeping began to get faster as he tried to free his arms.

“Easy, Ianto. Shhh …” a voice said through the haze. It sounded familiar and he found himself relaxing. “That’s it. You’re okay.” A warm hand was on his wrist, gently rubbing.

The memories were starting to piece themselves together. His eyes fluttered open and he looked around, taking in the pale walls and the dreary, pink hospital curtain pulled back from the door. He could see out into the hall, nurses and doctors were bustling about. He was in the hospital.

Adrenaline began to flood through him. It was only meant to be Jack and Owen. Horrified he looked down and saw he was in a gown, thin sheet and blanket covering him, his wrists were tied loosely to the rails of the bed.

“Ianto, calm down,” a firm voice said.

His eyes snapped to the sound and looked to see Jack beside him, his face soft with concern.

“Why are my hands tied down?” Ianto asked, voice hoarse.

“I can undo them,” Jack said, his hands going to free Ianto’s wrists. “You were fighting us. We didn’t want you to pull the tube out of your side.”

He reached and took Ianto’s hand, intertwining their fingers.

Ianto swallowed. The air was heavy with the weight of what was unsaid. There was no doubt from the look in Jack’s eyes that he saw—he had seen it all. Ianto looked at the ceiling as tears began to prick at his eyes.

Jack rubbed his thumb back and forth over the back of Ianto’s hand. Ianto waited for him to speak, to say something, anything would be better than the silence. Seconds passed, and then minutes. He stared at the ceiling afraid to look Jack in the eyes.

“Ianto …” Jack said. It sounded weak and full of pity.

Ianto swallowed back his pain. “You don’t have to say it.”

“Say what?”

“I know you saw.” Ianto rolled his head against the pillow to look at Jack.

Jack drew a breath and gave a weak nod, “Once we got here and you were stable, Owen did a full exam. He told me some of what he found.”

Ianto turned his gaze back to the ceiling. “I understand if you want to leave, Sir.”
Jack’s warm hand brushed Ianto’s face and nudging his chin, turning his head to look at him. “Don’t, Ianto. I told you. I wouldn’t think anything less of you, and I don’t. You are so strong. I just wish you had come to me sooner. I could have lost you.”

Hot tears began to stream down Ianto’s cheeks, each choked sob bringing pain back to his ribs.

“I didn’t … I thought I wasn’t good enough … I couldn’t stop him.”

“Shhh, none of this was your fault.” Jack’s blue eyes were glassy with tears. “Please, understand. You didn’t deserve this. I’m sorry, Ianto.”

He nodded. Part of him understood Jack, but after months of Joe putting him down, it was hard to believe.

There was a knock at the door and he looked to see a disheveled Owen standing in the doorway, holding a clipboard in one hand and a coffee in the other. His eyes seemed to flick over Ianto and then a frown come over his face. He walked into the room, setting his things down on the side table.

“Good to see you awake,” he said. He looked up at the monitors and then checked the IV. He glanced at Jack and then back Ianto. “Do I need to kick Harkness out?”

Ianto shook his head. “I’m fine. Just a little sore.”

Owen nodded. “I can do something about that.” He reached into his pocket and pulled out a syringe. “Something I have been working on. Better than morphine any day.” He injected it into the IV port.

Within a few seconds, he began to feel a little dizzy and the pain subsided.

“How long do I need to stay here?”

Owen stuffed his hands in his pockets and shrugged. “Few days at least. I had to place a chest tube since your stunt punctured a lung.” He took a step back to look at the container the fluid was draining into. “It looks like it’s nearly stopped draining so that’s good news for you.”

Jack looked to Owen and gave a little nod. There was something they weren’t saying, and he knew it.

Owen sighed and walked over to the door, closing it and coming back to stand by the bed.

“I need to talk to you about some other injuries I found. I can kick Jack out for this if you want,” Owen said.

He began to panic. He needed Jack there. “He can stay.”

Owen nodded. He grabbed the chair from beside the wall and dragged it over, taking a seat. “I think you know what I found,” he said gently.

Ianto swallowed and looked at his hands, nodding.

“You had significant tearing that required stitches.”

Ianto kept his gaze locked on his hands, too embarrassed to look up at either of the men.

“Most of the bite marks are superficial, two broke the skin though were beginning to become infected. I’ve got you on a course of antibiotics. I have also screened you for STDs which thankfully has come back clean.”
Ianto’s mouth seemed to be impossibly dry. He didn’t think he could form words if he tried. The reality of the situation was just too much. He wanted away but he knew that wasn’t gonna happen. Hands were suddenly holding his—Jack. He felt himself calm just from the touch.

“You have any questions?” Owen asked.

Ianto shook his head.

“Right then, I’ll leave you two alone for a bit, but I’ll be back later to check in.” Owen reached out and gave Ianto’s arm a squeeze before turning and walking out.

Once the door clicked closed, Ianto turned to Jack. “How could you still want me?”

Jack sighed, reaching up and running his fingers through Ianto’s hair. “I will say it a thousand times, as many times as you need to hear it, I’ll always want you. I love you, Ianto. It took leaving to realize just how much.”

Ianto squeezed Jack’s hand. “I don’t know … I want to say it back—”

“Shhh, you don’t have to say anything. Let me love you. You just take your time. I’ll be here for you.” Jack lifted Ianto’s hand and kissed it.

