Freaks And Geeks
by Deathraptor22

Summary

AU Torchwood 4, the organizations mobile unit and only surviving outfit, has always been unusual, even in the context of what the organization did. For example, some of their operatives were aliens. And some of them were underage. This is something certain Time Lords and four Coal Hill students are about to find out. (And what the remnants of Torchwood 3 already knew)

Notes

Disclaimer: I do not own Class or Torchwood. They unfortunately both belong to the BBC.
AN: Due to the for want of nail/in spite of nail elements of this story, brace yourself for a few OOC moments, those for the most parts everyone’s personalities are basically the same.
See the end of the work for more notes.
Copenhagen, Demark, 2001

Toni Jo didn’t even know Freak Shows were a thing anymore, yet here she was, trying to get a straight answer from the contortionist, going so far as to go full empath on him, finding out that he was hiding something, but unable to find more, while Fox was talking to couple of patrons. And possibly flirting with the female patrons and if that was the case, she might just break her Hippocratic oath.

Just then a well-dressed man with black hair and bit of stubble came through the crowd, with a Doberman Pincher. This was Fox and his dog, Murder. Fox was wearing a proud smile on his face that let Toni Jo know he had found something.

“Well?” Toni Jo asked, all business

“They’re in the blue and silver tent, not too far from here.” Fox answered, giving Castaway a rub on the head before leading the way.

“And they’re real?” Toni Jo asked, “Not some guy in a rubber suit, or a dog with a couple of toilet paper rolls stuck on its head?”

“Nope, these appear to be the genuine article.” Fox replied, “Though they’re not labeling them aliens per say. They’re letting the audience come up with their own theories. While aliens are on the list, so is some sort of evolutionary throwback and demons from Hell. The young lady I talked to’s money was on the latter.”

Toni Jo rolled her eyes. “How did I know there was a girl?” The she pulled a walk-talkie out of her hip purse and spoke into it. “Dad, come in. We found out where it is.”

There was for static, them her father’s voice coming in and saying, “Where?”

“Sliver and blue tent, the south end of the show.” Toni Jo elaborated.

“I’m close to there.” Her father replied, “I’ll meet you there. Everybody have their arms out. If reports are correct these things are very dangerous.”

“We hear you.” She had before putting the walkie back in the purse around her hips and muttering, “Damn you Harkness.”

“Come on, do you really think they got this thing here all the way from Wales?” Fox reasoned. “You have a better explanation from two aliens randomly appearing in a traveling show in Demark?” Toni Jo challenged, “When there have been no reports of strange crashes, or even UFOs, no reports of similar creatures, nothing documented in the area that could cause them to be transported here? Sometimes Occam Razor does apply to us and in this the simplest answer is one person manning some place that volatile leads to things slipping through the cracks sometimes literally!”

“He’ll get a new team together.” Fox assured her, trying to calm her down before she got worked up.

“We’ve been saying that for a year.” Toni Jo responded.

“Well, he would already have a medic, if someone hadn’t turned him down.” Fox reminded her. “Then who would be here to protect you two from yourselves?” Toni Jo smirked, somewhat deflecting. In truth, she had considered taking Jack up on his offer, but her place was here. This was where she was needed.

And with that, they arrived at the tent. At the same time, an older, but still physically fit man with a head of silver hair arrived at the tent. They went up against the side of the tent, pulling out their guns, causing a couple of passers-by to run away.

“Well, that’s gonna put us on a tighter deadline.” Toni Jo commented.

“Which is why we need to need to get this done as quick as possible.” The older man said, peaking in the room, “We got two aliens, both contained, no civilians. So, we go in on my lead.”

The group rushed in, guns at the ready, and the others followed. “Oh my God.” Toni Jo whispered out the sight inside. The others were speechless.
Inside the room were two cages: In one was creature roughly the size of a human male, with the basic outline of a human body but that was where the similarities ended. The tan-skinned creature had claws on its hands and feet, an almost domed head, fangs sticking out of its mouth, with quills running along its back, held in armor in some spots by a dirty brown-and-green uniform. It was currently laying over on its side, looking half-dead and pile of wet straw that smelt like it needed changing. In the corner of the tent was much smaller creature with dark grey skin helmet-like head, and impossibly large orange eyes. The cage it was in was too small for it to move, and it was whimpering.

Fox quickly approached the cage holding the larger creature and began to pick the lock.

“Fox, what are you- “Their leader began.

“Look at it, Chris!” Fox exclaimed, “It needs medical attention. Toni, you’re the doctor, back me up here.”

“I’ll need to look at it,” Toni began, “But from what I can see here he’s probably right.”

Fox finished and flew the door, and Toni Jo ran into the cage while Fox and their leader went into the other cage and started to open it as the tiny creature inside began to cry more, trembling.

“Damn, Chris.” Fox said as Chris removed the creature from the cage, “I think this thing may actually be a pup.”

Back at the larger cage, Toni Jo felt the creature’s forehead. “I think this is a fever, but I can’t be sure.” She said, “I have no clue what the body temperature is supposed to be!” This was the part of her job she found really frustrating. Half the time she didn’t know whether she was hurting or helping a patient.

Suddenly the creature leapt up, growling, causing Toni Jo to fall back on the floor cage. Suddenly everyone’s guns were aimed on it.

“No, don’t!” Toni Jo shouted, getting to her feet as fast as possible, “I got this!”

However, the creature charged again, aiming for Toni Jo’s side. The doctor jumped back and time went to hit her attacker, but the creature grabbed her wrist, squeezing and turning it at an unnatural angle. Toni screamed in excruciating pain, hearing the bones snap. She searched for any weak point, but couldn’t find one, then something popped into her head. She stuck her foot out and tripped her attacker, something the alien wasn’t expecting, causing her to let go. However, she refused to give up, hitting Toni Jo with such force she went across the cage, slamming her against the wall.

The creature about to go for the death blow when it stumbled back and fell to the ground.

Toni Jo looked around, and saw no one had fired a shot. In fact, she doubted even if someone had shot the creature it would have done any good. She shot up and ran over to the creature again, “I need some help over here.”

Chris ran to help, saying, “Fox could you- “

“I’m on it.” Fox said, placing the wailing toddler in the corner until he could be attended to.

Five minutes later, Fox came back with a cart and two white tarps. They laid the larger creature on it, covering it with the trap. Fox tried to do the same with the little one, who started bawling again.

“It’s alright, mate.” Fox said gently, “We don’t mean no harm.” He then started bouncing it and singing, “Honey why you calling me so late? It’s kinda hard to talk right now…. “

“Lips of an angel?” Toni Jo challenged, “That’s your idea of a lullaby?”

“It’s the first song that popped into my head.” Fox snapped back.

“Enough.” Chris interjected, “It’s the middle of the day, we don’t want to get into a firefight. Antoinette, you know I don’t ask this of you lightly- “

“You never do.” Toni Jo sighed, but in truth, in this instance she would’ve done it anyway. She reached out mentally to the child—and while she hadn’t begun her examination she believed Fox was right in his deduction—let her feeling into it, so it could feel her concern, her good intentions, her desire to rescue them. That they were the good guys. The child quieted, still shaking, but let the tarp be draped over him.

They managed to quietly sneak them out of the carnival gourds without rousing suspicion, and back to the storage units they were currently staying at without incident, then set to work.
A few hours Chris came into the unit that had been turned into a make-shift medical bay, a tin cup in each hand and a third balanced on the cup in left hand. His daughter was stood over the spike-plated creature who was now restrained for everyone’s safety, holding the Med-Scanner they had found on of their missions, while stirring a bowel of murky orange liquid.

“So,” He spoke up, causing Toni Jo to jump a bit, startled, “How’s it going in here?”

“She has the flu.” Toni Jo answered, not looking up.

“She?” Chris repeated.

“According the Scanner she’s female.” Toni Jo explained, “It can’t find whatever species she is, but it has two wombs, and more complex bone structure, neither of which help me treat her.”

“And the other?” Chris asked.

“Male, roughly one year of age.” Toni Jo said, “His hearts on the left side of his chest, and has a metabolism like you wouldn’t believe. But at least his perfectly physically healthy.” She ran her hands through her auburn hair. “I gave her anti-bodics, but they’re not working.” She sighed, “I’m trying to figure out when, or if I can give her that Nano-tonic we found. I think it’s made for stuff like this.”

Chris sat the cup down beside her. “I know you’re not going to want to, but at least eat something. I figured your patient wouldn’t have an appetite, but I thought you and the little one might want to eat. Provided nothing in it is toxic to anyone.”

Toni Jo looked at the cup dubiously. “What’s in it?”

“Egg and barely stew.” Chris answered, pushing it closer to her.

Toni Jo took a cup and a spoon. “He’s over in the corner.” She said, gesturing to the corner where she had set the toddler on a quilt.

Chris walked over to the child, who backed up. “Relax, little one.” Chris assured him, sitting down next to him, “Only me.” He opened a cup and handed it to the toddler, who proceeded to try to dip his hand into the concoction. Thankfully Chris grabbed his hand just in time. “Uh, uh, uh.” He tutted, “That’s a good way to get yourself burned, little man.” He picked up the spoon. “Here.” He said, placing it in the tot’s hand, “Use this.” He helped him dip the spoon into the bowel and into his mouth. They did this in silence for a while then Chris said, “Don’t worry, decorum was an actual class at Toni Jo and her sister’s boarding school, so by the time we’re done with you, your manners will be impeccable.”

“What does that mean?” Toni Jo asked, before putting a spoonful of the lukewarm mess of powdered eggs, barley that she no idea where it came from, and stock made from week-old bones in her mouth, with the hand attached to her unbroken wrist then going back to work. “I mean, it’s not like we can keep him, this is no place for a child.”

“What else are we supposed to do?” Chris challenged, “He can’t exactly blend in with human society. Neither of them can. Not without a lot of augmentation.”

“We have the augmentation, we have for years.” Toni Jo reported, “That’s how you were able to marry a woman with green skin and no one noticed.”

“Good men, Alec was.” Chris mused, “Came here straight from Torchwood 1 but went native fairly quickly.” He quickly snapped out his reminisce and said, “All right, the female, maybe with a little help from the stasis tank, but the child-he’s still growing, you won’t be able to anything permanent until he stops, at least not without possible effecting his growth. And as long as he’s still growing, might as well monitor it.”

Toni Jo froze, her finger about to push something on the scanner, slowly turning around. “Are you saying we study him?”

“I’m not talking vivisection.” Chris assured, seeing where this was going, “Just some basic examinations.”

“It’s unethical, and we have no baseline.” Toni argued, “How can you even be suggesting this as scientist?”

“I am suggesting this because I am scientist.” Chris insisted, “And it’s not like we haven’t played fast and loose with the method before.”

“This is different and you know it.” Toni Jo argued, “It’s not necessary.”
“What if we had their informed consent?” Chris asked, “Assuming your patient is the one in charge of him.”

Toni Jo paused a minute. “Then I might be open to it.” She said at last, “But until they know enough English to give it I don’t want to hear another word about this, you understand?”

“Yes.” Chris said, then went to trying to soothe the child, who had been upset by the harsh voices. Later on, Toni Jo pulled out a large glass jar of green liquid, labeled Detox Solution. “Okay, Andrea,” Toni Jo said, as that’s what she had been calling her patient, pulling out a plastic cup, “Let’s see if this helps any.”

The doctor carefully measured out the liquid into a cup before grabbing a funnel, just in case and walking over to the alien patient, A. K. A Andera. She carefully forced her mouth open, and Andera weakly snapped at her.

“Hey,” Toni Jo protested firmly, “I’m trying to help you here.” Then she stuck the funnel in Andrea’s mouth, but opened herself up again, sending her feelings, to show that she had no mal-intent. God only knew what this creature had been through, so of course she was defensive.

“Don’t worry, Andrea.” Toni Jo kept talking as she poured it in, “You’ll pull through this. You’re a fighter, I know it. We could actually use someone like you around here. On the team, I mean. Fair warning, though, ever since Britain lost its empire everybody thinks we’re a joke, hence while we’re undermanned, underfunded, and good luck trying to get any supplies unless you scavenge it yourself. Which is why not all the alien tech makes it back to higher ups.” She winked. “And to tell you the truth, I wouldn’t mind another girl to even out the testosterone.”

When she finished pouring the detox solution into Andrea’s throat, Toni Jo stepped outside, where Chris was organizing their equipment, and Fox was trying to convince the toddler that Murder wasn’t something to be afraid of. It didn’t appear to be going well, as the child continued to back away.

“Hey!” She called out, “Can I get some help fetching a wash-tub?”

It was about midnight, when Toni Jo put an awake patch before looking at a med-scanner again. The anti-biotics haven’t cleared her system, but they weren’t doing her any good. She soaked her in ice-water to get the fever down, but it had done nothing. Nothing was doing anything.

Deciding to get higher forces involved she got to her knees and started to pray, “St. Raphael, patron saint of bodily ills…” A knock startled her, causing her to jump. She turned around and saw Fox standing in the doorway, holding Murder by the leash.

“Danmitt, Fox Mulder!” She exclaimed, “If you don’t get that God-forsaken dog out of here…” It was bad enough having to practice medicine in a storage unit, even after scrubbing it down with bleach, hydrogen peroxide and quail for good measure, but to have a dog in it, germing it up, while she had a sick being in here-no, she wouldn’t stand for it.

“Talking to Archangels and cursing at the same time?” Fox quipped, placing Castaway outside, “A bit counter-productive, don’t you think?”

“I’ll add in a prayer for forgiveness.” Toni Jo shot back, “What are you doing up so late?”

“Arranging for our transport, out of here.” Fox replied, “An old contact of mine is willing to take us all the moment we’re able to move Mummy Dearest there.”

“She’s not his Mum.” Toni Jo replied.

“Excuse me?” Fox asked.

“She’s not his Mum.” Toni Jo, “At least I don’t think so. When I look into her, her feelings for him, are complicated. There’s concern in there, but…it’s almost like she hates herself for being concerned at the same time. And his, he likes her, but he’s scared of her at the same time. Plus, if my scans are any indication, unless the biogeology of the species’ sexes are extremely different, they’re not the same species.”

“Should we be concerned?” Fox asked, her eyes following Toni Jo as she walked over to stock of medicine herbs gathered from the various places they traveled in their mission to defend the larger world from alien threats.

“Don’t know yet.” Toni Jo replied, pulling out a jar of molasses, “We’re sort of playing it by ear as per usual.”
“Torchwood 4.” Fox though aloud to himself, “The only Torchwood-related organization that actually tries to help aliens.”

“If you’re going to hang around can you at least make yourself useful and help me blend in this mint concentrate?” Toni Jo requested, “If I don’t get that fever down she might not make it through the night, and this has worked before on other creatures, surprisingly enough.”

Fox came over and took out the brown glass, hand-labeled bottle that barely fit in his hand. “You know,” Fox said, helping mix the concoction, “We need to come up with something to call them, at least for the time being, until we learn their real names. Provided we can pronounce them.”

“I’ve been calling my patient Andrea.” Toni Jo, replied, “I’m not sure where I got it from, I just think it’s close.”

“And the boy?” Fox asked.

“I honestly haven’t given much thought to him.” Toni Jo admitted, taking the mixture over to her patient, Andrea apparently, and rose her just enough to force it down her throat, “How’s he doing, by the way?”

“As well as can be expected.” Fox responded, “But we must come up with something. Something good and strong.”

“We don’t want him to grow to be a smuggler now, would we?” Toni Jo replied, unable to help herself,” Seriously, what were your parents thinking?”

“Ah, may I remind you Antionette Josefina,” Fox reminded her, “Your parents weren’t all that merciful either, or should we get Innocenta involved?”

“No.” Toni Jo relented, “So, any ideas?”

And so, they spent the next thirty minutes bouncing names ideas off each other, trying to find just the right one.

“No, we are not calling him Algernon!” Toni Jo protested at one point, “He’s going to have enough issues without having to deal with being made fun of.”

“I find it aristocratic.” Fox replied, “You see so many of them bankruptcy court, nowadays.”

Toni Jo fought back a laugh, saying “I don’t think you’re quoting that right.”

“Alright, alright,” Fox said, “How about Charles?”

Toni Jo thought a moment, then said, “Yeah, I like it. Yeah. A lot of saints named Charles.”

“A lot of monarchs, too.” Fox added, “And a few authors.”

“Charles, it is, then.” Toni Jo said, checking Andrea’s temperature again, “Wow. The fever’s not completely gone, but it’s gone down significantly.”

“That’s good, yeah?” Fox asked.

“Yeah.” Toni Jo replied, “It’s great.”

Chris’ voice called out, “Fox! Fox get out here this instant!”

“I gotta go.” Fox said, “I think I’m in trouble.”

“Good luck.” Toni Jo replied, then as something occurred to her, she added, “Oh, and Fox!”

Fox turned around, “What?”

“No calling him Charles Darwin or Dickens or Ray or some other such nonsense.” Toni Jo ordered firmly, “And I expect the same with Andrea.”

“Well, I can’t really think of and famous Andreas.” Fox mused, “But I do love a challenge.”

“Fox!” Jeremy called again louder.

“I’ll deal with it later.” Fox said, leaving.

Toni Jo laughed, taking more scans. He might be a pain sometimes, but she had to admit, he knew how to make her feel better.

And, to make matters even better, Andrea’s system was clean enough to give her the Nano-tonic. Toni Jo spent the next two days, monitoring the progress of the Nanos in Andrea’s body, forcing the molasses-mint mixture down her throat, and praying to every medical-related saints and angels she could think of. Camillus, Raphael, Luke, Panteon, Cosmas, Damian, Michael, anyone she thought would intercede. Then she pulled out her rosary and said she didn’t know how many Hail Marys.

Then on the morning of the morning of the third day, it happened. Andrea’s fever disappeared and
she regained full consciousness. Unfortunately, that meant she was also struggling against the restraints. Toni Jo thought to pin her down. “A little help in here!” Fox and Jeremy burst in and helped her in battle. “I guess this means she’s feeling better.” Fox said. “Yeah.” Toni Jo replied. “I think I like her better when she was dying!” Fox quipped causing Toni Jo to shoot him a harsh look. Suddenly Chris entered the room, holding Charles. He walked up to them so Andrea could see him. “You see Mum?” He said, “Your kid’s okay, and you’re okay.” “She’s not his Mum.” Toni Jo protested. However, Andrea’s fighting cease, though she continued to growl and curse them in what they assumed was her native tongue. “For a minute, there I thought we were in trouble.” Fox quipped, causing the others to roll their eyes.
Chapter Summary

Quill and Charlie discuss the case, then Charlie finds a clue and makes an acquaintance.

Chapter Notes

AN: Okay, I just realized my math might be off in the first chapter, so i fixed it. The prolog now takes place 2001. Sorry about that.

London, England
Sixteen Years Later
In a physics class in Coal Hill Academy the new teacher, a strikingly pretty, but not rather pleasant woman, her hair cut into a very menacingly exact blonde bob, was appearing disinterested, looking down at her device, desperately wanting the bell to ring.
The female alien, having no way to get back home, had dedicated herself to the cause of Torchwood 4, as it allowed her to continue to be the soldier she was on her home world. She had fought other aliens, murderers, cannibals on one memorable occasion. She had been around the world, learned a language and a half, and gotten very good with the weapons of this world, and with some things that weren’t meant to be weapons.
And now she was stuck dealing with a hundred or so delinquents, waiting for what they weren’t even sure.
The bell rang, causing everyone to get up and pour out form the room, except for one blonde-haired boy in preppy clothes, who was walking up to the “teacher’s” desk.
Realizing he wasn’t following her, a girl with long brown hair turned around and looked at him questioningly.
“T just need to talk to her a minute.” He said, “I’ll be right out.”
The grey-skinned foundling had grown into a young man. He was trained in various forms of combat, (a lot of it by his fellow alien), had, had at least four near-death experiences, and had been an active part of the team for give or take seven years.
Unfortunately, he also hadn’t had much experience with humans his own age, or humans outside of Torchwood really, so he was having a bit of trouble with the undercover work of this particular assignment.
They stood in silence, then the dark-clothed teacher was the first to speak, “Well, so far no one’s shown any signs of being a murderous alien, or much evidence that aliens were involved at all, but I have got some odd energy readings all over the place.” She pulled a rectangular metal device from a drawer, sitting in on the desk.
“I’ve been getting those, too.” The boy replied, “I’ve never seen anything like them. Have you?”
The woman looked down at the device. “They’re almost like the ones that damn riff in Cardiff gives off.” She said, “Not exactly the same, but similar. What about your shadow? She try to eat your face off?”
“April?” The boy asked, “No, I’m fairly certain she’s human.”
“Oh, well, if you’re fairly certain…” The woman began, her voice dripping with sarcasm, rolling
her eyes.
“I’m sure.” The boy restated, “I’ve seen no signs that she’s anything more than a normal, completely human teenage girl. I did talk to her about the school, though, she confirmed the disappearance and the deaths and the circumstances of a few them were quite odd.”
“And odd is apparently enough to warrant an undercover investigation.” The woman said wearily, “What about the other students? Have you been able to get anything from any of them?”
“No.” The boy admitted, causing the woman to look at her disapprovingly. “It’s only been a week.” He protested, “And I can’t just walk up to someone and say, ‘Hi, are you an alien or know anything about violent alien activity at the school?'”
The woman fought back a smile, then said, “Okay, since the only lead we have is the energy readings, I’m going to go over the areas I haven’t gone to yet, and go over some of the ones I already have again, I suggest you do this same, and at the end of the day we’ll regroup and try to make some sense of it.”
“Alright, Mum.” The boy agreed making for the doorway.
“Miss Quill.” She corrected him, causing the boy to turn around, “It’s Miss Quill in public, or at least here. No one’s supposed to know we’re in town together, remember?”
“Why is that?” The boy responded, “I mean, it makes no sense. What benefit does this possibly give us?”
“Soldiers follow orders, they don’t question them.” Quill chided in a disinterested voice, though she herself did not see the point of it either, “Backstopped covers don’t grow on trees. “
“I thought I wasn’t soldier.” The boy countered. Quill rolled her eyes. “Oh, good God, I said that like, five years ago.” Then she looked at the boy straight on. “You’re a still member of this this team, and I outrank you, so you do what I tell you, understand?”
“Yes, ma’am.” The boy agreed.
“And you’re not fitting in enough.” Quill added, “The others think you’re weird.”
“I am weird here.” The boy pointed out, sounding frustrated with that part of the situation. It turned out being raised by natives was only useful if they were part of conventional society.
“Well, try to work on it.” Quill replied, then her look somewhat softened as she said, “I know it’s hard. Believe me, I do, but I know that you can do this. Just, watch the others and copy what they do.” After a moment to think on that she added, “As long as you’re sure they’re human. And they’re not doing anything illegal. Especially if it’s drugs.”
The boy smiled a little. “Okay.”
“Good.” Quill declared. “Now, go on to class before someone notices something’s up.”
He started to go when Quill called out, “And Charles?” causing him to turn around.
“Don’t get yourself killed.” She said.
“You too, Miss Quill.” Charlie responded, before leaving.
He started down the hall, carefully pulling out his own device, and hiding it in his jacket sleeve before catching up with April. “Everything okay?” She asked.
“Yeah.” Charlie replied, “Just had some questions about the material.”
“And she actually talked to you?” April asked as the pair began to walk.
“Come on, she’s not that bad.” Charlie retorted, having an urge to come to his guardian’s defense. “Exactly where were you before that you consider her ‘not that bad’?” April asked, mildly concerned.
“Well, she probably didn’t start out that way.” He tried, “Something had to happen to make her that way.” Then, as if by some kind of miracle, the signal went off. “I just remembered I left something in my locker. Why don’t you just go on without me and I’ll meet you there.”
Before she could respond, he was already halfway down the hall. At least until she called out, “I see what’s happening here.”
Charlie froze. “You do?” he asked, fearing their cover had been blown.
“Charlie,” April, said, walking up to him, “You can’t run from your problems. So, you struggle in LA, a lot of people do. Now, if you can get Miss Quill to help, I’m sure you can get Miss Foreman
“I’ll keep that in mind.” Charlie replied, “But I really do need to get a book.”

“Alright.” April relented, deciding not to point out that his locker was in the other direction.

Charlie followed the readings down an empty hallway, further and further away from other people. Suddenly they started to spike, as if there had been some kind if surge. “What the- “He said, looking around for the source of the surge. However, he could see nothing.

He went a little further, still nothing, but suddenly everything got cold. Really cold, and he could’ve swore he heard growling. “Is someone there?” He called out. No answer. The heard more growling. “Just come out.” He ordered, grabbing the knife he hid, ready for a fight.

Then as suddenly as the growling started, it stopped, as did the spike. For moment, he wondered if he had just imagined it. He peaked around the corner, but nothing was there. He in every spot something could hide. Nothing. “Maybe you are losing it.” Charlie thought aloud, “And now you’re talking to yourself.”

He walked down the hall back to a more populated part of the building, unable to shake the feeling he was being watched. He kept turning around, looking in every direction, but he would find nothing. He turned around one more time, continuing to walk, when he heard a clash and someone saying, “Not so tough now, are you?”

Charlie turned and saw four boys, two pining one down while the fourth was getting to punch him. Acting on instinct, Charlie leapt in, grabbing one of the boys holding the other, slamming him onto the floor.

“That was a big mistake.” The ringleader seethed, stepping towards Charlie as his other mook let their previous victim go, trying to pin their new target’s arms behind his back. However, before anything else could transpire, Charlie gave the ringleader a good swift kick to the groin, causing him to double over in pain and starling the other boy so much he stopped all attempts to restrain anyone.

Charlie then grabbed the other boy and ran down the hall with him. Once they got a safe distance away, they stopped and Charlie asked, “Are you alright? Did-did they hurt you? You know, apart from the obvious?”

“I think so.” The boy replied, in an accent other than English, “Thanks for the rescue. What about you?”

“I’m fine.” Charlie replied, “Does that happen often?”

“No,” The boy replied, “They pick a new target every few days. I just happened to be that lucky person today.” Then he rubbed his head, where these a welt forming.

“Did you hurt your head in the attack?” Charlie asked, concerned.

“First off, can we please not call it an attack?” The boy asked, “Secondly, it’s fine. I just bumped my head on the locker.”

“Let me look at it anyway.” Charlie insisted, trying to get the boy to sit down, as the boy was good head taller than Charlie and that was affecting his view somewhat.

“It’s alright.” The other boy said, resisting his efforts, “Besides, what would you be able to do?”

“My Aunt’s a doctor.” Charlie answered, finally, winning a struggle, “I’ve picked up a few things.”

“That doesn’t make you medically qualified to treat anyone. Not that I’m not grateful for the help.” After a moment he added, “Can I get my knight in shining amour’s name?”

Charles looked at his patient, perplexed for a moment then said, “Charlie Qu-Smith. Charlie Smith.” He couldn’t believe he had almost messed up his name. He did his best to compose himself, going back to what he was doing.

“Mateusz Andrzejewski.” The boy replied, suddenly amused at Charlie’s flustered state, “So, tell me, Charlie, will I live?”

“Yes.” Charlie answered, “That was never in much doubt.”

“I know, I was kidding.” The boy-Mateusz, explained.

“Oh.” Charlie responded, getting up, then helping Mateusz to his feet, “Sorry.”

“It’s alright.” Mateusz assured him, “Listen, I have to go, but hopefully I’ll see you around.”

“I think we have physics together.” Charlie pointed out.
“Yeah.” Mateusz said, smiling for some reason, “I think I remember you. See you then.”
“See you then.” Charlie agreed. And with that he walked away, wondering why his heart was beating so fast.
Toni Jo and Quill discuss Chris and the cases the team are currently working on. Quill contemplates her situation (Because she's still in a lot of pain at least some of the time) and she and Charlie find something a little more solid to go on in regards to the investigation. Just a little more solid.

Toni Jo looked at the scans Quill and Charlie were showing her over the video call. “What’s that spike, there? “She asked, pointing at the area where it appeared on the read-out. Despite being almost forty now, the doctor only looked to her in her late twenties, her porcelain skin skill without a wrinkle, her hair that she wore in a tight bun without a trace of grey. Her body was still fit and leaned, and she could still wear shirts she showed just a hint of her mid-drift, and had strategic cuts in sleeves, showing off a bit of arm, as she was now. No one really knew how she did it, but many suspected it was a side-effect of the times she used herself as a guinea pig. Or perhaps it was a result of hybrid biology.

“Charles?” Quill asked, looking over at her adopted son expectantly, “You’re the one who found it.”

Charlie swallowed. “I don’t know.” He admitted, “I followed it, but I couldn’t find anything.”

“Nothing?” Toni Jo responded, “No aliens, no monsters, no secret labs?”

“Secret labs?” Quill repeated in mild disbelief.

“Hey, this wouldn’t be the first time some mad scientist’s creation got set lose on the populous and we thought it was an alien.” Toni Jo reminded her, “Remember Soul?”

“Soul was a Million-dollar a year genetics company with ridiculous resources.” Quill pointed out, “This is a school. I doubt the science club is doing illegal cloning experiments.”

“Probably not.” Toni Jo relented, “But that doesn’t mean the school couldn’t be some sort of front for someone.”

Just then there was a commotion from outside the kitchen. “It’s just a phone, demons have nothing to do with it!” Rhys could be heard shouting, “For the umpteenth time, witchcraft is not a thing!”

“And yet Prudence met a woman today who claimed proudly to be a witch!” A male voice argued back.

“That’s was just some nutty new-ager!” Rhys was trying to explain, “She had no actual power!”

“Is everything alright there?” Charlie asked.

Toni Jo looked back for a second then looked back to her friends. “Yeah. Everyone’s a little on edge here right now. Plus, they’re both still trying to wrap their heads around the whole time-travel thing, and still adjusting to this time, so that’s not helping the situation.”

“So, I take it that means you haven’t found the hikers yet.” Quill replied.

After the fall of Torchwood Three, the Riff was still active, if for some reason slightly less so, plus the added problem of the top-secret, deadly (and possibly damaged) alien tech that had been locked away for decades in the vaults possibly being out in the wide world (a reality they learned the hard way), with only seven people to handle it. Because of this sometimes incidents happened, case in point, a group of four hikers coming across a displaced young couple from the lost colony of Roanoke, who had been deposited in a nearby forest by the Rift, before they could be intercepted the situation explained.

“We found two and got them reconed.” Toni Jo answered, “But the other two were from out of town and we’re having trouble locating them. And Prudence and Jacob are still stuck at Gwen and
Rhys’ until Fox can get here. And of course, Dad’s still down for the count.” She left it at that, but her brow furrowed for a fraction of a second.

“Charles,” Quill spoke up, “Could you give us a minute alone?”

Charlie pushed his chair back and quickly left the room, leaving the two women alone. They were silent for a moment, the Quill asked, “How is he? Really?”

“They’re still running test.” Toni Jo replied, “They thought it might be some kind of blood clot, but—now they’re not sure. Innocenta is talking about coming.”

That sent a trickle of alarm through Quill. Innocenta usually kept her distance from her unusual family. For her to consider coming, things must be serious. “And you?”

“I’ve got some samples.” Toni Jo replied, “But all of my test so far have been inconclusive.”

“I was actually referring to you.” Quill responded, “How are you holding up? And I want the truth.”

“Well, let’s see.” Toni Jo began, “My father is cripplingly ill, leaving me trying to run three different missions at once, two kids are depending on us for their lives in a new culture, in a new century and my forger’s still in Sweden, and the possible of my sister coming which in and of itself could be a sign the Apocalypse is about to start. Again. Yeah, I’ve been better.”

“Do you need help?” Quill asked.

“No,” Toni Jo said, “Believe me, I’ll let you know if I need you.”

Will you? Quill thought. She knew from experience Toni Jo was bad about not admitting when she couldn’t handle a situation on her own. Almost as bad as Quill.

“Is there anything else I need to know about?” Toni Jo asked, just wanting to change the subject.

“Is there one thing.” Spoke up, pulling something from her purse on the table, “I found this on one of my students today.” She laid down a round patch with a scarlet V at its center.

“The school was invaded by Puritans?” Toni Jo responded, confused.

“No exactly.” Quill replied, fighting back a smirk, “This is the emblem of a group called the Veritas Movement. Apparently, they want the government to admit the truth about alien incursions on Earth. It’s a small group, which is probably why we’ve never heard of it, but there are at least two Coal Hill students who are members.”

Toni Jo rubbed her face wearily. “So, what you’re saying is, we’re not closer to figuring out what’s going on here than when we started, and we have a group that gives us an extra risk of exposure?”

“Well, it might help if we had some back-up.” Quill pointed out.

“I know.” Toni Jo replied, “I’ll call Fox, see if he’s done with Sweden yet, and I will be down there as soon as I can.”

“Take your time.” Quill assured her, “We’ll figure it out, we always have.”

When Quill started talking like that, everyone knew something was wrong. “You don’t have to baby me, Andra’ath.”

“I would never dream of it.” Quill replied.

“What about you?” Toni Jo asked, “Your covers still holding up?”

“Yes.” Quill answered.

“No violent outburst?” Toni Jo asked.

“You are aware I can function without you, right?” Quill deadpanned.

“I still have to check.” Toni Jo said breaking into a smile, if only for a moment, “Has Charlie done anything weird?”

“Am I the boys’ keeper?” Quill asked.

“Yes.” Toni Jo replied, “Yes, that tends to be how it works when you adopt a child.”

“But I never adopted him.” Quill argued, “No one ever gave me any paper work, and when I told you the,” Quill looked around to make sure her charge was not in listening distance. Still she lowered her voice as she continued, “The real circumstances of how he came into my care, you freaked out, so I don’t think it counts as an adoption.”

“Yeah, well, you’re stuck with him now.” Toni Jo declared, “So?”

“He’s raised a couple of eyebrow,” Quill finally answered, “But he’s really more—awaked than anything else.”
“Good.” Toni Jo said, seemingly satisfied. That was when she heard Gwen’s voice ask from the other room, “Hey, have you guys seen Toni Jo?”

“I think she’s in the kitchen.” Rhys’ voice replied. “I think I gotta go.” Toni Jo informed Quill, “Tell the kid I said goodbye, and the both of you take care of each other.”

Quill rolled her eyes. “Alright.” She agreed, “And good luck. You’re gonna need it.” And with that the call was ended. Toni Jo sighed. She was getting too old for this. “Good luck, my loves.”

That was when a Welsh-accented voice asked from behind her, “Toni?” She turned around to see a dark-haired, pale-skinned woman staring at her with large big eyes.

“Hey, Gwen.” Toni Jo responded, “What’s up?”


“Feel like a road trip?” Gwen asked. “Just let me get some things.” Toni Jo responded, walking out of the kitchen.

Back in London, Quill just sat at the table for a few moments. She wondered if there was any alcohol in the house. Or at least some chocolate.

After a few minutes of searching she finally found a bottle of wine in one of the cabinets, next to two sliver-wrapped blocks. Thank you, Fox Mulder. She though as she grabbed the bottle and one of bars, setting the bottle on the counter and unwrapping the bar, furiously biting off a hunk. It was bittersweet and slightly stale, Fox must’ve has the cache prepared for some time, just in case. She hated this. Hated waiting. Hated feeling helpless.

The funny thing was, if she thought about it, before her arrival on Earth, she never felt helpless. Even during the war, even in a middle of a battle, even if they were losing a battle, she never felt helpless. Well, that wasn’t entirely true. She felt helpless, her first real taste of the emotion, actually, when her lover was killed. That might be why she tried to take her emotions out on an infant. In contrast, on Earth, she felt helpless at least every few months. Helpless to save a civilian. Helpless to assist her best friend, or the others for that matter. Helpless to understand these people she was forced to live amongst, even after doing it for over a decade. Helpless to protect her own child some days. Helpless to ever see her home again.

Stop it, she scolded herself, you can’t go home again. There’s no way back, and you’ve excepted that a long time ago. Thinking about what might have been helps no one. But it was too late. She was already wondering about the planet and people she still oh so desperately missed. Who was leading the resistance efforts now? Was there even a need for a resistance effort anymore? Was the war still going on? Or was it over? Did they win, did they lose? Had her last act as commander, done partly out of spite, partly out of stagey, made any effect? Given her own experience as a parent, albeit a somewhat reluctant one, she felt it had to. And what about her family, or at least what was left of it? The Quill were not exactly a sentimental people, but still she wondered about them. What did they think happened?

Quill poured some of the wine into a mug, despite knowing that it wouldn’t be enough to get her drunk. Hell, it’d take the whole bottle just to her a buzzed.

You know, you shouldn’t relay on booze to deal with your problems. Or sweets for that matter. A voice that sounded suspiciously like Toni Jo rang out in her head. “Well,” Quill countered the voice out loud, “Some of us don’t have virgins to talk to.” Then she definitely broke off a hunk of chocolate, dipping into the wine.

The extrateresials arrived early the next morning to look at the spot where the spike happened before there were many prying eyes.

“Alright.” Quill said, her own monitor out. “So, you were following it down this hallway?”
“Yes.” Charlie confirmed.

“Well, we’re still getting a signal.” Quill said to herself, then to Charlie, “Tell when we’re getting near where the spike happened.”

“We’re getting near it right now.” Charlie replied.

“Oh, now tell me when he hit exactly where the signal happened.” Quill ordered.

They came to a bend in the hallway when there was a flight of stairs. “Here.” Charlie said.

They froze and Quill looked down at the monitor. “It’s not here now.” She fiddled with the settings before asking, “Are you sure it was here?”

“Yes.” Charlie said, fiddling with his own device, “Maybe it some sort of surge, or- “His voice trailed off as he thought of other possibilities.

Quill walked off, looking for some sort clue. That was when she noticed something shining on the wall. She put her finger on it and it felt slimy. She turned her finger to look at it, and she made a face. “Charles, come here.”

Charlie did, looking at the slime on the wall. “What is that?”

“That wasn’t here yesterday.” Charlie told her.

“Hmm, which leads to some interesting questions.” Quill replied, “I have some sample containers in my room, go fetch them for me.”

Charlie hurried off to follow her order, while Quill continued to follow the trail. It was long, and wide. Something big made this. She thought, as she continued to follow it. “But, then,” She thought aloud, “Where are you?”

Suddenly she heard a gurp, glurp, behind her.

In the dim light, she could see a large, molted brown-and-green legless blob of a creature, with beady dark eyes staring up at her leaving a trail of clear slime as it slowly trailed across the floor.

Just then she heard footsteps coming back down the hall. “Charles, don’t move.” She called back, one hand in the air, as if to single a halt.

Then the footsteps stopped.

“Have you found something?” Charlie asked, too far away to clearly see the creature.

“It’s some sort of slug-like creature, roughly the size of…that giant salamander.” Quill explained, “You remember, the one from China? Though this does not look nearly as appetizing.”

I still can’t believe we actually ate an endangered animal. Charlie thought. They had been investigating a possible crash in the Chinese countryside, and they had found it half-dead, and they put it out of his misery before roasting it along with some edible roots.

“I’m going to take it alive.” Quill declared, “What weapons did you bring?”

“A knife.” Charlie answered, pulling it out.

Quill spun her upper body around. “Just one knife?”

“I’m taking a risk just bringing that.” Charlie countered.

Quill turned around. “I’m going to try to grab it, if it attacks me, get yourself out, you know what to do.”

All was quiet and the air got tense, and then Quill rushed the creature, grabbing it up in her arms. It wiggled a little and let out a series of glurps, but other than that put up no struggle. She turned to Charlie and instructed, “Go to the science rooms, find a large terrarium. If there’s none empty, empty it, I don’t care what you do with the animal already inside.”

Fifteen minutes later they had the animal secured in a long glass box with a low ceiling, currently sitting on Quill’s desk in the physic room, Quill on one side, Charlie on the other. They were both covered with a fair amount of slime from handling the creature under half, but otherwise unharmed. Quill tapped on the glass.

“I’m not really sure that’s a good idea.” Charlie spoke up, apprehensively.

“I know what I’m doing.” Quill replied, pulling out her cellphone and pushing the speed dial, and putting it up to her ear. “Come on, Toni, pick up, pick up, pick up.” She murmured to herself. With her other hand, she pulled and dark-colored device that looked two rectangles squeezed together in the middle, and, using her shoulder to prop up the phone, started pushing buttons.

A translucent blue beam shot out of the device, covering the complacent creature.
Around that time the voice mail went off. “You’re reached the phone of Toni Jo Callahan. You should not have this number. If you do, then something’s very wrong so leave me a message and provided I’m not dead, I’ll get back to you at a better time.”

As soon as the beep went off Quill began. “Toni, it’s Quill. We found something, some sort of slung, thing- “

Suddenly there was a ping from the device.

“No, wait starch that.” Quill said, “Apparently it’s a creature called a Glurp. Named for the sound it makes, feeds, mainly off of algae, prey animal…” He voices trailed off as it dawned on her, “I have to go. Call me when you get this.” Then she hung up.

“What?” Charlie spoke up, realizing something was wrong. Aside from the obvious. “What is it?”

“If this is a prey animal,” Quill began, “What if whatever preys on it is here, too?”

Charlie’s heart froze, remembering the growling he heard the day before. “I’ll take the left.” He said, before running out of the room.
Gwen and Toni Jo travel to Bristol, Fox shoots a sea monster, most cryptids are aliens, mild angst ensues and a simple task gets complicated. Get your blinking out of the way now.

Gwen put the cover back on the gas tank, getting back in the car, just as Toni Jo came out of the station. “Thanks.” She said, getting in on the right passenger seat, “You sure you don’t have to go, too?”
“No thank you.” Gwen replied, “I’d almost sooner have an accident then go in one of those dingy things.”
“Trust me, there are far worst places to pee.” Toni Jo declared, “And far as petrol station bathrooms go, it was pretty clean.” As they started off, she pulled out her phone, looked at it, and her face fell when she saw she had a message.
“What’s wrong?” Gwen asked.
“Quill left a message.” She listened to it, then started frantically hitting the speed dial.
Meanwhile, on the shores of lake Storson, Fox Mulder was running from a newt-headed creature the size of baby elephant, when his phone went off. He ignored it, but it kept ringing and ringing. Seeing a fishing shack, he jutted off, running for it, the phone still ringing all the while. He slammed the door, garbing a nearby chair and using it to barricade the door, then finally answered the phone. “Not the best time, Toni.”
“I take that means you haven’t dealt with lake monster number 4.” Toni guessed.
“I’m working on it.” Fox said, searching the cabin for some sort of weapon as he heard the creature charging closer. Toni could hear it all in the background. “Why do I hear growling? Fox, what’s going on?”
“Okay, short version, I found number 4, but it got my harpoon and broke it.” Fox said, still searching for something to defend himself, “And now I’m locked in a cabin, trying to find something to-ah ha!” He opened a drawer, revealing a flare gun, complete with flares. Just in time to, it seems, as the door started to shake as the creature used it heard head like a battering ram, the door falling from its place. Fox franticly loaded the flare gun, turning around just in time from the creature to bust through.
“Fox?” Toni Jo began, alarmed, “Fox, what’s going on?! Fox, are you okay?!”
“Yeah,” Fox answered, still holding the gun, “Monster number 4? Not so much. So, ah, I’m assuming there was a reason you called.”
“Yeah Quill and Charlie found some kind of-slug thing.” Toni Jo explained, “How soon can you get to London?”
“I’ll be on the next flight.” Fox replied, “But, uh, what do you want me to do with the body of big fella here?”
“Just leave it, let the wild animals deal with it.” Toni Jo responded, “The locals are probably use to those kinds of things by now. Just report to both of us when you arrive, capice?”
“Roger that.” Fox said, before hanging up.
Toni Jo let out a sigh of relief before rolling her eyes.
“They found something at the school?” Gwen asked. She hadn’t been sure about that case, but she to admit, something was weird. Too many missing students, too many dead people, too little
interest from other authorities.
“Something called a Glurp.” Toni Jo replied, “She said it’s some sort of prey animal, so they
shouldn’t be in any danger, until Fox gets there. He killed Monster number 4, so he’s should be on
his way soon.”

“Why do you keep calling it Monster number 4?” Gwen asked.
Toni Jo was silent for a moment then began, “Going back to the 1800s, possible further, lake
Storson in Sweden has played host to a creature known as Storsjoodjuret. The thing is, over the
years, the discretion of this monster has drastically changed. The first half of the twentieth century
it was a maned, horse-headed serpent, in the 60s and 70s it was a long body with a fish tale, then
come 1992 it was newt-like animal with four legs. I was actually there for that one.”
“Wait, so this thing is actually an alien?” Gwen asked.
“That’s the theory at least.” Toni Jo explained, “We only ever got confirmation on the third one.
And it’s things, plural, not thing.”

That took Gwen by surprise. “Is there some sort of riff there, or something?”
“We don’t know.” Toni Jo admitted, “We’ve run every test we can and nothing gave us a solid
conclusion. It’s just been one of those ones we could never figure out.” They were silent for a
minute, then Toni Jo added, “Come to think of it, roughly fifty percent of all cyprids have some
sort of alien origins.”
Gwen eyes widened. “F-fifty percent?”
“Roughly.” Toni Jo repeated.
Gwen was quiet a moment then asked, “Bigfoot? Is, ah, Bigfoot an alien?”
“An expedition party gone very, very wrong.” Toni Jo answered, “Of course the case was back in
the 70s so I don’t know all of the details.”
“Part of an alien scheme to take over the planet.” Toni Jo replied, “But it was handled by UNIT.”
“The Owlman?” Gwen added.
“No, that was just an unusually large owl.” Toni Jo admitted, “And a pair of frightened little girls.”
“Alien mutated by the local power plant.” Toni Jo explained.
“Chupacabra?” Gwen continued.
“Alien poachers dumped their cargo, cargo started a breeding population.” Toni Jo declared non-
chalantly.
“Beast of Bodmin?” Gwen wondered.
“Various wild cats that escaped from private zoos.” Toni Jo answered, “Nothing extrateresial about
it at all.”
“Thunderbird?” Gwen asked.
“Various prehistoric flying reptiles.” Toni Jo answered, “Some we were able to figure out where
they came from, some we couldn’t. Also, on one occasion a really big condor.”
“Mongolian Death Worm?” Gwen added.
“Inconclusive.” Toni Jo replied, “We were just lucky to get out alive on that one, especially
considering they weren’t even the reason we there. But we probably should look into that.”
Gwen thought for a good minute before saying, “The Sucuriju?”
Toni Jo laughed in surprise as she asked, “The what?”
“The Giant Anaconda.” Gwen explained, “Usually between 45 and 130 feet.”
“Oh, those are just giant snakes.” Toni Jo explained, “Giant, man-eating snakes.” She grimaced,
“Learned that one the hard way.”
Gwen momentarily took her eyes off the road to look at her. “Do I even want to know?”
“We were working a case in Brazil and we wound up in the jungle, after all is said and done I go to
gather some water, and next thing I know I’m in the river fighting for my life with this-giant snake,
I think it was closer to the 45 end of the spectrum, but it felt a whole lot bigger when it was
crushing me to death, then out of nowhere comes Quill, with an ax of all things, I still don’t know
where she got it, and hacked it until it let me go, threw me over her shoulder like a slender fireman
and got us both the Hell out of there and back to safety.”
“It’s gets better.” Toni Jo informed her, “I’m still half-dead by the time we get back to camp, so
Quill drags me into my medical set-up and starts going through my medical books trying to figure
out what to do, only at the time she didn’t actually read English at the time, but she’s being eerily
composed, and Fox and my dad are demanding to know what happened, Fox’s dog is barking and
Charlie’s crying, and then Quill finally figures out to do CPR, only she’s never had to do it before,
just learned how to do. Whatever the case, it works, but CPR isn’t as pretty as it is on the telly, she
did break a couple of my ribs and then I’m puking, and puking when I finally stop I manage to get
out-stay away from the water.”
Gwen was paused for moment, processing the story. Then suddenly she burst into laughter. “I’m
sorry.” She got out in-between bursts, “I don’t know why I’m laughing, it’s not funny, you
could’ve died!”
“But evidently I did not.” Toni Jo responded, shrugging.
“Well, that’s a pretty casual attitude to have about that.” Gwen declared.
“Gwen, where do we work?” Toni Jo challenged, “Having a casual attitude is the only way to get
up in the morning. Of course, I guess it’s different for you give the-circumstances.”
“What do you mean, circumstances?” Gwen asked.
“All your team members, all your friends dying.” Toni Jo explained, “That’s the one the one thing
I could never be casual about. I never told you anything, but when I heard about what happened, I
was wrecked, and I didn’t even know them that well, so I know it had to be worst for you. And if
anything happened to anyone of mine…I don’t know what I’d do.”
Gwen was quiet for a moment. “You forgot my boss flying off to parts unknown, never to be heard
from again.”
“Well, that seems to be his MO.” Toni Jo replied tensely, “Running away when things get hard, or
running away for unknown reasons because he doesn’t say why.”
Whoa. Gwen thought, that seemed personal. “Toni Jo,” Gwen began, “Pardon me if this is a bit too
personal, but did you and Jack…”
“No.” Toni Jo cut her off, “Oh, God no. I’ve known him since I was like, twelve, that would be
weird.” She paused a moment, “No, but there was someone else, someone who I care about and he
hurt them.” She paused again, then continued, “You know, the whole time they were together I
didn’t have a clue? I mean, I knew they were close, but I never though…” He voice trailed off for
a minute, “And then I got the call.” She got this far-off look in her eye as she finished, “I’ve never
seen-this person, like that before. And I don’t ever want to see them like that again.”
Gwen was silent for a minute, not sure what to say.
“Can-Can we just talk about something else, please?” Toni Jo snapped, “Anything?”
“How’s your father doing?” Gwen replied finally.
“Okay, anything but that.” Toni Jo added, before pulling out an unmarked plastic bottle,
unscrewing the cap and dry-swallowing two pills.
“Are you alright?” Gwen asked, concerned, gesturing to the bottle.
Toni Jo, realizing what Gwen was getting at. “This? Oh, yeah, I’m just starting to get a blocking a
headache.”
“A blocking headache?” Gwen repeated.
“Yeah, you know how the second time we met I explained that I was—only half-human?” Toni Jo
asked.
“Yes.” Gwen confirmed.
“Well, the whole—empath thing happens automatically.” Toni Jo explained, “Back where Mum
was from where literally the whole planet consisted of sparsely placed villages and privacy wasn’t
really a thing anyway, not much of a problem. But here?” She made a series of signals with her
eyes, “So, there’s three ways to deal with this, either focus in on one person, send your feelings out,
or block. The only thing is, blocking for long periods of time result in headaches, sometimes full-
out migraines. It practically crippled my mother.” She paused a moment then finished, “But when I was in med-school I started experimenting, and finally found a formula that worked. You wouldn’t believe how life-changing it was.”

“You must’ve been your Mum’s hero.” Gwen commented, then it dawned on her, “Oh, God, she wasn’t…”

“No, not yet.” Toni Jo assured her, then shaking the bottle said, “These gave her a few good years before she passed.”

Hours later they finally go to Bristol. As they drove down the street Toni Jo noticed an odd statue. It looked like an angel with arms stretched out, bearing fangs. Then it disappeared, causing Toni Jo to do a double take. “Gwen, did you see- “

“See what?” Gwen asked.

“Never mind.” Toni Jo brush it off, thinking she must be seeing things.

They parked by the curb got out of the car. Both women walked up, Gwen taking the lead as they got to the stairs. She knocked and the door was opened revealing a girl with light brown hair and small green eyes. A girl who wasn’t either one of their hikers.

“Is this the house of Seely and Angelia Harper?” Gwen asked, holding up her badge and trying to hide her confusion.

“Yes?” The girl answered, confused, “Have you found them?”

“Found them?” Toni Jo asked.

“Yes, they’ve been missing for a week.” The girl replied.
Miss Foreman

Chapter Summary

The Language Arts teacher takes rather intense and unwelcome interest in Charlie and Quill.

Chapter Notes

Is it called Language Arts in Britain? I have no idea.
So, I've discovered that for some reason by note at the end of chapter one keeps moving to the newest chapter completely unbidden for some reason. Since it outside of the context of chapter one this really problematic so if anyone has any idea what' going on and how to stop it, could you please leave a comment? I'd really appreciate it.

“Charles!” Quill called out, running out of the room, “That’s not what I meant! Charles!”
Charlie, however was out of hearing distance, heading to the other end of the school. His eyes went everywhere, looking for any sign of a more dangerous creature then the one currently in Quill’s room.
He turned down a hallway on a high alert. That was when heard it.
The growling again.
Charlie reached into his back pocket for his knife, looking around for the source. There wasn’t any place for it to hide, so, where was it?
“Excuse me.” An adult female voice said behind him, “Are you alright? Do you need help?”
Quickly putting away the knife and hopping whoever was behind him hasn’t seen it, and turned around. Standing a few feet away was an olive-skinned woman with long black hair, dressed in nice light blue sweater and slacks a blue several shades darker.
“Miss Foreman,” Was the first thing that came out of Charlie’s mouth, “W-What are you doing here?”
“I could ask the same of you.” Miss Foreman countered, walking closer, “Charles Smith, right?”
“Yes.” Charlie answered, “I’m in your 4th period.”
“Yes.” Miss Foreman responded, “You’re the one who always answers literally. So, are you alright?”
“Yes.” Charlie said quickly, “I was just going to my locker and got turned around.”
“Well, it did seem like you were looking for something.” Miss Foreman responded, “Where is your locker again?”
“Somewhere over that way.” Charlie answered, pointing in the direction, “Between the science and language areas.”
“Hmm, seems a bit far off.” Miss Foreman commented. The thing was, it wasn’t accusatory, maybe a little a little probing, but understanding.
Charlie almost felt bad about lying to her.
Just then Quill came running into view. “Charles Algernon Quill!” She shouted, marching to him, “De alle les rücksichttslos, neapish DinGes tae machen- “(Of all the reckless, idiotic things to do-)
“Is there a problem, Miss Quill?” Miss Foreman spoke up.
Quill froze and turned around. “No.” She lied quickly, calming down enough to remember to use English, “I just need a word with Mr. Smith.” She grabbed Charlie’s wrist and started dragging him out of the hallway, to which he gave no resistance. “Alone.”

Miss Foreman watched her fellow teacher drag the student from the hall with some concern. When they could no longer see her, she pinned herself to wall, staining to hear what was being said. When they were what they felt was a safe distance away, Quill let go of Charlie’s wrist and turned on him. “What the Hell were you thinking?!” She exclaimed, “Going after an unknown creature of unknown size, unknown teeth, unknown everything all on your own, with nothing other than one tiny knife?! Are you trying to get yourself killed?!"

“If there is something out there, we can’t just let it run lose.” Charlie reasoned.

“But don’t know off half-cocked.” Quill retorted, “That is how you lose people. This is why I am in charge. Now we will search the school, but we will do it the smart way. That means, you will not run off on your own again unless I tell you to do so, and if you disobey me there will be consequences, and don’t think you are too old for me to put you over my knee. Is that understood?”

“Yes, ma’am.” Charlie replied neutrally.

“Good.” Quill said, “Now, people are starting to show up, so get to class, we’ll confer later.” With that she turned and walked away, put several steps in paused, partially turning her head back to the boy, “And don’t get yourself killed.”

“You, too.” Charlie replied, knowing that she had to be upset for her to go off in Quill like that, and was only so mad because he had scared her, though she would never admit it. So, they shouldn’t part on bad terms, especially given their lives.

Any parting could be last one.

Charlie quickly gather his books from his locker only for them to be knocked out of his arms again. He got down to scoop them up, glancing up briefly as the culprit walked by. He didn’t know his name, but he was going to make a point of finding out before the investigation was over, because when this investigation was over he really wanted to show that guy just what he was capable of.

Suddenly someone handed him one of the books. Her looked up to find Miss Foreman staring back at him.

“Thank you.” Charlie said, taking the book.

“No problem.” Miss Foreman replied, “You alright?”

“Pride hurt, nothing more.” Charlie said, then it occurred to him that he shouldn’t be so informal with a teacher. Growing up surrounded almost completely by adults had sort of skewed in ability to properly interact with adult civilians.

Miss Foreman responded with, “You’ve spent a lot of time around adults, haven’t you?”

“No,” Charlie denied, getting to his feet, “No more than other normal person my age.” What was that? That was way too specific. “I’m sorry.” He added, “I really must be going.”

“Charlie, wait.” Miss Foreman called out, “I actually wanted to speak with you about what happened with Miss Quill.”

Charlie turned around, “What about it?”

“Well, she seemed rather upset with you.” Miss Foreman recapped, “Are you in some kind of trouble?”

“No.” Charlie replied nervously, “I was just late for an appointment with her.”

“Really?” Miss Foreman responded, “Because this morning you said you were looking for your locker.”

“I was.” Charlie said, officially making it up at he went along, “Which made me late for the appointment, which was why she was so upset. She’s a teacher you know, she’s busy.”

“Well, being a teacher myself, I know something about that.” Miss Foreman replied.

“Yes, well, that was all that happen, but it’s all fine now, so if you excuse me, I need to go.”

Charlie turned and started to flee.

“One more thing, though.” Miss Foreman called out, causing him to freeze, “I could’ve sworn I heard her call you by her last name.”

“No, she didn’t.” Charlie responded, turning around, “With all due respect, Miss, you must be
“No, she was pretty clear.” Miss Foreman insisted, “Charles Algernon Quill.”

Suddenly Charlie remembered a story of one of a boy Fox knew when he himself was one. “She’s my foster mother,” he began, which technically was true, “She just never adopted me, so on all the forms my last name is still Smith. It was easier to let teachers call me that than explaining it to them.” He hoped she’d take pity and not press the matter further.

“How come this is the first time I’m hearing about any about this?” Miss Foreman asked.

“We were keeping quiet about it.” Charlie replied.

Miss Foreman narrowed her eyes. “And does she go off like that at home?”

“No, she was pretty clear.” Miss Foreman insisted, “Charles Algernon Quill.”

Suddenly Charlie remembered a story of one of a boy Fox knew when he himself was one. “She’s my foster mother,” he began, which technically was true, “She just never adopted me, so on all the forms my last name is still Smith. It was easier to let teachers call me that than explaining it to them.” He hoped she’d take pity and not press the matter further.

“How come this is the first time I’m hearing about any about this?” Miss Foreman asked.

“We were keeping quiet about it.” Charlie replied.

Miss Foreman narrowed her eyes. “And does she go off like that at home?”

“How come this is the first time I’m hearing about any about this?” Miss Foreman asked.

“We were keeping quiet about it.” Charlie replied.

Miss Foreman narrowed her eyes. “And does she go off like that at home?”

“Not usually, no.” Charlie answered, “Anyway, it’s still better than where I was before.” He lowered his eyes for effect. This statement might have been true. For all he knew his birth parents could’ve abandoned him, or not paying enough attention to notice their one-year-old toddling off into enemy territory, which couldn’t say much for their parenting skills. Then again, it was a war zone, so they might have just got separated somehow. Or they could be dead. “Can I go now?”

“Yes.” Miss Foreman responded, seemingly regretful for digging that up.

Once again, he felt bad about lying to her.

Later that day, Quill was in her room during her plan period, sticking a bit of greenery into the terrarium hidden beneath her desk. “I’m not entirely sure what you eat, so we just have to see what settles, because right now we need you alive.” As she closed the lid and raised up, she added, “And I’m talking to a slug.”

Just then a voice came over the intercom. “Miss Quill, please report to the office. Miss Quill, please report to the office.”

Quill huffed. “Ah, what now?” She groaned as she left the room.

A few moments later, Miss Foreman stuffed her head inside. “Hello?” She called out, “Anyone here?”

Once she was certain she was alone, Miss Foreman scurried into the room. She didn’t know how long it would be before the other teacher realized no one had actually called for her, but she suspected it wouldn’t be long so she had to work quickly. She went over to the desk and started pulling open drawers. In the top one she found what looked like some sort of black and blue ray gun. “Hello.” She said, picking it up, “And what, are you?” She placed it down on the desk and pulled out her phone, taking a picture of it.

She quickly put it back in, closing the drawer. She looked through the other and saw a device that looked like two rectangles put together. This one she didn’t take a picture of. As she put it back in the desk, that was when she caught glance of the terrarium.

Miss Foreman crouched down, looking at the slug-creature. “And what,” She asked, taking out her phone again, “Is she doing with you?” She had been right. Something was definitely going on here.

“Oh, and all I wanted was teaching job and a simple life.”

Miss Foreman put the phone back up just as the bell rang. She stood up and ran from the room.

Unlike Quill, she had a class this period, and it would look bad if she was late for it.

Even later that day, as students poured out of the class Charlie caught Quill giving him the signal that they needed to talk. Unsure what this could be about, and therefore worried, he broke away and walked up to her desk.

April got in the doorway and turned around, “Charlie…” She began.

“He’ll be with you in a moment!” Quill snapped.

April scurried away.

“Are you sure she’s not an alien?” Quill asked, “She seems awfully attached to you.”

“No.” Charlie insisted, “She’s just—nice, that’s all.”

Anyway.” Quill began, before looking around and lowering her voice, “We have a bigger problem. I got a call on the intercom and when I got there they claimed no one had sent for me, and when I got back here, one of the drawers was cracked opened. The one with the scanner.”

Charlie’s eyes widened. “You think someone searched your room?”

“Yes.” Quill answered, “Has anyone taken an unusual interest in you? What about the Maclean
girl? I was thinking alien, but could she just be a spy? Has she said anything about the Veritas movement?"
“No.” Charlie answered, “But remember the teacher that caught us in the hall this morning? Miss Foreman?”
“Yeah.” Quill answered, “What did she do?”
“Apparently you said the wrong last name when you found me.” Charlies explained, “Used Quill instead of Smith.”
Quill’s heart sunk as she remembered the mornings events. That was what happened.
“She caught it.” Charlie continued, “And she asked me about it.”
“And?” Quill asked, “What did you tell her?”
“That you’re my foster mother.” Charlie replied, “But you ever adopted me. But even before that, she was asking what was going on in the hall this morning. I told her I was late for an appointment with you. It seemed like she bought it, but now—“
“You think she’s our little investigator.” Quill finished for him, “Well, now’s there only one thing to do.”
“We can’t kill her.” Charlie protested.
“I wasn’t going to kill her.” Quill retorted, “I do have some restraint. “She pulled open a drawer, and took out an orange bottle, “But Toni did leave us with an emergency supply of these.” She shook the bottle.
As he walked into the classroom, Charlie walked by Miss Foreman’s desk as casually as he could, his heart beating rapidly. Sure enough, there was a mug of milky tea.
Charlie pulled the vail out from his jacket and carefully poured a pill out into the brew, before walking off.
Okay then,” Miss Foreman at the end of that class, “Everyone, read chapter ten for the next period.”
Just then the bell rang and the kids started to leave. Charlie looked back, and saw Miss Foreman sitting down and putting the mug to her lips, taking a sip. Feeling a flicker of guilt, he ran from the room.
As soon sure as she was sure Charlie was gone, Miss Foreman spat out the brew. Standing up she peered outside to make sure no one was there to witness what she was about to do next, as it raised questions, and took her cup to the nearest bathroom.
She poured the cup out into the sink then threw some water in her mouth, trying to wash out any traces, spitting it out. “Okay,” She said aloud to herself, looking in the mirror, “So he’s in on it, too.”
Quill and Charlie stood in silence, looking down at the phone on desk when Quill asked, “And you’re sure, she drank it? You saw her?”
“Yes, I saw her.” Charlie replied trying not to sound exasperated as that was the fifth time she had asked that.
“Still, add her to a list of things to keep an eye on.” Quill instructed, “Now that we have a confirmed alien incursion we don’t need anyone snooping where they shouldn’t. How’s the little guy doing by the way?”
Charlie checked under the desk. “He seems okay. Did you give him something?”
“Yeah, he ate a piece a lettuce I gave him earlier but it looked like he still might be hungry so I found a couple of pieces of bread and threw it in.” Quill admitted.
Suddenly Charlie smirked. “Mum, are you getting attached to the Gurlp?”
“No.” Quill balked, “I merely don’t want the thing to starve. It’s called not being a sadist.” After a moment she added, “And you’re the last one who should be saying anything. Your ‘can we keep it’ phase was terrible. Everything that you could catch you wanted to keep as a pet. Feral dogs, cats, frogs, a raccoon on one memorable occasion. Any aliens we encored that didn’t immediately try to kill us. One time, you actually brought over a bar waitress and asked if we could keep her. Oh, she thought it was funny but we were all mortified. After that we were able to get it through to you that you do no keep sentient creatures as pets.”
Charlie searched his memory, trying to recall the incident.
“You were pretty young, maybe about, um, six when the waitress incident happened.” Quill said, as if reading his mind, “You probably don’t remember.”
“I think should be able remember six.” Charlie replied, still trying to recall the incident, “I think I sort of remember what you’re talking about.”
“Then can you tell me what possessed you to do it?” Quill asked.
“I can’t remember it that well.” Charlie told her, “I just remember—liking her.”
“I don’t whether or not to be worried.” Quill almost deadpanned.
“Trust me, Mum, you have nothing to worry about.” Charlie assured her.
“You’re a teenager, I’m not supposed to trust you.” Quill retorted, then threw her head back, “You know what, no one’s gonna call, so onto Plan B.”
“And Plan B is?” Charlie asked.
Quill pulled out a small pistol. “Search until we find something.” She handed the gun to Charlie. Charlie took the gun only to have Quill put her hands over his, “Aim for the largest area of mass, only pull the trigger if you want to shoot something, and never point it at yourself.”
“Okay.” Charlie agreed, as if he didn’t already know how to properly shoot the gun.
Quill narrowed her eyes and made sure Charlie was looked directly at her as she said, “And I lead point, you got that?”
“Yes, ma’am.” Charlie replied.
“Good.” Quill decreased, “Now come on.”
They quickly exited, Quill shutting the door behind them. “Stay safe little guy.” She whispered where Charlie thankfully couldn’t hear, then they were off.
They walked in stealthy silence, on high alert for any sign of trouble. Quill turned the corner with her gun out, ready to fire, as did Charlie, close behind her. Suddenly they heard growling from a hallway. Quill froze. “Charles,” She began, “Do you hear that?”

“Animalistic growling?” Charlie responded, secretly thrilled that he wasn’t going mad, “Yeah, I do.”

“Stay behind me.” Quill ordered as they descended down the hall. The growling got louder and then Quill was thrown against the far wall by an invisible force. A visible force with very sharp claws.

Charlie shot at their attacker, and there suddenly a ripple, momentarily revealing a wolfish shaped creature with red and blue scales. He shot again, but it seemed to have no effect, then the creature disappeared again.

“So, that’s how it does it.” Charlie whispered.

“What?!” Quill said, managing to get one of the legs off her. Well, at least she thought it was a leg. “Nothing!” Charlie covered, shooting again, forcing the creature to reveal itself again. Quill kicked the creature soft underbelly, causing the creature to back up, allowing her to free herself. She scrambled, getting her gun, and firing at the creature.

The creature fell as the blast of light hit it. Its movement slowed and his breathing became raspy and pained. Quill walked over to it and delivered the killing blow. She turned around and ordered calmly, “Charles, fetch a tarp.”

After managing to find a plastic blue tarp and they dragged the body outside. The place was mercifully empty, but the street light like suddenly felt like they were blaring down strait on them.

“We can’t go the whole way like this.” Quill declared, “We’re going to get our damn selves caught. “She looked around and caught sight of something she thought would help.

Okay, we’re gonna sit this down for a minute.”

“What?” Charlie balked, still holding onto his end of the body.

“Don’t question, just do it.” Quill ordered.

Charlie sat down his end, at the same time Quill did hers, and then the woman walked off. He made to follow her but then she called back, “No, stay with the corpse!”

“Where are you going?!” Charlie called out to her.

“To find something to make this easier.” Quill answered, “Now cover it up before someone sees it.”

Charlie folded the tarp on either side, covering most of the creature expect of the creature save a small line in the middle. After that there was nothing to but stand around waiting awkwardly for his guardian while looking around for any civilians who might stumble upon the scene. A couple of concerned adults stopped and asked if he needed a ride somewhere, but he turned them down, especially one that was rather persistent. He grabbed pencil and scrap of paper and jotted down the license plate number after that one, in case another boy went missing the next morning and he needed to make an anonymous tip to police.

Finally, a black mini-van pulled up. The window rolled down, revealing Quill.

“You stole a car?” Charlie asked as Quill gracefully stepped out of vehicle.

“What makes you think that?” Quill responded, not playing innocent, but not completely sarcastic either.

“The windows on the other side’s broken out.” Charlie began, then looking at the back and seeing a grouping of what looked like two adults and two children, said, “And there’s a stick figure family on the back.”

“Just open the trunk.” Quill ordered.

After he did that they each took an end of the body and put it in the back. Or tried to at least. “This is going to be a tight fit.” Quill groaned, bending the legs and getting it to go in. A few more shoves, the body was in.

They road in silence until Charlie stated the obvious question, “What are going to do with the body?”

“Figure out what it is.” Quill answered, “Autopsy maybe. Then figure out how it got here.”
“And the car?” Charlie asked.
“Burn it and dump it somewhere no one can tie it to us.” Quill replied casually.
“Mum!” Charlie exclaimed.
“What?” Quill exclaimed back.
“This belongs to someone!” Charlie protested, “Someone with kids.” He grabbed small stuffed toy kitten that someone had left and said, “They left things in here. We have to at least give them a chance to find it.”
“Charles, there’s evidence of us all over this car.” Quill responded, “Residue from the tarp or dried blood from our friend back there, my fingerprints, your fingerprints, which you just put on that cat by the way, I’m pretty sure I cut my elbow breaking in the car, and that thing clawed me, and I’ve been skipping injections so add possible off-colored blood on the upholstery to the list.
“Wait, you’ve been injured this whole time and you didn’t say anything?” Charlie asked.
“Really?” Quill replied, “That’s your takeaway?”
“Yes.” Charlie answered, “Yes, it is. Now how bad is it?”
“It’s just flesh wound.” Quill insisted, “Nothing to wine about especially while there are bigger fish to fry and nothing to go on about either. I’ll take care of it when we get to the house.”
“You do know your versions of ‘wining’ and ‘going on’ about something are different from everybody else’s?” Charlie responded.
“Now, you just sound like the others.” Quill informed him.
“Do you need me to drive?” Charlie offered.
“I’m not bleeding enough I might pass out!” Quill exclaimed, “Let’s just get to the house, stitch it up, so we can move on.”
When they got back to the house, Quill found the medical kit. The injuries hadn’t been as deep as they thought, but she still needed stitches. At least she allowed Charlie to do the stitching instead of doing it herself, though she refused any form of pain killer.
“It’s not even that strong.” Charlie insisted, pausing in his work, to pick up the glass from the kitchen counter beside her, “It’s just a little white willow and poppy, won’t even knock you out, just deaden the pain.”
“For the fifth time, I’m fine.” Quill insisted, starting to get little fed up by his constant asking, “This is not my first rodeo, as I believe the saying goes, you worry too much.”
“Or you don’t worry enough.” Charlie countered.
“Now I know I let you spend too much time with the others.” Quill commented, partly to him, partly to herself. Indeed, she and Toni Jo had made a similar exchange time and again, “Just get on with it.”
He started stitching, then finally tied it off. “That’s it.” He declared, stepping away.
“Now come on,” She said, leaping off the counter, “We have work to do.”
The body was laid out on the tarp in the living room. The aliens walked over to it and Quill pulled out the scanner. Its blue light descended on it and within a minute the ping from the morning was heard again. “Okay,” Quill began, reading off the screen, “We’re dealing with a Mog. It’s a predator from the same planet as the Gurlp, which is one of its food sources’, have the ability to make themselves invisible, usually travel in packs, but lone ones are not unheard of, looks like this is an adolescent.”
“How did they get here?” Charlie wondered.
“That’s the big question, isn’t it?” Quill responded, then started whispering out loud to herself. “No UFOs, no deaths that match the descriptions of its attacks. Then we got a bunch of odd-ball disappearances and death and weird energy readings. None of this makes sense.” Then, suddenly, it hit her. “No. It couldn’t be.”
“What?” Charlie asked, “Couldn’t be what?”
Quill, however was halfway across the room, pulling out the scans they had taken, and started playing them. “No,” She repeated, “No, no, no, this can’t be possible. Things like that don’t just appear out of the blue.”
Quill however, was either ignoring him or was so absorbed in her speculation she actually didn’t hear him, instead dialing number on her phone. “Come on, come on, come on.” She chanted, then said, “Toni, it’s Quill, I think I might know what’s going on here. But I need you to send me reading from the Riff, I know you have them, send them to the moment you get this.” Then with that, she hung up.

“The Riff?” Charlie repeated, “You mean, like the one in Cardiff?”
“Yes, exactly.” Quill said, reading more scans, “Remember how the other day I said these looked like the signals from the Riff?”

Charlie thought back before saying, “Yes.”

“Well, what if, and I know this is a stretch, somehow this is Riff in time and space as well?” Quill spectacled, “Things would make a lot more sense. At the very least it would explain the randomness of it all.”

“But how is that even possible?” Charlie countered, “From what I understand things like that, just don’t pop up overnight. They’re either natural or some sort of force to make it.”

Quill froze for a minute, thinking. “Charles”, she began finally, “Where are the missing person and death reports?”

Two hours later, the reports were all across the walls of their living room, going back from the most recent to the first anyone could remember.

“Okay, so here is where things really picked up, over the last few years, the entirety of the 2010s.” Quill recapped.

“There’s still incents from earlier, but significantly less.” Charlie continued, from his side of the room, “Actually, some of these probably have terresial explanations.”

“Then nothing,” Quill mused, making her way around the room, “Except for the disappearance of two teachers in the 1960s. Ian Chesterton and Barbra Wright. Apparently, they went to check on a student at home one day, didn’t come back. Well, not exactly true, eventually they did, they just wouldn’t tell a soul what happened. And the now the woman’s having a building name after her.” She glanced over to her charge, “Seems a little odd, don’t you think?”

“People do go missing.” Charlie replied, not seeing the connection, as that was the only incident on that part of the wall, “And sometimes they do come back.”

“Yes, but rarely do they refuse to tell anyone what happened to them, especially when their love ones were freaking out, and they don’t get to keep their jobs.” Quill countered, “And they just picked up where they left off, almost like nothing ever happened. Trust me, something is not right.” She took the picture of the female teacher off the wall, “So if we find them, we might fine our first solid lead.”

Meanwhile, something was happening across the school. An invisible creature was lumbering its way through the school, looking for its offspring.

They had been in this strange place for two days. The younger Mog had followed its prey off from the pack, she had gone after him, and somehow, they had wound up there. They had been hiding in the shadows, hungry, scared. The younger one had tried to prey on the mysterious creature that inhabited this place, but she had stopped, not sure if they were safe to eat.

She caught sent of her cub’s smell, as well as two others. She had smelled them before. They were different from the others. She stopped in front of scene where it looked like somehow a fight had occurred. She saw a trickle of bright red liquid. It smelted like had come from the female creature, maybe.

Then she saw another spot of blood. This time it was from her cub.
And there was the smell of death in the air.

The Mog reared her head back, letting out a roar of angry morning for her cub.

Those creatures were going to pay.
An Unexpected Date

Chapter Summary

While investigating the missing hikers Toni Jo has two surprising encounters.


As Toni Jo sent the requested scans she pulled out her phone. “Come on, come on, Quill, picked up.” She murmured until a robotic voice said, “You have reached the voice mail of—“Then Quill’s voice saying, “Why am I doing this? They’re calling me, shouldn’t—please leave a message after the tone.” Toni Jo rolled her eyes. Was Quill ever going to fix that? “Quill, I sent you the scans you wanted. Please call me back and tell me what’s going on.” She hung up then turned to Gwen. “Couldn’t reach her?” Gwen guessed.

“Got her answering machine.” Toni Jo answered, “Guess that’s fair, all things considered, “So, what have we got on our missing hikers?”

“Angelia and Seely Harper,” Gwen began, “Ages 20 and 22, married for one year, Angelia was going to nursing school, Seely was a locksmith, they both loved hiking, as we know, the last time anybody heard from them was a week ago when Angelia told her sister they were going out. She came by the next day and they had vanished into thin air.”

“And we’re sure they didn’t just go on a trip and didn’t tell anyone?” Toni Jo asked.

“Okay, doesn’t leave out terrestrial foul play.” Toni Jo reasoned, “Did they have any enemies?”

“No.” Gwen answered, “From everything I’ve gathered they’re just another young couple starting out. They most sinister thing about them is that they stumbled on Prudence and Jacob.”

Toni Jo’s heart plummeted. “You don’t think they could’ve sneaked away and somehow got to them before us, and did something to them, do you? I mean, they seem like good kids, but—people snap all the time.”

“Maybe it doesn’t.” Toni Jo suggested, “Maybe it’s just a coincidence.”

“Toni,” Gwen began, “When do we ever get that lucky?”

It was true. If some odd occurrence happened during the case, even if seemed impossible for the two events to be related, they usually were.

“Are you sure?” Toni Jo asked. She knew Gwen knew that she had been working with the couple longer than Toni Jo had, if only for a few days more, but still, that also might tint her perspective.

“Yes, I’m sure. Besides, how would they even get here?” Gwen insisted, then running her hands through her said, “I just don’t see how it fits.”

“Maybe it doesn’t.” Toni Jo suggested, “Maybe it’s just a coincidence.”

Toni Jo asked. She knew Gwen knew that she had been working with the couple longer than Toni Jo had, if only for a few days more, but still, that also might tint her perspective.

“Toni,” Gwen began, “When do we ever get that lucky?”

It was true. If some odd occurrence happened during the case, even if seemed impossible for the two events to be related, they usually were.

“So, what clues do we got?” Toni Jo asked.

“Just then, Gwen’s phone went off. She looked down at it, then said, “Sorry, but, it’s Rhys, so I better take this.”

“Oh, sure.” Toni Jo replied as Gwen got up and took the call into the bathroom.

“Hey, Rhys.” Gwen said in the bathroom, “Everything okay?”

“Yeah, I just thought you’d like to know I got Pru and Jacob set up in an apartment.” Rhys informed her.

“Really?” Gwen exclaimed, “How?”

“We had enough together to get them passed.” Rhys explained, “Plus I might have bribed the
landlord to look the other way for a couple of weeks.”
“You mean we’ve been trying to get them in the system for a week and it was that simple?!” Gwen
asked in disbelief.
“Well, at that’s something you can check off the to-do list.” Rhys reasoned.
“Yeah, something we can all be grateful for.” Gwen commented.
“I take it things aren’t going well.” Rhys guessed.
“The hikers are missing.” Gwen replied.
“What?” Rhys asked, as, honestly, that did need some context to make sense.
“When we got to Bristol we found out from the girl’s sister that they’ve been missing for a week.”
Gwen explained, “We’re trying to figure out how, or even if, it’s connected to what they saw. Hey,
they’ve been with you all day, right? Prudence and Jacob?”
“Yeah, everyone’s here.” Rhys confirmed, “If this is your kind of thing, it wasn’t them.”
“Oh, thank God.” Gwen berthed. While unlikely as it was they were involved, it would be so
humiliating if she had been wrong.
“I take it this means you’re going to be gone longer.” Rhys guessed.
“Yeah.” Gwen answered, “Sorry.”
“It’s alright.” Rhys said, though if he were being honest, he was a bit annoyed, “I get it, a lot’s
going on right now.”
“I can tell Toni Jo I have to go-” Gwen began, sensing his irritation despite his efforts to hide it.
“No, it’s alright.” Rhys said, sincerely, “She shouldn’t be doing this alone right now.” Since
Torchwood Four had appeared in Wales—well, regularly appearing in Wales, both members of the
couple had come to consider the group their friends. “I’m here if you need anything.”
“Thanks.” Gwen replied, “I love you.”
“You to.” Rhys said before hanging up.
She walked back into the main room to find Toni Jo had changed from the jeans and strategically
cut shirt, to a dark jacket and slacks and a green dress shirt.
“What are you suddenly dressed up so nice for?” Gwen asked.
“Because.” Toni Jo began, pulling out her phone, “The only way we are going to get anywhere is if
we get in one the police investigation, and there are only two ways we’re doing that: Option A, me
being able to call in one of Dad’s favor, or use one of his blackmails, or B, us pulling an Bavarian
fire drill. I’m preparing for both.” She handed out a thin fold of leather to Gwen.
Gwen looked at it, and her eyes widened. “This is an MI-5 badge.”
“Yep.” Toni Jo replied casually.
Gwen turned it around, revealing that her face on the ID. “An MI-5 badge with my picture on it?”
“Yeah, I had Fox make it a couple of years ago, just in case.” Toni Jo answered, paused for a
minute, then said, “That’s not normal, is it? I’m sorry, I sometimes forget.”
“No, no, having a fake MI-5 badge is not normal.” Gwen informed, “Do you have one of these?”
“Yes, everyone on the team does.” Toni Jo said, again, a bit too casually given the conversation
matter, “Well, except for Charlie, but, no one’s going to believe he’s agent, no matter how serious
he looks.”
“Oh, well, that’s good.” Gwen said sarcastically, “It’s good to know that you don’t have children
passing themselves off as MI-5 agents!”
Finally, whoever Toni Jo was calling picked up. “Mr. Hastings.” She said, “How have you been?”
“Who is this?” A man’s voice replied.
“Antoinette Callahan.” She answered, “I’m Christopher Callahan’s daughter.”
“That old salt’s got his daughter doing his dirty work now?” Mr. Hastings challenged.
Toni Jo froze for a moment. She was operating under the impression that her father was on good
terms with this guy, but now it sounded like he might begrudge whatever favor he owned him, or
was perhaps being blackmailed. “He’s unwell.” She answered finally, “And I’m actually the one
who needs help.”
“Oh.” Mr. Hastings responded, sounding a bit embarrassed, “So what do you need?”
“Access to Bristol police investigation.” Toni Jo answered, then explained the situation. Well, most
of it at least.
“Tell you what,” Mr. Hastings said, once she was finished, “I should be able to get you want you need, just give me a few hours, and I’ll call you back.”
“Okay,” Toni Jo said, before giving the man her number and hanging up.
“So?” Gwen asked.
“He’ll get back to us,” Toni Jo answered.
“So, what do we do in the meantime?” Gwen questioned.
“Well, the way I see it we have two options,” Toni Jo reasoned, “We can either wait him out or you can try out your new badge.”
“We’ll wait him out,” Gwen said flatly, sitting down on her motel bed.
And wait him out they did. They both stared at the phone well into the night, eventually falling asleep. Sometime around four a.m. they were awoken by sound of Toni Jo’s phone going off. The redhead quickly picked it up, saying, “Hello?”
“Okay, I got all the information from the case so far,” Mr. Hastings said, getting right to the point, “I’m sending one of my best people with it for you. When and where can you meet him?”
So, they set up a time and date, and Toni Jo was left with enough time to prepare. It also gave her time to get back in contact with Quill.
“This sounds a lot like a date.” Quill said over the speaker phone, “Are you going on a date while we’re dealing with all this-madness?!”
“I’m not going on date.” Toni Jo corrected, standing shirtless in front of the bathroom mirror, rubbing a brownish, speckled gel into her neck, “I’m just meeting with an asset to receive intel.”
“Oh-hun.” Quill replied, “A meeting that’s happening at a pub?”
“We’ve met assets in weirder places.” Toni Jo reasoned, putting her shirt back on, “And I’m still wearing the government suit. Why would I wear the government suit if this was a date? Look, what can you tell me about these teachers? The ones you think are connected to this—whatever this is?”
“Not much.” Quill admitted, “We spent all night trying to find anything else on them. It’s like someone erased them from existence. However, we were able to find one teacher who was close to Wright out in a nursing home out in Kent. I’ve called for a cover for a few days and I’m gonna head up there.”
“Alone?” Toni Jo asked, “What about Charlie?”
“We were going to go together, but then they might notice if we were both gone.” Quill reasoned, “Plus someone has to stay to keep an eye on things, so-“
“So, I take it that means Fox’s not there yet.” Toni Jo sighed, “Wait, why would they notice both of you gone?”
“Well, the new teacher and the new transfer student are absent on the same day,” Quill reasoned, “Might raise a few eyebrows at least, don’t you think?”
Toni Jo knew there was more to the story. “Andra’ath, what aren’t you telling me?”
Quill was silent then for a moment then said, “Charles ran off half-cock and when I found him I was so furious I called him by his full name. Only I used his actual last name.”
“Okay.” Toni Jo responded slowly, “So did anyone hear this?”
“An English teacher.” Quill admitted, “Miss Foreman.”
“What?!” Toni Jo exclaimed, turning around as if Quill was actually in the room with her, “Why wasn’t I informed of this?!”
“Well, you’ve been a little hard to reach lately!” Quill reminded her, “Anyway, Charles handled it. When she asked him about it later, he told them that I was his foster mother, but never formally adopted him for reason, therefore it still says Smith on all the forms.”
Toni Jo let out a sigh of relief. As long as this teacher didn’t look into it any further, they should be alright. “Okay, anything else?”
“Are you using your empath abilities on me? “Quill asked.
“You know very well that it doesn’t work over long distances.” Toni Jo snapped, “Now, tell what else I don’t know.”
“Someone lured me out of my classroom and searched it.” Quill finally gave up.
“What?!” Toni Jo exclaimed. So much for them being alright.
“Calm down!” Quill demanded. “We think it was Miss Foreman, so Charles slipped her an amnesia pill. So far nothing else has happened, so apparently it worked.”
“Wait a second, back up, um, you had Charlie, do it?” Toni Jo reacted.
“Well, he had a class with her, he had an excuse to be there, it made the most logical sense.” Quill reasoned. “Now, before you say anything, he did perfectly, he got in, he found an opening, the woman left a mug of tea on her desk right for anyone to mess with, he got them in without anyone noticing and he got out. If you repeat it I’ll deny it, but I’m actually quite proud.”
“Ah, they grow up so fast, don’t they?” Toni Jo quipped.

Quill deflected, “I’ll contact you if I find out anything. Or Fox shows up.”
“Or, if anything else go wrong.” Toni Jo added with an insistent tone.

Quill rolled her eyes.

"Yeah, yeah. See you later."

Toni Jo said before hanging up.

Then she turned back to face the mirror and sighed.

A few hours Toni Jo walked into a pub called The Dew Drop Inn, looking around for anyone who matched the description of the liaison she was told would give her the file.

She looked to the bar and saw a man with neatly cut brown hair, dressed in dark clothes. She stopped blocking and focused on him. He was who she was looking for.

“John Henry Davenport?” Toni asked in a low tone, sitting down next to him.

“And you must be Ms. Callahan.” The man replied.

“Dr. Callahan.” Toni corrected him, sitting down, “So, do you, have it?”

John Henry pulled a thing tan file out of his jacket. “Everything we know about the disappearances of Angelia and Seely Harper.”

“Thanks.” Toni replied, reaching for the document, only to have it pulled back from her.

“Oh, uh, uh.” John Henry tutted, “Not until I buy you at least one drink first.”

“This isn’t a date.” Toni informed him tersely, “You were told to give me the file, so give me the file.”

“I did a favor to someone I owe, risking my job,” John Henry corrected her.

“Wait,” Toni interjected, “You’re one of the detectives on the case?”

“I’m a detective, yes.” John Henry admitted, “But I’m not working on the case, making this all the more likely to come back and bite me, all the more reason I want to know what I stuck my neck out for, Dr. Callahan.”

Toni stopped blocking emotions long enough to get a feel on him. He really was who he said he was, meant no harm. He just wanted and explanation. Then she sighed. “Alright, but I’ll need at least two old-fashions.”

John Henry smiled. “Well, then, at least two old-fashions coming right up.”

And so, John Henry proceeded to try to get a straight answer out of Toni Jo, who had mastered the art of vague answers, and had an alcohol tolerance only rivaled by Quill. (Something she neglected to her host.) However, they did talk about some other things.

“So, I’m an only child,” John Henry was saying, “Which my mum points out telling me that I’m the only hope was carrying out the family line every time she tries to set me up. So, what about you? Any siblings?”

“Ah, two sisters actually.” Toni replied, “And between them I have two nieces and a nephew. “

“And ah, are you close?” John Henry asked.

“I was close with Innocenta, Innocenta, that’s my younger sister, when we were little.” Toni explained, “At school, our parents sent us off to boarding, she would always sneak into the older dorms to spend the night with me. Half my roommates loved it, like our own little slumber party, and the other half thought we were freaks.” She laughed at the memory, then he smiled faded as she continued, “But then as we got older, we just started—drifting. Like, we started wanting different things you know? She wanted a normal life, and I—I was looking for some sort of deeper purpose.”

“I’m sorry, back up a second.” John Henry requested, “Normal life? Deeper purpose?”

“Our family was somewhat—unconventional, mainly as a result of my dad’s work, hence the
boarding school,” Toni Jo explained, “And, once she got into the teenage years, Innocence just wanted out. So, she wound up running off to France with a banker, married said banker, adopting the twins, and keeping a house while selling make-up from a catalog. Me, I went off to pre-med, then med school, worked in an ER for a while before finally getting recruited for a family business. Now we talk on the phone, a few post-cards and letters, maybe see each other in person three times a year if we’re lucky. I mean, the girls are happy when they see me—but—it’s hard to actually get to know them, you know.” She looked down into glass. She didn’t like where this was going. The whole point was to avoid talking about the deep stuff.

“I’m sorry,” John Henry said genuinely, “I shouldn’t have gone down this road. We don’t—we don’t have to talk about this anymore.”

“No, it’s alright.” Toni Jo assured him, “It’s not your fault.” Then she downed the rest of her drink. “Can I ask you just one more thing?” John Henry requested, “Just one, I promise.”

“I already know I’m gonna regret this.” Toni Jo sighed, “Alright.”


“Well my other sister’s name is Andrea” Toni Jo explained.

“Antionette and Andrea.” John Henry tried the names on his tongue, “Has a nice ring to it. Twins?”

“Not exactly.” Toni Jo replied, “But me and her, we are close. We know everything about each other, we’ve practically raised a child together, she’s willing to do the things I can’t. I honestly don’t know where I’d be without Quill anymore.”

“Quill?” John Henry repeated.

Crap, I did say that, didn’t I? Toni Jo thought, panicking. How did she let that slip out? She was getting way too comfortable with this man if she was making Rookie mistakes like that. “It’s a nickname.” Toni Jo quickly covered, “Because she can, um, be a bit prickly.” Technically speaking that wasn’t untrue. “But, there’s a good person in there, deep down. I mean, she has pulled my fanny out of the fire more times than I can count.” She looked down at her phone, “Whoa, look at the time, I really need to get going. So, have I earned the file yet?”

John Henry smirked. “Well, I never did get a straight answer on my question.” He began, “But I did just put you through a lot, so- “He slid the file over to her.

Toni Jo accepted, stuffing it into the over-sized purse she brought to hide it. “Thank you.”

As she slid off the stool, he copied her. “But I must insist I walk you home.” John Henry informed her.

Toni Jo narrowed her eyes. “Why?”

“For one thing, it is my thought you are out at this late hour.” John Henry reasoned, “Plus, there’s kidnapper on the loose. Who knows what could happen?”

Toni Jo stopped blocking again and did not find what she was expecting to. Instead of the lust she thought this was leading to, but rather, a genuine concern for her safety, covered with humor. Deciding to indulge him, she smiled. “Okay.”

Even with her entire being on high alerts for danger, from whatever had taken the Harpers or newfound companion, said companion made the walk somewhat pleasant.

“So, a priest, a rabbi and a minster walk into a bar.” John Henry was saying, “You know what the bar tender says?”

“What is this, a joke?” Toni Jo deduced. She didn’t need to unblock for that. She had heard that joke before.

“You’ve heard it before.” John Henry correct guessed.

Before Toni Jo to answer she saw a gray statute. It was an angel, like the one she had saw the other day, expect its eyes were covered. She stopped walking. “Hey, what’s that?”

“What’s what?” John Henry responded.

“That statue.” Toni Jo answered, pointing over to it, “Over there.”

John Henry looked where she was pointing and saw it. “That wasn’t there before.” He declared. He
looked both ways, and seeing the street clear for the moment, began to walk over to it.
“Wait!” Toni Jo called out, following after him. He may be a cop, but in her world, he was still civilian. “I don’t think we should go over there. Not alone and unarmed, at least. It would be dangerous.”
John Henry turned to look at her. “It’s a statue. A randomly appearing statue, but still. How dangerous could it be?”
“You have no idea how famous those last words are,” Toni Jo responded.
That was when it happened. They felt a clawed hand wrap around an arm a piece, one for each of them, then suddenly they couldn’t see and their bodies felt-strange. Not in pain, just strange. Then, next thing they were aware of they both lying on the ground in some kind of grassy field. And it was daylight.
Toni Jo quickly got to her feet, surveying her surroundings. “I told you.” She breathed.
Quill's Day.

Chapter Summary

Exactly what it says on the tin, folks. Quill goes to Kent, where she learns things that lead to much longer-- and stranger-- journey.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The bus ride to Kent was frustratingly long. Quill just sat with her head against the glass, going over the information she had. The woman she was going to see was Alma Hicks. She was an English teacher at the same time Barbara Wright was teaching science and according to some reports they were close, or at least knew each other, and now she was living in Sundown Meadows, an unfortunately named rest home. She really wished she had more. She also wished she had an aisle seat because they were easier to escape from. Oh well, she’d figure it out if she needed to.

When she arrived, she flashed her badge at the woman at the front desk. “Katherine Kline, MI-5. I need to speak with one of your residents.”

A nurse led her down a hall, stopping at room near the end, and knocking on the side. “Mrs. Hicks,” The nurse called out, “Someone’s here to see you.”

Five minutes later Quill was set down at table while an elderly, white-haired woman in a light blue dress set a cup of tea in front of her. As Quill took a sip of it the Alma sat down across from her. She didn’t actually like tea, but Alma had insisted, and Quill had found that rough-handling of the elderly wasn’t socially acceptable, and she did need her to talk after all.

“Now, you say you wanted to talk about Barbara Wright?” Alma checked, “I haven’t thought about her in years.”

“Actually, I was hoping you could specifically talk about the events surrounding hers and Ian Chesterfield’s disappearance.” Quill elaborated, “Apparently when it happened they were checking on a student”

“Yes, Susan Foreman.” Alma replied, “I didn’t have her in my class, but I heard about her. Quite the odd one apparently.”

“Whoa, wait, back up a minute.” Quill requested, “Did you say the kid’s name was Susan Foreman?”

“Yes.” Alma, “Barbara wanted to talk to her grandfather, he was her guardian, apparently, but when she went to the address the girl gave her, it was just a junk yard.”

This might explain some things. Quill thought, but said out loud, urgently, “Mrs. Hicks, I need to know what that address was.”

That afternoon, Quill was back in London, on 76 Totter’s Lane walked up the I. M. Foreman junkyard. Someone wasn’t very creative with their alias. She thought as she walked in through the unopened gate, calling, “Hello?” No answer. “Okay, this is weird.”

Quill wasn’t sure what exactly she was looking for, in fact, she was pretty sure that after fifty years they wouldn’t be any evidence to what happened, but she was not going back empty-handed, she just wasn’t. It was a manner of principle at this point.

Suddenly she heard a faint rustling behind her. Normal human hearing might not have picked it up, but she was not a human. She whirled around and saw faint movement from the pile of trash. She positioned herself for a fight, pulling out her gun, until she heads a faint mew and little spick of orange popped up.
"Hello, there." Quill said gently, putting away the weapon and walking over to the kitten. She had a bit of a soft spot for cats. She respected their intelligence, cunning and predatory nature. Also, their ability to plaster a look of utter contempt on their face at the least little infraction. The little orange creature, clawed at her rescuer, hissing in protest. "Hey." Quill snapped, putting the kitten in her coat, "You’re lucky it was me that found you, instead of some future serial killer looking for practice. The cat always gets screwed in that deal.” She walked through the holding the kitten tight in the covering, “As for me, well, after I finish looking around, provided I don’t find something that needs my immediate attention, I’m gonna get you some place warm, a shelter or something. Nothing personal, but I took you home they’d never let me live it down.” She looked up at the sky and whispered, “And I’m talking to a kitten.”

A few seconds later a voice behind her called out, “Hey! What are you doing here?!”

She turned around to see a young man, barely older than Charlie, really, if his appearance was any indication, in an orange vest, looking at her questioningly.

Not missing a beat, Quill responded, “Well, I could ask the same of you.”

"Ah, I work for the sanitation department." The young man explained, "Being here is part of my job."

“Well, I’m also doing my job.” Quill responded.

“Which is?” The young sanitation worker asked.

“Animal control.” Quill came up with. Then as it to help her story, the kitten poked its head out of her coat. “See? We’ve had report of a feline attacking people.”

“I don’t think that’s the cat your looking for.” The young sanitation worker informed her, “In fact, he kind of seems like the runt of the litter.”

“Don’t let its size fool you.” Quill retorted defensively, “Small things can be very dangerous.”

Just then, as if on cue, something green burst from the garbage truck next to the boy and suddenly two tentacles were around the boys’ neck.