“What happens with Joe?” Ianto asked. “I don’t think I can face him. He’s too—”

“Already taken care of,” Jack said. “He’s gone. You never have to worry about him again.”

“But—”

“Shhh, it’s better you don’t know,” Jack said. “Why don’t you close your eyes and get some sleep? You need your rest.”

He wanted to ask, he wanted to press, but something about the look in Jack’s eye said it was best to let this go. He always suspected Jack had a dark side, something he didn’t ever want to see. He tried not to think about it as he drifted off to sleep. He focused on better things. He thought of Jack. The man that loved him despite it all. For the first time in a long time, Ianto fell asleep feeling safe with his Captain beside him, keeping the nightmares at bay.
Chapter 4

Epilogue

Jack put his feet up on his desk and sipped at his coffee. The mug was warm in his hands. He'd done some terrible things in his time and he had been the recipient of many himself—the master had seen to that. The memories of Joe begging in pain should have made him shudder, but instead, knowing the monster who had hurt Ianto had suffered made him feel at peace.

xXx

It had been raining, pouring, in fact, when Jack left Ianto's hospital room to find Joe. He didn't know what he wanted to do, or whether he'd be able to let him live. He did know that he'd never tell Ianto the truth about whatever happened. It would be one little lie. He'd simply tell him that Joe was gone. Ianto had been through enough.

The rain poured down on his back as he walked to Ianto's flat, rain soaking his coat. He could have driven but he wanted time to plan, to think, to feel the rage and burn inside him. He embraced it. His thoughts were on Owen's words, telling the ways Joe had hurt Ianto. He would make him regret ever touching the Welshman.

Once he'd reached the flat, he could see the lights on inside. Someone was home and it wasn't Ianto. He reached in his pocket and pulled out the key, clicking the lock open. He walked up the stairs to his door, gently knocking.

He was greeted by a man that looked in his forties, older than Jack expected. He was muscular and well groomed. He could see why Ianto had taken interest. He looked Jack up and down, then taking a drink from his beer. "Who are you?"

"I'm here for Ianto."

"Well, that's too bad mate. He's not here." Joe tried to close the door, but Jack stuck his foot in the jam.

"I said, I'm here for Ianto, not that I needed to see him. I know right where he is, and that's no thanks to you."

The man scowled. "What are you going on about? Where's Ianto?"

Jack pushed his way into the door, the drunken Joe stumbling back, spilling his beer.

Joe got his feet under himself and tried to get a grip on Jack, but Jack was faster and threw a punch, catching Joe's jaw and sending him reeling back, tumbling to the floor.

"I thought you liked to fight?" Jack said, grabbing the fallen man and then kicking him in the face, blood splattering across the floor. "Or do you only like to fight people who don't fight back?" He grabbed Joe by his shirt and dragged him into the kitchen. Cleanup would be easier on the tile floor.

The man cried, blood and spit dribbling from his mouth. "I didn't ... I never meant to hurt him."

The apology only made Jack see red. "You broke his ribs. Wanna know how that feels?"

"No, please, don't—"
Jack kicked him as hard as he could in the stomach and ribs, again and again, causing the man to cry out. Jack walked over and turned the radio on that was sitting on the counter. He turned the volume up as loud as it would go to cover his screams. He was just getting started.

Joe curled into himself, coughing and choking. Jack brought back his foot again and kicked him in the face, knocking out a few teeth.

"Ianto is a good man. You had no right to touch him like you did. I saw the marks, the scars. I know what you did."

Joe couldn't speak, just choke on his own blood.

Jack grabbed him by his shirt and dragged him to his feet. "I got an idea on what to do with you."

Joe shook his head and tried to fight but couldn't match Jack's strength. Jack dragged him out of the apartment door and into the raining night air.

"Ever heard of a Weevil, Joe?" Jack asked.

The man mumbled through broken teeth, still trying to get away.

"Well, tonight's your lucky night. I know right where to find some."

Jack dragged him down an alleyway, Joe stumbling and barely able to walk as they went, Jack needing to carry most of his weight. They came to spot Jack remembered having activity at in the past. He knew there would be Weevils in the sewers there. The way Joe was sucking ragged breaths, Jack knew he was nearly done for, being shredded by Weevils was just topping on the cake.

He opened the old grate to the sewer, rain pouring down on them. He listened for a moment and then he heard it. The sound of Weevils. A smile crept over Jack's face as he shoved Joe to the ground and forced him into the sewer, locking the grate after him. Even if the Weevils didn't get him, Jack knew he would succumb to his injuries and cold. It was just a matter of time.

Just as Jack turned, straightening the collar of his Jacket, he heard a scream. It was done.

xXx

"Sir?" Ianto's voice pulled him from his thoughts. He looked up to Ianto standing in the doorway with files in hand. "You okay? You seemed lost in thought."

"I'm fine, better now that you're here," Jack said, putting his mug down and getting up.

He walked over to Ianto, putting his hands on the Welshman's hips. "Thank you for giving me a chance to love you."

Ianto brought a hand up to Jack's face, gently touching him. "I love you, Jack."

Jack pulled Ianto into a kiss, Ianto softening into his touch as Jack pulled their bodies together. Everything was falling into place. This was how it was meant to be. It was going to be okay.

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