Just as fast as it had happened, Quill was on the creature with a knife, stabbing the tentacle until it was halfway detached, and the creature let go of its prey. Still Quill grabbed its by is good tentacle and pulled it out of the truck, revealing a disproporiately small, disk-shaped creature. Then she pulled her out her gun and shot it dead. She then turned around and addressed the young sanitation worker. “You see? That thing was only slightly bigger than the cat and it nearly killed you.”

The boy didn’t say anything, just got to his feet and ran away.

Oh, great. Quill thought, starting after the boy. She quickly tackled him, struggling with him on the ground as she tumbled to get the bottle of pills, out of her pocket. She got an amnesia pill out, and forced into the boy’s mouth, covering it. “Swallow it!” She demanded, “Swallow!” After a moment she added, “Look, I’m not trying to poison you, just swallow it!”

The terrified young man finally gave in swallowing the pill. “There!” Quill exclaimed, letting him up, “Was that so hard?”

“You’re mad lady.” The boy declared, scrambling to his feet, “You’re just—mad!” Then he ran away again.

“You’re welcome for the rescue!” Quill called after him. I hope he gets where he’s going before he passes out. She thought. And that he left his keys in his truck.

She got the truck and tested the door. It opened, and she found the keys still in the ignition. Finally, something was going right today. She then grabbed a white plastic sack, she went to collect the alien corpse, which was being inspected by the orange runt, which she had, had to remove from her coat in the fracas.

“You’re still here?” Quill asked in surprise, carefully picking up the blob and putting it into the makeshift evidence bag. When the kitten tried to fight against its new-found toy being take away by batting at Quill’s finger, the woman shouted, “Hey! I’m doing you another favor. You have no clue when this had been, or even if it’s edible.” She then got up, grabbing the kitten with her free hand. “Come on.”

She hurried to the cab of the truck getting in, setting the kitten in the passenger seat and the bag on the dash-board, then drove off, wanting to find somewhere private to find whose garbage the alien
had come from. Unfortunately, that was easier said than done. For one thing, she couldn’t tell which slime came from the alien and which was just from fifth. For another, it was the most nondescript garbage known to man.

“These people eat a lot of Chinese.” She commented on one pile, before going over to the side and pulling out her phone again, and dialed her ward’s number, only to get his voice mail, “Charles, pick up your phone damn it! You’re the fourth person I’ve tried, and this is the fourth time I’ve tried you, I am this close to throwing discretion to the wind, driving up in this truck and dragging you out of there. You know, you better be lying in a ditch somewhere. I know that makes me sound like a terrible mother, and I don’t care. So, call me back.” Then she hung up and slid down the side of the truck, thinking, please don’t actually be lying in a ditch somewhere.

Just then her tired was punctuated by a mew. Quill turned to the orange kitten, who was sitting comfortably curled up on the hood of truck. “Oh, don’t you start.”

Two and half hours later, her search proved fruitless, so she decided to cut her loses, gather what evidence she could and dump the truck. She drove another five miles out of her way to the middle of an empty parking lot in front of an abandoned building douche the truck with lighter fluid. She then took a lighter to it, setting it ablaze, then quickly got a safe distance away.

“And that’s how you do that.” Quill commented, taking a minute to warm her hands, before walking off. As she did her phone went off. She looked down and saw Charlie was finally getting back to her. She picked it up, demanding, “Where the bloody Hell have you been?!”

“I lost my phone.” Charlie explained apologetically, “I only got most of your messages after I found it.”

“Most ?!” Quill balked. “I got your one about Miss Foreman.” Charlie explained, “Where are you, I’ll meet you.”

“Don’t bother I’m on my way home.” Quill responded, her annoyance showing through, “I just have to make one stop first.”

The sun had gone down by the time she actually made it to the animal shelter. A bell went off as she entered, causing a teenage girl doing some kind of paper work at the front desk to look up.

“Just in time, we were about—” The girl’s voice trailed off when she got a good look the woman.

“Yes, I know, you’re probably about to close.” Quill picked up, “Look, I found this kitten, I think it was abandoned, or feral, or possibly both, I didn’t see any other cats around. The point is, can you take it?”

“Uh-Hun.” The girl responded, nodding.

“So, what, do I just hand it to you?” Quill asked, wishing the girl would just get on with it, “Why do you keep staring at me? Is there something on my face?”

The girl slowly pulled a compact mirror from her purse beneath the desk, handing it to Quill. Quill sat the kitten down, taking the mirror and opening it. It took her a minute, but she saw the problem. While on of her eyes was currently icy blue, the other however, was some sort of reddish brown color that didn’t quite look like it belonged on a human eye. The pea-pod shaped pupil only helped aid that impression.

“What, you’ve never seen someone with heterochromia before?” Quill challenged, putting the compact on the counter.

“Uh…but what about your…pupil?” The girl managed to get out.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.” Quill denied, “You might want to get some help young lady.” The she whirled around walking out in high dungeon, not wanting to waste the amnesia pill. However, the moment she was out the door, she covered the offending eye with her hand, running down the street, thinking, Oh crap, oh crap, oh crap.

When she arrived at the house, she barely took time to relock the door before running to the bathroom. Removing her hand from her eye an opened the cabinet above the sink, removing a white contact tray. She opened it and shut the cabinet spontaneously, then using the mirror on the cabinet to carefully place the blue colored contact into her eyes. She looked in the mirror and they
matched again. She wasn’t sure why she didn’t just take the other contact out, since she was in the privacy of the house. Maybe she was just more use to them in now than she was out. More use to blue than reddish brown.

No surgery could change the color of her eyes, or make the pupils round. So, she wore colored contacts, specifically blue, though she did have one set of brown that she didn’t ever use. She use to have some green contacts as well, many years ago, but she had burned them a long time ago.

As she put the tray back something fell from the cabinet. She looked down and froze when she saw what it was. It was a ring made of silver and iron, the iron polished so the it was indistinguishable from the silver, elegantly simple in design, one thing string looped over the other, like an increate braid.

How’d that get there? She thought, picking it up and examining it, much like she did when it was given to her, except instead of astonishment and confusion, she felt a pang of painful betrayal, of humiliation.

One of these days, she thought, I have got to throw this damn thing into the biggest body of water I can find.

Even as she thought it, she knew she wouldn’t. She would always keep it as a reminder never to do that again.

It was then she realized the house was completely silent. Shouldn’t her foundling have come trying to stick his nose in this by now? “Charles?” She called out, turning around. When she didn’t response she called out louder, “Charles!”

As she went down the hall, Quill was starting to get worried. Had he not made it back? Had something happened to him? She opened her mouth again to call out when she came to the doorway of his bedroom and saw laying on the top of said bed, still in his clothes, dead to the world.

Still a bit concerned, she stepped into the room to get a better look at him. Well, he was breathing, that was good sign. She could see what looked like bruises forming on his face, and a little nick on the side of it. His hands were gleaming like there was water poorly dried off on them, and there appeared to be something brown under his fingernails.

Okay, something happened. She thought, reaching out to shake him awake when she noticed something sticking out of his backpack. She took out and discovered the sketchbook he had, had for a couple of years. She started flipping through it She had never taken much interest in her son’s drawings, but just seeing it there, made her slightly curious, and she was finding some things that surprised her. There were creatures they had encountered, a giant centipede-like creature, a be-pedal lizard creature, a weevil, but there also some of the team in very detailed situations. Fox working on a jeep. Toni Jo and Chris leaned over some make shift lab. Murder curled up in a ball, sleeping. Herself and Toni Jo standing next to each other, their hands intertwined. That was one that really surprised her because, due to its placement and the level of skill with which it had been drawn, it seemed fairly recent. Quill couldn’t remember the last the pair had danced. She didn’t care what Toni Jo said, it was not like fighting at all. She flipped a few more pages and found a picture of some boy he had never seen it before. And it was the newest.

“What the Hell?” Quill wondered aloud, then felt staring on the bed and heard a gasp. Charlie sat upright on the bed, looking at her.

“What’s going on?” He managed to ask.

“Really?” Quill deadpanned, “I scream your name throughout the house, but what I just said wakes you up?”

“You-you were calling for me?” Charlie asked.

“Yeah, I had to replace a contact and I noticed I hadn’t heard anything from you.” Quill explained. “What happened to your contact?” Charlie asked, still confused.

“Oh, no you don’t ask the questions here.” Quill informed him, “First off how did you lose your phone, second, why does your face look like you’ve started armature boxing and thirdly,” she pointed to the sketch, “just who is this this?”
Okay, so for several reason, there have been various "Class"-related videos practically on repeat. (It's not as obsessive as it sounds) including the best Quill moments. Eventually I noticed that in Episodes 6-7, at least (at least in close-up scenes) the replacement eye was different color than the other eye and had a different shaped pupil. So that's where that came from. Does anyone know what you would call the color? I'm not sure. Anyway, hope everyone that's reading is still enjoying this.
Charlie's Day

Chapter Summary

Again, exactly what it sounds like. The day from Charlie's perspective, complete with answered for everything at the end of Chapter 8.

Chapter Notes

So, apparently even when I add to notes to the end, the end notes from chapter one still move to the newest chapter. Anyone got any ideas how to stop that? It'd be greatly appreciated.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Charlie stood by the school sign, staring at the building itself intently. It’ll be fine. He thought to himself, whatever this is has been going so slowly, what’s the likelihood of something big happening today? Besides, you’re not a child anymore. You can handle a solo mission. His thoughts were interrupted by the feeling of someone shoving him, causing the books he was holding to fall.

“Too easy, pasho,” His assailant, the same boy from the other day, said as he walked past, “It’s like pushing over a lamb.” Then he walked into the building.

I’ll show pushing over a lamb, Ram Singh. Charlie thought, picking up the books. He had found the boy’s name when looking through the student flies the night before and he was already planning he was going to make regret the day he decided Charlie was easy to knock over. He was raised by a warrior of the Quill after all.

He walked in heading straight to the physics room, carefully looking to make sure no one saw him as he entered. His mother had already had her gun on her and the Glurp was currently at the house, so all he needed to retrieve was the scanner and make sure they hadn’t accidently left anything else that her substitute might find odd.

He unlocked the top drawer and pulled out the scanner, quickly putting it in his backpack. He slammed the door shut, felling a threading pain as he accidently slammed his hand in it. “Gam!” He cursed without thinking. He flinched, then remember there was no one there to slap the back of his head and scold him for his language.

“Never heard that one before.” A voice said from behind him, causing him to turn around and find the boy he had saved the other day standing in the doorway.

“Mateusz.” Charlie declared, trying to not appeared worried, “What are you doing here?”

“I could ask the same of you.” Mateusz replied, smirking at him.

“Miss Quill wanted me to get something for her.” Charlie answered, which technically was true.

“Miss Quill trusted a student to get something for her?” Mateusz blacked.

“Why does everyone fine that so hard to believe?” Charlie asked.

“Because half of us wonder why she even got into teaching?” Mateusz countered.

Unable to help himself, Charlie laughed.

“So, what was that?” Mateusz asked, “What was that word you used?”

“Oh, it’s just a swear word.” Charlie admitted, hopping to dissuade his line of questioning, “Rather like the F-bomb, I shouldn’t have said it.” Only tend times worst. That sleeve had slammed hard
and his new human skin was still sensitive. So, sue him.

Rights of passages varied from culture to culture. In American, it was learning to drive. For the Dahomey Amazons (if sources were to be believed) it was during your own blood mixed with alcohol in a human skull. For Charlie it had been a series of surgeries to make him permanently look human. Replacement skin, reshaping of bones, days in the statis tanks to make sure he actually survived. He didn’t think it was as severe as what his adoptive mother had endured (he knew the removal of her quills had to be excruciating, plus on an emotional level she actually liked what she looked like before) but still it hurt like Hell. But it was worth it. The less Rhodian about him the better. If Toni Jo would have done it sooner he would’ve begged her to. He recovered from the surgeries just in time for this mission.

“To be honest, that didn’t even sound like English.” Mateusz informed him.

“It’s French.” Charlie lied.

“You speak French?” Mateusz responded.

“Yes.” Charlie admitted, sensing that was the quickest way out of it and it was true. Knowing a second language was mandatory requirement for all menders of Torchwood Four, and each of them knew at least one language other than their native tongue, some of them more, and they had taught some of the languages to him, including French.

“And do you usually curse in French?” Mateusz asked, intrigued, and perhaps a bit bewildered.

“I don’t actually curse at all.” Charlie replied, starting to blush, “That just really hurt and it…it just came out.” Suddenly Charlie started a staring contest with his shoes.

Seeing this, Mateusz came to the point. “Listen, I, ah, stopped when I saw you in here because I wanted to ask if you…wanted to walk to maths with me? Provided, you know, you don’t need to give Miss Quill…whatever you were getting for her.” He started to regret deciding to be so bold. Why would he want to do that? Charlie thought, why would I want that?

But, not wanting to draw further questions and seeing an opportunity for further investigation he said, “Sure.”

Charlie shut the door and they walked away in silence.

“So, you’re new right?” Mateusz asked after a few seconds, “This is your first year here?”

“Yes,” Charlie admitted, because, that one was hard to deny, and, what harm would it do?

“Where, ah, where you before this?” Mateusz asked.

“Sheffield.” Charlie lied. That was the cover story wasn’t it?

“What about you? Have you been here, always, like your entire high-school career?”

“High school, yes.” Mateusz answered, “We-me and my family, have been in Britain since I was fifteen.”

“Your English is very good.” Charlie complimented, then worried he had messed up again, added panicked, “I’m sorry, is that wrong? Is that something you’re not supposed to say?”

Mateusz chuckled. “No, it’s alright, the way you said it.” He could tell that Charlie wasn’t being condescending, consciously or unconsciously, that he was completely sincere. “You, ah, speak good French as well.”

Charlie laughed nervously. “You just heard me say one word.”

“But it was a good word.” Mateusz assured him. “Where, ah, did you learn?”

“Foreign language was a requirement at my old school.” Charlie covered, as they walked through the doorway of the class. “Well, this is it.”

“So, it is.” Mateusz replied, almost sadly, before they were forced to separate, if only by a few feet. Both boys struggled to focus for the rest of that period, and Charlie wondered why Mateusz kept glancing at him.

The minute class was over, Charlie immediately fled the room, running to bathroom. He splashed water on his face before looking in the mirror. What is wrong with me? He thought to himself. That was when heard the door open. He looked in the mirror and saw the three thugs from the other day, looking at him. “Well, look who it is.” The leader said, walking towards Charlie with his followers, trying to corner him.

Realizing that this was going nowhere good, Charlie started backing up, looking for some way of escape. Seeing that the only exit was blocked he said, “Look, I don’t want any trouble.”
“Well, maybe you should have thought of that before you stuck your nose into something that didn’t concern you.” The leader replied, then glancing at his lackeys ordered, “Grab him.” The two boys exchanged nervous looks. “Come on, last time was a fluke.” The leader insisted, “We got him right where we want him this time, now go!” “Were you even there last time?” One of the mooks responded, “The bloke’s got skills.” Frustrated the leader turned around. “If we let this thing stand, no one will ever take us seriously again.” He told them, “Do you want that to happen?” The pair was silent for a moment. “Ah….” “That was rhetorical!” The leader snapped, “And the answer was supposed to be no.” While they were fighting Charlie ran into one of the stalls, locking it. He just had to hold his position until they lost interest or someone else came in, because it didn’t seem they wanted witnesses, and he could get out of this. At least that was the plan until the walls started closing in. He had been told it was probably because of the small cage he’d been kept in, in Demark. Charlie didn’t think that could be it, because how could he be so traumatized by something he didn’t even remember? Whatever the case, he was utterly terrified of being in confined spaces, and actually being in one was unbearable. Finished reprimanding his troops, the leader turned around and realized their prey had escaped him. “Hey, where’d he go?” Suddenly Charlie threw himself out of the bathroom with such force he landed on his back. The group lunged on the opportunity, their leader punching Charlie in the face, while one of the lackeys held him down and the other punched his stomach. Charlie let out a groan of pain, then kneed the one closest to his legs in the groin. As that one doubled over in pain, Charlie turned over and fought to get up, pushing away the remaining two attackers. However, before Charlie could even get to his feet, the other two came back for more. It was at that point that by chance, Ram Singh entered the bathroom. Seeing the fight, he turned to leave, then he realized the fight was three on one. This violated the boy’s sense of fair play, so he intervened, pulling the boy currently hitting Charlie and punch him. The boy fell against the sink, looking shocked, both from the blow and from the fact he was not use to being interfering in his games and now a second was in a matter of three days. Meanwhile, Charlie took care of the bully’s two followers, kicking one in the groin again, punching him in the stomach, punching him and gouging his eyes. He knew it was overkill, but at that point he was angry. As he got him lackey in a choke-hold, the other ran out of the bathroom. “Here’s what going to happen.” Charlie whispered in the boy’s ear as intimidatingly as he could, unaware of his horrified audience. “You three are going to go your way, I’m going to go mine, none of us are going to tell anyone about any of this, and we are all going to try to pretend this never happened, okay?” The terrified boy nodded as best he could. “Good.” Charlie declared, letting the boy go. He immediately scampered away, getting to his feet and joining the head bully. “You’re mad.” The head bully declared, as they fled the bathroom, “Absolutely mad!” The door slammed behind them, leaving the two boys alone. It was then the Ram realized he had shoved the boy he now believed to be psychotic that morning, making him drop his books. Then he gulped. However, Charlie seemed more concerned with the here and now. “Thanks for the help.” He said rather amiably, as he got to his feet. “No problem.” The other boy replied, “Three against one like that, that’s not right. Though from the looks of it, you would have got it under control eventually. Just—don’t use any of those moves on me, okay? Please?” “Yes, speaking of that,” Charlie began, “Could you please not tell anyone about this, or that I can
do that? I can’t explain why, but—I don’t really want other people to know.”
“No worries.” The boy assured him, still scared, “Your secret’s safe with me.”
“Thanks, Ram.” Charlie responded, not thinking.
Ram raised his eye. “How do you know my name?” He asked, then before Charlie could respond, said, “You know what, doesn’t matter, would you mind—letting me do what I came here to do?”
“Oh, of course.” Charlie replied before fleeing the bathroom.
As the day went on, people seemed to be concerned about Charlie’s condition from the altercation. The first person was April. As they met each other is the hallway, her eyes widened as the sight of him as she exclaimed, “Oh, my God, what happened to you?”
“What are you talking about?” Charlie responded, guinely unsure of what she was talking about.
“Your face.” April answered, “it’s—did you get into a fight?”
It was then Charlie realized what was going on. “No.” He said quickly, “I just—walked into a door.”
“A door?” April repeated flatly, “A door did that?”
Okay, it must look pretty bad. Charlie thought, but out loud insisted, “Yes, yes it did. I’m sorry, I got to go.”
He barely made it into the room when he quite literally bumped into Mateusz. “Sorry,” The taller boy began as he turned around, then his face contorted into a look of surprised dismay when he saw Charlie’s face. “Are you alright? “He asked, “What happened to you.”
“I’m such a clumsy thing.” Charlie tried to cover, “I was walked right into a door.”
Much like April, Mateusz was skeptical of the explanation. “When was this?”
“Just after maths.” Charlie answered, “Look, I’m sorry, I really have to go.” Then he put a hand over his face and hurried to his seat, grateful they were practically across the room for each other.
The rest of the period was not much better as, for whatever reason, Quill’s cover was late. Trying to look board, Charlie started scribbling in sketchpad, when Mateusz caught his eye from that spot practically across the room. He didn’t know why, but suddenly he had these feelings whenever he was in close proximity to him. What was it with that boy that made him feel that way? He wasn’t exactly bad to look at, but Charlie had other things to worry about at the moment. He started drawing out a human form before he knew it.
Just then an older, dishelved man with slat-and-pepper hair hurried into the room, shutting the door and walking up to the desk. “I’m Mr. Pearson.” He began, still somewhat fretted and messing with things on the desk, “Miss Quill is out for the day so I will be teaching you. Please, forgive my tardiness, but I had a sudden urgent manner that needed to be disgust to with the headmaster.”
That sent up alarm bells for Charlie. Sure, they had removed everything incriminating from the desk, but that didn’t rule out some sort of alien incursion, especially if Quill’s theory was right. It didn’t rule out some sort of attack.
The teacher continued, “Now, please turn to page 394 in your textbooks…”
After what felt like forever class finally ended, and Charlie got up, then froze. What should he do now? A regular teacher wouldn’t talk to a student about important things, and it could draw attention. But how could he figure out what was going on?
Suddenly he was startled from his thoughts by the feeling of someone tapping him on the shoulder. He whirled around and found April standing in front of him. “Now, I know you don’t have to stay after to talk to the sub.”
“No.” Charlie said, and the pair walked out of the room. Once they were out of the class, he asked, “What do you think he was talking about?”
“What was what about?” April responded.
“What that teacher said, about talking to the headmaster?” Charlie elaborated.
“Could be anything.” April replied, perplexed by her new friend’s interest, “Probably someone acted up in last period.” She was silent for a moment, contemplating something then spoke again.
“Charlie, can I ask you something?”
“Ah, sure.” Charlie answered, slightly weary of where this was going.
“Do you have—some sort of personal relationship with Miss Quill?” April managed to get out. She
had actually been wondering about for a few days, but was afraid to ask. Maybe she could get answers on at least something today, since Charlie had shut the door on his state at the beginning of class.

“Why do you ask?” Charlie responded, trying not to let his panic show through.

“Because,” April began, “You’re constantly staying behind after class, you jump to her defense if anyone says anything about her, and yesterday on the way out I swear I saw you walking into her room after school let out.”

“I only defended her that one time.” Charlie replied, starting to get defensive, “And if you must know I stayed after school for tutoring, which she was gracious enough to provide. “

That throw April for a loop. “Why would you need tutoring in physics?” She asked, “I mean, if it was English I could understand, but you’re good at physics.”

“And what evidence are you using to base that assumption on?” Charlie challenged, “We’ve haven’t known each other that long. Trust me when I tell you I’m a very poor student.”

“Alright, sorry I asked.” April mumbled.

Charlie knew he had messed up and felt a twinge of remorse. He knew April didn’t mean any harm, and even though he knew they were going to leave eventually, he couldn’t help but feel a platonic fondness for her. “I’m sorry.” He said sincerely, “I shouldn’t have spoken to you like that. It was disrespectful.”

“It’s fine.” April responded, somewhat in a huff.

“You don’t sound fine.” Charlie told her awkwardly. Just then his phone went off. He pulled it out and recognized the number. “I have to answer this, it’s my mum.”

He explained then walked off without further explanation.

Assuming it was something related to the case, Charlie took the call into a secluded hallway, but by the time he had got there, the phone had gone to voice-mail. “Charles,” Quill’s voice began on the recording, “Hicks knew the name of the student Wright and Chesterton was checking up on when they day went missing. Susan Foreman. Now, don’t confront or do anything else stupid like that, just keep an eye on her.”

Because of this revelation Charlie got to class just as the bell rang.

“Cutting a little close there, eh, Charlie?” Miss Foreman teased.

While it was in no way different from the teacher’s usual demeanor, it suddenly made Charlie feel very uneasy. “Sorry, Miss Foreman.” He said quickly, getting in his seat.

The next hour was torture. More torture than it usually was, because he kept looking at his teacher, his teacher who seemed so normal, friendly, kind, and thinking, who are you? What are you? At least it distracted him from the usual frustrating struggle to understand what was going on with the brown stocking.

After he learned English and to read, Charlie’s education, sans languages and fighting, had been rather—uneven and sporadic. Anything that could be regarded as lesson usually involved helping Toni Jo and Chris in the lab. As for history and English, his education consisted of any relevant back ground information he was told and managed to remember, an account of an event from Fox, Toni Jo’s Bible (which she insisted he had some knowledge of if only for the fact that it was referenced everywhere), the odd novel that sometimes made the rounds in those rare lulls between cases and chores, and on some occasions before he was allowed to assist on cases being left at libraries as free babysitting, but left to his own devices just managed to traumatize himself, rather than gleam any reading comprehension. As such, a strange side effect of their case was Charlie finding himself utterly board in the science classes, and struggling just to stay three steps behind his peers in English.

The fact that when he got there they were starting To the Lighthouse didn’t help things.

“Hey, are you okay?” April whispered over to him, drawing Charlie out of his contemplations on Miss Foreman.

“I’m fine.” Charlie lied.

“You don’t sound fine.” April murmured, partially to him, partially to herself.

When time came for the same period was over, everyone was pouring out the door, and Charlie
had almost made it through the doorway when Miss Foreman called out, “Charlie? Would you mind staying behind for a second?”

Charlie looked around for any means of escape, only to realize he was trapped. “Sure.” He finally surrendered.

As the last students funneled out Miss Foreman took one of the chairs and pulled it up to her desk. “Sit down. Please.” She requested.

Charlie’s eyes scanned the room. There was only one traditional way in and out, but if he needed there was a window at the side wall he could get open or break to get out if he needed to. Worst case scenario he could put up enough of a struggle and make enough noise that someone might come and investigate. To any normal person, it would look like a teacher attacked a student which wouldn’t be good for her. He slid into the seat.

“Charlie,” Miss Foreman began, sitting down at her desk across from him, “Can I call you, Charlie?”

“Yes, of course.” Charlie answered, not sure where this was going.

“Charlie,” Miss Foreman began again, “I’ve noticed some things that, frankly, disturb me, particularly over the last couple of days. I know you’re struggling in this subject, but you won’t ask for help, which, honestly a lot of students do, but then there was the incident yesterday with your foster mother and then you’re almost late for class today and show up looking like you got hit by car.”

Realizing what she must be referring to, he quickly covered, “Oh, I just—fell this morning.” Miss Foreman narrowed her eyes. “Must’ve been a pretty nasty fall. Where did it happen, exactly?”

“Just outside the school.” Charlie lied, “On the pavement, that’s why it looks so bad, but it’s not nearly as bad as it looks.”

Miss Foreman was silent for a minute, then said, “Charlie, can I see your hands?”

Charlie realized what she was doing. If he had fallen like he said, he would have tried to stop himself and his palms would be scrapped up. As it was, the only part of his hands scrapped up were his knuckles, so, he balled his hands, saying, “I’d rather not.”

Miss Foreman stood up and peered over the desk. “Hmm,” She mused, “It looks like the battered part is on the wrong side.” Then she set back down and asked, “Are you having problems with someone?”

“No.” Charlie lied. Technically this was true as he didn’t think those boys were going to bother him after today.

“What about at home?” Miss Foreman asked, “Is everything okay there?”


“You know, if something is going on, you can tell someone.” Miss Foreman told him, “It doesn’t even have to be me, just someone you trust. And if something’s going on, you should tell someone.”

“With all due respect Miss Foreman,” Charlie responded, starting to get sincerely worked up, “I don’t really think this is the appropriate way to handle this, whatever this is.”

“I’m just trying to help.” Miss Foreman tried.

“There’s nothing to help.” Charlie replied.

Miss Foreman didn’t respond, just stared at him. Suddenly he felt…strange, like she was staring right into his very soul. Needless to say, he didn’t like it.

“Can I please go?” He requested, barely above a whisper.

“Yes.” Miss Foreman replied, “Sorry if I made you uncomfortable.”

Charlie didn’t respond, fleeing so fast he didn’t notice his phone falling from his pocket. Miss Foreman picked it up and began to call out, only to realize he was gone.

Later on, as the day ended Charlie was walking towards the exit, when he suddenly felt he was being watched. He turned around, but couldn’t see anyone. He shrugged it off and started to walk away, but still couldn’t shake the feeling of being followed, of being watched. He turned around and again there was nothing. He started to walk again when he thought he heard footsteps. This time when he whirled around, he saw Miss Foreman standing behind him, her arms up in the air, as
if she was signaling for someone or something to stop.
“Mrs. Foreman?” He asked, perplexed, “What are you doing?”
Miss Foreman put her hands down and pulled something out of her pocket. “I was hoping to catch
you before you left. You left your phone in my classroom earlier.”
“Oh, thank you.” Charlie replied, calmly taking it, thought inside he was panicking. What if she
looked at it?
“No problem.” Miss Foreman said, “Just—take care of yourself.”
“I will.” Charlie said, not sure of how to respond, before walking way. As soon as he was out of
her sight, he started running, and didn’t stop running until he was a block away from the school.
He finally did stop he checked his phone to see if it looked like someone had looked at it. Would
there a way to tell? Nothing appeared out of order but his mother had had still left a series of
increasingly annoyed voicemails. He tentively hit her speed dial, hoping his carelessness hadn’t got
her hurt, or worst, and that she had, had time to calm down.
“Where the bloody Hell have you been?!?” She demanded the second he picked up.
“I lost my phone.” Charlie explained apologetically, “I only got most of your messages after I found
it.”
“Most ?!” His mother balked.
“I got your one about Miss Foreman.” Charlie explained, “Where are you, I’ll meet you.”
“Don’t bother I’m on my way home.” Quill responded, her annoyance showing through, “I just
have to make one stop first.” And with that she hung up.
It was dark when he entered the house. “Mum?” He called out, turning on the light. When he got
no response, he walked in the kitchen and started looking through the cabinets. He wasn’t exactly
sure where they kept the grounds.
On the road, the only coffee readily available was the instant Toni Jo kept on hand as an
emergency stimulant and for asthma and sinus remedies and as much was kept under lock and key.
Charlie was hoping having a decent pot on might pacify his mother if she was still upset with him.
Of course, it would help if he knew what he was doing.
He found the kettle, that one thing at least, filled it with water and sat in on the burner. It took a
minute to figure out which knob went to the burner her put it on, but he got it without injury, then
went back to looking for the grounds. At last he found them and sent over to the press, pouring
them in, filling half of the tubular device.
Not certain but that looks like way too much. He thought, scooping it out with his hand, the only
way he could figure out how, pouring a fair portion over the counter. Crap, He thought grabbing a
towel and desperately wiping when the kettle went off. He grabbed it from the stove and poured it
into the press, then walked away to put his back pack up.
Taking a moment to wash the grounds off his hands, Charlie went into his room and sat his bag
down beside the bed then sat on its edge. He suddenly realized he was exhausted and he didn’t
know why. Before he was even aware of what he was doing, Charlie flopped back down onto the
bed and shut his eyes. Within seconds he was engulfed in sleep.
Charlie wasn’t aware of anything until he felt the bed move and heard a voice.
He sat upright,
letting out a gasp, turning to see Quill on the bed, looking at his sketch pad quizzically.
Suddenly
he remembered the days’ events.
“What’s going on?” He managed to ask, still confused.
“Really?” Quill deadpanned, “I scream your name throughout the house, but what I just said wakes
you up?”
“You-you were calling for me?” Charlie asked guinelly surprised. He hadn’t heard a thing.
“Yeah, I had to replace a contact and I noticed I hadn’t heard anything from you.” Quill explained.
“What happened to your contact?” Charlie asked, still confused. How had she lost a contact? And
what did that have to do with anything?
“Oh, no you don’t ask the questions here.” Quill informed him, “First off how did you lose your
phone, second, why does your face look like you’ve started armature boxing and thirdly,” she
pointed to the sketch, “just who is this this?”
Charlie’s heart suddenly went into his throat. For some reason, he didn’t want to tell her about Mateusz. “No one.” He replied quickly.

“No, you wouldn’t just draw no one.” Quill insisted, flipping through the book and showing it to him as if he didn’t already know its contents, “See? Everything else you drew has some sort of significance, so explain the significance of this boy?” She shook the picture in his face.

“There isn’t any.” Charlie denied, “I was trying to act natural so I started drawing and—he seemed as good a thing to draw as any.”

Suddenly her look of annoyance and suspicion changed to one of surprise tinted with just a bit of horror. Then the look faded and she rolled her eyes as she said, “Well, next time you have to ‘act natural’ find a different way. If someone catches you drawing random people, they’ll get the wrong idea, and/or think it odd.”

“Alright, I’ll remember that.” Charlie replied.

“You better.” Quill responded, “Now, what about the bruises?”

Charlie was quiet. He knew she was going to freak out. “These boys cornered me in the bathroom, we got in a fight.”

“What?” Quill responded.

“Now, I didn’t do anything that could blow our cover.” Charlie assured her, thought he wasn’t quite sure that was true, “But I did defend myself.”

“Well, why the Hell did they come after you at all?!” Quill demanded.

“I don’t know. “Charlie lied, “They just did. But it won’t happen again.”

“You bet in won’t.” Quill responded, suddenly going for annoyed to angry, “I want their names. Now.”

“Mum, don’t please.” Charlie pleaded, seeing where this was going, “A teacher can’t go around beating up students. And besides, aren’t you the one who says I need to fight my own battles? Which I did by the way.”

“Not good enough!” Quill exclaimed, “Someone is going to pay for this. Someone is getting their lugs ripped out.”

“I didn’t get their names.” Charlie insisted, “I was little too busy trying to protect the soft bits. Look, please don’t turn this into something. Please.”

Quill just stared at him for a moment, then sighed. “Alright,” She relented, “Now, what about the phone?”

Charlie’s blood ran cold. “That’s something we need to talk about.”

And so, Charlie told Quill everything that happened with Miss Foreman, her holding him back after class, her probing questions, and her seeking him out to return the phone.

She was silent for a few moments, a pensive look on her face. At last she held out her hand and ordered, “Give me the phone.”

Charlie pulled the phone out of his coat and set it in her hand.

“The phone itself it’s pretty innocuous, but we need to check for bugs and trackers.” Quill explained, “Come. You could learn something from this.”

Quill gathered a series of devices and pulled one of them into the phone. As it was processing she ran what looked like an airport metal detector over it. “Well, according this is clean,” Quill declared, “But we still need to double check. That’s what this,” She gestured to the small computer-like device, “is for. This finds everything, Earth tech, alien, government-level hardware, civilian material, would have access, too, can even detect a hack.” She glanced over to her charge with her eyes, “Charles, are you paying attention?”

“Yes,” Charlie responded, sounding exasperated.

“Don’t take that tone with me, young man.” Quill chastised him, “I’m teaching you valuable skills here. I won’t always be around, you know.”

“Sorry.” Charlie responded, looking at the computer-device when suddenly it writing appeared on the screen.

They read the information silently together, then Quill unplugged the phone, declaring, “It’s clean.” She handed him back the phone then stepped away from the table, saying, “Now, come on,
we still got work to do.”

“Alright,” Quill said a few moments later, walking around the giant case board that was their living room, “We now know that Ian Chesterfield and Barbara Wright were checking on the welfare of one fifteen-year-old Susan Foreman, a student who was brilliant in math and science, but raved like a lunatic in history lived with her Grandfather who was some kind of doctor in a junk yard in 1963. Now,” She pulled out a picture of Miss Foreman she cut out of the faculty section of the school’s last year book and proceeded to pin it on the wall, “One Susan Foreman, age 35 according to her files, is now an English teacher at Coal Hill Academy, and had a rather unusual interest in us.”

“But if this was the same Susan Foreman wouldn’t she be…older?” Charles asked.

“We don’t even know if she’s human.” Quill reasoned, “She could age slower for all we know. Whatever the case, we know now for a fact that she’s more than just some meddlesome teacher, she’s involved in this somehow. Now, we just need to figure out what she knows.” A rather dangerous smile crossed her face as she looked to her son, “How do you feel about helping me plan a kidnapping?”

You say that like I have a choice or could talk you out of it. Charlie thought.

Meanwhile, at another house, two houses actually, two teens were on a video chat trying to do math, but one of them kept getting off track.

“It was like he was an MLA fighter, or something.” Ram was saying, “Honestly, I didn’t think he’d be that strong.”

“Aren’t you the one who usually insists on only talking about math.” The younger, dark-skinned girl on the other end of the video chat pointed out.

“Hey, I just need someone to know.” Ram reasoned, “If something happens to me, point the cops to that guy.”

“It’s help if I had a name to give them.” The girl told him, “I can’t just say, weird preppy guy with oddly good combat skills.”

“Ah… I don’t actually know his name.” Ram admitted, “But I think we have him in physics, thought.”

“Well, that narrows it down.” The girl snarked.

At the same time these things were happening, Miss Foreman was creeping through the empty halls of Coal Hill, her head going back and forth, looking for something, a cattle prod in one hand, nets and translizers in the other, “I know you’re here.” She called out, “I’m not sure exactly what you are, but I know you’re here, so, show yourself.” When she got no response she continued, “Look, I don’t want to hurt you, but I can’t let you stay here. I can’t let you hurt the people here. So just make this easy on both of us and turn yourself visible.”

That was when something she couldn’t see pounced her. She managed to hit its side with the cattle prod. The pain startled it, causing it to drop its invisibility, revealing the female Mog. Miss Foreman hit it again, causing it to rear back. Freeing herself, the teacher slid to where the nets had fallen, throwing them upon the creature. The nets let out another shock, sending her to the ground. Miss Foreman got to her feet, grabbing the syringe of tranquilizer, stabbing it into the creature’s side. “Maybe that was a bit much.” She thought aloud as the creature lost consciousness.

Four minutes later she walking backwards as the unconscious Mog was being carried on a levitating, silver-colored board that she was controlling with a remote into her hand, into the back of a tuck. Once she was in, Miss Foreman shut the door and went to the cab, pulled herself up into it, and pulled out her cellphone. She dialed a number and put it to her. “Hey,” She said to the person on the other end, “Long time, not see.” After moment she said, “Well, you actually won’t believe it, but I actually wound up back at Coal Hill, except now it’s a posh academy. But, uh, something’s going on here, it’s actually why I called. I think I need help.”
In case anyone was wondering, Dahomey Amazons is the name for the female corps of the country of now-defunct country of Dahomey. (Where the country of Benin is now). Amazon wasn't the group's real name, but it's the only recorded name as European observers apparently never asked them what they called themselves. (To be fair, if half the stuff on them is true, they might have been afraid to.) You all probably already knew, but just in case, the book they were reading is "To The Lighthouse" by Virginia Woolf. The brown stocking is suppose to show that part one (which spans roughly seven hour, and takes up more than half the book) all took place in one character's head. As always, hope everyone who's reading is still liking this story. :)

Names, Surveillance, And Foreign Language

Chapter Summary

As the team put their plan to confront Susan Foreman into action, Tanya and Ram begin an investigation of their own, Fox arrives at Coal Hill, Mateusz makes Charlie an offer he doesn't refuse, and Quill revives an S. O. S.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Alright,” Quill began, pacing the room, “First step is recon. We need to learn her whole routine, not just as school, we need to know where she lives, how she gets to school each day, how she gets back, her associations, any weak spots where possibly grab her. We’re going to need a nondescript vehicle.” She walked towards the door saying, “Don’t wait up, I don’t know when I’ll be back.” “Wait, where are you going?” Charlie called out. “Didn’t you hear what I just said?” Quill responded turning around, “I’m going to command a car. Preferably one without a stick-figure family.”

The next day Quill did something she had never done before: went to the teacher’s lounge. She was hoping for a chance to spy on Miss Foreman, or perhaps even engage her in some sort of conversation. Nothing too invasive, just hopefully something would slip out, maybe even get her to let her guard down.

She was sitting at one of the tables when Miss Foreman came in. “Hey, there, Susan.” Quill spoke up. Miss Foreman froze at the coffee pot, then slowly turned around. “How do you know my first name? I don’t think I ever told you.” “One of the others told me.” Quill covered.

Susan Foreman seemed to buy it, sitting across from saying, “Well, then, you have the advantage.” The she looked at Quill expectantly.

It took a minute for her to realize what the other women wanted. “Andrea.” She answered finally, “But everyone usually just calls me Quill.” “Well, that seems like an odd choice.” Miss Foreman replied casually. “Well, it’s not like I picked it.” Quill retorted. “Your nickname?” Susan guessed.

“My name in general.” Quill responded.

By the time Quill had learned enough English to coherent conversation with her rescuers they had been calling her Andrea for a month. When she realized they were using that for her name she did correct them, but they insisted she needed some sort alias because Andra’ath didn’t exactly blend in.

“She had snapped back at the time, alone in a room with Toni Jo and while she never dared say it, the utter defeat in her voice had made the physician’s heart pang, “Nothing else ‘bout—we blend in. We not here five minutes before we put on display like animals.”

“We can fix that, Andra’ath.” Toni Jo had tried to assured her, trying to ground something up in her mortar with some difficulty with her still-healing wrist, “We have options. You have options—perception filters, surgeries, a combination of two…”

“No!” She protested, her voice so hard it trembled. Between being ripped from her world and everything she knew, in the middle of a war she was supposed to be running at that, and her imprisonment in the freak show, she was not in a good place at that time, to put it mildly.
Sometimes she practically hated the others. Hated Toni Jo for trying to help, for her pity, even though she knew it wasn’t pity, the doctor had shown it to her. Hated the others for the looks she was pretty sure was pity. Hated them all for saving them. She hated the toddler that came through with her just for what he represented. She moaned, “Shoulda let me die.”

There was moment of silence, then Toni Jo stood up and came over to her, sitting down beside her. “Come on.” She had said, “Where’s that warrior I did battle with? The one that broke my wrist?”

She turned to look at her. “Do not think you know me.” She said coolly, “You do not.”

“That’s true.” Toni Jo admitted, “I don’t. But I know you are better this. You will survive this, and you will make this work and you will fight, because you fought them, and you fought me,” She held her wrist out for her to see, “And I was trying to help you. Imagine what you can do when it’s actually an enemy. I know it doesn’t seem like it now, but you will get through this. It happens more often than you think.”

That got Quill to look at her. “What does?”

“Aliens having to make a new life here whether they want to her not.” Toni Jo elaborated, “I know, my mother was one of them.”

Despite her state, that got Quill’s interest. “You telling me you not human?”

“My ability to literally feel other’s people emotions and make people feel my own wasn’t your first clue?” Toni Jo responded, her eyebrow raised, “My mother was Ch Larian, this—species from a planet serval galaxies away. She was kidnapped my space pirates looking for a potential spy, thought if that spy was an empath it might be helpful. Lucky for her their navigator was really bad at his job.”

“You call crash on alien planet with no way to get home lucky?” Quill deadpanned.

“Compared to the alternative.” Toni Jo explained, “Not that it was easy for her. She was servely injured in the crash, she was stranded on an alien world full of strange creatures and sentient beings that spoke incomprehensible languages and had odd customs. What’s more she didn’t exactly blend in either, she had green skin. It was all she could do to keep herself hidden until Torchwood Four found her half-dead in an alleyway.”

Quill’s eyes widened as she recognized the organization’s name.

“Yes, we were the ones that found her.” Toni Jo confirmed, “Though it was staffed with different people, sans my father. Technically we’re supposed to treat all aliens as a threat, but our unique experiences have made us somewhat more—open-minded then the others. I don’t think—she was ever really completely right after that, but she still made a life for herself. Fell in love, had children, she still missed her home world, but she was able to be satisfied. So that means, as much as you hate to admit it, as much as you try to fight us on it, as hard as it is to believe, there’s hope for you, too.” She stared into Quill’s eyes. So, what do you think? Andrea sound okay?”

Quill gave in, partly to shut Toni Jo up, partly because there was an-extremely small-part of her that was starting to believe her, thought she would never admit it. “Yes.”

“If it helps, when it’s just you and me, I’ll still call you Andra’ath, at least until you get used to it.” Toni Jo offered, “Now to come up with a good last name.”

This apparently entailed Toni Jo finding a book of surnames and reading them off to her one by one, since at the time she couldn’t read them herself, since she didn’t read English, while Quill herself wasn’t even pretending to be interested, at least until Toni Jo said, “Okay, I highly you’ll pick this one, but, Quill—”

“That.” She had cut her off quickly.

“That what?” Toni Jo asked, surprised by the blunt interruption.

“That …last…name.” Quill elaborated, being careful with her words.

“No, no, no, no, no,” Toni Jo responded, “You can not have the name of your species be you last name. Unless that’s not actually your species name and there’s been some sort of miscommunication on that.” With her still very patchy English that was a very real possibility that what they thought she had given as the name of her species was another thing entirely.

“Why not?” Quill asked, keeping her tone even. She wanted, maybe even needed something to remind her of what she was, a reminder of the people she had been fighting for until a few weeks
before, and their name seemed as good a thing as anything. Possibly the only thing at point. Perhaps Toni Jo had peered into her and saw that, there was no way to tell when she was using her ability on you, or maybe she just didn’t have an answer to Quill’s questions, or at least a good one. Whatever the case she responded with, “Okay, Andrea Quill it is then. Actually, kinda has a nice ring to it.”

The switch to being called her last name happened slowly, as slowly as the endless painful surgeries felt. Surgeries that reshaped her body, removed her quill, dulled and molded her teeth, changed her skin, put hair where it wasn’t before. There came a day when she looked in a mirror and didn’t recognize herself.

It was Fox that found her, knocking on the doorway and saying, “Hey, Andrea, we’re heading out.”

She didn’t respond, didn’t even remember hearing him, just kept staring in the grimy mirror at the creature with her eyes. How long until those were gone, too? (She didn’t know about the contacts at that time.)

“Andrea,” Fox repeated, his voice with a slight sing-song lilt to it.

She didn’t respond, pushing at her cheek that was now soft. Was it supposed to be that soft?

“Earth to Andrea Quill.” Fox quipped.

For whatever reason this was the thing that got her to turn around. Maybe it was because she recognized it. Maybe it was because it reminded her of what she really was, beneath all the modification, which was kind of the reason she picked it in the first place. But for whatever reason, she responded.

Then it was practically the only way to get her to respond. Soon Andrea Quill became just Quill. As for her true name, Andra’ath, it became almost code between her and Toni Jo, a request to be straight each other, and more rarely, a means of comfort and assurance.

Only one person ever called her Andrea, and he made her love it, if only for a short while.

It was six months after she officially joined the team. They had caught case in Scotland that lead them for a shapeshifting humanoid squid energy vampire. They had managed to save its intended victim but in the process the creature had got away, but they managed to track to Wales, specifically Cardiff. They chased it into a parking complex, where Quill had got separated from the others.

That was how she wound up crouched behind an inferno red mid-life crisis, peering up to see a young redhead dressed in jeans and blue windbreaker walking by the wall.

“I got eyes on her.” Quill whispered into her commlink.

“Do you have a shot?” Chris spoke back to her through the commlink.

“No.” Quill admitted, “There are three cars between me and her. It’ll take one of Toni’s miracle for a bullet to make it to her before she could get out of the way.” This was before she had the gun she used now, which would have probably got to its mark faster.

“Hold your position for now.” Chris ordered, “We have a lock on where you are, we can take her down. Do you copy?”

“Copy that.” Quill whispered back to him.

Of course, what neither of them could see was the man in the old military coat in the hallway, who aimed a gun strait at the shapeshifter. “Freeze!” He ordered, “Turn around.”

Surprisingly, the shapeshifter did as she was told.

“Alright,” The man continued, “Now, just come with me, nice and easy, nobody else has to get hurt.”

The shapeshifter smiled wickedly at him, before two dark red tentacles burst from her body, wrapping themselves around his neck and upper chest, pulsing as she began to drain the energy from his body.

Quill saw that part and lept to her feet, letting out a battle cry as she ran through the rows. Once she was close enough she fired a shot, hitting the creature in the back of the neck, sending her to the ground, dead, her limp tentacles letting go of her would-be victim. It took a minute for it to dawn on him what had happened, then he immediately grabbed his gun, aiming it at Quill. “Drop the
“gun!” He shouted at her.
“You drop yours first.” Quill demanded, aiming her weapon at him, “Seriously, this is the thanks I get for saving your life?”
“Alright, fair enough, thanks.” The man replied, “Now drop the gun.”
“You’re welcome.” Quill said, “Now your drop yours first.”

Just then Toni came running from one hall, and Chris came running from another, Chris exclaiming, “Whoa, whoa, whoa, everybody hold on. Jack, it’s alright, she’s with us.”
The man, Jack apparently, looked for the Callahans to her back to the Challans. He slowly lowered his gun, and Quill did the same.

“This lunatic’s with you?” Jack questioned.
“Lunatic?!” Quill repeated in disbelief, “Why, I oughta—”
“Yes, she’s our new hire.” Chris cut her off before things could escalate, “Sorry, I didn’t think to mention her on the phone. Jack Harkness, Andrea Quill. Andrea Quill, Jack Harkness, head of Torchwood Three.”

“Well, nice to meet you.” Jack addressed Quill offering out his hand to Quill. Quill stared at the outstretched hand, wondering what the Hell she was supposed to do with it.
“You shake it.” Toni Jo spoke up, realizing what was going on.
Quill took the hand, shaking it while squeezing it for all it was worth.
“Wow.” Jack said, sounding in pain, “That’s quite a grip on you. Mind giving me my hand back?”
Quill let him go, and he pulled his hand back, rubbing it and commenting, “You’re stronger than you look,” smirking at her in a way that made her a little less annoyed with him.

“So, um, Quill,” Susan began, “Boy, it sounds odd to say it that. While we’re here, I actually have a matter which I hoped to discuss with you.”
Quill blinked. She wasn’t inspecting this. Still, she was trying to draw Susan end so she asked pleasantly, “Is that so?”
“Yes, I was wondering, where did you teach before this?” Susan asked.
Quill titled her head. “What business is that of yours?”
“Oh, I’m just trying to get to know you.” Susan tried to cover, “This is how it’s done.”
They don’t usually set it up as a ‘matter.’ Quill thought, but kept that to herself.

“Maybe setting it up as a matter was a bit dramatic.” Susan admitted.
“Maybe setting it up as a matter was a bit dramatic.” Susan admitted.

“How did you- “Quill began.
“I’ve just always been a little awkward, socially, I guess.” Susan cut her off, seemingly ignoring the comment, “Never really fit in, and when I was a teenager, oh boy, my personality was all over the place.” She paused a minute, then said, “I’m sorry, you were saying?”
“I wasn’t.” Quill responded flatly.
Susan was silent for a moment. “I take it that means I’m not getting an answer from you?” She speculated finally.

You got that right, sister. Quill thought but out loud said, “I’m just a very—private person.”
Susan didn’t say anything, just kept staring at Quill. It made the other woman feel uneasy, like her very soul was being stared at.

“Why are you doing that?” Quill asked, “That’s creepy. Stop that.”
“Sorry.” Susan responded, then looked down at her wrist. “Oh, would you look at the time, I have to go set out these papers before class starts. Lovely talking with you.”

Did we just have the same conversation? Quill wondered, but said aloud, “You, too.”
Quill waited several minutes before leaving. She looked both ways then started down the hall when a voice from behind her said, “Excuse me miss, I was hoping you could help me with something.”

She turned around and saw Fox Mulder, looking the worst for wear, his clothes disbelieved, bear stubble, looking like he hadn’t slept in days.
“I was hoping you could direct me to the physics department.” Fox quipped, “See, I’m looking for a friend of mine, an absolutely gorgeous teacher, I’m sure all the boys have been making a fuss over her, she’s hard to miss.”
“Oh, flattery is not going to get you out of this one.” Quill said, sounding mad, but smiling at him as they got closer. Then as quick as it happened the smile disappeared as she demanded, “Where the Hell have you been?!”

“Flight got delayed, twice, phone died, couldn’t get to a charger, and then I had to hitch-hike just to get here.” Fox explained, “They have really lax security by way, especially for a school this posh. Seriously, no one even asked who I was.”

“Well, they don’t stop wild animals from other planets running through the halls either.” Quill commented, “You’d think more parents would be pulling their kids out.”

“Yeah, Toni Jo mentioned you found something.” Fox replied, “Got time to give me a briefing on what you two have been up to?”

Meanwhile, Charlie was sulking through the library, the scanner hidden in his coat, unaware he was being watched.

Ram was talking to his girlfriend when suddenly he felt someone tugging on his arm. He turned around and saw the girl he had been talking to the night standing there. “I need you to come with me.”

“Hey, “Ram began, startled, “Listen uh-“

“No time for that.” Tanya insisted dragging away, “There’s something you need to see. Now.”

“Ah, sorry, Rach, I think I’m gonna have to go.” Ram called out as he was dragged away, “Man, you’re surprisingly strong.”

Rachel laughed as she watched the scene.

Tanya stopped when they got to the library. “Is that your preppy MLA fight?” She asked, pointing to stacks.

Ram saw who she was talking about immediately, or at least the back of him.

“Why the Hell did you bring me in here with that maniac?!” Ram exclaimed, jumping and stepping back.

“Look at what he’s doing.” Tanya requested.

Ram looked at the scene for a moment. “What is he doing?”

“I don’t know.” Tanya admitted, “Let’s go fine out.”

“No.” Ram said firmly, backing away, “No, no, no, I am not playing detective with you.”

“Fine.” Tanya responded, walking off, “I’ll go by myself.”

“What?! ” Ram exclaimed, pulling her back, “Have you lost your mind?! Didn’t you hear anything I told you last night?”

“Yeah, and I want find out what’s going on.” Tanya said, pulling anyway, “And you can’t stop me.”

Ram stood there a moment, flustered. They weren’t actually that close, but if anything happened to her because of what he told her, he wouldn’t be able to live with himself. “Fine.” He declared through gritted teeth, following her.

Charlie stopped to check the scans. It was the same low level of whatever it was that was everywhere else in the building. He put it back in his sleeve and started walking again, only to have someone unexpectedly stepping in front of him, causing him to jump.

“Sorry,” Mateusz, said, taking a step back, “I didn’t mean to startle you.”

“No, it’s fine.” Charlie assured him, “So, ah, what are you doing here?”

“I was turning in a book before school started.” Mateusz answered, “And you?”

“I was—I was,” Charlie found himself tumbling for words, then he grabbed a random book saying, “Looking for this.”


Charlie looked down and saw that, yes, that was the book he was holding. “Well, my guidance consular thinks I need to learn another language.” Charlie lied. In fact, he hadn’t even met his guidance consular.

“But you already speak French.” Mateusz reminded him.

“I know.” Charlie replied, his mind racing for a believable lie, “But she thinks a third would give me a completive edge, you know, for the future.”
“And you thought Polish was a good choice?” Mateusz questioned. From their hiding spot behind a nearby shelf, Tanya and Ram exchanged confused looks. Where they talking in some sort of code?

“I’m—still looking at my options.” Charlie offered for an explanation, getting extremely nervous and showing it. “You know, language wise.”

“Well, what other languages were you, um, considering?” Mateusz inquired, ducking his head and peering up like some sort of school boy. (Which to be fair, he was.) Charlie smiled awkwardly every language he could think of running through his head. “You know,” he said finally, “Italian, Mandurian…Yiddish.”

“Those are interesting choices.” Mateusz replied. Charlie could never explain why he said what he did next. “Do have you any preference?”

“Well, I am a little bias,” Mateusz quipped, “But, ah, I’d go with Polish.”

“Is that so?” Charlie asked, smiling at him. Ram looked over at Tanya. “Are they flirting?” He asked.

“Sssh!” Tanya responded, putting her finger to her lip.

“I’m pretty sure they’re flirting,” Ram continued anyway “They’re flirting using foreign language.” “Ssh!” Tanya repeated louder, causing a group of nearby students to glare at the pair. “Sorry.” Tanya whispered before turning back to their eavesdropping. Feeling bold, Mateusz said, “You know, ah, if you did choose Polish, I could help you with it.”

“Really?” Charlie asked, keeping up the charade.

“Polish is my native language.” Mateusz explained, unaware that Charlie had already surmised this from information he had found on the other boy, “I could... give you lessons or something... if you want.”

“I couldn’t possibly accept.” Charlie politely declined, “I don’t have anything to offer you...”

“Then I’ll do it for free.” Mateusz offered, maybe a little too quickly.

“But why would you do that?” Charlie responded, “I mean, you barely know me.”

“I think I liked to change that.” Mateusz explained. Unbeknownst to Charlie, he asked simultaneously with Tanya, “What does that mean?”

“I told you.” Ram declared, “Flirting.”

Charlie turned around at the sound of voices. “Did you hear that?”

“Hear what?” Mateusz asked as Charlie darted out of the isle.

“Run!” Ram explained in a whispered hiss, high-tailing it out of there.

By the time Charlie got there they were gone. “I could’ve sworn I heard someone back here.” He said aloud.

“Probably just someone getting a book.” Mateusz reasoned, “This is a library after all. So, do I have an answer?”

“Yes.” Charlie answered. He figured at least this boy could be a protentional source of information. Yes, that was the reason he was doing it. Mateusz looked at him expectantly.

Realizing what was going on, he said, “I mean, yes, I accept.”

“Well, then.” Mateusz replied, smiling, “Why don’t you let me walk you to maths, and I can teach you a few basic words.”

So that was what they did. For the first time since they had got there Charlie wasn’t observing everything, wasn’t thinking about the case, he just focused on him and Mateusz. It actually felt nice.

“Not bad for a first day.” Mateusz praised genuinely impressed as they arrived at the door to the maths room. “So, ah, same time tomorrow?”

“Sure.” Charlie replied, “Except, maybe this time we just meet outside the building instead of randomly finding each other in the library.”

“Probably a good idea.” Mateusz acknowledged.

Meanwhile, Quill had just finished telling Fox everything that had happened.

“Well,” Fox began, putting a Styrofoam cup of coffee to his lips, “Sounds like you’ve had a very
trying time.”
“That’s one way to put it.” Quill responded.
“So, now that I’m here, what do you need me to do?” Fox asked.
“Remember that car I commandeered last night?” Quill questioned.
“Considering you just told me about it, yes.” Fox reminded her.
“Can you get it and have it here and ready to go by the end of school today?” Quill requested.
“Quill, come on, this is me you’re talking about.” Fox answered, “You know I can.”
“Alright, then, do that and meet us at the back.” Quill instructed. Then she looked up at the clock.
“I gotta go.” She said, standing up, “I have to get to my first period.” Then realizing the opening,
she gave Fox quickly, “Don’t say it.” Then she walked away, sighing. “Teenagers. Give me evil
clowns that eat people any day.”

After school that day, Charlie walked into the physics room, where Quill was appearing to grade
papers. “Will you look at some of these?” She said, holding up a paper covered with red marks, “It
looks like someone bled to death on it. I mean, do these people pay attention at all?” Pulling one
paper out of the pile she continued, “Including you.” She handed out the paper to him.
Charlie looked down at the paper to find his name, at least his alias, on the name line and big red C for the
grade.
“How did you get a C on your physics quiz.” Quill demanded, “You’re good at physics! You were
literally raised by a physicist, or at least around a physicist, you should not be getting Cs in
physics! Furthermore, you’re not a C student.”
Charlie handed the paper back to her, saying, “Sorry, haven’t exactly had time to study.”
“Well, then make time.” Quill ordered, standing up, “Just because this is sham does not mean you
don’t give it your all, do you understand me?”
“Yes, ma’am.” Charlie confirmed.
“Besides, what if you wanted to do something else with your life?” Quill continued, “Something
required university? You’re not getting in with grades like this.”
“What else would I do?” Charlie asked.
He wasn’t being smart. It was genuine, sincere, mildly inquiring question. What was there for him
outside of Torchwood Four? And for some reason it made Quill’s blood run cold. Recovering
quickly, she responded, “Well, didn’t you use to say you wanted to be doctor?”
“I was seven when I said that.” Charlie pointed out, “And how would I even get in. I have no other
records, no money…”
“And they say I’m a pessimist.” Quill quipped, “The point is, no more Cs. Okay, let’s get this back
to the reason we’re all here. Did you get eyes on Susan?”
“So, I looked and Miss Foreman is still in her room. It looks like you two had the same idea.”
“That might be the scariest thing about this situation.” Quill commented, “Did you get it?”
Charlie pulled out a small metal disk on a string.
Quill reached out and took it from him. “Go to the car and wait with Fox. I’ll call when she
leaves.” Then she put the perception filter on, not making herself invisible, but not seeable.
When Quill arrived at Miss Foreman’s room the woman was still at her desk, a red ink pen in her
hand.
Man, she’s dedicated to the role. Quill thought, I just did it before I was board.
As Quill walked over to the desk, Susan looked up and turned in her direction. Quill, froze, but
then the other woman shrugged and went back to her work.
Sure, she hadn’t been caught, quilled over and stood behind the woman. They were real papers, she
clearly wasn’t trying to hide anything.
Susan finished that stack then pulled up a stack of worksheets for her 4th period. “MacLean,
April.” She read aloud to herself, then read the rest in silence, only putting one read mark on the
paper. She set it aside when she was done and pulled the next one up. “Smith, Charles.” She read
aloud again, only this time the statement was followed by an, “Here we go.”
What does that mean? Quill thought to herself, concerned.
She soon found out. By the time Susan was done, half the paper was marked with red. (All on the
“Seriously?!” Quill exclaimed. When did her son get so off the academic track?! And how had she missed it?! Well, it wasn’t like they had kept any records, but still…

Susan’s head shot up, turning to look around. Quill went deathly silent, hoping that she hadn’t broken the illusion.

Just then there was a knock on the door. Both women turned to see a man in a tan custodian uniform at the door. “You about ready for the day Miss?”

“Yes, sorry.” Susa replied apologetically, gathering her papers and standing up. She hurried from the room followed by Quill, who was speaking into her com. “The sparrow is taking off.”

“And where is she flying?” Fox asked from the other end.

“Looks like the front.” Quill replied urgently, quicken her pace.

“We’ll be round there, Starlord.” Fox replied.

“That is not my call sign.” Quill growled. If she had any regrets about choosing her last name, it was that she was never warned that Fox was into comics enough to know everyone’s names.

“You know it is, so unless you have a new one….” Fox let his voice trail off.

Quill let out a long grunt. Why did Fox always have to be so glib?

Susan exited out the front with Quill in hot pursuit. As they left school property a nondescript dark-colored car pulled out. Fox opened the door and Quill quickly got inside, removing the perception filter as they took off.

There was enough traffic to make the car unnoticeable. Unfortunately, there was also enough to make it hard to keep up with their target.

“Hurry, up, we’ll going to lose her!” Quill shouted at Fox.

“I’m going as fast I can, woman!” Fox snapped back at her, “Or do you want her to realize she’s being tailed?!”

“She won’t be for much longer!” Quill retorted.

In the back of the car, Charlie put his head in his hands. Please, someone just shoot me now.

“Fine, I’ll speed up a little bit, but just a jotch.” Fox conceded, hitting the gas.

As Fox sped up, Susan turned around, looking in their direction.

“Oh, crap, she’s seen us.” Fox groaned, “See, I told you this would happen.”

“We don’t know she’s seen anything yet.” Quill argued.

Just then Susan turned around and continued to walk.

“See?” Quill continued, “She’s still none the wiser.”

The strange procession went on for two more minute, before Susan stopped at a small flat complex. She walked up the stairs to the second floor, opened the door to one of the flats, and stepped in, locking the door behind her.

“Okay,” Quill began, “Now we just have to wait, see if there are any other developments, repeat for a about a week, then pull the grab.”

“You sure that’s enough time?” Fox asked, “One week’s a small surveillance window.”

“Fox, this is a volatile situation.” Quill responded, “Things are changing hourly, we don’t have time for anything else. Charles, back me up here.”

“She’s right, Fox.” Charles confirmed, raising up so his arms were on the back of the front seats.

Fox eyed Charlie skeptically. “Alright.” He said finally, “We’ve done more with less. Now, I’d suggest you two get comfortable. It’s gonna be a long night.”

Stakeouts were always boring, but this was evening more so than usual. They literally sat there all night, waiting for something, anything to happen. Each of them almost fell asleep at least once.

Quill was nodding off again when she felt someone nudging her and saying, “Quill, wake up.”

Quill jutted awake saying, “I wasn’t—”

Fox smiled, amused.

That was when the apartment door slowly began to open.

“We got movement.” Fox declared, moving in his seat and preparing to take off.

Susan Foreman walked out, a leather bag over her shoulder, prepared for the day, heading down the walk.
“Go, go, go!” Quill hissed in a whisper, and Fox backed out, being careful not to be spotted. They followed their target and wound up right where they began: Coal Hill Academy. “Well, it’s not like you weren’t going to be back here anyway.” Fox responded to this development, “Alright, you two, try to make yourselves look like you haven’t been in a car all night spying on an English teacher, I’ll get eyes on her. This girl is not spending a moment alone anymore ‘till we grab her.”

Quill handed Fox the perception filter before stepping out of the car. As Fox drove off Quill and Charlie walked into the building before splitting off. Charlie had just made it to the bathroom when he heard someone call his name. He turned to see Mateusz towards him.

Crap. Charlie thought, panicking, as he was sure he was in a state. He started pulling at his clothes, running his tongue over his teeth. They felt okay. Maybe he wouldn’t notice. He ran his fingers through his hair when it hit him: Why am I doing this? Why do I care so much?

“He okay?” Mateusz asked, now as close to him as social custom allowed. “Yes, I’m fine.” Charlie lied, trying to keep it together.

“Are you sure?” Mateusz asked, not convinced, and a bit concerned, “You seem a little…out of sorts?”

“I’m fine.” Charlie repeated, “Are you ready?”

“Yes.” Mateusz answered as they walked off.

Meanwhile, Quill had cleaned herself up and had made it to her room, trying to get everything she needed for that day together. That was when she realized she was missing her flash drive. She started pulling open drawers, picking things up. There wasn’t anything important or incriminating on it, but her PowerPoint—well on she had found online—way on it and people could not realize that she had no idea what she was doing. Well, not yet anyway. They still had a case to solve.

She tried to find the PowerPoint again, but it she couldn’t find it again. She sighed. The one day I don’t just do worksheets. She thought, before standing up and headed for the door, if she hurried she could get to the house, find the flash drive and get back to school in time.

She made it back just to see a young man in a delivery uniform standing on the front stoop holding a small cardboard package.

“Excuse me,” She called out, “Who are you and what exactly do you think you’re doing here?”

He turned to look at her. “Are you Anita Garibaldi?”

“Who’s asking?” Quill challenged. But unless an Brazil/Italian revolutionary came back from the dead or someone else used the name as an alias, she was who the delivery man was looking for. Which is what put her on guard.

“Look, this is nuts—me and a couple blokes made a bet.” The delivery man explained, “So…this thing’s been lying around the office since…ever?! Uh, with a note on it saying to bring it here today. It’s from a—a Mary Nightingale?”

Quill’s ears perked up at that. It was one of Toni Jo’s aliases. “Yeah.” She said, grabbing the package from him and heading up the stoop, “Yeah, yeah that’s—that’s mine. Great.” She opened the door, “Thanks.” As she shut the door she finished, “Thanks.”

“Yeah.” The delivery man replied, just before the door shut on him.

Quill put her back to the door, opening the package. She pulled out the letter that was inside, along with a familiar cell phone, and started to read: Quill, something’s happened…

Chapter End Notes

So, Quill's alias comes from Anita Garibaldi, a Brazilian woman from the 1800s hundreds who fought in three different revolutionary wars, the Brazilian Ragamuffin
War, a conflict in Uruguay, and finally an Italian rebellion, she and her husband basically running the navy in the first two. While pregnant. I thought she was historical figure Quill would appreciate.
Toni Jo's alias is a combination of the famous nurse Florence Nightingale, and her rival, Mary Seacole, who has been much forgotten by history, which is a shame, because she was an awesome person, generous, great sense of humor and ran into battle to treat wounded. Something I though Toni Jo would appreciate.
John Henry got himself in an upright position as Toni Jo turned around and offered him a hand. He took it, allowing her to help him to his feet.

“Where are we?” John Henry asked, looking around, “How did get here?”

“That’s a good question.” Toni Jo replied, still looking out at the changed landscape before walking off, saying, “Come on.”

“Um,” John Henry began, following after her, “Where are we going?”

“With luck, to figure out where we are.” Toni Jo answered, picking up a large stick.

“And a stick’s gonna help us do that?” John Henry asked, at her side now.

“A stick’s gonna help us if we run into something large and toothy.” Toni Jo answered.

Eventually, they came to a what appeared to be a pathed, two-lane interstate.

“Well, that’s a good sign.” Toni Jo noted, “We’re probably still on Earth.”

“What did you just say?” John Henry asked.

Toni Jo was quiet. All and all John Henry had been taking everything pretty well so far, save for some initial confusion, but she was afraid that learning there was chance they might not be on the planet they were five minutes ago would send him over the edge. “Never mind.”

Just then a tan late-70s module car past by them.

Seeing another car down the lane Toni Jo stuck her hand out.

A wood-paneled brown sedan pulled up, with two brunette girls in the front seat. What caught Toni Jo’s eye was their clothing: One was in long-sleeved pink dress worth a long stain of pearls, the other in some kind of green turtleneck, covered by a blue and green checkered jacket, and she was wearing huge, somewhat gauche diamond-shaped sliver earrings. Not exactly contemporary.

“You two need a ride?” The girl in the driver’s seat, the one in the more obviously not modern fashion outfit.

“Yeah,” Toni Jo answered, “Yeah, a ride would be great.”

The girl in the pink dress opened the door opened the back door for the couple and they got in.

“I’m Margot.” The girl in pink introduced herself, “And this is my sister, Gussie.”

“I’m John Henry and this is Toni Jo.” John Henry introduced the pair.

Toni Jo fought back a face palm. It wasn’t like he was an undercover cop or anything, and what she was about to do wasn’t much better. “Look, this may—most likely will—sound like an odd question, but, um, could you tell us where we’re at and what year it is?”

“You’re right, that is odd.” Gussie spoke up.

“Gussie.” Margot scolded, “Be polite.” Then she looked at their guests, “You’re in Wales, 1979.”

Toni Jo’s heart plummeted and John Henry jumped in surprise. “We’re where?” He asked.

“Wales, 1979.” Toni Jo repeated, hoping to save the girls the trouble. Then the start of an idea started to form in her mind. “Hey, how close are we to Cardiff?”

The girls weren’t going that far, but they gave the pair directions and dropped them off at the nearest hamlet before their paths diverged.

“Thanks.” Toni Jo called out, waving goodbye before they drove off.

“How are you so clam about this?” John Henry asked her perplexed by her behavior, given the situation.
“Well, I thinking you were handling this rather well,” Toni Jo responded, walking off with him quickly following her.

“Yeah, but I still acted a little surprised.” John Henry countered as they walked. “And on the inside, I am completely freaking out, but you—you barely batted an eye, like this is every day for you.”

“Well, things like this are not every day.” Toni Jo gave away, awkwardly adding, “And I’ve never been on this side of it before.”


“Never mind.” Toni Jo replied.

“No not never mind.” John Henry said, taking Toni Jo’s arm and turning her around, “What is going on here, who are you and what’s in Cardiff?”

“I don’t know yet.” Toni Jo admitted, “With luck, help.”

They spent the better part of the day hitch-hiking. They encountered an elderly couple who had a problem with Toni Jo’s suit and the fact that she and John Henry weren’t a couple, a woman about Toni Jo’s age who asked way too many questions, a guy who gave them both the creeps, a newlywed couple who, once again inquired about Toni Jo and John Henry’s relationship status. Eventually they got to Cardiff.

But a lot can change in 40 years.

“It has to be here somewhere.” Toni Jo muttered to herself as they walked through the streets.

“What does?” John Henry demanded, “You know, has it ever occurred to you that I could help with whatever this is?”

Toni Jo sighed. “I’m looking for a building. “She pulled out her wallet and took out an old picture of her father and the rest of the Torchwood 4 team from back then, as well as Torchwood 3.

“That’s it, right there.” She pointed to the back of the building, “It should still be in the same spot, they never moved just—built to the changes.”

“Alright, well, do you know the street names?” John Henry asked.

“Oh, Henry, that’s brilliant!” Toni Jo beamed, then marched towards the nearest person calling out, “Hey! Could you give me directions to…”?

John Henry sighed, following after her.

With the help of the person they asked, they were able to find the building. As they walked in a bell went off, causing a woman with shortish, strawberry blonde hair to look up.

“Excuse me,” The woman said, “Can I help you?”

“Marjorie Esch, right?” Toni Jo guessed. To her knowledge she had never met Marjorie in person, as she died in back 83, but from what she little she knew about the woman she was a strawberry blond. For whatever reason everyone who knew her made a point of mentioning it when describing her.

“How do you- “Marjorie began.

“Look, I know this might be hard to believe,” Toni Jo began,” Or maybe not, considering where you work, but I’m with Torchwood Four, forty years from now. I was working a case, when me and this guy back here were transported here by—well, we’re not sure actually, possibly a statue. Point is, we need to talk to your boss. Now.”

Marjorie picked up an old-fashioned, well, to be fair for the time it was probably normal, phone.

“Alex,” Marjorie spoke into it, “I think you need to get up here.”

Within a second a door rolled back and a man with short cut-brown hair stepped out and suddenly Toni Jo felt like she couldn’t breathe. This isn’t fair. She thought, Sweet Mother Mary, this just isn’t fair!

“Marjorie, who are these people?” Alex asked, then noticing the redhead’s obvious distress, added, “Is she alright?”

“Alex.” Toni Jo breathed finally, before rushing the man and throwing her arms around his neck, embracing him like a long-lost friend. Which he kind of was.

“Whoa.” Alex responded in surprised, “Okay, this, this is different.”

Then suddenly Toni Jo pulled away and open faced slapped him full in the face. “How could
you?!” She screamed, “How could you?! If you wanted to end yourself that’s one thing, but did you really have to take everyone with you?!” “She started pounding her fist against his chest as if to empathize her point,” What could you have possibly seen that was so horrible you son of a bitch?!” She was in tears at that point.

It was also at that point John Henry decided to step in, pulling her off of Alex as she started sobbing uncontrollably.

“So, I take it we know each other.” Alex deduced.

Toni Jo chocked back the rest of tears and managed to get out, rather bitterly, “Yeah, something like that.”

After a minute Toni Jo calmed down enough to explain everything that happened. Well, almost everything. She knew enough about time to understand that it was a complicated and delicate thing, and as tempting as it was, and she was fighting the urge to scream her grievance in full detail from the rooftops and beg him not to do it, all she said on the issue was trust her, he had it coming.

“I’m assuming you two want our help getting back home.” Alex said once she was finished.

“It’d be nicer than the slow path, to be blunt about it.” Toni Jo replied.

“Especially considering your mum, whoever she is, is currently carrying you.” Marjorie, who had been privy to this whole conversation, commented, “I didn’t even know the man was married, let alone expecting.”

“Yes, there is that.” Alex responded, then looking Toni Jo up and down commented, “You have your mother’s eyes by the way. And hair.”

“Yeah, my sister was always the one who looked more like dad.” Toni Jo said coolly, “Though she does have the hair, though.”

“Good to know.” Alex replied, “I think I know what we need to do here. If you two would just follow me.” Before he left he shot a look at Marjorie.

“You don’t have to worry about me, boss.” Marjorie assured him, “My lips are sealed.”

And with that the door opened and they walked inside. John Henry’s head was suddenly on a swivel, his mouth agape.

“John, you’re going to catch flies.” Toni Jo told him.

John Henry closed his mouth, then said, “I’m sorry, but some of us weren’t raised in secret societies, it’s a lot to take in. I mean, you said your family was unconventional, but—this?”

“Alright, first off, I was not raised in a secret society.” Toni Jo informed him bluntly, looking straight ahead, “I didn’t even fully comprehend what my dad did until I was twelve when this one here and some other bloke show up at my house looking for him and I hear a conversation I wasn’t meant to.”

“Didn’t you say— John Henry began.

“It was summer, the school wasn’t year-round, and after Mum quit they stopped sending us to whatever camp they could fine or pawning us off on relatives.” Toni Jo cut him off, the day’s events starting to get to her. Even with what she was used to dealing with, this was a bit much. They were so engrossed in their conversation they hadn’t notice Alex call out for someone in the seemingly empty hub, until Toni Jo heard a familiar voice say, “I’ll go check.”

She then turned around to see Captain Jack Harkness going off to check something. Oh, this is like the episode of ‘This is your life’ from Hell. She thought, approaching Alex and asking casually, “So, what’s the plan here?”

“Well, as I assume you know, assuming this hasn’t change, we have a series of stasis units, over—” Alex began.

“No!” Toni Jo exclaimed in a panic, “No, I’m sorry, but that’s not going to work. Look, I can’t go into detail but something’s going to happen to the stasis units around 2009, and…well, let’s just say it won’t be a good day to be cold storage.” Suddenly images of the wreckage flashed across her brain, of the bodies, alien and human alike, that they had pulled out. Of the state some of them had been in. Right now, she was taking the fact that she didn’t remember any bodies that looked like her or John Henry as a good sign.

“Alright, let me think.” Alex requested, “Now, you said you were from 2016, right?”
Toni Jo nodded.

Just then Jack came up to him again. “Okay, looks like there is room for two more- “He began, but was cut off by Toni Jo, her anger getting the better of her again, slapping him.

Jack took a moment to get his bearings back, then snarked, “I take it that’s for something I didn’t do yet.”

“You’re damn right.” Toni Jo practically snarled. Just be lucky the person you actually did it to isn’t here. Yes, if Quill was there, there would’ve been a blood bath. And yes, that was the thing Toni Jo was most angry about. She could forgive him running off, because really, one extra person probably wouldn’t make that much of difference. He could even forgive his actions that lead up to and during the 456 disaster, because, really, he wasn’t the only one. There were a lot of people doing a lot of stupid things around that, and a lot of blood on a lot of hands. But the one thing she could not let go was ironically enough, the least catastrophic.

“Has everyone here done something to set you off?” John Henry asked.

“Just these two.” Toni Jo seethed.

“Well, can we at least know what we did?” Alex inquired, hoping to avoid whatever had happened, “Or, will do? Or whatever happened, or will happen, in 09?”

“I wish I could.” Toni Jo responded remorsefully, “You don’t know how bad I want to, but there are fixed points and flux points and I don’t know which is which and I’m afraid that if I say the wrong thing I’ll bring the Ten Plagues of Egypt down on all our heads or something.”

Alex looked to John for confirmation that, that was a possibility.

“She’s right.” Jack confirmed, “Well, maybe not about the whole Ten Plagues of Egypt, but trust me, try to stop the wrong thing and the consequences could be nasty. Better we just don’t know.”

“Alright,” Alex began, “Now that we’ve got that out of the way, I think that we can still make this work. We just have someone pull you out in 08 and you take the slow path the rest of the way. It’s not ideal, but it’s the best I can come up with.

“You don’t have any other-cold storage units or whatever you want to call it you could use?” John Henry spoke up.

Toni Jo shot him a look.

“Well, it’s more reasonable then having to go into hiding for eight years.” John Henry pointed out. That was when Jack noticed some spare parts lying around. “I have an idea.” He declared.

That was how they wound up at an ancient mausoleum of the edge of the city, removing two bodies.

Despite approving of the plan, Toni Jo was fighting back sickness. O, Lord, Jesus Christ, Redeemer and Savior, forgiven my sins, well, our sins in this case, just as You forgave Peter’s denial and those who crucified You. She silently prayed, crossing herself, Count not my transgressions, but, rather my tears of….

“What if someone visits a relative or does maintenance?” John Henry asked, as discovery was legitimate concern.

“That’s why we picked this one.” Jack explained, as he set up the system, “Most of the family lines here have all but died out. So, you should be safe here until Dr. Callahan’s friend can come get you. Speaking of which- “He looked at Toni Jo expectantly.

Toni Jo held out the box she had prepared, which a had a letter explaining what had happened wrapped around her phone. Not like she would be using it anyway. “Find a delivery place in London.

One you know for a fact is still operating in 2016.”

“Can do.” Jack assured her, pocking the box in his coat.

“It’s ready.” Alex called out, finishing converting the slabs into status units.

Toni Jo and John Henry walked over to the units and men helped them in.

“See you in 40.” Jack smirked at Toni Jo.

Yeah, right. Toni Jo thought, before going in, quickly losing consciousness.

The next thing Toni Jo was aware of was jolt of air hitting her face as the slab was pulled opened. Her eyelids jolted apart and she saw a rather annoyed-looking Quill staring down at her.

“Are you alright?” The alien asked, helping Toni Jo upright.
“I think so.” Toni Jo replied, “Just a little woozy. John’s in the one next to me.”
“Yes, I’m getting to him.” Quill responded, pulling open the other drawer. John Henry blinked looking up at her in weary surprise.
“Relax, that’s just the friend I sent my phone to.” Toni Jo told her, “John Henry, Quill, Quill, John Henry.”
“Please to meet you.” John Henry said as he was helped upright.” Wait, Quill, as in your sister Quill?” After a minute he added, “Can’t say I see much of a resemblance.”
Quill rolled her eyes. “Boy, do you know how to pick ’em.”
“I already told you, it wasn’t a date!” Toni Jo protested, sliding off the slab.
“Whatever.” Quill responded, heading for the opening.
Chapter Summary

As the team unites, Toni Jo deals with John Henry and a decision is made about Susan.
The title should tell you what that decision is. (Wink, wink)

Charlie was sitting in the front seat, staring out the window at Susan’s apartment, but he wasn’t paying much attention, at least the attention he should be, preoccupied with worry for his mother and Toni Jo.
Due to how suddenly it had all happened, any warning either he or Fox received was short coded text. They determined that something had happened to Toni Jo, but that was all they could figure out and neither of them were answering their phone. Charlie managed to get ahold of Gwen, who confirmed that Toni Jo had gone to get an intel and never came back and she was looking all over the place for her. With no clue where they were and a job to do, all the males could do was carry on and hope for the best.

“Don’t worry about it, Pup.” Fox spoke up, sensing what was on the boy’s mind, “I’m sure they’re both fine and they’ll call when they can.”

“How can you be so sure?” Charlie asked softly.

“For one thing, Toni had to get word to your mum somehow.” Fox reasoned, “Which mean she could not be too incapacitated. Secondly, need I remind you this is the same woman who took out eight armed cartel members with a pencil. A pencil.”

“Wasn’t it seven the last time you told that story?” Charlie asked. This wasn’t the first time Fox had told the pencil story and the number of men seemed to raise each time he told it.

“The point is,” Fox responded, “Your mother did that and still can and Toni Jo is more than capable of handling herself as well. Whatever’s going on they’ll be fine. So just try not to worry and focus on what we’re doing.” He turned back to the apartment. “Does this lady have no social life?”

“I don’t know.” Charlie admitted.

“That was rhetorical, Pup.” Fox informed him.

Just then Fox’s phone went off. When he saw who was calling he commented, “Speak of the devil,” picking it up then demanded, “Where have you been?”

“Hello to you, too, Fox.” Quill replied, “Listen, I got Toni, and we’re on our way to you, do you have eyes on Foreman?”

“Yeah, we’re in front of her apartment right now.” Fox confirmed, “Looks like another night in.”

“Things are escalating, we need to speed this up.” Quill continued.

“Quill, we have no reason to believe whatever happened to us was related- “Toni Jo began from the front passenger seat.

“You were kidnapped by a statue that put you in another time period.” Quill cut her off, “Even if it’s got nothing to with this that is more than a two-person job. We need to nab that woman and find out what she knows yesterday.”

“Excuse me?” John Henry spoke up from the back beside Gwen, “You’re doing what?”

Toni Jo’s response, however, was a little different. “I’m sorry, shouldn’t I be the one to say when we’re going to kidnap someone?”

Quill turned to her and said, “Well, go ahead then.”

“Did she really just—” John Henry began.

“What makes you think I’m just gonna approve this?” Toni Jo argued.
“Because we have no other leads and wild animals from alien planet are roaming school halls!”
Quill shot back.
“What’s roaming school halls?” John Henry asked.
“Just go with it.” Gwen advised him.
“And exactly what proof do you have that this teacher is involved?” Toni Jo countered, “Really, I’m asking.”
“Well, she’s been asking some very invasive questions.” Quill began.
“After you broke cover.” Toni Jo countered.
“Except she conducted a more thorough investigation actually luring me out of my room and breaking in.” Quill added.
“Ah, actually, Quill, “Fox spoke up from the other end, “From what you told me you could never actually prove it was her.”
“Not helping, Fox.” Quill said into the phone.
“Plus, didn’t Charlie give her an amnesia pill?” Toni Jo recapped.
“Wait, Charlie slipped her the pill!” Gwen asked.
“Why is that part everyone focuses on!!” Quill exclaimed, “He’s seventeen, not seven.”
“Wait, minors are a part of this group?” John Henry asked.
“Just the one.” Gwen assured him, then raising closer to the front seats, asked, “How did that happen again?”
“Look, we’re all getting off topic here.” Toni Jo said, “Quill, you know I trust your judgement, but as long as I’m here, show me what you got and I’ll probably give you the go ahead. Besides, it’s not like those two can just burst in and drag her off. Plus,” She gestured towards John Henry and lowered her voice, “We have one other thing to deal with.”
That was how Toni Jo wound up in the kitchen of the flat, setting across from John Henry, an amnesia pill between them.
“So, this will make me forget everything that’s happened?” John Henry asked, pointing to the pill.
“Yeah.” Toni Jo confirmed, “We usually just slip it in something, but, I thought you had the right to know, especially after all we’ve been through. Well, all we’ve through in the last twenty-four hours, at least.”
“It will still work now that you’ve told me?” John Henry asked.
Toni Jo laughed sadly and softly. “Of course, it will.”
“Well, can you tell me a couple of things, before I take it?” John Henry asked.
Toni Jo didn’t respond, shifting uncomfortably.
“Come one, it’s not like I’ll remember to tell anyone anyway.” John Henry reasoned, “Throw a bloke a bone, will you?”
“Alright.” Toni Jo conceded, smiling at the detective sadly, “Hit me.”
“What were you all talking about, in the car?” John Henry asked, “About kidnapping people and aliens in a school?”
Toni Jo ran her fingers through her hair, which at that point was starting to come out of its usually neat bun. “There’s this school that popped up on our radar.” Toni Jo began, “There have been a lot of—let’s just say weird disappearances and even flat-out deaths and for whatever reason all the authorizes you’d normally see swarming a school in a situation like that seemingly couldn’t care less if they tried, so, I sent two of my people in undercover.”
“And those people were your sister and your nephew.” John Henry deuced, “Who at the tender age of seventeen is already in the family business?”
Toni Jo let out a hiss. “It’s not like we meant for that happen.” She began, “We went to great pains to keep him safe and out of it until he hit double digits and even a little after that. But there was this one case where we needed a distraction, and a lost child would be just the thing. After that it was picking a pocket here, a lookout there, and next thing you know…”
“He’s slipping his teachers mickeys.” John Henry finished for her.
Toni Jo nodded.
“But why was he even that much involved in the first place?” John Henry asked, “Why didn’t Quill
just—send him away like your parents did with you?”

“Alright, this is where everything gets complicated.” Toni Jo said mostly to herself before addressing John Henry, “John, you’ve probably already gathered for yourself that Quill’s the sister of my affection as opposed to the sister of my flesh—or even being the sister of being raised together for that matter.”

“Yeah, I had already figured that much out.” John Henry confirmed.

“Well, there’s a chance that she might…not…be human.” Toni Jo managed to get out. John Henry raised his eyebrow.

“Okay, she’s not. “Ton Jo admitted, “She’s an alien who was stranded here, and she was soldier, a commander as a matter of fact, so we wound up recruiting her and she kept her guardianship of Charlie who came through with her and she gave her consent to perform certain—examinations on him.”

John Henry sputtered. “You—experimented on him?!?”

“Studied, not experimented.” Toni Jo responded, though she knew it was just semantics. Or at least might as well be.

“Oh, because that’s so much better.” John Henry snarked.

“I’m not talking vivisection.” Toni Jo protested, “It was all done carefully, humanely with the consent of an adult guardian. Really, just blood samples, mouth swabs, one MRI.” She fought back a cringe at the memory.

“Then why do you look like you don’t believe that?” John Henry challenged calmly.

“Because I don’t.” Toni Jo thought, but she swallowed that down said, “Any more questions?”

“All of it.” Toni Jo replied, “I gave you the truth. I was just vague.”

“Alright.” Toni Jo agreed.

“Just one.” John Henry answered, “How much of it was real? What you told me at the pub?”

Toni Jo smiled. “Let me deal with all this then we’ll see.”

With that, John Henry put the pill in his mouth, then took a drink of water to swallow it.

Later, John Henry was awoken by the sun shining through the curtains. His eyes fluttered open and he sat up taking in his surroundings, finding himself in some sort of motel room he didn’t remember renting. He looked over at the bedside table and found a note messily written on napkin. He picked it up and read it to himself. It said: Last night got a little wild. You might want to call in sick because you’re about 20 miles away from Bristol.

Meanwhile, back in London, Toni Jo, Quill, Charlie, Fox and Gwen were all gathered around the table, Toni Jo going through the evidence Quill and Charlie had put together.

“And all this other stuff happened in the time I was gone?” Toni Jo asked.

Quill nodded. “And did you see that part where a girl with her name was involved the first disappearances? And how that’s likely not her real name?”

“Yeah.” Toni Jo confirmed, putting the file back on the table, “Well, I’m convinced. Let’s do this.”

Even with the urgency of the situation and three extra people, getting everything ready took two days to prepare. They needed a place to actually conduct their interrogation which involved calling in several favors to get a storage unit and make sure no one was around to ask questions. And of course, they still needed to plan the whole thing out, as one does not simply grab a woman off the street in front of God and everybody, especially when they do not know whether or not she was armed or had any powers they need to worry about.

When they day finally came, they chose to do it after school, so that no alarm bells would be raised when she didn’t show up. The car Quill had commandeered had been traded in for an even more nondescript window less van, that was being drove close enough where they could keep an eye on
her, but far enough away she didn’t notice she was being followed.
When they were in an isolated spot away from the school, Quill called out, “Okay, Fox, now!”
The car pulled up next to her, but Susan was somehow ready, jump out of the way, as Quill and
Toni Jo jumped from the van. The women however, got on either side of her, blocking her escape
routes. Susan pulled out a taser from her sleeve.
Quill smiled without warmth. “Really? That’s all you got? A taser?” Then Quill pulled out her gun.
“Tell you what, we’re not looking to make a scene a here, so, just get in the van, nice and easy, and
no one had to get hurt.”
“Not yet at least.” Susan countered, “Look, we both know how this is going to end, so why don’t
you just- “Her words were cut off by a burning, sweet-smelling rag covering her mouth and noise.
She struggled against her attacker, but the world slowly blacked out as he lost consciousness.
As Susan fell, Toni Jo caught her from behind. “Grab her legs.”
Quill did turning to the van as they carried her in. However, Toni Jo was going faster in from a
different angle, causing Quill to hit the side. “Go to the left.”
“Sorry.” Toni Jo replied, following those instructions.
After that they quickly got Susan inside the van, shutting the door behind them in driving off.
Chapter Summary

During Susan's interrogation, it turns out she may be more friend than foe.

Susan awoke in darkness, her head pounding. She slowly opened her eyes and found herself in a place grey and blurry. As her vision cleared she found herself surrounded on three sides by concrete walls and a metal door. Standing in the corner of the room was the woman she knew as Andrea Quill.

“Huh-” Susan began, then she remembered what happened. She bolted upright, only to feel something tugging at her wrists. That was when she realized she was zip-tied to a metal chair. That was nailed to the floor. Well, this isn’t good. She had clearly underestimated whoever these people were.

“Look who’s finally up.” Quill said, sauntering over to her. She leaned down over her saying, “We were starting to worry you were having some sort of reaction. You know, considering you’re not really from around here, if you know what I mean?”

“Considering that I’m fairly certainly you’re not from around here either, I do.” Susan said, then stared up at Quill and for a moment the interrogator felt as if her captive was staring into her soul. Not knowing else how to stop what she was sure was some kind of mental assault, Quill slapped Susan full in the face. “What was that?!” Quill demanded, actually a bit freaked out.

“Sorry about that.” Susan said, “I was trying to avoid doing that, at least that depth, but, well, look where that got me.” After moment she added, “By the way, who uses their species as their last name? Better yet who chooses to go simply by their species? You’re more than that.”

Quill froze. Her voice was a dangerous whisper as she said, “Oh, don’t think you know anything about me just because you somehow got a peak into my brain.”

“Well, it wasn’t much a peak.” Susan countered,” Left me with more questions than answers. Like, what do the Quill want with Earth? Last time I checked didn’t you have your hands full with some messy civil war with the Rhodians? Not that I’ve been regularly keeping tabs, though.”

Quill was momentarily stunned by her knowledge of that, then got her bearings back together. “Okay, first off.” She began, “A civil war implies we’re part of the same country. We’re not. They invaded us—”

That was when Susan could swear she heard a voice from outside murmured “Here we go—” Quill, or whatever her name whirled around. “Are you listening to through the door?!” She demanded. When She got no response, she continued, “Fine, be that way, but I’m just setting the record straight! Besides, I highly doubt she’s going to get a complex.” The she turned back to Susan, “And secondly off, I’m not the one invading the planet here, you are, or you’re running some kind of smuggling operation or something, so why don’t we just cut all the crap and you just tell me what the Hell you are, and what the plan is?!”

Susan’s eyes widened in surprise as it dawned on her. “Okay, I think I know what’s going on here. You see, there’s been a huge misunderstanding on both our parts.”

“Oh, really?” Quill asked in tone that showed she didn’t believe a word of it, “And how is that?”

“Because, as I thought you were part of an alien invasion.” Susan explained, “And you thought I was part of an alien invasion. But now I’m thinking neither of us are invading and we’ve just been dancing around each other while whatever’s actually going on, and I’m pretty sure now there is something bigger going on, is off in the corner somewhere.”

“Really?” Quill deadpanned, “You really expect us to believe that? Without any proof?”
“Okay, fair enough.” Susan began, “How’s this for proof? I saved your son, or whoever he actually is to you, from being terribly mauled to death.”

Quill’s face contorted into a look of confusion. “What?”

Quill, Fox, and Toni Jo escorted Susan back to her apartment, where they found to their utter shock, as it was the last thing they were expecting, an adult Mog thrashing in cage in the woman’s front room, a muzzle over its mouth.

“I thought you said you killed this thing.” Fox told Quill.

“I did.” Quill responded, “Or at least a smaller one. I don’t know how I missed this one.”

“That’s problem with hunting invisible predators.” Susan answers, “From what I was able to gather, what you killed was an adolescent, this its mother.”

“You can read animal minds too?” Quill asked sincerely surprised.

“Kinda.” Susan replied, “It’s not easy, considering animals don’t think like us, all or at least mostly ID, very little in the way of Ego, or Ego, that is if they think in any recognizable language at all. Doesn’t help that reading minds doesn’t really come that naturally to me. Again, I was left with more questions than answers, but I did get that she was looking to rip a kid limb from limb, and when I go intervene imagine my surprise to find her target’s Charlie.”

There was a hint of a request for an explanation in that last comment, but Quill didn’t notice it, as she suddenly felt like she couldn’t breathe.

Realizing what was going on, Toni Jo put a gentle hand on the woman’s arm. “It’s okay.” She assured her, “Someone got there in time.”

Not wanting to show anything that could be perceived as weakness, Quill quickly got ahold of herself, pulling away and saying to Susan, “Thanks. Um, so, if you weren’t here to take over the place, why exactly are you here?”

“The last few years, actually the last few hundred years, since we can be honest now, have been kinda rough.” Susan explained, “Actually that’s a massive understatement. I just wanted a—a fresh start, and as girl I was happy here, so I figured why not give teaching a shot. A year later, this shows up on my door step.”

“And what about Wright and Chesterton?” Quill questioned, “You know, that two teachers that went missing while looking for you.”

Susan actually blushed. “Yeah, not my Grandfather’s finest moment.”

Quill turned her head to look at the other alien. “So, he is a real person?”

“Of course, he is.” Susan responded, “You think a fifteen-year-old girl gets to an alien planet light years away from her own world on her own?”

“Depends on the fifteen-year-old.” Quill murmured, “So, what did he do to them?”

“Torchwood?” Susan repeated, “I thought that whole thing disbanded in 09.”

“Torchwood 4.” Fox explained, “The mobile unit. We’re still trying to put out alien-related fires.”

“Yeah, speaking of which,” Susan continued, “Any idea how,” She gestured to the Mog, “This got here?”

“I have a theory.” Quill spoke up, “But, uh, it’s a little crazy.”
And so, Quill explained her theory to Susan, and what lead her to it.
“You’re right, it’s crazy.” Susan declared once she was finished, “Andrea, Riffs don’t just pop up overnight.”

“From the looks of it, it didn’t.” Quill pointed out, “It’s been here for a while. You saw all the reports.”

“But something has to have caused it for it to just—pop up in the first place.” Susan countered, “Something….” The it hit her. “Okay, I think I might know what happened, but I can’t be sure until someone gets here.”

“Who?” Fox asked.

“After I found this,” Susan pointed to the Mog, “I called for reinforcements but he’s taking he’s sweet time getting here. And I need him and some supplies only he has to prove my theory.”

“Yeah, we’re gonna need a bit more information that.” Quill informed her.

“I’ll explain it to you later.” Susan assured her, looking at her watch, then stood up saying, “Right now we’re about to be late for work.”

“That’s what your concern about right now?” Quill responded, “We got an actual, serious problem here!”

“Yeah, and for now the best way is to deal with it is to keep an eye on things on the ground, plus I need to keep my job.” Susan insisted, grabbing Quill’s wrist and pulling her out of the chair, dragging her towards the door.
Chapter Summary

The team regroups to take care of the Mog, then Toni Jo gets some unexpected news.

“I can be there in ten, maybe less.” Gwen told Toni Jo on the phone, “Don’t worry, I will. See you then.” She hung up and saw Charlie looking at her, silently asking how it was going.

“They got conformation on her story.” Gwen said, “The Mog’s locked up in her flat, in a large dog crate. Just to be safe they made her tell the story three times, too. Why do you people do that by the way?”

“Every time you tell a story, you go through your memory to make sure you tell it right.” Charlie answered, “You add details, make corrections. If you make up a story, you tell it the same every time.”

“Okay, still have to question the three times in a row method.” Gwen responded, as while as a cop she was aware of this fact, but never seen it done like they did it before she met them. “Anyway, apparently, her arrival at the school had nothing to do with the goings-on, she was just looking for a fresh start. She also knows someone who can help prove or disprove your Mum’s theory.”

“Well, where are they?” Charlie asked.

“Fox is at the flat, Susan and Quill are back at the school.” Gwen answered, “As for Susan’s contact, he’s—on his way, that’s all I know. Right, now, I’m supposed to drop you off, then meet them to deal with the Mog, so, grab your bag and meet me at the car.”

“Wait, what do you mean drop me off?” Charlie asked, “I’m coming with you.”

“No, you’re not. “Gwen contradicted firmly,” We still need bodies at Coal Hill, and this thing has apparently already tried to kill you once. If I take you to deal with it your mother will kill me. Plus, it’s what I’ve been told to do.”

“I can handle it.” Charlie protested, “And Mum has Miss Foreman now.”

“That’s still only two people.” Gwen pointed out, “Trust me, you’re needed. Now, please don’t argue with me on this and let’s go.”

Realizing he wasn’t going to convince her to take him, Charlie headed for the door, pushing past her and murmuring, “Fine.”

Gwen whirled around, demanding, “Don’t you use that tone with me young man. And you don’t shove me like that, or anyone else for that matter. Would you pull that with Quill or Toni?”

“Sorry.” Charlie responded, albeit rather grudgingly, putting on his coat. He walked out, shutting the door behind him.

“Teenagers.” Gwen sighed, to herself, “When Anew gets that age, somebody shoot me.”

Four minutes later, Gwen parked the car next to the school. “Alright, this is it.” She announced, “See you later.”

“You too.” Charlie said, getting out of the car, by that point civil again.

“Oh, and Charlie?” Gwen continued, causing the boy to freeze, “Be careful out there.”

“You, too.” Charlie replied, turning his head somewhat to look at her before going on his way.

Gwen waited a moment, watching as he headed towards the door. Halfway there he was stopped by another boy, about one head taller. Both boy’s faces lit up as they started to talk, then they headed in still talking.

“Crap.” She gasped, not sure she liked what was going on there. Making a friend was bad enough, considering that once they fixed the Rift or whatever this is, they would leave for the next thing, but it looked like their boy might be getting a crush and that was just going to lead to heartache,
possibly for both parties involved.
When Gwen parked in front of Susan’s flat, Fox was outside, in the cab of a semi-truck. “Do I even want to know where you all got that?” She asked, getting out of the car.

“This was how Susan got the beast here.” Fox explained, “Now I’m just trying to figure out how it works.”

Gwen climbed in the cab and started looking at it. “I think I can manage this.” She declared.

“Before we work on getting it out of here, we still need to manage to get this thing in the truck.”

Toni Jo said, leaning on the side of the truck.
That was how they wound up Fox dragging the creature by a chain muzzle, Gwen and Toni Jo at is sides with cattle prods that they were forced to use as the creature tried to attack them, slipping in and out of invisibility.

Maybe we should’ve brought Charlie along. Gwen thought. The kid was surprisingly strong.

They finally managed to get the creature and quickly shut the door. As the trio slid down the slide, Toni Jo’s phone went off. She looked at the caller ID and her heart stopped. “It’s Inocenta.”

They all stared at each other for a moment than Gwen said, “Well, what are you waiting for? Answer it.”

Toni Jo picked up the phone. “Everything okay?”

“I don’t know.” Her sister replied in a shaky voice, “They think they know what it is. They’re talking about something called Cardiomyopathy?”

Toni Jo’s own heart stopped. Don’t panic. She told herself. There’s a wide range with Cardiomyopathy. More people die with the diseases then actually from the diseases. At last she asked, “What else are they saying?”

“I don’t know.” Inocenta admitted, “I-I think you need to get back here.”

“Alright.” Toni Jo replied, “I’m on my way back to Wales right now. I’ll be there.” She then hung up looking at the others.

“What is it?” Gwen asked, concerned.

“They’re saying it might Cardiomyopathy.” Toni Jo answered, “I need to get down there.”

“We’ll drop you off on the way.” Gwen declared.

They dropped her off about block from the hospital then headed to a compound on the edge of the city. As the gate raised to let them, Gwen asked, “Um, how do you know this man again?”

“I don’t,” Fox answered, “This is one of Chris’ people. We use him when we have to store something big and potentially dangerous.”

“Then how come I’ve never heard of him?” Gwen asked.

“Because Torchwood 3 never used it.” Fox explained, “They didn’t need it. We did because of the whole walking the Earth thing. Not a lot of room form bulky things. The location is just a coincidence.”

Getting the Mog contained was easier this time, as their benefactor sent men out to help them. After they got the creature in a more suitable cage, a man with greying brown hair dressed in leather walked up to him.

“Thanks again, Louis.” Fox said.

“You always say that like I had a choice.” Louis replied, “Now, is there anything I need to know about this one?”

“I don’t know if you noticed this but it can turn itself invisible.” Fox replied.

“Yeah, I noticed that.” Louis responded, “I meant the odds of it breaking out or someone coming looking for it.”

“No one’s coming for it.” Fox assured him, “As for it breaking out—well, that’s why we brought it here, isn’t it?”

Louis sighed.

“See you next time then?” Fox asked.

Yeah, yeah, sure.” Louis said as the pair got in the truck.

“So, back to London now?” Fox guessed.

“I don’t know.” Gwen admitted, “I still got hikers and apparently sentient, malevolent statues to
find. But before any of that, I need to make a stop.”

When Rhys William’s arrived home from work after picking Anew up from school, there was a
very familiar woman sitting on the couch.

“Mummy!” Anew exclaimed, rubbing to Gwen who engulfed her in a hug.

“Hey, there,” Gwen beamed, “How’s my sweet girl, she being good for her Dad?”

“Yes, she had been.” Rhys answered for her, “Honey, why don’t you get yourself a snack while me
and Mummy talk a minute, okay?”

“Can I have a biscuit?” Anew asked.

“Sure, honey.” Rhys conceded.

Anew ran off happily. For a moment the couple looked at each other than Rhys came over to the
couch, asking, “Why didn’t you tell me you were coming back?”

“I didn’t know I was.” Gwen explained.

And so, Gwen told him everything that had happened since they had last spoke.

“So, what happens now?” Rhys asked, once she was finished, his head spinning.

“I don’t know.” Gwen admitted, “I probably should head back to London, I can’t leave them high
and dry. But someone should probably check on Toni Jo.” She looked at Gwen pleadingly, “Rhys,
I know it’s a lot to ask but—would you do it?”

Rhys sighed, “Sure.”

“Thanks.” Gwen berthed, falling back against the couch. After a beat, her eyes went over her
husband as she added soberly, “I never said sorry, you know.”

“What?” Rhys asked, confused.

“Mean…” Gwen began, “You never asked for any of this, and just when I get us out, I managed
to let myself get dragged back in and once again making you pay a price too.”

To be fair, neither of them were expecting Torchwood 4 to show up on their doorstep looking like a
bunch of ragged orphans. They had clearly been thought Hell trying to get there. What were they
gonna do, turn them away into the unknown? Besides, Chris said they just wanted to talk.

“I’m so sorry to bother you at home like this.” Chris had said as they all just stood there in the
front room, “But in the wake of all that’s happened we have some rather important matters to
discuss.” Eying her stomach he had added at the time, “How far along are you?”

“Six months.” Gwen answered awkwardly, still not sure what to make of the strange troupe
suddenly gathered in her house. Jack had mentioned Torchwood 4 to her, but he had always been
rather vague about it.

“Ah, not long now.” Chris noted.

“You are like the team doctor or something?” Gwen asked, wondering what the comment meant.

“No, that would Antionette over there.” Chris replied, gesturing towards the redhead, who was
trying to get her best friend to sit down, to no avail, “Me and my wife went through two
pregnancies, I’m use to the routine.”

“You have kids?” Gwen asked.

“Yes.” Chris confirmed, “So you can trust me when I say that, and yes, I know this sounds rather
trite, that there is no greater joy in the world.”

“Yeah, thanks,” Rhys cut in, “Ah, I have a couple questions. Frist off, if you lot really are with
Torchwood, then where the Hell have you been this whole time? I mean, I don’t know if you’ve
noticed, but we really could’ve used some help a couple of months ago.”

“We were in India when the kids started having episodes.” Quill spoke up, “We started working on
it, then the locals noticed Charles here wasn’t having them, so naturally, they assume whatever’s
happening is our fault, and we had to run for our lives.”

“We tried to get to London,” Toni Jo added, “But it was all over before we even made it to Europe.
Then we spent the next three months trying to get here, but we kept having setbacks alone the
way.”

“Basically, we battled our way across Europe.” Quill elaborated, seeming rather proud of that
accomplishment, if weary.

“Before the India case we were in Topeka.” Fox added in, “And let me tell you, that one was weird
even for us. Before that Northern Ireland. Before that…actually, where we before that?"
“Botswana.” Toni Jo reminded him.
“Right,” Fox responded, “Truth field. How could I forget?”
“According to Jack Torchwood 4 is a mobile unit.” Gwen managed to get a word in edgewise to
explain, “They go wherever they’re needed, and when they’re not they sometimes move around
just to keep the team on their toes.” She looked to Chris, who was clearly in charge, “Is that right?”
“Yes, that sums it up nicely.” Chris confirmed, “You have to remember, Mr. Williams, when
Torchwood as a whole was founded the sun never set on the British Empire.”
“And they kept this operational after they lost it?” Gwen asked for clarification.
“Basically.” Chris answered, “Now does that explain everything?”
“Except for what you want with us.” Gwen replied, “Which is--?”
“it has come to our attention,” Chris began, tightly grasping the top of a chair, “That in the wake of
the catastrophe with the 456 there is a particular fallout that puts the world in even greater
jeopardy.”
“Could you be a little more specific?” Rhys reasonably requested.
“Apart from the obvious problem of no one manning a still volatile Riff,” Chris elaborated, “The
fact that your base was completely destroyed, meaning that every piece of alien technology
Torchwood 3 ever collected is not out there for every agency with who knows what intentions for
them, civilians who either have the right connections and enough cash or just ignored the police
tapped and found something, not to mention the any aliens who were put in suspended amination or
humans put in suspended animation because they were mutating into creatures that the Institute
didn’t otherwise know how to contain—”
“Who were probably all turned into chunky salsa.” Quill commented.
There was a moment of uncomfortable silence as everyone exchanged awkward looks.
“Yes,” Chris began again slowly, “We are at the point where that is the best-case scenario, but we
have to prepare for the possibility that they’re out there. Now, to deal with it we will need to
scavenge the wreckage for anything or anyone dangerous. That’s where you come in, Detective
Cooper. May I call you that?”
“Sure.” Gwen replied, “Look, I see how you could come to this conclusion, but Jack and I did get
what we could before he went on his walk about around the world, I’m surprised you lot didn’t run
into him then— “
“You thought he hadn’t?” Rhys spoke up.
“Well, since he’s nowhere around—” Fox began, stroking Murder’s head, as the dog was starting
to get antsy and he was trying to clam her down. She was still alive then.
That was when it hit Gwen. “You don’t know.”
“I do.” Chris replied, “He found out a secret I had many years ago, so he told the told me his. The
others don’t, however.”
“Don’t know what?” Toni Jo spoke up again, starting to appear agitated. Quill whispered
something in her ear, and that seemed to calm her back down.
“So, as long as we’re on the subject, where is he then?” Chris asked.
“After walking the Earth for six months he hopped a cold fusion cruiser.” Gwen explained soberly,
“Look, the point is between us and UNIT it’s all safe.” Though you might have a point over cold
storage. She hadn’t thought of that before now, and it made her hear jump through her chest.
“Oh, please,” Quill scoffed with a roll of her eyes, “You can’t actually be that naïve.”
Gwen turned to look at her. “Excuse me?”
“You heard me.” Quill replied, getting to her feet, “Torchwood 1 fell, what, two years ago now,
and had us, you lot, and Torchwood 2 confiscating artifacts, and yet, still, still, as in two weeks
ago, we somehow keep finding pieces of tech stored in their vaults in the hands of people with the
right connections in as big enough bank account. Why would think your outfit would be any
different?” After a moment she murmured under her breathe, “What, did hire this one just for the
pretty face?”
Despite the fact that the comment was barely above a whisper, but Gwen caught enough to it say, “What?”

Before Quill could stick her foot in her mouth any further, Toni Jo grabbed her wrist, saying, “Mrs. Cooper, I apologize on Quill’s behalf. We’re just gonna wait outside for the others—“

“Actually, Dr. Callahan, I think it would be best if you all left.” Gwen cut her off coolly.

“Right.” Chris responded, pulling a piece of paper out of his jacket, “In case you change your mind about helping, here’s a number where I can be reach.”

Gwen hadn’t planned on contacting Chris, but then a week later, as if some cosmic force was looking to make a point to her, everybody on the planet became a clone of Harold Saxon for roughly twenty-four hours. While the device itself hadn’t come from their particular base, Gwen got the message.

So, she wound up bundled up with Rhys, and the Torchwood Four team sifted through the rubble of her old workplace, gathered anything that was there. Well, the others did most of the work, it turned out they only needed to her tell them what and who was all in there, as their manifest were slightly out of date.

“Thank you so much, Detective Cooper,” Chris said back at her house, the two of them alone standing in the doorway, “I know this could not have been easy for you.”

“It wasn’t.” Gwen admitted, “What about you? What will you do now? You and the others?”

“Honestly…” Chris began, “I haven’t a bloody clue. If we disband most of us have different paths we could go with our skill sets, but there are still threats out there. I have connections, enough to keep us going. So, does Fox, so theoretically we could keep it up. Though, I’m guessing that you, Detective Cooper are looking forward to a nice quiet life.”

“You would be right.” Gwen replied, “No more aliens for me.” Well, that was the plan at least.

“And I wish you the best of luck with that, Gwen Cooper.” Chris declared sincerely before turning around and walking away.

Apparently while he had wished her the best of luck he hadn’t been sure she would have it as he called in a couple of favors to have people keep tabs on her in case she got into any trouble, which was probably a good thing as she only learned of this when said people helped her fend off a bounty hunter still seeking Torchwood members. After that, the moved to a secluded house out of town, which a concerned Chris checking in.

And at first it was just that, checking in out of a genuine concern for their well-being. Then it was small favors, letting Toni Jo snatch up a cut on Fox in the kitchen, keeping Charlie for a couple of days when the mission was too dangerous for him to take part. Next, she started actually assisting them sometimes, helping them keep the Riff contained mainly.

“All I’m saying is,” Gwen continued in the here and now,” I know it must not be easy for you. Dealing with this again. So. Thanks.”

“Well, thanks for noticing.” Rhys replied sincerely with no hint of malice at all.

As Gwen gathered a few things to take back with her, and Rhys went to call Toni Jo, neither noticed they were being watched from the outside.
Toni Jo arrives at the hospital where Chris is being treated.

Toni Jo burst through the front doors of the hospital doors, marching up to the front desk. “Excuse me,” She said, trying to keep her voice even and clam, “Can you tell me where Christopher Carter is. I’m his daughter. I was told they figured out his condition?”

“One minute.” The woman at the front desk replied, typing on a keyboard at a computer.

Two minutes later she walked into a room where her father was in the bed and Inocentia was pacing the floor. For a moment, Toni Jo froze in shock. She had never seen her father look so frail in her life.

“Toni!” Inocentia cried out, rushing her sister and hugging her. Inocentia looked a lot like her big sister, except her hair fell down in waves and curls, artificially made, and she had their father’s brown eyes. Brown eyes that were currently welling up with tears.

“I take it it’s not good news.” Toni Jo guessed, as they broke the embrace.

“It’s not as bad as she’s making it out to be.” Chris responded.

“Inocentia said on the phone they think it’s Cardiomyopathy.” Toni Jo recapped, “How did they come up with that? We don’t even a have a family history of it.”

“One of the reasons they didn’t think of it at first.” Chris replied, “But after eliminating everything else they did a blood test, and then a chest x-ray, and an EKG.”

“They did all that in the time I was gone?” Toni Jo asked, doubting that even if they had, they had results back already.

“The results haven’t come back yet.” Chris explained.

“So, we still don’t know anything for sure yet?” Toni Jo assumed.

“No.” Chris replied, “Sorry, it wasn’t really nessacry to drag you out here.”

“Don’t listen to him!” Inocentia exclaimed, “They’re already talking about treatments!”

Putting her hand on her sister’s shoulder, Toni Jo said gently, “Okay, Inocentia? Why don’t you go out there and call home, okay? Check on Alcee and the girls? I need to talk to dad alone for a minute.”

“Don’t condescend to me, Antionette.” Inocentia demanded.

“I’m not.” Toni Jo replied, “But I think I’ll be able to get the whole story if I’m alone.”

“Alright.” Inocentia agreed, before leaving the room.

Once they were alone, Toni Jo stared her father down saying, “What are we looking at here? “

“Like I already told you.” Chris replied, “They don’t know for sure, but since they’ve elimated everything else—”

“It seems pretty likely.” Toni Jo finished for him, “Which is why they’re already talking about treatment options. What are they thinking? Pacemaker? Heart transplant?”

“Nothing so drastic.” Chris answered, trying to keep her clam, not just pretending to be clam, actually clam, “But the possibility of a pacemaker was brought up. As was septal myectomy or even simply medicines.” After second, he smiled bittersweetly, adding, “Whatever the case I’m likely going to have to retire. Guess your sister finally got her wish.”

Toni Jo was silent, processing what he had just said. “You don’t know that,” She said finally, “People can about their lives with this with life style changes.”

“Antionette, you wouldn’t sugar code it for anyone else, don’t sugar code it for me.” Chris stopped her, “We both know our job is the exception.”
Toni Jo nodded.
“Granted in Torchwood it could be considered an accomplishment to make long to develop of heart condition.” Chris quipped, smiling.
Toni Jo couldn’t help but smile back. “And we can talk about what do about the team with you gone later.” She began, setting down in a chair across from him, “Now let’s focus on getting you better. Now, I know the doctors here are perfectly qualified, but—”
“You want to run your own tests.” Chris finished for her.
“If it’s alright with you.” Toni Jo stipulated.
“Did I stop you the last time?” Chris responded.
“I’ll be back in a minute then.” Toni Jo announced, getting up, “If Innocenta gets back before I do, tell her I went to get some things.”
Toni Jo had set up a small lab for in case of emergency in Cardiff ages ago. “Let’s see,” She said to herself, “Syringes.” She went over to a small cabinet and grabbed two, carefully placing them a large leather purse, just the right size for sneaking it into the hospital. Then she grabbed some needles saying, “Yeah, gonna need those too.”
She then walked over to the counter picking up a hollow gray and metallic green device roughly the size of a pet carrier. She really wanted to do her own electrocardiogram as well, but she didn’t have any Earth tech or alien that could do. “Okay, no biggie.” She said aloud to herself, “I can just do a stress test.” After a moment, she added, “Somehow.” After another moment, she added, “Who am I kidding? No way I could get my own treadmill in here. I’ll just has to be happy with these two for now.” And with that she took her purse and ran for the door, then she got an idea. She turned back around, grabbing a device that looked like an ear thermometer attached a round fidget spinner.
“Okay,” Toni Jo was saying as she entered the hospital room again, going through the bulky purse, “I couldn’t get the EKG, but I did find—” Her voice trailed off when she realized her father was asleep in his hospital bed, Inocenta sitting across from him. To her surprise, Rhys was sitting by Innocenta.
“You just missed him.” Innocenta informed her, smiling sadly.
“I’ll get him when he wakes up.” Toni Jo responded, sitting beside her sister, then she turned her attention to the newcomer. “Rhys, what are you doing here?”
“Gwen wanted me to check on you.” Rhys explained, “Innocenta says it’s something called Cardiomyopathy.”
“It makes it harder for the heart to pump blood.” Toni Jo explained.
“Well, that doesn’t sound good.” Rhys replied, concerned.
“It’s not.” Toni Jo confirmed, “But it’s treatable. Of course, they don’t know anything for sure yet —”
“So naturally, Toni’s gonna run all her own test.” Innocenta cut her off. There wasn’t anything of teasing or judgement in it. Just a simple statement of facts that was maybe just a bit concerned. Toni Jo looked a bit annoyed at that statement.
“So, ah, Gwen’s headed back to London with Fox.” Rhys spoke up nervously, trying to change the subject.
“That’s probably the best for now.” Toni Jo agreed.
“What about you?” Innocenta asked, “Are you going to have to go back?” She was trying to be casual, trying to be understanding, she knew the job, but in her eyes, there was a look of fear. Of fear of doing this alone again.
“No.” Toni Jo answered, “Not unless something big happens.” She looked over to Rhys, silently pleading for understanding.
Rhys simply nodded, and nothing more had to be said. He got it. This was her father, and her only living parent. And her sister shouldn’t be left to deal with it alone, either. She wasn’t abandoning Gwen and the others this just needed her attention.
“But I promise, I’ll check in.” Toni Jo assured him, “I’ll be keeping abreast of everything that’s going on.”
“Just do what you got to do.” Rhys replied, “So, ah, is there anything I can do to help? You girls need anything?”
The girls exchanged looks. “No,” Toni Jo answered, “Just take care of your daughter.”
“Okay,” Rhys agreed reluctantly, “But if you need anything—and this time I mean anything, you know my number.” He turned to the younger Callahan sister, “Innocenta, do you know it?”
Innocenta shook her head.
Rhys pulled out a piece of paper and wrote it down, handing it to her. “This goes for you too.” He told her, before going.
“Thank you.” Innocenta called out to him as he left. Once he was gone, she said, “So, that was Rhys William, huh?”
“Yeah,” Toni Jo responded, her voice far away, “Patron saint of Torchwood spouses.” Already she was starting to lose focus on the conversation, thinking about her father, asleep in his hospital bed. If the worst happened…
Suddenly, Toni Jo felt a hand covering hers on the chair arm. Her eyes glanced over to see the other hand was Innocenta. “It’s gonna be okay.” Her little sister assured her, squeezing her hand. This wasn’t right. Toni Jo was the oldest, she should be comforting Innocenta, especially when she was freaking out half an hour ago. She had to pull herself back together.
“I hope you’re right.” Toni Jo said at last.
“Do you want to—” Innocenta began to offer awkwardly.
Toni Jo was surprised once she realized what her sister was offering. Her rather had never attempted to convert their mother, and as children they had well-versed them in both their religions, allowing them to choose for themselves. They had experience both candles of mass, the hymns, and increases and gold bowl that her father had specially made for their mother, that she filled with water and claimed could tell the future. Sometimes Toni Jo even thought she could see things in it. In the end Toni Jo asked to be confirmed shortly after she turned fifteen. Innocenta had took a third option and went protestant, and even after that, wasn’t really religious. “Are you sure—”
Innocenta nodded. If it helped her sister she would do it.
They bowed their heads and began.
Quill is over protective, Charlie acts something like a teenager, the Vertias movement is passing out flyers, and a serial killer giant wasp runs amok.

“We’re seriously doing this?” Quill asked, fast-walking alongside Susan, “Going about as business as usual?”
“No,” Susan corrected her, “Now that we have our little- “She made a motion is the air with her hand as she tried to think of a word to describe what had happened, “Misunderstanding cleared up, we can actually warn each other if we see anything.”
Quill rolled her eyes. “So, we’re doing that again? Oh, I am so tired of surveillance.”
“Well do you have any other ideas?” Susan challenged, “Any idea how to fight what we’re up against?”
“How about seal the damn riff?” Quill countered, “And yes, I am standing by my riff theory.”
“And again, how do you suppose we do that?” Susan sassed, “Even I’m not sure how to do that and my people literally wrote the book on space-time riffs.” After a beat she added, “A couple of books actually.”
“And who are your people, exactly?” Quill asked, her eyes glancing over to her.
Susan broke into a grin, saying, “You wouldn’t believe me if I told you.”
“Have you looked around lately?” Quill responded, “You’re having a conversation with an alien who works with a team of paranormal fighters, currently investigating alien incursions possibly caused by a tear in space in a high school of all places, and you have telepathic powers. You could tell me just about anything and I’d believe it.”
Seeing her point, Susan opened her mouth to speak, but before she could get another word, the other alien saw something that caught her interest even more. “What the Hell?” Quill asked, mostly to herself, walking away from Susan.
What was that all about? Susan thought, her eyes following Quill as she walked up to two boys. She realized one of them was Charlie, who went stiff at the sight of her.
Oh boy. Susan thought, walking as fast as she could to rescue the poor children.
As Quill was walking up to them, the boys had been talking, however, that stopped the moment they heard her say, “And what do we have here?”
They both went silent, suddenly aware of her presence. “Don’t you two have somewhere to be?”
“We were just on our way to math’s, Miss.” The taller boy spoke up. Charlie on the other hand, suddenly been rendered incapable of speech, looking like some sort of frightened rabbit.
Quill narrowed her eyes, looking at the other boy suspiciously. She hadn’t taken much notice of him before, but now there was something just not right about him. “And who are you?”
“Mateusz.” Charlie blurted out, actually getting between Quill and the boy. For some reason his face had started flushing. Quill wasn’t sure what to make of that, or if she liked it. “Mateusz Andrzejewski.”
“I’m ah, actually in your physics class.” Mateusz said, trying to step out from behind Charlie, clearly uncomfortable with whatever was going on here.
“Well,” Quill snarked back, “Clearly you can’t be that good, otherwise you would’ve made more of an impression.”
“Mum!” Charlie shouted in protest, before he could stop himself.
Did he really just say that? Quill thought, Why is he acting like this? He doesn’t act like this…
Her thought train was interrupted the other boy, Mateusz apparently, asking, “Miss Quill is your mother?”

Quill decided in this situation it was best to own it. “Yes. And as such I would like to know what you’re doing with my son.”

Fortunately, before this could go any further Susan burst in, taking Quill by the arm. “Miss Quill,” she began, maybe a bit too brightly, “We really do need to be going, don’t we?”

“Excuse me, I’m trying to-” Quill began as Susan attempted to turn her around.

“And you two,” she addressed the boys, eyeing them both, “Need to get to class.”

“Yes, ma’am.” Charlie replied gratefully, grabbing Mateusz’s wrist and running for it.

“What’d you do that for?” Quill demanded as they walked in the opposite direction.

“I could ask the same of you.” Susan replied.

“Something’s not right there.” Quill informed her, her eyes going back to where they had been, “I’m telling you something’s just not right there.”

“Care to be more specific?” Susan requested.

“Can’t quiet put my finger on it yet.” Quill admitted, “But I’m telling you there’s just something not right about that Polack, and I don’t think I want him around my son.”

“Polack?” Susan repeated, “Who are you, Blanche DuBois?”

“I don’t know who that is.” Quill responded.

“How long have you been on this planet?” Susan asked.

“What does that have to do with anything?” Quill demanded.

“Okay, we’re getting off-topic here.” Susan responded, trying to steer the conversation back to her point, “Look, if you have no proof anything is out of the ordinary about the kid, no proof anything is going on, you’re just being paranoid.”

“When everyone’s out to get you, paranoia’s just plain common sense.” Quill reasoned.

“You think everyone’s out to get you?” Susan asked, trying to gage Quill’s mental stability at that point.

“I’m with Torchwood, everyone’s out to get all of us, all the time.” Quill replied, “UNIT, MI-6, MI-5, Scotland Yard, FBI, CIA, NYPD, LAPD, NCIS, TBI, CBI, CID, KGB, MSS, March of Dimes-”

“March of Dimes?” Susan cut her off.

“Again, we’re getting off-topic.” Susan said, “I highly doubt that boy is anyway associated with the March Dimes or anyone else in the alphabet soup you just listed off. Charlie was just probably beating the bushes or maybe he made a friend. He certainly seemed embarrassed enough for it to be the later.”

“Well he doesn’t need to be doing that.” Quill protested, “The minute we get this tear or whatever it is shut up we’re out here. He shouldn’t be making parament ties. He knows better. I’ll have to talk to him about that.”

Susan paused a minute, contemplating the meaning of what was doing said. “So, what you’re telling me here is that your son is not allowed to have friends?” She summed up finally, concerned.

“Believe it or it’s actually never come up before.” Quill admitted. She knew that he had made acquaintances before. When he was little and they were investigating a series of deaths at a lake, a group of teens had let him follow them around, another time he had befriended a pair of siblings at one the libraries they left him at, but never anything deep, never anything long term. Well, unless one counted Terra. Then again, Terra hadn’t ended well.

“Well, that’s gotta be lonely for him.” Susan continued, “Lonely for both of you.”

“He’s got me and I’ve got him.” Quill informed her, “And we both have the others.”

“Okay that works for you.” Susan admitted, “But when you were a kid, did you like hanging out with adults?”

“When I was a kid I had bigger issues to worry about.” Quill scoffed.

“And another thing.” Susan said, “You keep saying things like, ‘when we seal up the tear’. What if the tear can’t be sealed up. It’s a possibility we all need to be prepared for.”
Quill wasn’t sure how to respond to that. They had to be able to fix it. There had to be a way to defeat this thing. “Well, I suppose we’ll cross that bridge when we come to it, as I believe the saying goes.”

“It does.” Susan replied as they came down to a stop, “I think this is where part ways. Good luck. We’ll talk later.”

“You, too.” Quill agreed, before heading in the direction of the science department.

“Oh, and Quill?” Susan called out, causing the other woman to turn around. “If you must interrogate someone else, try not to be as subtle as a hammer about it.”

“This coming from the woman who has been using the same alias for over fifty years.” Quill countered.

Susan gave her a look as if to say, So?

Meanwhile, in another part of the building, a different but not completely unrelated conversation was happening.

“Miss Quill is your mother?” Mateusz asked, still being dragged by Charlie, who he found was surprisingly strong, “Your mother?” Well, he supposed they looked alike, in a Nordic kind of sense.

“Yes, and I’m really, really sorry she did that to you.” Charlie answered, getting hot again at the very thought. What was wrong with her?!

“It’s alright.” Mateusz assured him. He wasn’t really all that okay with that kind of accosting, but at that point he was just trying to calm Charlie down. “Can you, ah, let me go now?”

Charlie did, and saw to his horror, that a bruise was forming. “Oh my God,” He gasped, “Mateusz, I’m so sorry. I didn’t mean- “

For a minute Mateusz was confused as to what Charlie was going on about, then he saw his wrist. “I know you didn’t mean it.” He said, “And it’s not like you broke it. Really, no need for such a big reaction.”

“How are you being so blasé about this?!” Charlie balked, “My mother all but attacked you and I laid hands on you!” He practically hated his insane family at that moment and himself as well.

“Well, in your case it was an accident.” Mateusz iterated, “You weren’t actually trying to hurt to me. And as for your mother, I just have to avoid her from now on.”

“How are you going to do that?” Charlie questioned, “You have a class with her.”

“I’ll figure something out.” Mateusz assured him, chuckling a little. Deciding the best thing to do was change the subject before poor Charlie had a heart attack, he said the first thing that came to his mind, “She, um, doesn’t really seem old enough to have a son your age.”

“I’m adopted.” Charlie explained as they began to walk again, “And she’s older than she looks.”

Charlie wasn’t sure of that last part. He had no idea what his foster mother’s real age was. He didn’t think anyone on the team did. On one hand, as Mateusz had pointed out, she only looked to be in her early thirties. On the other hand, she was the commander of an entire army by the time they were stranded on Earth, and presumably that rank took some time to get.

“You mean an adoption agency actually gave her a child?” Mateusz asked in surprise, not really thinking.

“Why does everyone think she’s just this monstrous horrible person?” Charlie asked, sincerely hopping for an answer.

“Well, you have to admit she does have one of those—abrasive personalities.” Mateusz answered, “It’s rather easy to imagine her being rather—withholding as a parent.” He knew he really shouldn’t be criticizing other people’s parents, all things considered, but still—he was concerned.

Charlie did see where he was getting at it with that. “Well, she was never really -warm, it’s not her way.” Charlie admitted, “But she cared for me—cares for me. I can feel it.” As a child, he could feel his foster’s mother concern, even when she tried appear indifferent. But there had been little things that gave her away, things he had only put together now that he was older, or things he wasn’t supposed to know, but he did. The way she uses to lose her appetite whenever they were using half rations. The time in Myanmar he caught malaria and kept vigil on the floor next to him the whole time, even though she herself was covered in cuts and bruises from the latest mission,
her wrists ringed in dark violet, he could have remembered that quite clearly for some reason, with a sunburn on her arms and neck so bad the skin shed in sheets when it came to heel, and Toni Jo telling her being there wasn’t a good idea the whole time. The look in her eyes when they were training him to withstand interrogation, thought she was being good cop at the time.

Just then their conversation was interrupted by brunette girl dressed in pink and green walking up to them. “Excuse me.” She said, “I was wondering if you would be interested in this.” They both politely took the flyers she was holding from her. They were on gray background with large scarlet V on the front and big bold letters saying, DEMAND ANSWERS.

“There’s a meeting tonight a seven.” The girl said, “All the information for the location and everything should be on there.”

“Thank you.” Mateusz said politely before they walked away.

When the girl was out of sight, the boys did two very different things with the pamphlets. Mateusz chunked his in the nearest trash can, while Charlie put his in his back pack.

“You’re not seriously going to go that, are you?” Mateusz asked, when he saw the pamphlet go into the pack, “It’s just a bunch of conspiracy nuts.”

“I don’t know if I’m going.” Charlie responded as they neared the classroom, “It just doesn’t hurt to keep the pamphlet.”

Quill spent all that morning, distracted from the both her current jobs. She was normally able to compartmentalize, but she couldn’t get her mind off Charlie and his new “friend.” So, she just slapped some worksheets on the desks, and did research. What was the most frustrating thing being that from the looks of it, Susan might actually be right.

Finally, 3rd period came. It couldn’t end soon enough.

As the students poured out, she made her signal and Charlie walked up to the desk. Both April and Mateusz, who didn’t have any meaningful contact with each other usually and had not discussed what had happened, stopped in the doorway and just stared at the two at the desk, until Charlie gestured with his head towards the hall with an entreating expression.

After they the room, April spoke up, “Okay, I know why I stayed behind, but why did you?”

In the room, Quill got straight to the point. “We need to talk about what happened this morning.”

“Yes, backstops cover, I know.” Charlie responded in a part exclamation, part groan, before she could get anything else out, “But you were acting like a crazy person. It was so embarrassing.”

“Okay,” Quill began slowly, “I wasn’t talking about that, but now that you mention it I think we should, and also, I’m not sure I like your tone.”

Meanwhile, Susan Foreman was rushing through the halls, the screaming behind her still ringing in her ears.

“What I wanted to talk about that boy were with.” Quill continued in the physics room, absent-mindedly arranging thing on her desk, “namely,” she turned her attention back to her charge, staring him down, “What where you doing with him?”

“Nothing.” Charlie insisted, sounding both alarmed and exasperated, “We were just—talking, that’s all.”

“Talking about what?” Quill countered.

Charlie swallowed thickly.

Outside, Mateusz had just finished telling April what had happened that morning.

“She’s his mother?!” April balked, her eyes wide.

“Yes.” Mateusz confirmed.

“Well, that puts a whole new spin on things.” April commented, then suddenly her eyes widened as something dawned on her.

However, before she could voice her thought, the hall became filled with two different sources of noise pollution: Raised voices in the physics room, and multiple screams coming from down the hall. “What is that?” April exclaimed, her head going in both directions.

Just then Susan ran up the hall and past them.

“Miss Foreman—” April began, intending to ask what was going on.

“No time, April!” Susan exclaimed, pushing past them. She then turned around and instructed,
“Get yourselves somewhere safe, and don’t come out until someone comes from you.” Then she bolted towards the physics room.

“I am trying to be patient here.” Quill was saying, in a voice that didn’t at all sound patient, “But you have taken unneeded risks, very possibly endangered this mission, and now you are outright defying me! And really, I think it was a simple question!”

Suddenly Susan rushed into the doorway, holding onto either end of it with her hands. “We have a situation.”

“Excuse me!” Quill exclaimed, annoyed by the interruption. “I’m trying to talk to my son here.”

Okay, I’ll just handle the giant wasp that’s rampaging through the hallways on my own.” Susan snarked back, letting go of the door frame and gesturing with her hands.

They both turned to look at her. “What?” Quill asked flatly.

“You heard me.” Susan replied, “There is a man-sized wasp running through the hallway and it was all I could do to keep it from attacking anyone before I could get them to safety.”

Immediately Quill opened her drawer saying, “This conversation isn’t over.” Then she pulled out her two guns, handing one to Charlie, “Aim- “

“Aim for the largest area of mass, only pull the trigger if you want to shoot something and never point it at yourself.” Charlie cut her off tersely, “Yes, I know.”

“Hey!” Quill shouted in warning, “Tone!”

“Is now really the time?!” Susan exclaimed.

“Right,” Quill agreed, “Come on.”

By the time they got there the students and faculty had the sense to pull out, and a creature that looked exactly like a teresial wasp, except the size of a man, was roaming the halls, rather angry.

“Alright,” Quill called out, aiming her gun at the creature, “You have one chance to surrender, come with us quietly and nobody had to get hurt. You don’t, I’m gonna have to shoot!”

“I already tried that.” Susan told her, “This thing is not up for negotiation.”

“You tried to negotiate with that thing?” Charlie asked, bewildered at the suggestion and started to doubt the woman’s competency.

“Vespiforms have human intelligence!” Susan explained, “It’s not an animal, Charlie!”

“I’d say my intelligence goes far beyond these humans.” The Vespiform spoke up, clicking his mandible.

“Oh, great, another one of those.” Quill commented, throwing her head back a little. She herself felt like that over half the time, but, seriously, can’t they ever come up with something original?

“This is good.” Susan began.

“Yes, we’re talking.” Susan responded. It was further than she had got with the creature. “We do this without any bloodshed. You haven’t hurt anyone so far so I don’t think you want to.”

“Oh, that’s where your wrong.” The creature replied, “These humans are just so fast when they’re scared. None of my other victims could run that fast. I’d have to say I’m almost impressed.” He paused a moment, sizing them up. “I think you’ll do nice for my first kills on this planet.”

Then creature charged them, aiming the stinger at them. They jumped out of the way and both Quill and Charlie fired.

Charlie’s shot missed completely and Quill only injure several of the creature’s arms. It let out a grunt of pain before charging at Quill specifically, looking as if he had something to prove.

Without really thinking Charlie jumped in front of her, trying to fight the Vespiform off, but she managed to push him out of the way, sending him to the ground. This time Quill’s aim was truer, blowing the Vespiform across the room, with a spray of viscous amber fluid.

Susan hurried over to the Vespiform, crouching down. “Okay, I’m not sure where the pulse would be on him, but I’m pretty sure he’s dead.”

“No kidding.” Quill snarked, walking over to Charlie who was pulling himself up off the ground. She gave him a hand up, asking, “Are you alright?”

“I think so.” Charlie answered.
“Good.” She said, before spitting him on the back of the head, “What the Hell were you thinking?! Are you actively trying to get yourself killed?!"
“I was trying to keep you from getting killed!” Charlie argued, rubbing the place she hit.
“Yes, and you’re very lucky you didn’t get us both killed!” Quill snapped back, “I’ve trained you better than that! Bonehead moves like that only put yourself and others in more danger!”
“Excuse me!” Susan interjected, “We have other problems to deal with at the moment.” She gestured to the Vespitiform corpse in the corner. “You can lecture your son on battle safety later.”
They wrapped the Vesiiform’s corpse in grey tarp and carried it through the hallways. “If I’m remembering right there’s a storage closet no one uses.” Susan said, pointing out said closet. They hurried to the closet, Charlie breaking away to open the door. As they opened it they heard a voice say, “This is gonna sting a little,” then they saw a woman with cinnamon-colored skin dressed in pink scrubs, her raven-colored hair pulled back in a bun, dotting a bloody spot on a boy’s head.
The woman turned her head when she saw the door open, her eyes widening when she saw the bundle. “Oh God,” She breathed, “Don’t tell me…”
“Oh, no,” Susan cut her off, knowing what the woman was getting at, “This isn’t what it looks like, Reet. No one’s died. In fact, I’m pretty sure the worst injury is poor Kevin there.”
“Oh, thank God.” Reet sighed in relief, “But then what’s…”
“Unfortunately, a lot of Gym supplies got ravaged.” Quill spoke up, “Coach Dawson asked us to sash somewhere until we get everything cleaned up.”
This time Reet let out a sigh of frustration. “Of course,” She said, helping Kevin to his feet, “Because that’s the biggest concern right now. You know, what do you bet there’s not even an investigation into whatever the Hell just happened?” Her eyes went over to Kevin and she said, “Parton my language.”
“No problem ma’am.” Kevin said as Reet lead him out of the closet. “I’m gonna get him out of here then make sure no one else is hurt.” She told them.
“Good luck.” Susan called to Reet as she walked away.
“That’s Nurse Drouet, I assume.” Quill said, waking the body into the closet with Susan. While she hadn’t encountered the woman in her search of the school, she knew about her from the flies.
“Yeah, she’s a friend of mine.” Susan explained as they set the body down. Quill rolled her eyes. “Of course, she is.” She commented walking out before Charlie shut it.
Using a combination of following the trail of destruction the creature had left and the scanners, they searched for the tear. Suddenly there was spike. “It’s practically off the charts.” Charlie noted urgently from his spot at the back of the group, “But…shouldn’t we be able to see something?”
“Not necessarily.” Susan responded. There was no guarantee a tear or riff would be visible. Quill picked up a small bit of rubble and tossed it in the air. There was small flash of white light and then the rubble disappeared. “Something tells me there’s our tear.”
“So, what do we do now?” Charlie asked.
“Now, “Quill answered, “We find a way to keep people out of here until it closes.” They found some caution tape and wet floor sign and used it to be block the perimeter, then after using both positioned themselves in the hall, throwing a piece in debris at five minutes intervals to see if had closed yet.
Susan looked out into the abjoining hall to check that they were still alone. “You’d think somebody would’ve come looked into this by now.”
“I know,” Quill agreed, “I haven’t seen any group this dense sense…I don’t even know. Those incidents back in the early 2000s.”
“I know what you mean.” Susan replied, “The level of denial going on here? I thought they’d be over that my now.” That was when Charlie remembered the girl with the pamphlet. “Some of them are.” He said, pulling it out of his backpack and presenting it to the women.
A fight ensues about how to deal with the Vertias movement.

I'll be honest, this chapter's kinda filler, sorry about that, but it DOES have some character insights at least.

“And this is like an alien watchdog group?” Fox asked, looking at the flyer over the phone. “Something like that.” Quill replied, “Basically they want the government to bare all about what’s going on with aliens.”

“Well, would that really be a such a bad thing?” Charlie spoke up, “I mean, it’s not like the government’s done a very good job of handling it.”

“Oh, so you want mass panic in the streets?” Quill reprimanded him, “Or do I need to remind you about Meadville?”

“What’s Meadville?” Susan asked.

“This sweet little town in Colorado” Quill told her, “Or at least it was until some advance scouts decided to use it to test out tactics for an invasion. They sprayed a continual stream of gas that made them hallucinate their neighbors were invading aliens.”

“Think Invasion of the Body Snatchers meets ‘The Monsters are Due on Maple Street’.” Fox added in.

“Whatever,” Quill responded, “The point is, Home Office intercepted someone call to the National Guard, we got there the next day, but over half the town was dead. We managed to stop the gas and the invasion, long-story short if you send someone their weapons and all but one of their scouts back in pieces and the remaining one tells you this feat was accomplished by five people, they tend to leave you alone, but the damage to the town was done.”

“We’re getting off-topic here.” Toni Jo spoke up, on a video-chat in the hospital cafeteria, which was thankfully empty, “We need to figure out how much of a threat they are, if any. Now, any ideas how we do that? At this point, there are no stupid ideas, people.”

All was silent for a moment then Charlie said, somewhat awkwardly, “Well, she gave me the flyer. It wouldn’t seem weird if I showed up.”

“No.” Quill said firmly, “Nope, that is not happening.”

“Well, the Pup does have a point.” Fox responded.

“No, he doesn’t!” Quill exclaimed, slamming her hands on the table, “Next idea!”

“Is this even really a threat?” Gwen spoke up from the passenger seat, “I mean, it’s a group of people on the fringes with money from Xerox, if it was anything else they would be making more noise and we would hear something.”

“That’s not necessarily true.” Toni Jo replied, “You might have noticed but we’ve been stretched a bit thin lately. Things fall through the cracks.”

“Plus, a lot of nasty things have come from people with Xerox money.” Fox pointed out.

“So, what are we gonna do about it?” Susan asked.

“I’ll be in there for maybe an hour…hour and a half…” Charlie managed to add in.
“I already said no!” Quill exclaimed.

“Yeah, we might need to rethink that.” Toni Jo said, “Because so far that’s the only reasonable plan, and you gotta admit, it’s a pretty solid one.”

Quill just shook her head. “I won’t allow it.” She said, “Do you hear me? I will not allow it. And you can’t order me to do it, I’ll refuse.”

Everything was silent for a moment after that than Toni Jo said, “Hey, guys, could you give a moment?”

Susan and Charlie stood up, walking from the room, and Fox hug up, leaving just Toni Jo and Quill.

“Toni,” Quill began, “I know what you’re going to say-“

“Why are you fighting this?” Toni Jo asked.

“Because he’s not ready.” Quill responded insistently, “We’re flying in there blind, almost zero knowledge of what we’re looking at, and he’s still inexperienced, I’d even go as far as to say naïve, impulsive…”

In the front room, Charlie was pressed against the door, curling his hands up at the accusations. Naïve? She was actually calling him naïve?! And what was this about inexperienced? This wouldn’t even be the most dangerous thing he had done this week!

Suddenly he felt a hand on his shoulder. He jumped as he turned around only to fund Susan looking at him. “Ah, I thought we were giving Dr. Callahan and your Mum privacy.”

Charlie just looked at her, unsure of what to say.

Susan smiled knowingly. “Come on.” She said, gesturing him to follow her away from the conversation.

“I mean, aren’t you the one who usually says this?” Quill was continuing in the kitchen.

“Quill, he’s been on more dangerous stuff than this.” Toni Jo argued, “What you two are doing right now is more dangerous than what he’s suggesting.”

“And it’s a miracle he hasn’t gotten himself killed here!” Quill snapped back at her.

What does that mean? Toni Jo wondered, then it hit her. Rubbing the back of her neck, she asked, “Quill, has something happened?”

“No!” Quill exclaimed.

“Andra’ath…” Toni Jo responded, a hint of warning in her voice.

“Antionette.” Quill countered, “See? You’re not the only one who can use a person’s real name.”

Toni Jo just raised an eyebrow, demanding an answer with her facial features.

Quill sighed. “Okay,” She relented, “What happened was…”

And with that, Quill gave Toni Jo the unedited version of what happened that day. The other boy, the fight, Charlie trying to use himself as a not-really-human shield, or whatever he east trying to do, everything.

Toni Jo was silent for a moment before asking, “Why didn’t you tell me any of this before?”

“No?” Quill countered, “That’s the headline for you?”

“Really?” Toni Jo responded, “But I still want to know.”

“Okay, I’ll admit, it seems bad, but it’s out of the ordinary behavior. This is just recon, he’s done it a thousand times before. You know he can handle it.” Smiling at her sister, Toni Jo added, “He learned from the best.”

“What does everyone suddenly think flattery works with me?” Quill asked.

Meanwhile, Charlie was pacing the floor away out of listening, Susan leaned up against a chair arm.

“Will you please stop?” Susan requested, “You’re making me nervous.”

“I’m sorry.” Charlie responded, pausing before starting up the pacing again, “I just don’t get why she’s trying to bench me all of a sudden. I’m not a child anymore, I don’t need protecting.”

“Except you are.” Susan countered, “You are a child, you’re her child. And you already gave her
quite the scare today.”
Charlie resisted the urge to roll his eyes. “Yes, I know.” He said.
“Try to think of it from her perspective.” Susan suggested, “She has to send you into danger on a regular basis, more than often with her, and even thought she knows you’re trained, she knows it a necessary, I can tell you she’s scared out of her mind.”

Charlie looked at her skeptically. The idea of his solider, mildly insane, improbable weapons wielding mother afraid of anything seemed about as likely as snow catching fire.
“Even soldiers know fear.” Susan continued, as if reading Charlie’s mind which, she very well could have, “Especially when it comes to their children, same as any parent. If anything happened to you—believe me when I tell you it would kill her.” There was a look in her eyes like she was speaking from experience.

He wanted to ask her about that look, but before he could Quill walked into the room. “Alright you can do it.” She relented.
“Thank you.” Charlie breathed in relief, “I promise I’ll be careful. Nothing else stupid.”
“I know you will, and I know you won’t.” Quill responded, “But first,” She pointed to the far wall, “Five minutes, for –basically all of today.”

Charlie looked annoyed, but got up, and went to the far wall, stretched out his arms, placing his palm on the wall and staring it down. It looked like he had some practice at this. Whatever this was.

“Um, what am I witnessing?” Susan asked apprehensively.
“Well, you try consistently disciplining a child when you’re constantly on the road.” Quill responded defensively, “He’s lucky we’re on a deadline, I’d keep him there until he apologized. And believe me, he is stubborn when it comes to that, there was this one time when he was fourteen he stayed there all night, I think we both fell asleep a couple of times before he gave in- “

“You know I can hear everything you’re saying.” Charlie cut in, partially turning his head.
“Eyes front!” Quill snapped at him, then turned her attention to Susan, “Come on, let’s take this somewhere else.”

Two hours later, Charlie was sitting in the middle chair in the middle row, in the basement of a community center. The rows were divided in the middle of middle for people to walk through. Despite their dismissal of the group, the rows were starting to her alarmingly full.

A row in front of him the girl who had given him the flyer sat down. She momentarily looked around, her eyes widening in recognition.

Charlie ran his finger nervously around his collar, the tip of it tracing the gold chain of the metal underneath his shirt. He monetarily glanced away, catching sight of a redhead in the back who seemed to be taking notes. That could be a problem.

Hearing the sound of feet, he turned around to see Nurse Reet Drouet ascending the stage.
The Vertias Movement

Chapter Summary

The Vertias meeting takes some unexpected turns.

Reet Drouet had changed from her pink scrubs to jeans that looked like she had ironed them, a dark blue sweater that complimented her cinnamon-colored skin, and dark shoes. There was something in her movement that gained everyone’s attention. Close to her side was the man with a short, neatly-trimmed white-blonde beard.

“Hello,” Reet began, “Welcome to this meeting of The Veritas Movement. I’m Reet and this is Michael, and we are the heads for this chapter.”

“You say that like we have other chapters.” Michael commented, evoking laughter from the room. Even Charlie couldn’t help but chuckle.

“Well, yes, we are actually, a small group.” Reet admitted, “But that doesn’t mean we can make our voices heard. Now, before we move on, any old business?”

A woman in the back raised her hand.

“Yes, Pauline?” Reet asked.

“We have twenty members for the Canary Warf assembly.” Pauline announced.

Canary Warf assembly? Charlie thought, his head whirling around the room in alarm, What Canary Warf assembly? To his knowledge Canary Warf was just an abandoned building now, but it was still concerning.

“Good.” Reet was saying, “Now, if there’s anyone here who hasn’t signed up that wants to there’s a sign-up sheet in the back.”

Charlie had to find out what this assembly was. He started to raise his hand when the redhead, who he could now see was wearing black-framed glasses on her face, did it for him.

“Yes, young lady?” Reet responded, pointing to the redhead in question.

“What’s this assembly about?” The redhead asked.

“Alright, good question,” Reet admitted, “For those of you who don’t know we will be having an assembly on the anniversary of the Battle of Canary Warf to honor the dead.” For just a fraction of a second, just long enough for someone maybe to catch it, then she quickly covered, saying, “Pauline, how are we doing on supplies?”

“I got three crates of white candles and two stacks of poster-board waiting in my apartment.”

Pauline responded.

“Great, now, what about permits?” Reet asked, “Where’s my permit guy? Um…”

“That’s me, actually.” Michael spoke up.

“Oh, right.” Reet responded, startling a bit and turning to Michael, “So?”

“It’s all in order.” Michael assured her.

“One less thing to worry about,” Reet commented, “Thank you Michael, now, if there’s nothing else, moving on. If the younger faces in the crowd tonight I assume that we got our flyers out to Coal Hill.”

Six students nodded in response. Charlie slumped down in his seat, trying to avoid attention.

“I’m pretty sure most of them just threw the flyers away.” The blonde who had given Charlie the flyer commented.

“Don’t worry, I’m sure more will come around.” Reet assured her, “Especially after what happened today.”

And so, Reet gave a full account of what had happened that day from her perspective. As the tale
went on the room started to stir.
“And you know what the worst thing is?” Reet continued, “They’re already coming up with flimsy
excuses. They’re saying some sort of leak in one of the chem labs caused everyone to have
hallucinations.”
Suddenly the room began to rumble with angry murmurs from the crowd and Charlie started to get
gnervous.
“Seriously?” Reet continued, “A school with children was allowed chemicals that can cause
hallucinations like that in first place, and we had all the same one and it caused actual property
damage?”
Charlie had to admit, she had point there. Especially since it wasn’t the first time that excuse or one
similar had been questioned this way. They really needed to come up with some new material.
“And we’re lucky that’s all that it was.” Reet was saying, “Property damage, not actually human
lives. I know many of you have lost people to these types of incidents. I myself have.” She got a
sad, haunted look for a moment, but quickly pulled herself back together to say, “And that’s what
we do here is so important, if we can prevent someone else getting hurt, or at least the truth about
those that have, it'll be worth. As you go out into a world that thinks we’re all just a bunch of
conspiracy theorist crackpot nutjobs, I want you all to remember. One day what we do here will
matter.”
The group started crapping and suddenly a room of about twenty people became thousands if one
were to believe the applause, and suddenly even Charlie found himself moved.
As the meeting came to a close and people started standing around talking, going to the back table
Reet had pointed to during the meeting, or quietly sipping out, Charlie just stood there, looking for
the redhead and contemplating what just happened. They didn’t seem like much now, but they
were organized enough and Reet was compelling enough, that maybe, just maybe—
That was when a voice behind him asked, “Have I seen you before?”
Charlie turned around to see Reet standing in front of him. Deciding honesty more less was the best
way to go here he replied, “Maybe. I mean, was helping Miss Quill and Miss Foreman move some
things today.”
Reet looked him over with an inspecting gaze them accepted the answer. “So, um—” She began,
fishing for a name.
“Charlie.” He admitted. It’s not like she couldn’t look it up.
“You all, seem, um dedicated.” Charlie admitted awkwardly, “But is it alright if I ask you
something?”
“I’m an open book.” Reet replied, “Within reason, of course.”
“Do you take minutes for these things?” Charlie asked, really hoping that was all he had seen, “It’s
just, I noticed someone in the back taking notes.”
Just then he happened to catch sight of the bespectled redhead heading towards the door.
“No, they’re not.” Charlie lied, “Excuse me, I think I have to go.”
He walked up to the woman and purposely bumped into her, causing her to drop her purse, causing
everything to spill. “Oh my God, I’m so sorry.” He said, crouching down, as if to help pick up,
which technically he was. He was just looking for something as well.
“It’s alright, you didn’t mean it.” The woman assured him, going to pick up what looked like a can
of pepper spray. That made Charlie be even more careful in what he was about to do.
As the woman was looking away putting the spray in her bag, he quickly grabbed her wallet,
opened it up and pulled out her driver’s licsine, putting it in his coat and closing the wallet before
the woman turned around. “Here.” He offered, holding it out to her.
“Thanks.” She said, going back into the bag to put it up, allowing Charlie some time to rip a
handful of paper out of her notepad, hope it was the right paper and again stuff it in his jacket.
After the woman-he hadn’t taken time to look at the license so he still didn’t know her name-had
gathered her things he let her go first then walked out himself, where the surveillance car pulled up. He got in the car and Quill, who was in the driver’s seat with Susan in the passenger side, instantly and calmly asked, “So, what are we looking at?”

“They’re not really interested in us, or seem to know anything about us.” Charlie answered, “They just know something’s happening. They’re planning a Canary Warf memorial, but they don’t know it’s connected with us. There is something else we might need to be concerned about, though.” He took his ill-gotten gains out of his coat, “Or I just knocked over an innocent woman for nothing.” He looked down at the note’s and his eyes widened, “Or not.”

On top of the first piece was What the heck is Torchwood?

By the time they got back to the house, everyone was nicely tense and alarmed. Gwen and Fox were sitting on the front stoop, waiting for them, standing up as they got out of the car.

“I take it it’s not good news. “Gwen said as they walked up.

“Well, yes and no.” Susan answered.

“The good news is, The Veritas Movement is no threat, or even have any idea who we are.” Quill said, taking the papers as she said, “The bad news is, someone else does.”

A few minutes later they were all gathered around Gwen, who was at a laptop, reaching the woman. “Okay, Heni Wicks, age 27, a reporter at an online journal called, ‘The London Caller’ seems pretty mainstream, not the type of thing you find conspiracy theories in.”

“Maybe it’s a personal project.” Fox suggested.

“One way to find out.” Gwen said.

As they quickly came up with a plan for another unexpected and completely unwanted side-project, they didn’t notice a coated figure rushing off into the night.

Across town, Heni Wicks had her research, a hog-podge of redacted documents, pictures, a couple of journals, even a tin of what appeared to be love letters, spread out on kidney bean-shaped coffee table made of dark resin, she sat down on her couch and opened her notes, and discovered they were missing.

“What?” She said out loud, flipping the notebook open and shut a couple of times in disbelief, “No, no, no, no, no. Jesus H. Christ, no.” How had this happened? Her notes had been with her the whole night, accept…

Just then her phone rang. She picked it up, her voice on edge as she said, “Hello?”

“This Heni Wicks?” A voice she had never heard before on the other end asked.

“Who’s asking?” Heni responded.

“Someone who can give you the scoop of a lifetime on your story.” The voice replied.

“How do you know about that?” Heni asked, alarmed. She hadn’t told anyone about what she working on, which is why what appeared to have happen was all the more alarming.

“Well, honestly, I don’t know much.” Jack admitted, “But I know I have some things you’ll be interested in. Meet me at The Green Light tavern in five minutes if you’re interested. I’ll be the one in the old coat. You can’t miss me.”

And with that, Captain Jack Harkness hung up.
A Dramradey of Errors

Chapter Summary

When Jack tries to suss out what Heni knows and stop her investigation, things go wrong very quickly. Quill gets into a bar fight, Fox gets frustrated, and the team nips the investigation in the bud.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Jack was taking a sip of his drink when a voice said, “Excuse me?”
He turned around and saw Heni Wicks pulling at her tan pencil skirt.
“You must be Ms. Wicks.” Jack guessed, gesturing to the drink beside his, “I took the liberty of ordering for you.”
“And you must be my own personal Deep Throat.” Heni replied, sitting down at the bar, “You’re right, you really can’t miss that coat.”
Jack smiled. “So, Torchwood? That um, seems an unusual thing for a journalist of your caliber to be doing a story over.”
“Ah, I work at an online newspaper that only maybe two hundred or so people read.” Heni contradicted, “And it’s not just over Torchwood, it’s over all of them.”
“All of them?” Jack repeated actually impressed, “And how did you get the idea for this?”
Heni took a sip of the drink. “It actually started when I was working on another story, this police chief taking bribes. Then, my source backs out and I get this folder on my desk filled with all these redacted U.N.I.T files. Some of the redaction had actually been scrapped off and it looked like something out of a sci-fi novel. I started digging found more files, some related to Torchwood, which got me on that, I was able to get a couple of retired U.N.I.T men, found some rather interesting first-person artifacts.”
“Such as?” Jack asked.
“A couple journals I believe belonged to a member of Torchwood.” Heni answered, taking another sip, “She was a fanatical diarist, wrote down everything, the only problem is she coded everything, well, at least names, so I have a phenomenal source of information but I can’t figure out who half these people who are in are. And if their codenames are any indication, they’re probably an interesting bunch. And of course, there are the love letters…”
“Love letters?” Jack repeated in surprise, as he wasn’t expecting that.
Yeah, from what between a bloke name Jack and girl named Andrea.” Heni elaborated, making Jack’s heart stop in the process, “Well, it mostly contains Andrea’s letter, but there are few slips of paper that Jack wrote. This man actually wrote a letter on the back of petrol station recent.”
Jack swallowed thickly. In addition to the realization of what she was talking about, it brought back memories that were still happy, but tainted with grief of a relationship gone oh so terribly wrong. He could remember at that moment quickly scribbling his letter down on that recent, wanting to get it to her before the team left for Moscow. He just had to let her known he was still deeply in love, it was that intense. She had sent it back to him a week later, not wanting anything to happen to it, or anyone to discover it with a post-it that read, you’re a sappy one, aren’t you? Still, love you, too. It was the first time they had actually ever used the L-Word.
Even after how everything went down between them, he couldn’t bring himself to get rid of them.
These two they were just—so in love.” Heni continued, “When I think about where was this found
and what probably happened to them—almost makes hard to be objective, you know?”
Imagine if you lived it. Jack thought, but said, “And how do you know they had anything to do with Torchwood?”

“Some of the letters mentions details about assignments, other details.” Heni explained.
“Uh, hun.” Jack replied, knowing exactly what she was talking about, “Just out of curiosity, how does your boss feel about all this?”
“She doesn’t know about it yet.” Heni explained, “I wanted to wait until I have enough together to prove it.” Then suddenly she realized what was going on. That was when the sedative started to kick in. “What—what did you do to me?” She demanded as she fought to stay awake.
“It’s alright.” Jack responded, trying to keep her from panicking, “It’s just a little something to help you forget.”
“What does that—” Heni began, stumbling as she got up.
Oh, crap. Jack thought, standing up himself, realizing he must have actually put in too much sedative. Must be getting rusty. He thought, grabbing onto her so she didn’t fall and soothing, “It’s okay. I got you. You’re gonna be fine.”
Heni explained, “I wanted to wait until I have enough together to prove it.” Then suddenly she realized what was going on. That was when the sedative started to kick in. “What—what did you do to me?” She demanded as she fought to stay awake.
“It’s alright.” Jack responded, trying to keep her from panicking, “It’s just a little something to help you forget.”
“What does that—” Heni began, stumbling as she got up.

Just then, two men, seeing what was going on and inferring what any rational person might, got up and hurried across the room. “Hey,” the closest to Heni spoke, “Are you okay, miss?”
“Yeah, she’s fine.” Jack spoke up quickly, “My girl here just had a little too much to drink.”
“I was talking to her.” The man replied, gesturing to the semi-conscious young woman.
“Please…help…” Heni managed to get out. She knew she was in over her head.
The men exchanged looks. “I think that clears that up.” The man that had been talking said, grabbing onto Heni, “Nate, call 999.”
“That’s not necessary.” Jack responded nervously, trying to pull Heni back to him.
“Leave her alone!” The man demanded, pushing Jack and grabbing Heni again, “The lady clearly doesn’t want to go with you.”
“Look, I don’t want any trouble—“ Jack began.

As Quill set Heni down in a chair, taking off her coat and wrapping it around the reporter, then she turned and glared at Jack. Before anyone knew what was happening, she leapt on him, pinning him to the ground.
Jack pushed back with all his might, causing her to let go and quickly pinning her in turn. “I know all your tricks, remember, Andrea?” Jack whispered. That was he felt swift, shooting pain in his groin, causing his knees to buckle and his grip to loosen.
“Get your filthy paws off my sister!” Quill yelled, yanking the young woman away from both of them, “Heni, are you okay?” Looking at both man and really hamming it up, she demanded, “What did you bastards do to her?!”
“Hey, he was the one who drugged her.” Nate spoke up from where he was contacting the authorities or first responders or both, pointing at Jack.

As Quill set Heni down in a chair, taking off her coat and wrapping it around the reporter, then she turned and glared at Jack. Before anyone knew what was happening, she leapt on him, pinning him to the ground.
Jack pushed back with all his might, causing her to let go and quickly pinning her in turn. “I know all your tricks, remember, Andrea?” Jack whispered. That was he felt swift, shooting pain in his groin, causing his knees to buckle and his grip to loosen.
“Get your filthy paws off my sister!” Quill yelled, yanking the young woman away from both of them, “Heni, are you okay?” Looking at both man and really hamming it up, she demanded, “What did you bastards do to her?!”
“Hey, he was the one who drugged her.” Nate spoke up from where he was contacting the authorities or first responders or both, pointing at Jack.

Just then the bar-tender taking notice of the growing fracas, hurried over, saying, “Okay that’s enough—“
“You stay out of this!” Quill shouted, throwing the first thing she could grab, a bowel of peanuts,
at him with such force that it sent his head back and left a red welt on his it, “This is between me and him!”
Meanwhile, Fox was in the car outside, impatiently waiting for a signal that Quill had eyes on Heni.
What could possibly be taking so long? Fox thought, but annoyed and concerned, The bar’s not that big.
Just then, as if to answers his questions, serval panicked, running patrons poured out the doors, some calling out.
Fox quickly grabbed his gun and lept from the car, hopping that if it was an alien attack, it wasn’t an alien he was on a first name basis with.
When he got in the bar, He could see Quill tussling with someone he couldn’t make out, as she was currently winning the fight and was punching his face. Several people tried to pull her off, but she just threw them off her, actually managing to fling one across the room. In wake of the battle, several smaller fights had broken out around her.
“How did this happen?” Fox wondered aloud, he was so shocked.
“Dick tried to take advantage of her sister.” The good Smartian, who was still standing by Heni, explained, in a state of shock as well.
Seeing Heni, officially unconious despite the brawl around her, Fox quickly scooped her up, telling her protector, “It’s okay, I’m with her,” pointing to Quill. “We got a strange text from this one and we’ve been looking for her all night.”
The man had enough presence of mind to ask, “What’s her name?”
“Heni.” Fox answered quickly, seeing where this was going and hopping Quill didn’t give the reporter a fake name.
Stratified that the two were legitimate, the man backed away saying, “Good luck, mate.”
“Thanks.” Fox replied, dragging Heni away. I think I’m going to need it.
Fox deposited Heni into the back of the car, then hurried back inside the bar. Quill was not in the place she had been before, and his eyes started darting around the room, looking for her.
Jack dogged another blow from Quill, his back hitting the wall. “Seems like this is more than just about the girl.” He noted, “Who I didn’t actually do anything too, by the way.”
“Oh, I know.” Quill assured him, elbowing someone who tried to pull her off, “You’re a lot of things but that isn’t one of them.” Grabbing him by the collar she continued, “And no, it’s not just about that girl, it’s about- “Before she could finish another person tried to pull her off and she turned to struck him, then saw it was Fox.
“What were you- “Fox began, but his voice trailed off when he saw who he was attacking, “Jack?”
“Hey, Fox.” Jack answered, his face bruised and battered, “It’s been a while.”
Fox just stared for a moment, then said, “Come on.” With that, he and Quill fled the establishment.
Gwen and Charlie were at Heni’s apartment, gather all the evidence she had gathered during her invesgation. “Okay,” Gwen was saying, coming back in the living from the hall, “This is everything. You got the pills?”
“Yes.” Charlie said, pulling out the bottle.
Just then, the door opened and Fox and Quill walked in, Heni between them, an arm over each shoulder.
“What happened?” Gwen asked, hurrying over to help.
“Jack Harkness happened, that’s what.” Quill answered, handing Gwen the reporter.
“What?” Gwen responded as she help lay Heni on the couch.
“We’ll explain later.” Fox promised before turning to Charlie, “There’s a medical kit in the car, go grab it.”
Two minutes and a blood sample later, Charlie was crouching in front of Heni’s unconious form, standing down at the med-scanner waiting for results. “Alright,” He said finally, “It looks like he just gave her an amnesia pill and some sedative, but the amount of sedative’s really high.”
“Must be getting rusty.” Quill mumbled.
“How much is really high?” Gwen asked, “Do we need to take her to a hospital?”
“And tell them what?” Quill asked.
“She should be fine.” Charlie said, “Still, somebody should stay behind, just in case.”
In the case the medical expertise of the high schooler isn’t infallible. Gwen thought, but said aloud,
“I’ll do it, you two should go and get a hold of Toni, tell her what’s happened.”
Fox and Quill started to gather all evidence Heni Wicks had been working on the story. When she notice
only two of them were helping she called out, “A little help here.”
Charlie looked at the others than back to Heni, then to the others again.
“It’s alright.” Gwen assured him, “I got her.”
As they stealthily snuck out the back of the building, they formed a line Fox, then Quill, then
Charlie. Something fell from one of the boxes he was holding, causing him to stop and pick it up,
in case it’s incrimination. It was a blue post-it note, faded with age, that read You’re the sappy one,
aren’t you? Still, love you, too—A
If he didn’t know any better, he could’ve sworn he recognized the handwriting from somewhere.
“Charles!” Quill called out in annoyance, when she saw him lagging behind, “Come on!”
Charlie didn’t say anything, just put the note in his pocket and hurried to catch up.

Chapter End Notes

So, I’m going out of town for few weeks, and I don’t know if I’ll be able to update, but
as I get back I’ll start right back where we left off.
Chapter Summary

Quill remembers her relationship with Jack, right down to the bitter end.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

How did he even know about Heni?” Toni Jo asked, “How did he know about any of you being here?”

“No clue.” Fox said, flipping through a leather-bound journal, part of Heni’s research, “We didn’t exactly have time to ask him.” He shot a look at Quill.

“I was trying to keep the authorities from getting involved!” Quill insisted.

“And starting a bar fight was the best way to do that?” Fox challenged.

“Oh, like you’ve always been a beacon of subtlety, ex-agent Mulder.” Quill responded, knowing the exact buttons to push.

“Guys!” Toni Jo interjected before things could get any further, “Could we focus, please? Now, Gwen, was the girl actually hurt?”

“No.” Gwen answered, “When she woke she felt a little hung over, but other than that she’s fine. Doesn’t even remember she was working on a secret story.”

“And no one’s traced the brawl to any of us?” Toni Jo asked, shooting Quill a reproachful look as well.

“No.” Fox admitted.

“And this Veritas group has no clue we even exist?” Toni Jo continued.

“No.” Charlie confirmed.

“Alright then.” Toni Jo responded, “Now, Jack’s not getting in the way, but maybe he knows something we don’t so if he shows his stupid face again, let him come in from the cold, but don’t seek him out. We’ve had enough side-tracks as it is. Speaking of which, what’s your next move?”

“Tomorrow’s Saturday, which is a prime time to examine the tears unmolested, maybe try to see how they tick.” Quill began, “Fox’s been looking at the security system, thinks he should be able to get us in by morning.”

“Okay.” Toni Jo said, “Best plan I’ve heard so far. “

Just then a nurse stepped into cafeteria, making it no longer a safe area to talk.

“I gotta go.” Toni Jo informed them, “Report back what you find, okay?”

“Okay.” Quill said, before she hung up.

Fox went off to call his hacker to deal with the cameras, while the others sorted through the things Heni had gathered.

By chance, Gwen opened the tin, and pulled out a picture, her eyes lighting up in surprise. “Is this what I think it is?” She asked.

Both aliens turned their head. “Is what, what you think it is?” Quill asked, turning around.

They both moved towards the former cop, Charlie being closer getting their first to look at what she was holding. It was picture, an older one, if the white strip at the bottom was any indication, as they didn’t make that type of film anymore, of Quill, wearing dark clothes similar to what she was wearing now, and small child, maybe about three years of age. They both holding some sort cap, maybe a military or sailor cap by the looks of it, above the little boy’s head, each with a grip on it, while Quill was smiling coyly at the camera.

“You were cute.” Gwen commented, “What happened?” Then she elbowed the boy good-
naturally.
Charlie didn’t pay the comment any heed, staring at the photo trying to recall it being taken, but finding himself unable too. And there was nothing in the picture that could give a hint to its location either. At last he gave in and looked to his mother, who was standing above them, what little color she had drained from her.
It was enough to throw both the others off. “Quill,” Gwen was the first to speak, “You okay?” “Yeah.” Quill replied, trying to shake it off, snatching the polaroid from Gwen’s as she said, “Give me that.” Picking up the box she said, “As a matter of fact, I think I should take care of all of this myself.” Then with that she fled the room, heading up the stairs.
“Quill!” Gwen called out, only to be answered by the slamming of a door she couldn’t see. Turning to Charlie she asked, “You wouldn’t happen to know what that was all about, would you?” Charlie shook his head.
Fox was in the upstairs hallway, pacing as he talked on the phone. “I know things like this take time Celeste, but—” He was cut off by a whirl hitting him, a whirl that he realized when his vision cleared was clear, already halfway down the hall.
“Sorry, Fox!” She barely took the time to say, as she grasps something he couldn’t see tight to her chest.
“Whoa, Quill!” Fox responded, “Where’s the fire?”
Like Gwen, his question was answered by the slamming of the door to her bedroom.
“Mulder?” Celeste’s voice came through the phone, “Mulder, are you still there?”
“Yeah,” Fox confirmed, “Celeste, I think I’m gonna have to call you back, but call me if you get it done before then.” And with that, he hung up.
Quill locked the door behind her, her body sliding down to the floor with the items she had grabbed, staring at the picture. She knew exactly where and when this had been taken. The Hub, Cardiff, 2003. They had wound up their in-between jobs and were regrouping, restocking. She had returned from running such errands, rushing through them in hopes of some secret alone time with Jack. Well, almost alone, but at three, Charlie was still rather easy to distract. He wouldn’t give them away.
They were both waiting in his room, when Charlie found the hat, and put it on.
“Charles, stop that!” Quill scolded, maybe even snapped, pulling him back and removing the offending headdress. “It’s not yours.” Suddenly, she heard someone laughing. “It’s alright.” Jack’s voice assured her, “Let him play with it, I don’t mind.”
She turned around to find Jack stepping into the room. “You’re going to spoil him.” She warned him in all seriousness.
Jack just smirked, going to the other side of the room and rummaging through things.
“What are you doing?” Quill asked, realizing he was up to something.
“Oh, come on.” Jack responded, pulling out a bulky green camera. “This is just too perfect not to capture for posterity sake.”
“Where did you even get that?” Quill asked, looking at the camera.
“You can find these at like any store that sales a little bit of everything.” Jack informed, “Now, come on, give me a smile.” Finding him amusing enough to indulge him, Quill smiled at the camera, helping Charlie hold onto the hat.
Jack snapped the picture, which spewed out of the bulky camera’s mouth.
Just then her thoughts were interrupted by the sound of knocking on the door. “Quill!” Fox called out, “Quill, is everything alright in there?”
“Yes!” Quill shouted back at him, “Now go away!” Then she opened the tin, and found it filled with neatly ordered envelopes of white, red, green, blue, yellow, pink, a couple of papers rolls up like scrolls, little bits of paper, a few more pictures.
Quill grabbed one in the middle and pulled it out, a red envelope, faded with age, pulling a yellow
piece of lined paper out. It read, we need to address what we talked about when we were last together. You're right. This is more than sex and it has been for some time…

It’s concise and to the point, maybe even a bit blunt, not really your typical love letter, or maybe it’s the type of love letter the Quill write, or would write if they were into that short of thing. She pulled out a white envelope and opened it, revealing white piece of paper, garishly framed in little seashells, with larger ones on the edges. She could still remember how disgusted she had been with it. Harkness, it read, indicating it was further on in their relationship, they had gotten increasingly sloppy as it went along, putting things in that they shouldn’t have, like their names, Apologies for the ridiculously fancy stationery. I think you know that I had no desire to use this, but this is evidently the only paper available in the entire neighborhood I’m in right now…

She opened letter after letter and all of it was the same. Her words, and some of his which she has sent back with her own letters, lest they be discovered. She either destroyed or sent back everything she wrote him. Jack had apparently been less careful. Suddenly it was all flashing in front of her eyes.

They were in the rubble of a building explosion, she has just barely gotten to her feet, her ears still ringing.

“Are you hurt?” Jack asked, trying to get up himself.

“What?!” Quill had shouted back, barely able to hear him.

“Are you hurt?!” Jack repeated, louder.

“I don’t think so!” Quill responded, still using loud tones, “You?”

“Same!” Jack called back as he allowed her to help him to his feet. Then suddenly he was kissing her. Then just as suddenly he reared back a horrified look on his face. “I’m sorry,” He said, his voice suddenly back to its normal tone, “I shouldn’t have…”

“It’s alright.” Quill assured him, lunging across the space between them and kissing him back. She was well acquainted with the adrenaline rust that came from near-death misses. The urge to pull the first warm and willing body available to her. The need to reaffirm that she was still alive. In she was being honest she needed it too right about now. She removed his lips just long enough to say, “I’m okay with this if you are.”

“I’m okay with it.” Jack agreed, and next thing either of them knew they were practically ripping each other’s clothes off.

She began to going Jack. When they were in town she to him a few nights, when she felt too tense to sleep in whatever bed they found, of if she had drunk alcohol not care. She went after a case with the strong elation of accuracy, of lethality, and she went as a means to escape the images and echoes of what she’d seen and done on the road, sometimes even the images of echoes of the time before that. He was very accommodating.

Suddenly it was six months later, and she was furtively pulling her blouse over her head. What started out as a rather lovely evening had taken a turn with the question, “What are we?”

“Andrea, talk to me.” Jack practically pleaded, sitting on the edge of the bed.

“I don’t have time for this.” Quill insisted, buttoning her blouse, “We leave for Maine in less than two hours. Some of us still have to answer to Home Office, at least to a certain degree.”

“This is more than just sex anymore and you know it. “Jack said, refusing to let her change the subject, reached out and took her wrist, “Has been for a while now.”

Quill pulled away. “I have to go.” She said, walking out the door.

Suddenly it was three days later and she was standing at the side of a makeshift raft as the others, plus a deft teenager girl that was the only survivor of marine biology exhibition that had encountered some sort of species of aquatic aliens that resembled a couple different human myths. The only thing keeping them from meeting the fate of the others was homemade earplugs keeping out the trance-inducing music. A harpoon was in her hands and she was on high alert. Realizing their usual methods of attack wasn’t working, a dozen or so of the mermaid-like creatures began shaking the raft from underneath. As they all fought to keep their footing, one of them grabbed Quill by the ankle. She dropped the harpoon as she was pulled under the water. She could feel the water splash on her face, struggling as her attackers her into the water, tiny little
teeth pricking into her skin. Her main thoughts were trying to get free, get back to the surface, before she drowned or was eaten alive, but as oxygen deprivation sat in, other thoughts set in, including on last one before she lost consciousness:

Jack was right.

Later, after she had been pulled out and revived, and they had killed the creatures and made it to safety, still wet, in a borrowed waitress uniform, her arms covered in bite marks, her sleeping charge beside her, she picked up a pen and began to write.

Then it was a year later. She was half-dressed sitting on motel bed, rolling a sliver and iron ring back and forth between her finger.

“Why exactly are you giving this to me?” Quill asked, not understanding the reason for the gift.

“Because,” Jack said, coming over to the bed and crawling on it with her, “I saw it and it made me think of you.”

Quill raised an eye brow. “Okay, and how exactly did you make this connection?”

“Because,” Jack began again, taking the ring from her. She reached to snatch it back, even if she didn’t understand why he had given it to her, that didn’t change the fact that it was hers now, but he reared away playfully. “It’s beautiful, unpretentious, and made of some seriously strong stuff.

He managed to get her hand, and slipped the ring on her finger, which and she was pretty sure her heart just did something that hearts are never normally meant to do in any biology.

Jack grinned. “A perfect fit.” Then he leaned in and kissed her.

Next thing she remembered wasn’t Jack. It was Toni Jo, two weeks later, the two of them sharing a bed, Charlie between them, sound asleep. Toni Jo reached across the way and pulled the ring, which was on a cheap chain around her bedmate’s neck, holding it out where she could see.

“Quill,” She began, “Where did you get this?”

“Nowhere.” Quill responded quickly, then lied, “I found it.”

“Uh, huh,” Toni Jo replied, not believing her for a second.

Realizing lying to empath was likely not the best idea, Quill sighed. “Okay, fine, it was a gift.”

“A gift?” Toni Jo repeated, “From who? Quill, you could count on one hand the people you know.” After a beat she said, “Okay, maybe both hands, but still.”

“It was just—something I got from a friend.” Quill told her, “It’s really not a big issue, really.”

“Oooh a friend.” Toni Jo teased.

“What, are you, twelve?” Quill asked, “It’s not like that. Look, can we just—drop it okay, and get to sleep?”

“Alright,” Toni Jo relented, “But please be careful with whatever’s going on with this— ‘friend’. I don’t want you to get hurt.”

“Trust me, Toni, I can handle myself.” Quill assured her.

Later on, a few months after nearly being caught, Jack and Quill were at a dinner in London, playing at being normal. Something about wanting to try a “proper date.” If you can call breakfast a proper date, but that was what they could manage.

“How many cups are you going to have?” Jack asked, watching her down her third cup of coffee.

“Um.” Quill makes a sound before setting down her cup, “This is what you get for taking me to place with free refills.”

The dinner’s radio is playing some idiotic pop or soft rock song. Closing time. This room won’t be open till your brothers or sisters come...

“I think you may have a problem.” Jack informs her, “Like, some sort of serious caffeine addiction.”

“My constitution is stronger than yours.” Quill counters, “And I can stop at any time I want.”

Jack laughs, shaking his head.

Closing time. Every new beginning comes from some other beginning’s end...

After that it was blur for a few minutes. Flick of memory of royal blue bedsheets with orange poppies, of knowing smiles while the others were around, of secret revenues barely made. Of Jack whispering things in her ear, calling her his little angel, and cherub, names she only allowed
because she knew that angels were really quite fierce and terrifying, that they drowned whole cities in salt and guarded gardens with flaming swords, and had to use some version of the phrase ‘be not afraid’, to just deliver a message. Of her whisper sap to him, or if she was in tender mood, my Captain. Of feels so intense she felt she might burst. Of that question, ‘Do you think they know?’ “I think they know about us.” Quill announced, during those final days. They’re in his living quarters at the hub, sitting on his bed, fully clothed, Quill fiddling with the ring around her neck. They’ve been together for five years at that point, all the while keeping it a dirty little secret. “Has someone said something?” Jack asked. “Toni’s been asking questions again.” Quill answered, “Like where I’m going, where have I been, the usual, but the other day—she actually asked if I was seeing someone. Five years, even when I was sure we caught, she’s never asked that. Of course, I denied everything.” “Of course.” Jack repeated, almost sadly. “So, what do you want to do?” Quill asked. He was quit for a minute, then said, “We could run away.” Quill laughed at that. “I’m serious.” Jack replied, “You grab the kid, we meet up, head off to Greece and walk around a table.” “Why would we- “Quill began, then decided that wasn’t the headline, “Jack, what about your team? What about my team? We can’t just leave.” “No offense, but your team was functioning long before you showed up, and will function long after you’re gone.” Jack countered, “And Owen, Tosh and Suzie can handle things here.” Quill stares him head on and ask bluntly, “And what about when I die?” She knew his secret. Had for years at that point. “You have a longer lifespan than humans, right?” Jack questioned. “In theory at least.” Quill admitted, “But not by much.” “Well, then I’ll have you longer than I’ll have anyone else.” Jack reasoned, “And we can cross that bridge when it drops on us.” He pulled her closer to her, “It doesn’t have to be Greece, you know. It can be anywhere you want. Just—think about it please.” Quill rolls her eyes, not in annoyance or exasperation, but just to look at him. “How long have you been thinking about this?” He didn’t answer her, just held her tighter. Two weeks later, she was in hostel a few miles away from Cardiff, walking into the room where Charlie was playing with a bottle he had found. “Charles, get your coat.” She ordered. “Are we going somewhere?” He asked, pulling the close brown coat from a nearby chair, then before she can answer asked, “Where?” “You’ll see.” Quill responded, leaning down to help with the buttons. She then reached into the coat to adjust his perception filter. The last thing she needed was it glitch. It occurred to her that maybe she should back them a change of clothes or something but that would only draw attention. She picked him up, grabbing a small, flat, blue-and-green plaid bear off the floor with one hand, so he wouldn’t fuss for it later, and walked out. They arrive at the train station, and Quill headed right to the bench where she and Jack hand agreed to meet. It was empty, they had made it first. “Mother,” Charlie said as Quill sat him down on the bench, “What’s going on?” “You’ll see.” Quill promised, sitting down next to him. She didn’t want him making a scene, or giving them away, so she was waiting to the last minute to explain what was happening. Maybe it wasn’t the proper thing to do, maybe it was cruel, even, but she didn’t know what else to do. They sat there for two hours and the train they were supposed to take was about to pull out. Quill looked over to the board with the arrival and departure time. Two more trains to their destination. They could get tickets to one of those. Three more hours and they eat a meal of fruit leather and salt and vinegar chips from a nearby newsstand that just happened to have some food options. “Mother,” Charlie ask again, between bite of read colored strips, “Who are we waiting for?”
“I’m not sure anymore.” Quill admitted. What could possibly be keeping him? What if he wasn’t coming?
Still, it was four more hours, nine hours total, the sun’s gone down and there’s a small child sleeping soundly at her side, covered with her coat, when she finally had to admit, as the first hot, angry tear rolls down her face:
He’s not coming. Maybe he never was.
Her hand is shaking as she pulled out her phone and punch the speedail. “Toni,” She said when it picked up, “I think I’ve made a huge mistake.”
She manages to hold it together until Toni Jo gets there, then it the waterworks really start as she told her everything. She wasn’t really heartbroken, well, there was that, but she was angrier and embarrassed at being sucker in. Had it all just been a lie?
“That coward.” Toni Jo seethed, as they drove out of town, “That brassard! I’m going to kill him, I swear, I’m gonna kill him.”
“No.” Quill spoke up, “I get to do that.” And oh, was she compiling a list of endless and excellent ways she kills Jack.
But the next day, she couldn’t even get out of bed. She just felt too numb, and as if the energy had been sucked out of her. It’s not as bad as the way she felt when she was stranded on Earth, but it was still crippling. And she hates it.
That’s what made her get out of the bed. She was determined to get right somehow. She had to get right.
She broke into Toni Jo’s medicine supply, grabbing a bottle of laxative, a bottle of ipecac syrup, and a jar of detox solution and head to the bathroom. She turned up the heat and chugged all three. She spent the better part of the day puckering and crapping her guts out and sweating, trying to purge herself of whatever was affecting her. It worked too well and she passed out on the bathroom floor.
She didn’t remember the next few days very well, except that there was an IV in her arm and Toni Jo barely left her side, coddling her half the time and tearing her a new one the other half, all the while forcing a series of tonics down her throat. When she was finally able to stand, Quill resolved to forget she met Captain Jack Harkness.
And yet, there it was, the proof of it right in front of her.
In her hands in that moment was a letter written on a buttery blue piece of paper. In a rage, she ripped it apart, letting out a noise that was a cross between a groan and scream. She threw the piece to the ground then slapped the whole tin across the room. She needed a better way to get rid of them. She stooped and started frantically pulling open drawers, throwing out clothes and whatever else was in them. A lighter. She had to have a lighter somewhere.
At the end of the search the room it looked like a bomb went off, the others had come to the door at least one time for each of them—she knew that they would want an explanation, that she had probably just brought more attention to the situation, but in her obsession, she couldn’t be compelled to care—and she was on her knees on the floor when the phone rang.
She looked up, saw the caller ID, and picked it up. “Everything alright, Toni?” She asked, trying sound normal.
“You tell me.” Toni Jo replied, “I just got three different SOS texts and they’re using phrases, like ‘erratic,’ and ‘she’s lost her mind’. What’s going on?” She thought she had some idea what was going on, but she needed to hear it from Quill.
“I can’t find a lighter.” Quill managed softly.
“What?” Toni Jo balked.
Quill answered back with, “He kept them. Letters, pictures. Every little thing. He kept it all. And it’s not for their consumption.”
Suddenly everything made sense. “Oh, Quill…” Toni Jo began.
“Don’t ‘oh Quill me.” She protested, “I’m fine.”
“I know you’re not.” Toni Jo responded.
Quill didn’t say a word but shook her head. Toni Jo was right. She wasn’t fine.
I'm back everybody!
Just a quick announcement, school is starting next week and I won't have time to update on Fridays, so all updates will now be Saturday until further notice.
The Coach With The Dragon Tattoo, Or Who Is In Control?

Chapter Summary

When the team encountered another group of people while staking out Coal Hill, it turned into a fight for survival.

Chapter Notes

Just a quick warning, while not graphic, this chapter can get a little gory in places.

Gwen was in the lead as they went into the building. “Alright.” Gwen said, “Me and Susan are taking the right, you three take the left.” While no one was saying it, after whatever happened the day before she didn’t want Quill with just one person. They still didn’t know exactly what happened yesterday. When she finally came out, she apologized, but offered no explanation. They asked, but she brushed them off, going back to work as if nothing had happened. It was actually scarier than the outburst itself in a way. “I want everyone to check in with each other every five minutes.” Gwen continued, “Coms in at all time, guns ready at all times, do I make myself clear?” “Crystal.” Fox responded, before they parted ways. Once they were far enough away, Fox was about to speak when suddenly, the scanner started making noise. “Scanners picking up something.” Quill announced. “Is that a big one or a little one?” Fox asked. “Little.” Quill answered. “Gwen.” Fox spoke into his com, “Are you getting anything? Anything at all?” “Nothing.” Gwen answered, “Why?” “We’re getting a signal in here.” Fox explained, “No spike yet, but a signal.” “Do you think that means there’s going to be a spike?” Gwen asked, “That a tear’s about to open?” “That’s a very real possibility.” Quill spoke up, “After the spike was when we found the Glurp. And the tear where the Vesiform came through gave off elevated energy reason the whole time it was open. The fact that you’re not getting any could mean—” “Something just moved.” Charlie interjected, turning towards the right hall aiming his gun. “Stay here.” Quill ordered, proceeding into the hallway with Fox, “Gwen we might have something here.” She said, “I’m not sure what, apparently Celeste couldn’t get the bloody lights on.” “She can’t do everything.” Fox spoke up. “Okay, just hold on, we can be there in five minutes.” Gwen said. “I think it’s a little late for that.” Quill responded. “Why?” Gwen asked, thought she already knew the reason. That was when the beam on the flashlight on Fox’s gun landed on something revealing a puppy of all things. It looked sort of like a Doberman, except instead of black on top of brown, its fur was a darker, chocolate brown on top of a lighter brown. “Hey there,” Fox said, softly lowering his gun, holstering it as he walked over to the dog. He offered his hand to it. The puppy licked it.
Fox smiled. “Aren’t you the pretty one?”
The dog didn’t respond, just kept liking his hand.
“Would you like to come with me?” Fox asked, moving to pick up the dog.
“Fox, don’t!” Quill exclaimed, “It could be dangerous!”
“Quill.” Fox responded, pausing in his action,” She can’t be more than six weeks old. Barely old enough to be her away from her mother.”
“Oh, sure, it looks like a helpless puppy until it rips your throat out.” Quill replied.
Fox stared at her questioningly.
“You’re the one who said I should read Oryx And Crake.” Quill reminded him.
Suddenly Gwen’s voice came over the coms. “Guys what’s going on here?” She asked, clearly starting to freak out, “Guys?!”
“We’re here Gwen.” Fox assured her, “It’s either a stray dog, or a Wlovog.”
“What?” Gwen responded, understandably confused.
“Never mind.” Fox replied flatly.
That was when the dog ran off, Fox going after it.
Quill rolled her eyes, going after him saying, “If you get yourself killed, don’t blame it on me.”
Neither of them realized that Charlie, tired of waiting, finally disobeyed and hurried to catch up to the pair.
As Quill and Fox ran down the hall, they started to hear voices. “Now, Mr. Dawson,” A voice they didn’t recognized was saying, “I don’t think we’re asking too much here.”
“I don’t have to answer to you, Pearson.” Another man’s voice, raised and angry, said.
“I thought we were supposed to be the only ones here.” Fox whispered.
“So, did I.” Quill replied, marching that way.
As they marched towards the boy’s locker room where the voices were coming from, a third-Quill thought she actually recognized it as the headmaster-what was his name again-Armitage? -said, “But you do have to answer to me. Now, just take the test and if comes clean we’ll both owe you an apology.”
The Torchwood operatives smashed themselves against the wall. Closest to the door, Quill turned her head and peered in as best she could without being detected. She could see that yes, one of the men in this conversation was the headmaster. She standing next to a man that Quill could’ve sword was her cover from the other day. Person had been his name, hadn’t it? Across from them was the coach, she remembered him from the flies. What was his name? She thought Susan had called him Coach Dawson. One thing’s for sure, they were having some sort confrontation and it was building.
“What proof do you even have?!” Dawson challenged.
Just then Gwen’s voice came in over the intercom. “Fox, Quill, come in.” She requested, “What’s going on over there?”
“Sssh.” Fox hissed, “Now not’s the best time, Gwen.”
However, it was too late. They were caught. “Who’s there?” Armitage called out, “Come out.”
“Stay here.” Quill told Fox before revealing herself to the three other men.
“Andrea?” Armitage asked, “What are you doing here?”
“It think the better questions is,” Quill began, “What are you all doing here?”
“There’s a match today.” Dawson spoke up, angrier than anything else, “I came here early to prep and was treated to this ambush.”
“I’m sorry, who is this?” Pearson asked.
“Andrea Quill, one of our physics teachers, the one you were covering for, I believe.” Amiratige answered, then turned his attention back to the woman herself, “How did you even get in?”
Quill’s brain started to race for a convincing lie.
That was when it seemed that very air in spot behind the men turned liquid, and rip of light cut through it.
“You need to get out of here.” Quill said urgently, “Now.”
“Not until we get an explanation.” Armitage insisted.
“Here’s an explanation for you, turn around!” Quill exclaimed. They did and looked in shock at the sight of the tear. Well, two out of the three of them did. Dawson looked dismayed, but not surprised. Like he knew this was a possibility. That was when it came out. A giant creature, a creature that took up half the room, covered in dull, steely gray scales, decorated by luminescent lines its head framed with a boney fringe on either side. A creature with a month full of sharp teeth.

“Why are you all just standing here?!” Quill exclaimed, “Run!” The three men didn’t have to be told twice, following Quill out of the room. Seeing the group coming out, Fox and Charlie who he had ushered to the side after he appeared in the hallway, stepped away from the wall.

“We got company!” Quill announced raising her gun, thought she knew it wouldn’t do much good. The creature lunged out, grabbing at Pearson with its almost hand-like claws, forcing the man to the grown. Pearson screamed, and clawed at the floor, but he was still dragged back into the gym.

“Get them out of here.” Fox told Charlie, readying his gun and running into the room.

“And we will talk about this later.” Quill hissed, following after Fox. All the while the exchanged was decorated with Pearson’s screams. When they ran into the room, guns raised, they couldn’t see where the creature had taken its victim. That was when Quill realized something. “The screaming’s stopped.” Suddenly a wad of bloody skin flew from behind a set of lockers, hitting the wall with a sickening splat. Quill ran over to it, crouching down and touching it.

“Is that what I think it is?” Fox asked.

“Human skin?” Quill responded, “Yep.” They turned around just in time to see the creature drag the bloody, skinless corpse of Pearson into the tear, leaving a trail of blood as it did so. For minute, in spite of it not being the worst thing they had seen, they both felt like they were going to sick. Then, slowly, but still too fast for them to do anything, the tear closed.

Meanwhile Charlie had got the survivors of the attack down the hall when Gwen and Susan came running in their direction.

“What happened?” Gwen demanded.

“A tear opened up.” Charlie answered quickly, “Something came through, something big. There was a third man, but it attacked him. The others are trying to get him.”

“Tears?” Armitage repeated, “What is going on here? What was that thing? And Susan, what are you doing here, involved in all this?”

In the confusion, nobody noticed the black ink outline of Chinese-like dragon fly across Dawson’s skin, and the man stiffen. Or if they noticed the latter, they attributed the last part to his own shock and confusion. Just then Fox and Quill rejoined the group.

“Where’s Allen?” Armitage asked.

“If that’s Pearson, he didn’t make it.” Quill answered bluntly.

“Quill!” Fox exclaimed. Couldn’t the woman show a little tact, just once?

“Alright, what exactly happened?” Gwen asked.


“Or at least a creature that looked like one.” Fox elaborated, “I don’t think it was an actual one.”

“He’s right.” Charlie spoke up, “That was what it looked like.”

“And where is this—dragon now?” Gwen asked.

“It went back into the – “Quill began when she saw something move on Dawson’s skin. “Did anyone else just- “

“I did.” Susan confirmed.

“See what?” Gwen asked, and then it happened again. This time she saw it, and aimed her gun at Dawson, shouting, “Hands in the air!”
Armitage and Charlie stepped away from Dawson, Charlie’s head going back and forth between the two. At the same time Fox exclaimed, “Gwen! What are you doing?!”
“Look at him!” Gwen exclaimed, gesturing to the man.
They did, just in time to see the dragon make its round, this time encircling the man’s neck. “What is that?” Charlie asked, mystified, taking a step back, and holding his gun up.
“That’s a good question.” Quill replied venomously, aiming her weapon at him as well.
“Looks, it’s not what you think.” Dawson said tensely, “I don’t know what this is, just like I don’t know what that was.”
“So, your tattoo comes to life and you just go on like business as usual?” Quill responded.
“I didn’t even have this two week ago.” Dawson protested, his eyes going to the guns still aimed at him.
“Okay, why don’t you just start at the beginning when that first popped up.” Gwen suggested.
“Before we do that, why don’t we move this somewhere else?” Fox suggested.
“And after I make a few calls.” Armitage added, “The whole reason Dawson was here today being that the school’s hosting a match. It wouldn’t be good to have the players showing up with all this going on—whatever this is.”
“I’ll go with you.” Fox said, following him as he started to leave.
Armitage looked a little nervous at his words.
“We’re not in the business of hurting humans.” Gwen assured him.
While they were splitting up, Ram Singh had arrived early and was walking into the locker room through the back interence, where he was greeted by several lockers knocked over and a trail of blood.
“What the—” Ram began, turning his head and wondering what he should do, he was leaning towards either going back and getting his father or calling the police himself when he heard voices outside. Against his better judgment he went to the door way peeked outside. There were about eight people just standing around. Two of them that were heading his way.
Ram ducked his head back so they couldn’t see him.
“My office is this way.” He could hear Mr. Armitage saying, leading the second figure in that direction.
Once he was sure they were gone, Ram stuck his head out again, looking in either direction, desiting which way he should go. In the end he decocted to follow Armitage and whoever he was with.
Meanwhile, the others had taken things out into a back alley behind the school.
“Okay, Dawson.” Quill said, apparently leading the interrogation. “Start talking.”
“I had stayed late for practice, two weeks ago.” Dawson began, “I didn’t even know what had happened until she hit me.”
“She?” Susan spoke up, “How do you know it’s female?”
“I’m just guessing.” Dawson replied quickly.
None of them were buying it. “Go on.” Gwen ordered anyway.
“She—it—Hit me from behind.” Dawson continued, “Suddenly I had dragon blood in me. Bigger, stronger—”
“So, what, these are like steroids for you?” Quill cut him off.
“Now you sound like Pearson and Armitage.” Dawson countered, swallowing, his rage barely hidden, “You have to understand. I was so weak. Not even the players respected me- “
“Thought you wouldn’t question a good thing?” Quill responded, her voice laden with contempt.
“Well, the first thing we need to do is find out if and how these dragons are connected.” Gwen spoke up, clearly not happy with the coach’s petty motivations for ignoring the issue, especially since it was linked to a death. If he had just been afraid of winding up on a vivisection table, that would be one thing, but this was another. “And how to get it off.”
Meanwhile, Fox was leaning against the desk as Armitage made sure personally that every student, or at least their parents knew not to come.
“Thank you, Mrs. Watts,” Armitage was saying. “Just make sure your son doesn’t come today. Good day.” As he hung up he looked at Fox, “Sorry, about all this. I just feel a duty to keep as many children away from this as possible.”

Unbeknownst to either of them, Ram was outside, listening, thought so far, he hadn’t gleaned enough to put anything together.

“No, it’s okay, I totally get it.” Fox assured him.

“I don’t suppose you’d tell me anymore about what this is, or how two of my teachers got involved with it.” Armitage requested, though he knew what the answer would be.

“You would suppose right.” Fox confirmed.

“I thought so.” Armitage replied, resigned, “You know, I actually really like Andrea. I mean, she’s a pain in my bottom, but she’s a fresh kind of pain and for a head teacher, that’s—marriage.” After a moment he added, “I suppose that only makes sense to someone in the education field.”

Who’s Andrea? Ram thought.

“Well, fresh kind of pain is a good way to describe Quill.” Fox replied, “I mean, I love her, but—she can be a bit nuts.”

Quill? Ram thought, As in Miss Quill? No, it couldn’t be. Well, maybe…

“It’s Susan being involved this that has me surprised.” Armitage continued, “She’s always just been so open, friendly even. And one of the most dedicated teachers I have ever seen.”

“Believe me, she is.” Fox responded, “Believe it or not she’s doing this for the students.”

“I’ll believe anything at this point.” Armitage replied, “Tell you what, thought, I’m just glad somebody’s finally doing something.”

“So, you knew something was going on?” Fox asked.

“If by knew you mean realized there were teachers dropping like flies, children disappearing, unexplained property damage.” Armitage replied, “Just today I had a cleaner fail to show up with no explanation.” After a moment he added, “Which, given what just happened is a little more concerning.”

“Well, that’s quite the—” Fox began, but his voice trailed off as a tear appeared behind the head master.

“What?” Armitage asked, good natured, but somewhat nervous.

Ram peaked over the side, just in time to see the dragon come back through as Fox pulled Armitage out of the way.

The pair ran out to the hall, where they saw Ram still on the ground. “What are you doing here?!” Fox exclaimed, before saying, grabbing Ram by the shirt and pulling him up, saying, “Never mind, come on!”

Ram didn’t have to be told twice, willingly following the men as they all ran down the hall, until suddenly he fell to the down as a sharp pain entered his leg.

They managed to grab onto Ram and started pulling, trying to get out of the monster’s clutches before it could get a good hold on him. The actually got him away, but there was a sickening rip of tearing skin.

They gathered up Ram and started to run, Fox shooting at the dragon. It didn’t even seem to notice.

“There is pain…” A deep voice suddenly said, as the dragon’s lips opened, revealing rows of sharp teeth, “There is anger…”

“It talks?” Armitage asked, pausing for a moment in shock.

Not knowing what else to do, Fox shot at the dragon as it pinned Armitage under his foot. Blood started trickling out form the man’s skull.

Fox pushed Ram around the corner then dived on the dragon, but it was too late. Within seconds he had ripped Armitage’s skin from his body, sending a spray of blood across the hall, lockers, and Fox, a wad of skin hitting the wall as it dragged the body back towards the office.

“Bastard!” Fox called out, his eyes going between the two different paths as he tried to quickly make a decision: Try to take vengeance on a creature he had no clue how to kill or save the boy. It was no contest. He forced himself up, fighting the urge to puke, and headed back to Ram.

Outside, Gwen had Dawson under an electronic species’ guide, getting no results. Suddenly the
dragon started to move around on the Coach’s skin, as if trying to get away. “Okay, something’s got this one frisky again.” Quill said out loud to herself. That was when she heard Dawson muttering in a hushed whisper, “I am in control. I am in control.” Suddenly the doors busted opened, revealing Fox, and Ram, who’s arm was flung over the adult’s shoulder as he grabbed onto the boy tight to steady him, his leg torn and bloody with a bloody mass of cloth tied around it. “Who is that?!” Quill demanded, “Where’s Armitage?” “It came back.” Fox offered for an explanation, hurrying over to them. “What came- “Gwen began, “The dragon?” “Yes.” Fox confirmed, “Then we found this one while we trying to flee. The dragon got ahold him, but we were able to get him loose but then the damn thing started talking and…” He didn’t have to finish. “Oh God.” Gwen moaned, covering her hand with her mouth. Charlie did the same, momentarily rendered in capable of speech, as Susan fought back bile in her throat and Quill rubbed her temples. Fox threw Ram on the open bottom of the van and Charlie grabbed the medical kit. “Ram,” He called out, covering him his coat to fight off shock, “Ram, are you still with us?” “Yeah.” Ram groaned, “What the Hell just happened?” “I’ll explain later.” Charlie lied, “Let’s just see what we’re working with right now. “He unwrapped the cloth and sucked in a quick breath. The side of Ram’s calf was a bloody mess, a flay of skin falling at the side. “In control of what?” Quill challenged, strutting over to him. Dawson didn’t reply. “Come on Dawson.” Quill insisted, raising her voice, “In control of what?!” Suddenly the glass of the building they were by shattered, the dragon coming through it. “Get the boy out of here!” Fox ordered. He wasn’t losing anyone else today. Charlie bit the surgical thread he was using to sew the skin back on, hastily tying it off before leaping off the back with Ram, helping him run. However, the dragon’s attention was on Dawson this time, snarling at him. “You can’t have her!” Dawson seethed, “You can never have her! She’s mine!” “So, you did know.” Gwen said coolly, her gun at the dragon. “I was nobody!” Dawson began, “I was weak! It’s was like I told you before! Then one day I felt her under my skin. That much of what I told you was true. It was some sort of accident when she traveled here, but she was trapped on my skin. But then he mate came looking…” Everybody exchanged looks. That would explain it. “I knew he’d never do anything to risk her harm.” Dawson continued, actually sounding almost proud of himself, “But there is a price. He needs to kill to provide blood for her to drink. That’s how they feed. She’s trapped on me, there’s no other way, but I have it under control!” “Yeah, looks like it.” Quill snarked, putting her foot on a piece of the shattered glass. “Now, I’m sorry that’s you’ve all seen so much.” Dawson said, leaving his hand up to his arm before ordering, “Kill them.” The dragon opened its mouth wide, roaring, rather protesting the order or preparing to attack one couldn’t be sure. That was when Quill made her move. She kicked the glass from the ground into her hand ignoring the pain in as she lunged at Dawson, actually managing to pin him, holding the shard above the
female dragon. “Make one move and I start slicing up his skin.” She threatened.
The dragon glared at her, both skeptical and enraged.
“Now, I’m sure your girl is fast.” Quill said, watching both dragons, “But I’m faster, “Her face and
tone softened as she said, “I’m sorry. I know how it feels to lose the one your love. I lost mine, saw
him die—”
“She is not dead.” The dragon protested, “She is trapped.”
Okay, trapped, we can work with that.” Quill replied.
“There’s nothing to work out.” Dawson spoke up, starting to fight Quill, “He has to do what I say,
or I’ll hurt her.”
“He has to do what I’ll say or I’ll hurt her.” Quill pointed out, “And I’m the one with skin piercing
weapon. What could your dull fingernails really do?” That gave her an idea. “Does the skin
actually have to be on his body?”
“What?!” Dawson exclaimed, actually managing to break away.
“What?” Gwen and Fox repeated almost simultaneously.
“Quill- “Susan began.
“Oh, come one, like he doesn’t have it coming.” Quill responded, “He had two people horribly
murdered just today—”
“Three.” Fox corrected.
“What?” Quill asked.
“Before the skin taker here showed up again, Armitage told me that a janitor didn’t come into
work.” Fox explained, “Knowing what we just found out, I imagine they all met the same fate.”

“Okay make that at least three.” Quill said, “And nearly fed a mere boy to that thing! If anyone
deserves to be turned into leather, it’s him!”
“Leather?” The dragon spoke up.
Yeah, it’s this material they have here made from animal skin.” Quill explained, “My people
actually had something like it, we just called it something different, obviously—”
That statement caught the dragon’s attention.
“Okay, I’m like you. Brought to this planet against my will through a riff, just one in
a different place, but unlike you, I don’t have a way back home. That was my new reality, and still
is, but I learned to live with it. And this is your new reality. Just turn him into a chair or a jacket or
something. Sure, you won’t have her like she had before, but at least you’ll still have her. I’ll never
have my lover again.”
“No, no, no, no.” Dawson protested.
Quill, on the other hand, could see the dragon was considering it, so she decided to help him out by
pushing Dawson in the creature’s direction. The dragon grabbed Dawson, pulling him into the tear
as he screamed, “No, no, wait pleas, wai- “By that point they were both in the riff, which slowly
started to close.
Quill turned around. Gwen and Fox looked a bit disturbed, but resigned, buy Susan was glaring at
Quill with contempt.
“Oh, spare your righteous indignation.” Quill huffed, “We had no way of fighting it, no other way
to negotiate with it, and Dawson had it coming.”
“And we get decide that?” Susan challenged.
“Well, what we supposed to do, go to the police and say, arrest him officer, he kills people with his
skin peeling dragon?” Quill shot back.
“Ladies.” Gwen called out, trying to break up the fight before it could start, “I think what we need
to do now is find the boys and deal with the injured kid.”
“I’m with Gwen on this one.” Fox agreed.
Quill couldn’t really argue with that. For all they knew the boy was bleeding out as they spoke with
Charlie fighting the inevitable every step of the way. “Come on then,” She said, let’s go.”
Just then, however, they heard a man calling out, “Ram! Ram, where are you?!”
“I’ll deal with it.” Susan told them, already hurrying in that direction, still disapproving of what
just occurred, “You go find your boy.”
Not So Different

Chapter Summary

In the aftermath of the battle at school, cooler heads do NOT prevail.

Chapter Notes

Quick, possible unnecessary, but I'm paranoid warning: One particularly offensive, if obscure, swear word, and possible accidentally protagonist-centered morality. (I wasn't aiming for it, but really, does anyone?)

They found the boys in some nearby bushes, Ram leaned upright, his leg elevated to the best of his ability, Charlie a few inches away, covered in Ram’s blood, his gun out and ready to fire, clearly on edge, immediately aiming the gun at the adults.

“Whoa, there Charles,” Quill said quickly, holding her hands out in front of herself, “It’s just us.” Charlie the gun and allowed Quill to take him by the arm and pull him from the bush.

“How’s your patient?” She asked as he stepped out.

“He’s stable.” Charlie answered, “But he’s a need a hospital. And an actual, proper doctor.”

“Don’t worry, we’ll get him to one.” Quill assured him as Gwen and Fox gathered up Ram, who at that point had almost lost consciousness.

“It’s alright” Gwen said, picking up the boy on one side, “We got you.”

That was the last thing Ram could make out before he fully blacked out.

When Ram awoke, he wasn’t entirely aware of his surroundings, just bright lights and a numb ache in his leg. As his vision cleared, he realized he was in some sort of hospital room.

What? He thought slowly sitting up and seeing clean white cloth wrapped around one of his legs.

Crap. He thought, struggling to get out of the bed. He had to get out of there before who knew what happened.

“I wouldn’t do that if I were you.” A female voice told him, causing him to jolt in that direction, seeing his physics teacher standing there. Yes, she had been, hadn’t she?

He remembered seeing, or at least someone with that haircut.

“D-Don’t!” Ram pleaded, panicking, “I swear, I won’t- “

“Oh, relax.” Quill cut her off, “If I was going to kill you I would’ve done it while you still out. Plus, after the stich work he put into you Charles would strangle me with his bare hands. I just wanted to make sure you were alright.”

“Well, I’m not!” Ram exclaimed, “How could anyone me alright?! My leg’s been skinned and that —that thing—” Ram’s voice trailed off, panting as he thought of how to even articulate what just happened.

Quill grabbed a picture from the bedside table, pouring a glass of water. “Calm down,” She told him, hurrying over to him with the glass, “Just breath and drink this.”

Ram put his lips to the glass.

“There you go.” Quill said in a hushed voice, “Just drink slowly.”

After a moment Ram removed his lips from the glass. “Where’s my dad?” He asked.

“Outside, talking with your doctors.” Quill answered, “I’m sure he’ll be in shortly.”
Five minutes later Quill was walking out of the hospital when a black van pulled up to her. The window rolled down, revealing Gwen. “Is it done?” She asked.

“Kid didn’t even know that I was slipping him the pill.” Quill said, sliding into the van, “And on your end?”

“The lockers are still a bit wrecked.” Gwen replied, “But you can’t tell what happened there.”

After they dropped Ram off at the hospital with a flimsy story they had to deal with wreckage at the hospital. As the one that was the least blood-spattered, (well, at least the least-blood splattered who they trusted to handle it) Quill was picked to stay behind to give Ram the amnesia pill.

“And has anyone contacted Toni?” Quill asked, “You know she’s going to want to know.”

“We’re about to cross that off the to-do list.” Fox assured her from the other side of the car.

That was when Quill noticed two things: One, the boy currently sitting in the hump was shaking, two, there was something moving around in the floorboard. “Charles,” She spoke up, slowly, “Are you alright?”

“Yes.” Charlie responded, rather unconvincingly, “I’m fine.”

Quill narrowed her eyes. “Charles you’re shake- “Suddenly there was whimpering from the floorboard. “I’m sorry, but what is down there?”

She looked down before anyone could answered and saw the puppy from earlier looking up at her with warm brown eyes.

“What is that doing here?!” Quill demanded.

“She showed up while we were housing off the walls.” Fox answered, “I couldn’t just leave her there, now could I?”

“You do realize she almost lead us to our deaths?” Quill reminded her.

“That was an accident.” Fox replied, leaning down to stroke the pup, “Vampire was just trying to alert us to the problem.”

“Vampire?” Quill repeated.

“Seems intimidating enough.” Fox explained. That was when she noticed Susan’s hand wrapped tight around the arm of her seat in the front.

“Oh, you can’t seriously be upset.” Quill balked.

“Upset?!?” Susan repeated, “Upset?!” Quill was making it sound like she was some sort of bratty child distressed over a trifle.

“Like I said before Dawson had it coming!” Quill insisted.

“Being skinned alive?!” Susan countered.

“Well he saw no problem with doing it to other people!” Quill practically shouted.

“And God only knows what you’ve seen— “Susan began.

“Whoa there, big girl.” Gwen cut her off. It wasn’t that she thought Quill would be insulted by what Susan was about to say, she just knew if she didn’t stop this it was going to turn into a physical altercation. “Let’s just wait to have this conversation until we’re all not in a moving vehicle.”

Both women immediately stopped.

“Thank you.” Gwen breathed. She hoped that maybe by the time they got back to the house cooler heads would prevail.

She was sadly let down, as aside for the tension being so thick you could cut it with a knife for the rest of the ride, and it hit the fan almost the second they walked through the door.

Charlie, still in some sort of state of shock, headed up the stairs. Quill was about to follow him when she saw Susan still glaring at her in judgement, which hit a nerve. “Are you seriously still on this?!”

“You mean you killing two people in as many days?” Susan recapped, “Yes, I’m still on that.”

“Two?” Gwen spoke up. By her count there only one dead. Well, by Quill’s hand, at least.

“I think she’s counting the Vespifrom or whatever it was, from yesterday.” Quill explained. As Gwen let out a silent ‘O’ of comprehension Quill’s focus was on Susan, “Which I remember at the time you had no problem with!”

“That was different, he was seconds away from killing you, it was self-defense.” Susan reasoned.
“And what do you think this was?” Quill balked.
“You had other options today!” Susan exclaimed.
“Other – ‘Quill began in disbelief, ‘What are you talking about?’”
“You had the male talking.” Susan answered, “We could have found a solution that didn’t involve
giving a man over to be skinned alive!”
Quill couldn’t believe what she was hearing. “Jesus wept, woman, look around you!” She shouted,
in disgust, “Fox is covered in the blood of your friend, him and at least two other people are dead,
flayed alive just so the man you’re weeping over could bulk up! Meanwhile, Charles is upstairs
covered in another boy’s blood, a boy who would have probably met the same fate once Dawson
had done away with us, which he had ordered the dragon to do, you heard him say it! And we had
no way to even slow the dragon down, not way to free the female, and Dawson- “
“Yes, yes, he had it coming,” Susan cut her, “You’ve said that enough you’ve practically sung half
the Cell Block Tango. But you’re also overlooking the fact that he was under an alien influence.”
“Oh, please, at the very most the dragon was Jello shots at a party.” Quill scoffed, “It didn’t do
anything but loosen his inhibitions. You know what? I don’t have to justify anything to you!”
“Then why are you?!” Susan challenged.
“I don’t know!” Quill shouted before starting back to the stairs as Susan turned around, retreating
to the living room.
Fox and Gwen exchanged looks before Gwen asked, “Which one do you want to take?”
“I’ll take Quill, you deal with Susan.” Fox offered, heading up the stairs.
When Fox reached the top of the stairs, he found Quill arinigy pacing. “You alright?” He asked.
“Yeah, I just had to get out of there.” Quill answered, “I will not be in the same room with that self-
righteous, moralizing—” Her voice trailed off, unable to come up with what she felt was the proper
word for Susan.
“If it’s any consolation, I know you didn’t have any other options.” Fox assured her, “You may
have even done the proper thing.”
“Thank you!” Quill exclaimed, “Now if little Miss High and Mighty could see that.”
“I’m not sure if she’s so high and mighty as she is more those ‘thou shall not kill under any
cirstances’ types.” Fox replied.
“Well, she is going to need to get over that.” Quill grumbled, “Little prick. I mean, seriously, can
you believe her? What, does she think uncounted people should die just so she doesn’t have
squiggly feelings about how they were saved?”
“Quill, why is this bothering you so much?” Fox responded, “It’s not like you haven’t have people
question you before. Hell, you’ve had us question you before.”
It was true. There had been incidents where the others had accused her “flying off the handle,” or
otherwise acting with more force than necessary, and the occasional unobeyed order. Toni Jo in
particular was found of the question, “Was that really necessary?” But having Susan questioning
her was something different.
“You all know what you’re talking about.” Quill answered, “She doesn’t. She just set a standard
that she expects everyone she peers down from her high horse and if you step one toe out of line
she passes judgement. Just like the—the—”
“The people you were fighting against back home?” Fox helped her out. He didn’t know as much
about Quill’s past as Toni Jo did, but he got the gist. Quill certainly went on enough rants about her
old enemies for him to.
“Yes.” Quill admitted, “Yes, at the moment I can’t see any difference between her and them at the
moment.”
“For one things she’s not a ‘cruel demented colonialist’,” Fox countered, “She’s a woman trying to
navigate her way through an untenable situation, same as the rest of us. Gwen’s with her
downstairs I’m sure she’ll make her come around.”
Quill huffed. “I’m not looking for an apology.”
“I wouldn’t expect you to,” Fox responded.
Quill fought back a smile, but she had definitely calmed down. “I need to go check on Charles,”
She said, “He seemed pretty rattled. And you should probably go check on your new girl.”
“We’re already starting that again?” Fox smirked, heading down to do so and check Gwen’s
progress with Susan.
At that same time downstairs, Susan was also pacing. “There’s something wrong with that
woman.” She declared, “There has got to be something seriously wrong with her.”
“Susan,” Gwen began, “Try to see reason.”
“Reason?” Susan repeated, “She’s the one who sees no problem with what she did.”
“It’s not that.” Gwen responded. Well, maybe a little. “It’s just that she doesn’t see any other
options, and frankly I don’t either.”
Susan froze, staring at Gwen. “You mean you actually agree with her?”
“Look, am I completely happy with how things went down? No.” Gwen admitted, “But sometimes,
there are just no good options, and the best you can do is pick the lesser of two evil, as cliché as
that sounds, and today was one of those days. Surely you must see that.”
“Believe me, I know a thing of two about situations with no good options.” Susan answered
gravely with a far-off look on her face, “I’ve seen more than my share of them in my lifetime. And
they’ve cost so much, not just to me, but to others as well. I’ve had hoped to be done with them.”
Gwen was silent for a moment. She was a little taken aback by Susan’s sudden shift and had no
clue what to do with her statement.
What had the women been into before they all encountered
each other. At least she said, “Well, you might have to stand a few more.”
Susan was starting to see that. Her faced changed again as she realized she was going to have to
give in. However, she wasn’t ready to give all the way in yet, apparently, as she asked, “But was
that whole ‘Jello shots’ thing? What does that even mean?”
“Chris once said that when something alien influences a person’s behavior it usually comes in two
flavors: Bath salts and Jello shots.” Fox said, descending back down the stairs, “Bath salts being
things that can turn the most sane, well-adjusted human being into a raving lunatic, and Jello shots
being things that merely loosen inhibitions and anything bad they do under it they had in them the
whole time.”
“How are things upstairs?” Gwen asked.
“Well, she didn’t punch a hole in anything.” Fox answered, “She’s going to check on the pup
now.”
“I owe her an apology, don’t I?” Susan asked ruefully. That was not going to be a fun conversation.
“Well, she’s not looking for one.” Fox told her.
Meanwhile upstairs Charlie was in the bathroom, shirtless, trying to rinse the blood out of his shirt
in the bath tub, and shake the strange tension he was feeling. He didn’t know what was wrong with
him. It wasn’t like he hadn’t seen violence before. It wasn’t like he hadn’t had to do medical
operations in the middle of the violence before. Once he had to assist Toni Jo and remove shrapnel
from Fox’ leg while riding over a bumpy road in covered truck driven by his mother who drove
like a manic, while bullets were flying all around them. And that was on someone who was
practically family. He barely knew Ram. So why was there this knot in his stomach that wouldn’t
untwist, and paired with his heart clenching?
“I think you somehow managed to get even more bloody.” A familiar voice asked. He turned
around and saw his mother standing in the doorway. Before he could speak, she stepped over,
grabbing a hand towel as she did so, then down on the toilet and started wiping off the diluted red
from his hands and lower arms. “You were always such a neat child.” She commented while she
worked, “Even when you were a baby. You would always cry if so much as hint of anything got on
your hands. I remember on time, back on Rhodia, I was discussing strategy with two of my
generals, and I hear you start wailing. I thought a wild animal had gotten into the camp and
attacked you, or maybe one of the soldiers who weren’t exactly thrilled to have a---a Rhodian
around, so I whirl around only to find that no, you had just fallen into the mud. Not so much as a
scrapped knee.” She worked silently for a moment then asked, “So, what’s going on?”
“The blood won’t come out.” Charlie answered, “I tried soaking it, but it didn’t work, and I didn’t
want to waste the peroxide. I think we might have to burn it.”
“While I’m all for not talking about our feelings, I don’t think this is really about the shirt.” Quill responded, finishing with the hands and arms.
“I’m sorry.” Charlie replied, assuming she was at the very least annoyed.
“It can be emotional sometimes,” Quill responded, “Working on someone you know. That’s why they don’t usually advise doctor treat family. Or so I’ve been told.”
“But I don’t know Ram.” Charlie insisted, “Not really.”
“You know his name, that’s more than I know.” Quill quipped, “Look, all things considered I don’t think we’re going to be having any big eureka moments today, so put on a clean shirt and take a walk, clear your head.”
“No, I-I- “Charlie began.
“Go.” Quill ordered “Just take your phone with you, stay in the neighborhood, and be back by dark.”

A few minutes later, with Charlie out, Fox taking care of Vampire, Gwen taking the opportunity to check on her family, Quill sat down with a cup of coffee that had been brewed the night before and reheated. She had just put it to her lips when Susan’s voice rang out, “Can I ask how it happened?”
Quill didn’t even bother to turn around, asking, “How what happened?”
“You told the male you lost the one you love.” Susan answered, “Saw him die. You mind if I asked what happened?”
“He was killed in the war with my enemies.” Quill answered, “Our enemies. Things were at a stalemate, again, so I, me and my officers, thought storming the capitol might tip the scales in our favor. It almost did, but then things went sideways, enemy forces got the upper hand me and the others that escaped barely got out alive…and he was shot down less than five feet away from me.”
Suddenly there was wetness at the corner of her eyes, which she quickly wiped away. She hadn’t cried then, she had done a lot screaming but she hadn’t cried, and she wasn’t going to cry now. Not in front of her.
“I’m sorry.” Susan responded soberly, “I know that probably sounds sallow to you, sorry is the Kool-Aid of emotions after all, but I am. I lost my husband, a long time ago. Not in a war, well, we were in a war once, but we survived. He died because—well, he was human, and I wasn’t. And then I had to fight in another war. The most bizarre, violent, brutal war.”

That got Quill’s interest, so she turned around.
“The point I’m trying to make—or at least the point I think I’m trying to make is,” Susan began, “I know that sometimes there are no good options and I shouldn’t have judged you, or at the very least I shouldn’t have come so down so hard on you.”
Quill just looked at her, unsure of what do with the statement, or this information, or Susan in general for that matter. At last she pushed the other chair away from the table and asked, “You want a seat?”
Susan took a tensive step forward. “Sure.”
“Coffee’s over there, if you want some.” Quill offered nonchalantly.
“Thanks.” Susan replied, going over and pouring a cup, before sitting down across from Quill.
Chapter Summary

An unexpected encountered caused Charlie and Mateusz to grow closer.

Charlie had no clue where he was going. He knew where he was, just not where he was going. He had gone straight down the street and made a turn with no destination in mind. He also had no clue what they were doing. The whole point of this walk was to shake this dark feeling in him, but it wasn’t going anywhere. Well, it might have subsided a little, but it was still there. As now he kept seeing it over and over again, Pearson being dragged back in the room to his death, Ram, flayed and bleeding on the ground, barely conscious.

Charlie could feel bile raising in his throat. Forcing it back down, he leaned up against the nearest wall he came to and slumped down, running his finger through his hair. Just let go of it Charlie. He thought to himself, it’s doing you no good to dwell on this, so let it go.

That was when a voice asked from above him, “Charlie?”

He looked up to see a now familiar Pole.

“Mateusz?” Charlie asked, “What are you doing here?”

“I work here.” Mateusz answered, bending and offering Charlie a hand, “What are you doing here? On the ground? Looking like something very bad has happened?”

“It’s – it’s a long story.” Charlie answered, allowing Mateusz to help him up.

“Tell you what” Mateusz began, “My shift’s over in another hour, so why don’t we find you somewhere a bit more comfortable than the floor to wait it out, then you can tell me all about it?”

“No, I wouldn’t want to get you in trouble— “Charlie stammered.

“It will be fine.” Mateusz assured him leading him into the building.

They pair found themselves inside an old dinner where some song from the 90s was playing. Closing time, you don’t have to go home but you can’t stay here… But he did stay there, for an hour in broken booth that apparently no one ever sat in and the waitress who managed that section hardly ever went to, his head on the swivel, slinking down in a seat in the hopes that no one noticed him. His head was making another turn when saw Mateusz coming over with two cups.

“Couple changed their mind, left before they even got them.” Mateusz explained, setting the cups down on the table and pushing it in Charlie’s direction, “You looked like you could use it. It’s okay, no one else touched them.”

“Isn’t this stealing?” Charlie asked softly.

“I stuffed the difference in the tip jar, it’s fine.” Mateusz assured him.

Charlie took a sip of whatever was in the cup. Some sort of tea, black, with milk in it. “So, um, you’re a waiter here?” Places of employment was one of the few things they hadn’t talked about.

“Bust boy.” Mateusz corrected.

“Why do you work all the way out here?” Charlie asked, “It’s a bit out of the way for you.” They had exchanged enough information for him to know that.

“It’s just the place where I got a job.” Mateusz answered, “And besides, it’s not far enough I can’t walk.” After a beat he asked, “So, what happened?”


“Because of the state you were in when I found you?” Mateusz responded, sounding almost like it
was a question, “Look, I know we still don’t know each other that well, but you can talk to me.” Charlie looked down at the tea, his mouth suddenly dry. If he told the truth Mateusz would think he was insane and that was if he was lucky. If he actually believed him who knew what would happen.

“Is it your mother?” Mateusz guessed, “Was it a fight?”

“No,” Charlie said maybe a little quickly, “Nothing like that.” In fact, his mother had been surprisingly nice about whatever was going on. Maybe that was part of what was bothering him. At last he said, “There was an accident. I guess I’m a little rattled.”

“What happened?” Mateusz asked.

Charlie was quiet for a moment then decided to just go with the cover, with maybe a few embellishments. “I had to help Mum move something from her classroom.” Charlie lied, though technically speaking his mother had been there and he had been helping with something. He stopped a minute, thinking over what he was about to say very carefully, “We heard screaming, and went to see what it was, and—” The pause that time was just to gather himself, “You know Ram Singh? From physics?”

Mateusz thought a minute. He did vaguely recall someone with the first name Ram in the class, maybe. “Not personally, but I think I know he exists.” He said at last.

“Well, we go to see what’s going on and we find him in a hole.” Charlie lied, “Some sort of freak deterioration of the floor.” He rubbed his head in his hands as the images of what actually happened flooded back to him yet again.

Mateusz was taken aback for a moment. “What was he even doing there?” He asked finally, “Is he—”

“He’s alive.” Charlie said, “But his leg was hurt—bad. There was---blood everywhere….” Mateusz tentively reached out and put what he hopped was a reassuring hand on Charlie’s shoulder. “Charlie,” He began, “Just take deep breath.”

Charlie did, taking a second one for good measure.

“I’m sorry.” Mateusz said after a moment, “That sounds awful.”

“I’m not the one who were hurt.” Charlie pointed out softly.

“That doesn’t make seeing something like that any less traumatic.” Mateusz countered.

“I’m seen worst.” Charlie murmured, not thinking about who he was with. Then his eyes widened when he realized what he said and who he said it to. “I mean—”

“With your aunt, the doctor?” Mateusz asked.

“Yes, yes exactly.” Charlie quickly agreed, “With her.”

“Still, there’s nothing wrong with being shaken up.” Mateusz assured him, “It just means you’re human.”

Charlie was unable to suppress a laugh. Not a scoff, not mocking, a genuine laugh because to him that was funny even if his companion didn’t understand why.

“What’s so funny?” Mateusz asked, understandably confused and wondering whether or not he should be insulted.

“Nothing.” Charlie answered, then he got quiet again. “Thank you.” Charlie replied, “For listening, and….” And making me forget about it for a few seconds.

“It’s no trouble.” Mateusz replied sincerely. Suddenly he got an idea. “Do you want to get out of here?”

“Where would we go?” Charlie asked.

Back at the house, Susan’s and Quill conversation had somehow transformed into the swapping of stories.

“So then, Chris says, ‘you’re grounded young lady! Hand over the nuke!’” Quill finished.

Susan burst out laughing, “Exactly how well did that work out?!”

“How do you think?” Quill responded, “She was a grown woman. But it worked thought, we haven’t heard anything from them since.”

“Well, I’ve heard of more insane plans.” Susan granted, then a after a moment something occurred to her, “Hey, weren’t we suppose to call her?”
“Call who?” Quill asked, not sure what she was talking about for a moment. “Toni Jo.” Susan replied, “You know, the nuke-slinging doctor?” Quill’s eyes darted around the room. “Oh, we were, weren’t we?” Then pulled out her phone, saying, “Well, I’ll try to take care of that. Mind if I blame you if she notices that delay?” Meanwhile, two teenagers were trying to figure out, exactly where they were going.

“Is anyone expecting you?” Charlie asked, turning his head to look at Mateusz. He didn’t want the boy getting in trouble over him.

“They won’t notice if I’m a bit late.” Mateusz assured him. After a moment he added, “What about you?”

“As long as I’m back by dark, I’ll be fine.” Charlie answered. After a moment he asked, “So what exactly is the plan here?”

“I’m not really sure there is one.” Mateusz admitted.

“Should we come up with one?” Charlie asked. He wasn’t sure, but they should probably have a plan for…whatever they were doing.

Mateusz smirked. “Are you afraid I’ll get you lost or something?”

Charlie was silent, not sure of how to respond.

“I’m just teasing you.” Mateusz said finally, fighting back a laugh.

“I’m sorry.” Charlie replied, “I just don’t know what I’m doing. I’ve never really—” His voice trailed off, trying to think of the right word.

“Hung out before?” Mateusz guessed.

“No.” Charlie admitted, going with that word for it, “There’s never really been the need. We—move around a lot, not a lot chance to make friends to do that with.”

Mateusz looked at him sadly for a moment then said, “Well, you have one now.” Somehow a little while after that they wound up at park. It was Saturday, so it still fairly populated, children on the playground, their parents watching him, other people just out, like they were.

A black and white ball rolled in their path, causing Mateusz to kick it back from whence it came. “Thanks, mister!” A boy of about eight called out, going back to join the game.

Charlie carefully watched the children. They were really good at the game. At least he thought they were, he didn’t really have as good a grasp on it as he should, considering how many countries he had been in where it was the most popular sport. The thought process brought him back to Ram. Had Ram been good at this? Well, he most certainly wouldn’t be now.

Suddenly his heart was clenching again.

“What’s wrong?” Mateusz asked, sensing the shift.

“I’m just—thinking about Ram again.” Charlie admitted, “Sorry.”

“You can’t help how you feel.” Mateusz responded.

Charlie shot him a grateful glance. “I’m just guessing from what I observed.” Charlie said, as it was close to the truth, “When I was younger I wanted to be a doctor, so I learned everything I could about amatory. I guess I retained at least some of it. Enough to make a tentative diagnosis.”

“Ahhh.” Mateusz responded. That explanation did conedncide with things he had observed. After a moment, he said, “That was when he noticed Mateusz giving him a look. “Why are you looking at me like that?”

“How do you know all of that?” Mateusz asked, “You’re not his family, I doubt they told you.” Charlie scrambled for an answer. “I’m just guessing from what I observed.” Charlie said, as it was close to the truth, “When I was younger I wanted to be a doctor, so I learned everything I could about amatory. I guess I retained at least some of it. Enough to make a tentative diagnosis.”

“Ahhh.” Mateusz responded. That explanation did conedncide with things he had observed. After a moment, he said, “I’m sorry about, Ram.”

“Me, too.” Charlie replied.

“It’ll work out.” Mateusz trued to assure him.

They walked in near silence for a while after that in silence, until Mateusz asked, “What did you mean, wanted?”
Charlie turned his head to look at him. “Excuse me?”
“You said wanted, as in past tense.” Mateusz answered. “What changed?”
Life? Charlie thought, but said around, “Have you seen my grades?” Then it occurred to him, “Oh, no, you haven’t. It’s—um, not pretty. No way I’m getting into med school.”
“It’s not too late to turn that around.” Mateusz said encouragingly, “The way you rattled all those facts off—you’re smart, Charlie.”
Charlie ducked his head bashfully. “That’s nice of you to say.” He told the other boy, then trying to change the subject, asked, “What about you? Do you, ah, know what you want to do after high school?”
Deciding to indulge him Mateusz answered, “I was, ah, actually thinking about something in social work.”
“That can be hard.” Charlie warned him, “There are really bad people out there. Like, really bad.”
His eyes darted over to Mateusz, commenting softly, “Though maybe you already know that.”
“I’m aware, yes.” Mateusz confirmed, “But someone needs to do it.”
“Well, I know you’ll be good at it.” Charlie told him.
“And no could ask for a better doctor.” Mateusz replied.
Charlie knew for a fact that he was blushing in the moment. He looked down, trying to hide it. He wanted to ask why Mateusz was even bothering with him but couldn’t force the words out of his mouth.
He was so preoccupied he didn’t notice Mateusz’s fingers twitching towards Charlie’s hand. Soon his whole hand was edging that direction, until he was holding said hand.
When Charlie realized what had happened, his heart did a flip. So, that was it. His head was telling his to body pull away, to find a way to let Mateusz down easy. It wasn’t that he didn’t like the other boy, it just wasn’t a good idea for them to be a relationship. Not like that at least. In fact, them being friends was probably a bad idea as well. As soon as the tears were dealt with they would be moving on to the next mission, or at the very least leaving town before people started to ask questions. In the meantime, he would probably be putting Mateusz in danger. At the very least if something happened he would be distracted worrying about him. Yes, there were some very serious reasons for him to pull away.
So why wasn’t he?
Eventually the pair wound up back where they started at the dinner.
“Do you need to walk you home?” Charlie offered, “Maybe explain why you were late?”
“No.” Mateusz answered a bit too quickly and a bit too harshly.
Now it was Charlie’s turn to be concerned. “Is everything okay?” He asked, then lowering his voice added, “Is it safe for you to go back there?”
“As long as they don’t know about you.” Mateusz answered.
That didn’t exactly ease Charlie’s concerned. “Do you need help?”
“It’s fine.” Mateusz answered, “Really.” He smirked adding, “I did function before I met you, you know?”
“Just in case,” Charlie began, pulling out a pen and taking Mateusz’s hand, writing on it, “Here’s my number, if you need anything. Just, keep your hand covered until you can get it on something more permeant and hopefully hidden.”
Once it looked like he had finished, Mateusz took the pen, and Charlie’s hand, saying, “In case you need anything. And you should probably take your own advice on what to do with it.”
“I will.” Charlie replied, completely unsure of what he was doing.
“Do I need to see you home?” Mateusz offered.
“No,” Charlie began, “No, I’ll be fine. See you Monday.”
“You too.” Mateusz agreed.
And that they parted ways, each of them suddenly a little sad.
“I’m back.” Charlie announced as he walked through the door.
“Alright,” Quill responded, glancing over. He seemed to be doing better now, though something stilled seemed a little off to her.
“How are you doing?” Susan spoke up before Quill could get the words out.
“Better now, thanks” Charlie replied, which was true. At the very least he wasn’t thinking about the dragon or Ram or any of it now.
“Good.” Quill commented, “Oh, Toni wanted me to tell you, back when she a candy striper, she nearly fainted a couple of times at the sight of blood.”
“Really?” Charlie questioned. He had never known that.
“Surprised me, too.” Quill responded, then she narrowed her eyes as she caught sight of something, “Is there something wrong with your hand?”
“No.” Charlie said quickly, hurrying up the stairs before she could demand a closer look.
When he was out of her sight, Quill slowly turned around, then declared, “Okay, so he’s defiantly hiding something.”
In one of the longest chapter I've ever written, new players joining the fray, John Henry begins to remember, the Callahans gets some answers about Chris' condition, the team gets a cue, and Charlie digs himself in deeper.

The rest of the weekend was rather uneventful. No breakthroughs, but at the same time no attacks and before anyone knew it, it was Monday. Monday was the first time Tanya saw Ram’s injury or even knew it was injured. She was so stunned her stooped when she stood and exclaimed, “Oh my God, Ram, what happened?”
“I’m not sure.” Ram admitted, “The doctors told it I fell into some kind of sinkhole. They say I was lucky it’s not worse than it is.”
“A sinkhole?” Tanya repeated.
“That’s the headline for you?” Ram questioned.
“Ram, if it was a sinkhole, you’d be dead.” Tanya explained, “You’d be sucked into the ground and either be killed by debris, suffocation, or dehydration.”
“Well, maybe it wasn’t a sinkhole.” Ram responded, “I don’t know. I was more focused on the fact that my leg was half-skinned.”
“Half-skinned?” Tanya repeated.
“Are you just going to repeat everything I tell you?!” Ram snapped.
Tanya shot him an angry look.
“I’m sorry.” Ram told her, “I just don’t won’t to rehash this again, especially since this has the potential to ruin my life.”
“I’m sorry.” Tanya remorsefully relented. After a moment she requested, “One more question. Just one more, I promise.”
Ram sighed. “Alright, what?”
“Where did it happen?” Tanya asked.
Two hours later when the hall around the locker room was empty, Tanya carefully hurried down the hall, trying to be aware of her surroundings, stopping in front of it. There were two stripes of yellow tape crossed over the entrance in a X. She simply docked under it, going inside. As she walked through the rows of lockers, there was one thing she took notice of.
“There’s no sinkhole here.” She murmured allowed to herself, “There’s no hole here at all.” She had also taken noticed that some of the lockers were strangely battered. She went for a closer look and that was when she saw it.
A few flakes of what looked like dried blood.
“Look, Ram, I know you don’t want to talk about it, but there’s something I need to ask you about the accident.” Tanya began over a video call that night, “And before you say anything keep in mind I just walked you step by step through over twenty problems.”
Figuring he did owe her for that, he reluctantly agreed. “Go ahead.”
“Are you sure it wasn’t the lockers you hit?” Tanya asked.
“What?” Ram responded.
Tanya was silent a minute, then said, “Okay, don’t freak out, but, I snuck into the lockers room today and, while there were on holes of any kind, but I found blood on the lockers.”
“Tanya!” Ram exclaimed, horrified at what he was hearing.
“Come on, Ram!” Tanya reasoned, “That story doesn’t add up and you know it. Now, you said it
yourself, this thing could possibility ruined your life, don’t you want to know what actually ruined it?”

Ram was about to answer when suddenly some sort of—vision, there was no other word for it, flashed before his eyes. It was blurry, but he could see a man with dark hair, and something large and metallic gray. He could hear screaming and he wasn’t sure what was going on.

“Ram!” Tanya called out, “Ram, are you with me?”

“Yeah.” Ram replied, shaking the vision off, “Look, Tanya, just let this go.”

Meanwhile, at falt in Soreich, a team now consisting of five people and a dog, were working away at the walls of the falt’s living room, trying to make sense of the information on it.

“I think I found another potential dragon victim.” Gwen announced, “The assistant coach’s sister reported him missing a week ago.”

“Well, one mystery already solved.” Quill commented.

Suddenly Vampire started barking, jumping up and down in front of the wall.

“Fox, I think she needs to go out!” Gwen called to him.

“I’ll handle it.” Fox said, grabbing Murder’s old leash he still happened to have and walking over to the puppy. “You need to go wee, girl?”

The dog wined, trying to climb up the wall.

“Fox, if that thing destroys evidence, you’re both dead.” Quill warned him.

“Come on, girl.” Fox urged pulling her away, “Let’s go before Quill loses it.”

Vampire eventually gave up fighting and went with Fox, who never noticed the picture with three suited men in the background.

The next day, Tanya made an excuse to go to school early and suck back into the locker room. She didn’t know what she was expecting to find there now but it was her only lead. She was looking at the battered lockers again when she heard the sound of footsteps on the cement floor.

After a moment she carefully peered over the side.

That how she saw Miss Quill, walking into the room. She went down a roll of lockers in the middle, dangerous close to Tanya’s row, causing the teen’s heart to beat faster. However, Miss Quill never even noticed she was there, opening one of the lockers and fiddling with something inside.

Tanya wanted to try to see what it was but didn’t dare get any closer.

Miss Quill some notes on a pad of packer, put the paper in her coat, then walked out.

“The signal’s becoming dimmer.” Quill declared gathered in her classroom with the others, putting the notepad down for all of them to see.

“It’s getting a little dimmer each day.” Charlie noted, staring down at the paper.

“Oh really?” Quill responded, rolling her eyes, “I hadn’t noticed.”

“But only just a little.” Fox added.

“Is this obvious observation day?” Quill asked.

Everyone shot her various displeased looks.

“Sorry.” Quill responded half-heartedly.

“But it’s only dimming by a fraction, sometimes less.” Susan pointed, “At this point it’ll take months for the signal to fade.”

Charlie glanced at Quill who stared back at him as they processed the implication.

“That means the signals we found could’ve been from months before.” Charlie said, gravely, “Years even.”

As if the concept weren’t frightening enough, Fox added in, “And who knows what came through the tears.” In past fortnight they had encountered two predatory wild animals, a murderous alien wasp that might have very well been a serial killer, and a dragon who flayed people alive at the whim of a roid-filled sociopath that had its mate hostage. And in that same fortnight, three people had died, two had been injured, one seriously, not mention the female Mog stalked Charlie fully intent on killing him, only stopped by Susan’s intervention. Who knew what carrange had been wrought over time?

“We can find out.” Gwen spoke up, pointing at Quill and Charlie she continued, “You two kept
records of all the signals, right?"

"Yeah." Quill responded nodding, Charlie copying her nod.

"And we have records going back over fifty years." Gwen continued, "You’ve already done some of the leg work on that. And with the monitor in the locker rooms, we can compare the deterioration to the scans, then pair that with the incidents and maybe we can discern some sort of pattern. “She paused for breath than said, “Look, I know it’s a long shot, but—"

“It’s all we got.” Fox finished for him.

“I’ve heard worst ideas.” Susan added.

"Eh, beats sitting on our arses waiting for something to happen.” Quill responded.

"Ah—” Gwen began, gesturing to Charlie with her eyes.

Realizing that, yes, if Charlie use that word she’d probably at least call him out, said, “Oh, Charles, don’t say arse.”

Shortly after that the group poured out of the room to do their assigned tasks as sethily as possible, thinking the hadn’t been seen.

None of them knew that Tanya had finally dared to come out from her hiding pace and find out where Miss Quill had went. Except by that time the first trickle of people was showing up for the day. She turned a corner to fast only to jump back as a slight girl with long dark brown hair did the same.

“Sorry.” April responded.

“It’s alright.” Tanya responded, running past her.

“Hey,” April called out, turning around, “Where are you going?”

Tanya wasn’t aware of April following her, even when they both stopped short near the physics room, close enough to see, but not to be seen, and saw everyone leave.

The girls didn’t have much contact with each other until the end of the day, when April shut the door of her locker and found Tanya standing next to it, a very serious look on her face.

“Oh.” April began, “Hello again.”

“Hey, April,” Tanya began, “Listen, ah, I wanted to talk to you about what happened this morning.”

“How do you—” April began, “Never mind, what about it?”

“I don’t know if you know this or not, but there had been some weird things going on.” Tanya explained, “Things that might have gotten my sorta-kind friend hurt. But I think you might have noticed other things and I was hoping…maybe we…we could compare notes?”

When Mateusz met Charlie at the park that afternoon, the latter had what looked like a Doberman puppy, tethered to his wrist with a least.

“I had to bring a guess along.” Charlie told him when they got close enough. “I hope you don’t mind.”

“Not at all.” Mateusz replied, “He friendly?”

“She is.” Charlie answered. As Mateusz leaned down and petted the dog, Charlie continued, “This is Vampire. Vampire, this is Mateusz, please do not tell anyone about him.”

“She looks like she can keep a secret.” Mateusz replied, standing up. As the three began to walk he turned to look at Charlie. “Vampire?” He repeated.

“Not my idea.” Charlie replied, “She belongs a friend. He named her. Something, about being imitating.” Thought at the moment he couldn’t imagine Vampy intimidating anyone bigger than a mouse. “Anyway, the last dog he was had was named Murder, so I guess it’s better than that.”

“Murder?” Mateusz repeated, “Does he fight these dogs?”

“No.” Charlie answered, shaking his head emphatically, “No, he wouldn’t even ever think of it. No, Murder could play at being dangerous, enough to intimidate the right people, but really, she was sweetheart. In pinch that dog was even my babysitter. I remember one time when I was six and I realized I was alone, so I got upset and started crying, so she licked me until I stopped.”

“That is both the most adorable and disturbing thing I have ever heard.” Mateusz told him bluntly.

“That’s the most adorable and disturbing thing you ever heard?” Charlie questioned, “There must be more adorable and disturbing things than that. Albino sugars are more adorable. Wendigos are
more disturbing. Just to give a couple of examples."

“Wendigos?” Mateusz repeated.

“They’re these—creatures from Native American legends.” Charlie explained, “They use to be human, but then they ate human flesh and became these—unkillable eating machine. If it decided you were on the menu, you’re a dead man walking.” After beat he added, “Those things use to terrify me when I was little.” Fox had told him the legend while they were on a case in Alaska, and Charlie was convinced it was coming for them.

“Wendigos?” Mateusz asked, “Wendigos specifically?”

“Well, other things as well.” Charlie responded, “I’m sure there were things that scared you when you were a child.”

After a moment of walking in silence, Mateusz said, “Killer clowns.”

Charlie was confused for a moment, “What?”

“I was little and someone had left the television on, and there was this—film about killer clowns and it occurred to me that it was probably as good idea to stay away from those things.” Mateusz explained. After a bit he added, “I know now it’s silly.”

“I don’t think so.” Charlie responded, “That seems like a very legitimate fear.”

“So, do Wendigos.” Mateusz agreed.

The day following in a Bristol police station, one Detective John Henry Davenport was sitting in his desk, when he looked up at the board for the Harper case and saw the back of some sort of statue, and suddenly there was knot in his stomach and he didn’t know why. Standing up he went to the board for a closer look. It was a statue of gray stone, an angel, if the wings were any indention. He could swear he saw it before, but he wasn’t sure where.

Suddenly an image flashed before his vision. The statue in the middle of street, staring him with smooth, blank eyes. The woman from the week before, the doctor the sergeant asked him to meet, Toni something, was telling him not to come near it.

“Something interest you, Davenport?” A voice said from behind him. He turned around and found one of the actual detectives working the case—a red-headed woman in a gray pantsuit—staring at him waiting for an answer.

“I just thought that statue looked familiar.” John Henry answered.

“Well then, could you help me out?” The red head asked, “One of the photographers caught that the couple’s back yard, but we can’t find it anywhere. Probably not significant, but at the very least it’s weird. Wouldn’t be doing our due diligence if we don’t look into it.”

“Well, I don’t exactly remember where I saw it.” John Henry admitted, narrowing his eyes as he added, “And what I am remembering’s not making any sense.” Shaking it off he added, “If I figure it out, I’ll let you know.”

As the day went on, John Henry keep running into things that…triggered him, he guessed he’d call it, making him recall things that didn’t make much sense.

He had been making coffee run for the others and the girl at the cash register was wearing diamond-shaped earrings several decades out of date. Suddenly he could remember meeting a girl with a whole outfit like that. Two of the actually I’m Margot. And this is my sister, Gussie.

John Henry rubbed his forehead, trying to make sense of the memory. When did this happen? However, the others would kill him if he came back with cold brews, so he attempted to shrug it off and went on his way.

“Hey, he’s back!” One of the other detectives, an older man with thinning hair, declared when he got back.

“Sorry about that, Holiday.” John Henry responded, handing the man his drink, “There was a line.”

Just then the red headed detective came back into the room.

“Hey there, Davenport.” She greeted him before joking, “Figure out where you saw that statue yet?”

While it had only been meant in the joke, it triggered something for John Henry again. People, lots of people, talking about statues. Me and this guy back here were transported by—well, we’re not
sure actually, possibly a statue. You were kidnapped by a statue that put you in another time period. It’s a statue. A randomly appearing statue, but still.

“Davenport?” The red head detective asked, waving her hand in front of his face, “Earth to Davenport?” After a moment she started to become greatly concerned and exclaimed, “John!” That snapped him out of it. “I’m sorry, what?” He responded.

“Are you okay?” The red head asked.

“Yeah, I’m fine.” John Henry answered, shaking it off.

John Henry spent the rest of the day trying to make sense of the things he was remembering. Statues couldn’t kidnap people, could they? And what was that stuff about another time? Who were those girls? On top of it all he got the nagging feeling there was something else, something else he couldn’t remember…

At the end of the day he was getting ready to leave when he heard the red head, also about to leave call to her partner, “See you tomorrow, Lee.”

“See you, Jo.” Lee called back.

That made John Henry, who had been gathering paper, stand up straight. “Jo?”

“Yes, it’s short for Joanna.” The red head explained, “Wait, we’ve worked together for how many years and you don’t even know my first name?”

“I’ve just always called you Linden.” John Henry answered, “Even in my head.” After a moment he added, “Nice to meet you Joanna Linden.”

Jo smiled good-naturedly. “Thanks.” She said, before heading out the door.

When she was out of the door John Henry became frantic, putting things away and then running the sergeant’s office hoping he was still there. Because he remembered the doctor’s name. Toni Jo. Toni Jo Callahan. He knew who he needed to find to get answers. And where to go.

“What were you doing with all these lemons, anyway?” Fox asked, working under the sink.

“Supper?” Quill responded, standing between Fox and the kitchen table. She and Charlie had split a half a bag of lemons between them for the evening meal that night. A few hours later the sink was clogged.

Fox slide out from underneath the sink. “You ate half of things of lemons for supper?”

“It’s not the worst we’ve done.” Quill commented. On the road they spent days either forgetting or unable to eat properly.

“But this place is fully stocked.” Fox reminded her.

“We still can’t cook worth a damn.” Quill pointed out.

“There’s a whole cabinet of self-heating cans.” Fox countered.

“Okay, maybe we’re just too use to scrounging.” Quill admitted. After looking around Quill added, “Fox, I wanted to talk to you about something.”

Going back inside, he said, “Well I’m not going anywhere.”

“I’m worried about Charles.” Quill told him.

“He still shaken up over the boy?” Fox asked.

“No, he’s actually more or less recovered.” Quill answered, “But even before that he’s been erratic, smart mouthed, and I’m fairly certain he’s keeping things from me.”

“In other words, he’s just being a regular teenager?” Fox quipped.

“He’s not a regular teenager.” Quill countered.

“Except he is.” Fox replied, “He just happened to have his heart on the left side. But his brain’s the same as a human’s and we have the scans to prove it. Look, I’m sure this is just a phase. Just—wait it out.”

Quill sighed. “Alright.”

It was Thursday when Toni Jo was on the front row of an empty non-denominational, multi-faith chapel on the first floor of the hospital, rosery in her hand, making the sign of the cross on the crucifix then beginning the Apostles’ Creed. “I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, Our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary…”
The tests were still out. Well, some of them had come in, but half of them were still out and the ones that came weren’t saying anyone good. Of course, he’d have one of them most severe kind.

So, she was doing the only thing she could now. Literally praying her a miracle. You’re a medical professional, you work with science, how can you believe that drivel? The memory rang through her head, thought Quill hadn’t said it in years. Thought she still thought Toni Jo was insane, she respected her too much to mock her unless she was in a particularly bad mood.

Toni Jo had considered calling her, but sense she was busy with the case, hadn’t.

As she continued the prayer she became aware of another present coming into the church, but assuming it was someone like her, come to pray for healing or seek solace from their God, she didn’t look up and continued the Rosary.

At least until a voice from behind her said, “Toni?”

She looked, turned her head around and saw Innocenta behind her.

“The tests are back, the doctors are upstairs,” Innocenta explained, “We got them to wait for me to come get you. If you want me to…”

“No, it’s alright.” Toni Jo assured her, getting up, “I think He got the point.”

And so, they gathered in the room, Chris and Toni Jo and Innocenta and two grave looking male doctors and listened to diagnosis.

“What we’re looking at here is Restrictive Cardiomyopathy.” The older of the two doctors, probably about Toni Jo’s age, began, “It’s a type that tends affect older adults. Your heart’s ventricles have become rigid because abnormal tissue is replacing normal heart muscle. Because of this the ventricles can’t relax normally, and your atria had become enlarged, reducing blood flow to the heart over time. This is what lead the abnormal heart rhythm.”

“Oh, God.” Innocenta breathed.

“Innocenta, it’s all going to be alright.” Chris assured her.

“Breathe, baby sis,” Toni Jo instructed, “Just breathe.” They did not need her having a panic attack right now. She had been prone to them when they were teenagers, but she hadn’t had one in years. Still, Toni Jo wasn’t taking chances.

“How bad is it?” Chris asked, getting right to the point.

“Right now, we’re dealing with a fibrosis of the sinoatrial and atrioventricular nodes.” The younger of the pair spoke up, “Resulting in almost complete heart block.”

“What does that mean?” Innocenta asked.

“Yeah, actually, help me out on that as well.” Chris requested, “I’m not that kind of doctor.”

It means I should have finished that Rosary. Toni Jo thought, or at least hadn’t insisted on everyone eating liver whenever it was available. Yes, her attempts to save them from anemia, had probably lead to her father developing Hemochromatosis, which she failed to diagnose. Just their luck.

After rephrasing it for Chris and Innocenta, the elder doctor said, “Normally we would suggest less drastic option first, but things have gone so far along, I’m going to have to suggest a pacemaker.”

“Is that really necessary?” Innocenta asked.

“The muscles in his heart are literally weakening and being blocked, Innocenta!” Toni Jo snapped, “It can’t pace on its own!”

“Antionette.” Chris spoke up, silencing her on the matter, before addressing the other doctors, “Is this really the only option?”

“The only one I can recommend.” The older doctor, “I know it seems severe, but with a few changes you can live your life mostly the same.”

You don’t know my life. “How soon can it be done?” Chris asked.

They spent the next several minutes discussing plans for the immediate future. Chris would be released as an outpatient with a heart monitor, then at the end of the week the pace maker should arrive.

When they got to a motel, the time for the other conversation about the immediate future had come.

“So, what happens now?” Toni Jo asked.
"You can’t just—go back on the road.” Innocenta announced, as it seemed to her the thing that needed to be addressed right out of the gate.

“She’s right.” Toni Jo agreed, “The way we live—the stress alone could aggravate your condition.”

“I probably should have retired a long time ago.” Chris surrendered, sitting down on the bed. During his time in the hospital he had time to think and get use to the idea of bowing out of the fight. “The question now is what to do with the team. Permanently.”

“Well, I actually think the first thing we need to do is figure out where you’re going to live.” Toni Jo responded, “You know, if you’re putting down roots.”

“I have contacts in France.” Chris began, “I could get an apartment there. See the girls more.” He glanced over at Innocenta, “If that’s alright.”

“Of course, it’s alright.” Innocenta assured him, “And I don’t mean to be condescending, but you probably don’t need to be rattling around that big old house by yourself, anyway.”

Chris and Toni Jo exchanged nervous looks.

“What?” Innocenta asked, “What is it?”

“Innocenta we had to—sell the house a couple of years ago.” Chris confessed.

“What?!” Innocenta exclaimed.

“We had some…unexpected expenses.” Toni Jo explained nervously, her eyes scanning the room for a quick getaway.

“We need to get some particular weapons.” Chris explained.

“And then there was a ransom payment.” Toni Jo added.

“And we had to pay for a smuggler out of Ethiopia.” Chris continued.

“And anti-venom.” Toni Jo admitted.

Innocenta was struck dumb for a minute. “W-What about your other sources?” She asked, “I thought you said you had other sources of money after the other Torchwoods fell.”

“This was actually before the other Torchwoods fell.” Toni Jo informed her.

Innocenta gapped. “W-When was this?”

“About twelve years ago.” Toni Jo answered, knowing that Innocenta was about to be furious. And she was every right to be.

“So, twelve years ago, you sold the house that we grew up in,” Innocenta recapped, her voice boiling over with rage, “And never even thought to tell me?”

“Well, to be fair we didn’t really grow up in it,” Toni Jo responded slowly, knowing as she said it, it was a weak argument.

“That’s not the point, Toni!” Innocenta snapped.

“We know,” Chris spoke up, remorsefully, “We’re sorry. We should have told you.”

This seemed to pacify her a bit. “So, who exactly did you sell it to?”

“Sonja, the bar tender who runs the Carcass.” Chris answered. The Carcass was a bar out in Topeka where various members of groups ‘in the know’ frequented. Torchwood, UNIT, a couple of free agents, just don’t get in fights with one another. Naturally, Torchwood four had stopped their several times over the years. “It’s actually more like collateral on a loan, really. I mean, she likes us and all, but she’s not running a charity. She might even let us have it back when we finish paying her back.”

“And how close are you to doing that?” Innocenta asked, a plan forming in her head.

“And how close are you to doing that?” Innocenta asked, a plan forming in her head.

“Don’t even think about it, little sister.” Toni Jo told her, “We have it under control, I promise.”

Innocenta just stared at her. If they kept something like this from her for so long, how could she trust them? Maybe, just maybe, if it was just this it would be something she could get over eventually. But this was just the latest in the long line of her father and sister’s many secrets and flat-out lies. She knew that sometimes they didn’t have a choice, but even when they did, they chose to hide things. Things that should concern her. And she was sick of it.

“You’re right.” Chris declared as if reading her mind, “We should have told you. There’s a lot we should have told you. And I am truly, deeply sorry for that.”

“I can’t talk to either you right now.” Innocenta responded, before turning and heading to the door,
opening and leaving it.

Chris stood up, intending to go after her.

“Don’t.” Toni Jo told her, “She’s come back when she’s had some time to cool off.” Not that I’d blame her if she didn’t.

“I’m not sure this time.” Chris replied.

“I know.” Toni Jo admitted, “But who could blame her?” She leaned up against the wall, “We can only screw up so many times.” She started to fall down as she thought about every time she, they had screwed up, not just with Innocenta, with Charlie, with Thomas, with the other teams, how many of their own rules they had broken… She forced herself to stand back up. Now was not the time to do that.

“Are you going to be alright?” Chris asked, guessing what had just happened.

Toni Jo nodded.

Always my little martyr. He thought not really believing her, but said, “Now, let’s go find your sister and we’ll figure everything out.”

“I still think we should give her time to cool off.” Toni Jo insisted, “So let’s talk about what we’re going to do with the team.”

“We haven’t come up with anything definite yet.” Toni Jo told Quill on the phone later.

“But he will live?” Quill asked, standing at the table, cell phone to her ear.

“If they act now,” Toni Jo replied, “He just can’t—do what he’s been doing anymore.”

“And Innocenta?” Quill asked, “Did you make her see sense?”

“We’re—actually still letting her cool off.” Toni Jo admitted, before adding, sounding almost weary, “We really stepped in this time.”

That brought Quill to her next question. “And you?”

“I’m fine.” Toni Jo answered.

Quill, however, was not convinced. “I know you’re not.”

Toni Jo sighed. “You’re right, I’m not. What if—what if I’ve really lost her this time? Or what if something goes wrong and I lose him. I can’t—I can’t—”

“Antionette Josefina Callahan, you listen to me and you listen good.” Quill told her firmly, “You are not losing either of them. This isn’t the worst thing Innocenta had forgiven by far. In fact, I wouldn’t be surprised if she expects this sort of thing from you two by now. As for Chris—I won’t lie to him and say he’ll be fine. He might not. But most likely he will. Probably.”

Toni Jo smiled. The fact that Quill hadn’t changed was somewhat conforming. The fact she was likely right didn’t hurt either. Sans how twisted her relationship with her blood sister was. “Thanks, Andra’ath.”

“Always.” Quill assured her, “So, before we get too gooey, do you want me to tell the others?”

“No, wait until we can get everything figured out.” Toni Jo instructed, “Speaking of which, I better go find Innocenta. Love you.”

“You too.” Quill responded, before hanging up.

The next day was filled with unexpected headaches. It all started when Quill walked in to find Armitage’s name being added to the Wall of the Fallen, or as they were calling it back at the house, the biggest red flag that something was wrong at the school. Have they even had time to legally declare him dead yet? She thought, taken a moment to watch them work. After a moment she said out loud to herself, “I never found out what the F stood for.”

“Francis.” A voice said behind her and Quill glanced to see a pale-skinned burette in a red suit-dress approaching her. “Miss Quill, I believe.” The lady in red guessed.

“Yes.” Quill confirmed, although somewhat suspicious of this stranger’s intention.

“I’ve been wanting to meet you.” The woman in red continued, extending her hand, “Doretha Ames, new head teacher.”

Quill took the other hand, commenting, “Right. That was quick.”

“Yes.” Dorothea admitted, “But people who go missing from Coal Hill have a distressing tendency to stay missing, don’t you find?”
“I don’t know, I’ve only been here a few weeks.” Quill brushed her off, walking away.

“Don’t listen to an old gossip like me, but I partially wanted to meet you, Miss Quill.” Dorothea added quickly.

“Me?” Quill questioned, trying appeared only slightly perplexed, but alarms bells were going off big time on the inside.

“The Governors speak highly of you.” Dorothea continued.

“The Governors?” Quill repeated, stepping back towards the woman.

“My dear, if you’re going to answer everything I say with a question, well, then we’ll be fine friends because I enjoy being the one with all the answers.” Dorothea informed her.

“I’ve never met the Governors.” Quill replied.

“They think you’re a frightfully useful member of staff.” Dorothea explained, then turning to walk away called out, “Must get on!”

Quill just stared at the woman walking away from her. We either had an actual lead or we’re in serious trouble.

Five minutes later, Susan was torn from her last-minute paper grading by the sound of the door shutting and locking. She looked up quickly to see a now familiar blonde. “Quill,” She began, “What are you doing?”

“We have a problem.” Quill began, “They’re onto us.”

After making a quick call—this sort of incident required a meeting—Quill told in detail her encountering with the new head mistress.

“It might explain why no authorities have investigated the school.” Gwen said when they were finished, “The Governors are covering up the incidents. The question now is why.”

“Keep the school open.” Fox speculated, “Keep parents sending their kids, keep their jobs.”

“Yes, and now they know they’re being investigated.” Quill replied, pacing the room, putting a hand to her forehead she said, “Fox, you need to pull us out.”

“What?” Fox responded, as this was the last thing he expected to hear from her. She usually refused to be pulled out, no matter the risk, and he had certainly never heard her request it.

“We’ll find some other way to do this.” Quill assured them, then, in a moment of complete honesty added, “If it was just me that would be one thing but—” Then it hit her, her eyes widening as she exclaimed, “Charles! He doesn’t know! He- “She knew these Governors were clearly willing to do a lot to cover up the tears, but would they result to child murder?

“I’ll go find him.” Susan volunteered, heading to the door and unlocking it, “You all just figure out what you need to do.”

Susan found Charlie halfway to maths, once again walking with Mateusz. However, even in her hurry she could see something was off today. Their body language was almost completely different from her last encounter with the boys.

“Charlie!” She called out, hurrying over to him, “May I see you alone for a moment?”

“Yes.” Charlie agreed apprehensively, allowing himself to be lead away. Once they were a sufficient distance away he asked, “Has something happened?”

“Basically.” Susan answered, “We’re not sure of all the details, but someone might suspect you guys are investigating the school. Just—try to stay with someone today. In fact, multiple someone’s, find a group and stay in it.” If they were going to try something, Susan figured they wouldn’t do it in front of witnesses, if only because that would make more work for them. She was banking Charlie’s life, or at least safety, on it.

“I can’t just hide.” Charlie protested, “Not while everyone one else is dealing with—whatever this is.” In truth he was still kind of confused.

“Charlie, I promise we’ll all have our part to play eventually,” Susan insisted, not sure what she meant by that, “For right now just—do what I said, okay.” She looked around before lowering her voice saying, “Your mum’s more than a bit rattled and it’d just give her peace of mind.”

“Fine.” Charlie reluctantly agreed.

“Thank you.” Susan replied, before the two parted ways.
“What was that all about?” Mateusz asked when Charlie returned to him.
“Is she okay?” Mateusz asked, concerned as whatever was going on seemed quite urgent, and there
had to be a reason Miss Quill had sent Miss Foreman instead of simply delivering it herself. She
certainly hadn’t had a problem with that before.
“Yes, she’s fine.” Charlie answered, “Can we just—go?”
“Alright.” Mateusz reluctantly, and the pair walked away together.
Later that day Quill was walking towards Doretha’s office, thinking, this is a stupid plan. How in
Hell did I let them talk me into this?
After putting things in perspective, Quill took back her desire to be pulled out, and was eventually
talked out of forcing Charlie to pull out. Then after further discussion, Fox suggested trying to
warm Doretha up to her, try to get close enough to find something.
“Buddy up to her.” Quill mocked the suggestion now, “What’s the worst that could happen?
Getting my throat slit, that’s the worst that could happen.”
She peered inside Doretha’s office. No one was there. Suddenly an idea hit her and she started
searching for a lock pick.
Meanwhile, Charlie was sitting in a chair outside of the counselor’s office, by chance and
alphabetical order, Ram sitting across from him. Apparently, they were two absorbed in the case to
realize that there was a school-wide event where all the students were meeting with their guidance
counselors, they even rearranged that day’s schedule around it. Students were being called in
alphabetically and apparently there weren’t that many people in-between ‘sig’ and ‘sim’.
So, Charlie was sitting across from Ram, his eyes going back and forth between Ram’s face and his
leg.
“Will stop doing that?” Ram snapped finally, “I’m not a damn cripple.”
“It’d be wrong to look at cripple that way too.” Charlie stammered out, then immediately realizing
that wasn’t exactly the right thing to say, flinched, saying, “I’m sorry, I didn’t mean—”
Just then he was saved by the door on that side opening, and the girl who had been in there
walking out, and Ram consular, a man in a brown suit with saying, “Ram, you can come in now.”
Ram steadied himself and limped in the room. Since nothing was actually broke he didn’t need
 crunches, it just hurt to put a lot of weigh on it. It was somewhat painful to watch.
Charlie was so observed in watching Ram that he didn’t notice the door open until he heard
someone say, “Mr. Smith?”
Back in Dorothea’s office, Quill had successfully picked the lock on the door, opening it and going
inside. She found that all of Armitages things had been moved and replaced with Doretha’s.
“Man, they move fast around here.” Quill whispered to herself. She knew that in war, or in the
fight against aliens there was little time for mourning and slots needed to be filled quickly but this
was neither of those situations. This was a school. A school run by shady Governors but a school
nonetheless. This was just thoughtless.
“So, Charles,” The consular, a woman who appeared to be in her mid-twenties, her heart-shaped
face farmed prettily with light brown hair, began, “Do you have any thoughts on what you want to
do after sixth form?”
Charlie thought a moment then said the only thing he could think of: The truth. “I figured I’d just
join the family business.” He admitted.
“I guess you could call it, private security.” Charlie tried.
Back in the office. Quill was going through the papers on the desk, which was pretty innocuous. Of
course, she’s not gonna keep the good stuff out in the open. She thought, pulling out the lockpicks
again. She put in the mechanism when she heard voices from the hallway.
“I’ve noticed a decline in your grades sense you got here.” The consular said, sliding copies of the
records across to him. Apparently, his backstop cover got fairly decent grades before, A and Bs,
not exceptional but nothing to sneeze at either. Even since he became a real person, there were
some Bs, but mostly Cs.
“What’s going on?” The consular continued.
“Nothing.” Charlie replied, “Just a lot of—changes.”
“What sort of changes?” The contour inquired, tilting her head a bit.
“Just the new school.” Charlie tried, “It’s just been harder to—catch up then I thought.”
The voices outside the office were getting closer and one of them was defiantly Doretha’s, saying, “I just need to get something from here really quick…”
Quill’s eyes darted around the room and she went to the nearest window. She managed to pry it open and throw herself out it, landing with slight pain on the ground, pulled herself up and ran for it.
Charlie had someone how managed to make it through the session and hurrying away from the place as fast as he could, when suddenly he felt hands on him, pulling him into the nearest room. He struggled, pulling from their grasp and reeling around, finding to his shock April and a younger girl, Tanya, he thought he name was.
“Charlie.” April began in a very serious tone, “We need to talk to you for a minute.”
Charlie turned his head away to look down the hall. He could theoretically make a break for it, but that would have drawn suspicion. Besides, it was only April. What was the worst that could happen?
“You might want to sit down.” April continued, gesturing to the desk, as he obeyed she continued, “Now, we’re friends, right?”
“Yes.” Charlie agreed.
“And you know you can trust, me, right?” April continued.
“Right.” Charlie began slowly, no clue where this could possibly be going.
“So, with that in mind—” April began.
“What did you and your mother do to Ram?” Tanya cut her off.
“Excuse me?” Charlie responded, taken aback. How did either of them even know about that?
“We know whatever happened it wasn’t a sinkhole.” Tanya continued, “And when we saw the line of people leaving her room, we both saw you with them. And,” She gestured to April, “She told me that Miss Quill is your mother.”
“How did you—” Charlie began, still processing what happening here. He was basically being interrogated by two teenage girls who had somehow found them out.
“Mateusz told me.” April explained, “Look, Charlie, you don’t have to be afraid. We can protect you, or somebody with some actual authority can.”
How did this happen? Charlie thought, not really processing what April was saying, until he did.
“Why would I need protecting?” He asked.
“Because April is convinced you’re as innocent as a kitten.” Tanya spoke up, “Me, I’m not so sure.”
“You didn’t see the bruises.” April countered.
Charlie stood up, “I’m sorry, I really need to go.” He said, trying to leave.
“You’re not going anywhere until you tell us what’s going on.” Tanya declared firmly reaching out and grabbing Charlie’s wrist, “Now, he might not be seen with me in public, but Ram is my friend, and I’m fifty percent certain April has a crush on him—”
April let out on uneasy scoff. “I do not—”
“And whatever happened in locker room, hurt him, so nobody’ leaving until we get some answers.” Tanya continued, firmly, “Now, we can do this the easy way, or the hard way.”
For some reason that caused something to snap inside Charlie. He glared at Tanya. “Are you sure your ready for the hard way, little girl?” He asked coolly, pulling from her grasp with more force than he meant, “Cause let me tell you I have dealt with far more intimating interrogators than you. Good cop bad cop, sleep deprivation, some things a little more…intense.” He left what that meant to their imaginations, “And that was just practice. I will tell you this. You are in over your heads. Just walk away.” With that he turned around and walked away.
The minute he was out of view of the room the girls had pulled him in, Charlie promptly started to lose it. Idiot. He scolded himself, running his fingers through his hair franticly. Stupid, stupid,
stupid. Not here three weeks and you’ve gone soft. You’re damn sloppy, that whole display back there was damn sloppy. When he was done chewing himself out he stop and began to think, I can’t let them remember that. They’re gonna keep looking and get themselves into all sorts of trouble. They’ll get themselves killed.

Suddenly Charlie knew what he had to do. He hurried to the physics room and peeked his head in. His mother wasn’t there. Good. No need for anyone to find out how massively he had screwed up. Things weren’t too far along that he couldn’t put things back on the rails himself.

He walked over to the top drawer of her desk and picked the lock. The bottle of the amnesia pill was on its own, off to one side. He took it out, unscrewing the cap and removed two pills. Suddenly there was the sound of heels on the tiles. Crap. Charlie quickly pocketed the pills and hurried at the door only to run straight on into his mother.

“What were you doing in my room?” Quill asked, “We haven’t got anything planned. Well, other than matching up scans, but we’re not doing that here. I’m sure even the idiots here would notice that web.”

“I got confused, I thought we were.” Charlie lied. “Oh,” Quill responded, “Well, as long as you’re hear I could use your help. I hate to say it, but I think I might have really hurt something.” She adjusted herself as she walked.

After looking her over and recommending some pain pills from the sprained arm, Charlie took his leave. He had to grab a few more things then he could set his plan into motion.

“I’ll get it.” April said, heading towards the door at her home. She opened and found a repentant-looking Charlie, his hands held out in surrender.

“I’m sorry.” Charlie declared, “I know I shouldn’t have acted that way, and I wouldn’t blame you if you slammed the door in my face, you have every right to, but let me make it up to you. We’ll get Tanya and—I’ll tell you everything.”

Surprisingly enough April excepted the apology and the offer and the trio wound up at coffee shop near her house, the girls sitting across from Charlie, Tanya glaring at him.

“I know you’re upset.” Charlie began, “But please just hear me out. But first, I need to exactly what you already know, or think you know. It’ll just make it easier to explain things.”

April and Tanya exchanged looks than April said, “We know that something happened in locker room, we know Ram was there and he got hurt, we now Miss Quill is hiding something in one of the lockers. We know she’s your mother. We know you were in her room with a whole bunch of other people, including Miss Forman. And we know you stay behind on a regular basis. And we know someone hurt you last week.”

“That one actually doesn’t have anything to do with this.” Charlie told them, “I just got in a fight.”

“It’s true.” Tanya spoke up, “Ram saw it happen.”

“And you’re just mentioning this now? April responded.

“Well, it didn’t seem important until now.” Tanya reasoned, “Other than showing that he has some sort of training. Which brings us back to the point at hand: who are you people?”

Charlie paused for a moment. “We’s an—organization that investigates—unusual phemonon.” He answered finally. There. He had said it.

“What, like the X Files?” Tanya responded.

“That’s not the worst analogy.” Charlie agreed, hoping that Fox never found out about this. He didn’t want anyone else to find out about this either, but this raised the stakes in that area.

“And what would....” April began, unable to believe what she was about to say. “The X Files want with us? Our school?”

“Haven’t you ever noticed.” He looked around to make sure they weren’t being over heard, then lowered his voice, “All the odd things that go on at Coal Hill. The disappearances? The deaths? The fact that there are so many of each you have need of a memorial wall? The ‘mass hallucination’ next week? That the fact that no one is looking into it? Police, UNIT, the school board, no one?”

“Well, when you put it like that- “April began awkwardly, before taking a sip of her flat white. Charlie resisted the urge to eye roll, thinking that maybe his mother was right and humans only
ever saw what they wanted to see. Then again, the girls had put all this together. “That’s why we’re here.” He continued, “To figure out what’s going on and stop it.” “Good job of that so far.” Tanya snarked before taking the sip of the hot chocolate she ordered when Charlie insisted on buying them both something. And bringing it to them. “Tanya—” April began. “No, she’s right.” Charlie said, “Right now we’re just trying plug up holes and…and it’s not working.” After a moment he added, “We were doing recon on Saturday and we didn’t know there was going to be a match on. No one was supposed to be there—” He rubbed his forehead before practically slamming his hands back down on the table, “But then the dragon came through and all Hell broke loose.” “Dragon?” Both girls repeated at about the same time. “Or something that looked like one.” Charlie replied, “There wasn’t exactly time for a full interview.” After a moment he added, “Ram’s leg will be fine. I put some stuff on it to speed the healing process, it should be well in about a week or so. It’ll probably take him a bit to fully recover, though. “He was silent again, then said, “That’s really all I can tell you, because that’s really all we know at this point. Miss Foreman says she knows someone who might be able to help but—he taking his sweet time getting here. I’m sorry about earlier. I shouldn’t have done that.” “It’s alright.” April replied, “You’re clearly going through a lot right now. Apparently.” “I’m still a little mad at you for that.” Tanya countered, “But all things considered, I think I’ll get over it.” “Thank you,” Was all Charlie could think to say, “Please, don’t look into this anymore. If something were to happen to either of you—” “We won’t.” April assured him, “We promise. But shouldn’t we tell someone, though?” “Tell who?” Charlie asked, “Anyone who could help doesn’t care and you can’t tell the general public, because even if they did believe you, it’d risk the entire curtain coming off, and then we’d have another Satanic Panic on our hands, if we were lucky.” The girls just looked confused and Tanya asked, “The What Panic?” “This thing in America in the 80s that spread to a lot of the world in the late 90s where they had this mass hysteria belief that was this big conspiracy of Satanic cults ritually abusing children.” Charlie explained, “It was actually a fairly big thing here as well. It started with this one book that has since been debunked, along with all the other evidence that it was happening, but in the meanwhile a lot of lives were ruined, innocent people actually went to jail over this, some are still suffering the fallout. And if this comes out—it’ll be that all over again. I’m talking mass panic in the streets, riots, people accused of God-knows-what, on Gods-knows-what-evidence. You can’t want that.” “That’s terrible.” April admitted, somewhat horrified, “But this is something completely different. When people hear the truth, they’ll…” “Actually, April, I think he may have a point.” Tanya reluctantly spoke up, “The Red Scare? The Spanish Inquisition? Any large fandom anytime anything happens? Starting to see a pattern here?” “Yes, as a species you—we—have a tendency to either overreact or underreact.” Charlie agreed, “And in this case under is safer for everyone.” “I guess you’re right.” April relented. “Thank you,” Charlie responded, standing up, “Now, mind if I walk you home?” As they walked down the street Charlie carefully watched the girls for any sign of the amnesia pills kicking. The only time he’d seen them in action they’d been paired with sedatives, which while not nessacry, meant he had no clue how an awake person was supposed to react. “When you fix it,” April began, “If you can fix it, what will you do?” “Move on to the next case.” Charlie answered, “There’s always some kind of incursion, somewhere.” “How do you find them?” Tanya asked. These are certainly inquisitive. Charlie thought. “Well we use to get them from the home office but—let’s just say that’s not tentible anymore.” He explained, “Now we usually get them through odd
new stories, police and military scans, word of mouth.”
“So, you’re basically hunters.” Tanya responded.
“I’m not sure what I mean, so I can’t really tell you.” Charlie answered.
“And if you don’t find a case?” April asked, “Will you stay, at least for a little while?”
“Probably not.” Charlie admitted, “It’s not good to stay in one place too long if you don’t have to.
You could draw attention to yourself, or get too complacent, especially in the first world.”
Just then they came back to April house. Suddenly, she threw her arms around Charlie. “Thank you
telling us everything.” She said, pulling back.
“And thank you for listening to me, even after I treated you both so shamefully earlier.” Charlie
replied repentantly. If this went south, he wanted them to know that he was sorry for that.
“It’s forgiven,” April said, opening her door, “See you both Monday.” She walked in, closing the
door. “Mom, I’m home.” She called out.
“Have a good time?” Her mother called back.
For obvious reasons April had skipped some of the
details but he had let her mother know she was going out with friends.
“I …think so.” April replied slowly, as suddenly it was becoming all fuzzy. Where had they gone
again? And what happened this afternoon that had her upset? Had she been upset? All of the
suddenly she couldn’t remember.
One block away from Tanya’s house, the girl stopped. “We better stop here.” She told Charlie,
“My Mum will freak if she sees me with a boy. She’ll jump to the wrong a did, she’s a—over
protective.”
Just then Charlie’s phone rang. “Speaking of overprotective mothers…..
Tanya actually laughed a little, emphasizing. “Good luck,” She said, before turning the corner.
When she was out of sight Charlie picked up his own phone. “Hello.”
“Where are you?” Quill demanded, “You were supposed to be home over an hour ago. I was this
close to come looking for you.”
“I had to take care of some—things.” Charlie responded, “I’m on my way home now.”
“What kind of things?” Quill asked.
“I had to return a book to April.” Charlie lied, “She was letting me copy some of her notes. I’m
sorry, I should have told you.”
“Yeah, you should’ve.” Quill responded, “We’ll discuss them when you get home.”
When he got home Quill as sitting at the kitchen table, peering at him from over a book. “Sit
down,” She ordered firmly, lowering the book to the table.
Charlie obeyed, sitting in front of her. “Look, I know I should have called you—” He began.
“Save it.” Quill cut her off, “I know you’re sorry. The point is you did it. But—I’m letting it go
this time, there’s just one thing I want to know. “Her look softened a bit as she asked, “Is
something going on that I need to know about?”
“Excuse me?” Charlie responded, guaniely not sure how to respond.
“This isn’t the first time you’ve been off your game lately.” Quill elaborated, “So, is there
something wrong? Are you still shaken up about Ram?”
“No.” Charlie said, though it wasn’t entirely true, “No, I ‘m completely over it.”
“What about those boys?” Quill asked, “Are they still giving you trouble?”
“No.” Charlie answered, “In fact, they run when they see me coming now.”
While she knew she should chide him about keeping a low profile, Quill couldn’t help but smile.
“Good boy,” She said, rather impressed, then got back to the matter at hand, “Well, then, what is
it?”
Suddenly Charlie realized there was something that had been bothering him since he had talked to
April and Tanya. Well, other than wiping their memories. “What good do we actually do?” Charlie
asked.
“What?” Quill responded.
“We’ve been treading water ever since we got here.” Charlie elaborated, “People have died,
they’ve been hurt on our watch. And this isn’t even the first time. That—flying Gorilla thing in the
Philippines managed two people before we could put it down—”
“Alright, I’m gonna stop your right there, Charles.” Quill cut him off, “Frist off, you don’t want to go down this rabbit hole. This rabbit hole gets dangerous, believe me. Second, the fact of it pure and simple is, as much as we want to, as much as we try to, we can’t save everyone. Trust me, I’ve lost enough people to know that. But that doesn’t mean we don’t do any good, because we do save some people. We put the flying gorilla thing before it got to that little girl, didn’t we?”
“Yes,” Charlie admitted, “We did.”
“And those are the ones you focus on.” Quill told him, “The ones you could save, they ones you did save. It helps.”
“I’ll try that.” Charlie promised. At least he could fix one thing.
“Now, onto other business,” Quill switched gears, “Now that we have a name, Fox took off to Topeka to talk to Azazel again.” Azazel was intel broker who worked out of the Carcass.
“I thought Azazel didn’t know anything.” Charlie replied.
“She didn’t when all we had was ‘weird shit goes on at Coal Hill’.” Quill answered, pushing back her seat, “Now we something else to go on, these Governors, she might have something. He had to head out before you got back so he told me to tell you he said goodbye.”
“Message received.” Charlie assured her, standing up.
“I’m getting a can, you want one?” Quill offered, opening the cabinet where said cans were being held. Her tone said saying no wasn’t really an option.
“I’ll get one in a minute.” Charlie replied, “I’m just gonna put my bag up.”
“Sure,” Quill responded casually.
Charlie walked slowly to his room, and found the door closed, he didn’t remember closing it but thought nothing of it, assuming it must had fell back on his own. He pushed it opened, only to see a pale skinned girl of about fourteen with long brown hair sitting on his bed.
“Hey, Charlie.” She smiled, looking up at him with dark brown eyes.
“Terra?” Charlie gasped.
When Charlie was thirteen, the team had this case in Frankfurt. A teal-skinned woman threw herself from a fourth-story building, falling to her death. What they found was a combined micro-brothel and taubslo that specialized in aliens, most of whom were not there of their own free will, hence the suicide. Getting the Hell’s Angels running it arrested on other charges or otherwise dealt with (he didn’t know this but Quill castrated at least two of them, it seemed a fitting punishment to her) wasn’t that hard but dealing with over twenty traumatized alien women was another story. They had no way to simply get them home, none of them spoke English, though several spoke a degree of German, but just their luck a the only member of the team who spoke German was Fox, and most of them were terrified of him for simply being human male (because they hadn’t exactly had a good experience with any they had met so far), half of them had STDS, some of which were aggravated by their biogolgies, and other injuries and there a lot of identities to fake and places to find, which lead to them being stretched thin, which lead to Charlie pitching in on something that even at that age they would have kept him away from for obvious reasons.

That was how he met Terra. He had been grabbing the nano sutures, med spray and yarrow ointment from Toni Jo’s larger medical stash, which had been left on the ground floor, when suddenly the whole building was filled with a loud, shrill scream so intense it was physically painful, forcing him to cover his ears, which did little good. In addition to everything else, they had kept some of the more dangerous girls drugged up to keep them compliant, and one of them was going into withdrawals upstairs. After two straight minutes of it, the screaming stopped and Charlie was able to stand upright, and open his eyes, where he saw Terra in a corner, her skin a bright yellow green. Her species’ skin apparently changed color according to the strangest emotion they were feeling in at the moment, which was mainly how they had been communicating with them at that point, thought she could communicate telepathically. Guessing by the look on her face, yellow-green meant fear.

“It’s okay.” Charlie told her softly, “I know it might seem like they’re hurting her, but they’re not. They’re just trying to help.” He didn’t know if she could understand him, but felt it was worth a shot.

How is that helping anyone?! A voice screamed out in his head. It took him a minute to realize what was happening.

“She’s going through withdrawal.” Charlie explained once he realized, “When someone has been on drugs for some time, even a little bit…”

He launched into a lengthy, probably overly detailed explanation of what was happening upstairs and Terra listened to it intently. He took so long that Toni Jo sent Fox down to see what was keeping him, but seeing the girl almost at ease with him, he froze. After a moment he said, “Hey, Pup.”
Charlie turned at the sound of his voice, but Terra cowered deeper into the corner, her skin turning a deep emerald.

“It’s alright,” Charlie tried to assured her, “Fox isn’t like them.”

Terra still hid behind her newfound companion, but skin was changing color again as she began to calm somewhat, a pale sky blue.

“Actually, ah, why don’t I take those up?” Fox suggested, gathering the medical supplies that Charlie had dropped to the floor, “You just—” He lowered his voice, “Keep her clam. She’s got an appointment with Toni later.”

Then and there the pair became instant friends, only separated when Charlie had to help the group. He stood by her side through rounds of anti-biotic treatments for the syphilis she had contracted from a john, and when her body had a bad reaction to it, and the endless attempts to find a treatment that worked, whispering what comforting words to her he could. In turned she told him of the lush forest and misty mountains of her home planet, of her parents, of her older sister and little brother. By the end of it her skin had become dusty rose and she was crying, so he handed her a tissue, because she hated being touched, by anyone. They loved each other. Not romantically, but the pair had deep bond.

All that changed as her condition worsened. Nothing they tried to work to treat it, and the syphilis went to her brain, eating away at it. Soon she began to have violent, frightening hallucinations that made her run screaming around the house, fighting everyone who tried to help her. She once nearly broke his nose in one of those fits. Then came the day, the worst day, when her telepathy failed to work. She busted out crying, turning a bright saffron yellow, which was now the closest thing to communication she had.

Then one day, he woke up in the spot he had been sleeping lately, at the floor by her bedside and found the bed empty, and his mother crouching in front of him. “Charles,” She began softly, “I need to talk with you. About Terra.”

“W-Where is?” Charlie sollowed, a bit forming in his stomach as a part of him already knew.

“She—passed on during the night.” Quill answered, choosing her words very carefully, “She was died in her sleep, and wasn’t in much pain.”

Charlie blotted upright, “No!”

“I’m sorry.” Quill responded solemnly, standing up, “I truly am.”

“She’s not, you’re lying!” Charlie screamed, tears pouring down his face, running out of the room. Quill ran after him, grabbing him from behind to stop him.

“Let me go!” Charlie protested, “She’s not dead, she’s not—” He became inaudible after that, because even as he was denying he knew it was true.

They buried her later that day. Chris and Toni Jo stayed behind with the other girls, while Fox, Quill and Charlie, who had insisted on coming, drove out of the city and didn’t stop until they found deep enough woods that no one would disturb her grave. They dug a six-foot whole and was about to put her cloth-wrapped body in when Charlie spoke up, “Wait.”

He took a sharperie he had found in the car and started drawing a design on the cloth where her chest was, a half moon and sun, broke into crystal fractals. It wasn’t exactly the traditional materials, but it would have to do.

“What are you doing there, Pup?” Fox asked, utterly baffled.

“It’s a symbol her people put on their dead.” Charlie explained, “It’ll guide her to their Heaven. At least that’s what she believed.”

The adults let him finish it before taking the body. “Look away Charles.” Quill ordered. Under the circumstances there was only so much deference they could give the body. Quill was used to it, but he wasn’t.

Charlie wasn’t right for some time after that. He grieved Terra like a sister. He lost his faith in humanity for it, believing them all to be evil, until Quill set him straight, pointing out their own species weren’t exactly perfect, and what of Chris, Toni Jo and Fox?

And now, here she was in was in front of him, no older than when she died, in some sort of human form.
“I missed you so much!” She beamed, reaching out her arms to him.
“What—” Charlie stammered too shocked to think straight, let alone form a coherent sentence or take a decisive action, “How—”
Her face fell. “Right, I’m sure you have lots of questions.” She said, then patting the spot next to her on the bed, suggested, “Why don’t you sit down?”
Charlie grabbed a chair and pulled it in front of the bed, sitting down.
Meanwhile, downstairs, Quill was leaned up against the counter with can of bangers and beans when she heard some kind of knock. She sat it down and marched over to the door. “You know, you aren’t supposed to just drop by in this country.” She called out to whoever it was. She peaked out and saw that no one was at the door.
Okay, weird. She thought before hearing the knock again and turning around. She could make out somebody standing behind one of the slotted doors.
“Hello, Andra’ath.” The person greeted. A male person. He came into view, revealing a ropey-muscled blond.
Quill took a few steps towards the door. “No one knows that name.” She informed him, “No one currently here knows that name. No one alive knows that name.”
“Therefore?” The man responded.
“Therefore, you’re a dead man.” Quill answered, “Or you’re going to be.”
“Come, come, Andra’ath.” The man tutted, “A fight? Then again, maybe that would be the best greeting?” As Quill prepared to attack, the man continued, “It’s the shape, I know. Some morphic resonance I don’t understand. Surely, though, even in this skin that you yourself wear so well, Andra’ath, surely you recognize your old lover.”
That made Quill freeze in spite of herself. “Quin’th?”
Meanwhile, in a different house, Tanya had just walked into her room and found a man sitting on her bed. Recognizing him as a dead man she froze for a moment in shock before screaming.
“Taya, it’s alright.” The man tried desperately, standing somewhat, “It’s me! Your father!”
“No, you’re not!” Tanya screamed, stepping backwards, “My dad’s dead!”
“It is.” The man insisted, “I’ve reached out to you across space and time.”
“Because dead people are doing that all the time.” Tanya snarked, nearly stumbling over a chair, then falling back into it, “I mean, you hear about it constantly.”
“The stroke came so suddenly.” Her father, or whatever it was, told her, “One moment I was here—”
“And the next, you were gone.” Tanya cut him off, trying to work out what was happening in her head. Maybe she was dreaming. Yeah, that was it.
“There’s so much that wanted to say to you.” Her father continued.
“You’re not him.” Tanya insisted. Dream or no dream, this wasn’t him.
“I am.” Her father replied, “I’m a part of you, Puddle.”
“I’m out of here.” Tanya declared, pulling herself up again.
“I’m your father, Jasper.” He protested, “I married your mother, Vivian. And then, two years later, we had your brothers.”
“You died two years ago, next month.” Tanya argued, not entirely sure what she was doing.
“I know that, Puddle.” Jasper replied, “But I’m here now. I know how much pain you’re in. I can help with that pain.” Reaching out, he offered, “Why don’t you take my hand?”
“I, I don’t think I’m dealing with this very well.” Tanya responded, hurrying out and shutting the door, then doing what she could best figure was the sensible thing: ran for help.
Unbeknownst to her, during her freak out she had pocket dialed April, who had been listening to the whole exchange, and was now frantic for what to do. Frist, she opened her mouth to call for her mother then she realized, what would she tell her and what could she do? Then she hung up and began to dial 999, but the realized she had the same problem. What was she going to say, an acquaintance’s dead father had somehow broken into the house? Why did Tanya have her number anyway? It was good thing she did though. At last she unlatched her window and threw herself out.
Mateusz was first alerted to the issue by silence.
He was reading in his room when he realized he could hear nothing, where he usually heard at least bits of conversation. This caused him to set the book down and stand up. Then the silence was broken by the sound of a baby wailing. A baby that couldn’t possibly be in their house.

“Mama?!?” He called out, walking down the hall, “Tata?!” (Mom,?! Dad?) He stopped when saw something that looked like a slimly green tentacle coming from the living room. He went to it and stop short when he saw someone covered in a mess of green. The way they were positioned he couldn’t see a face, but he was assuming it was one of his parents.

Between the shock and the confusion and the baby crying outside, he couldn’t think for a moment but he did he rushed to the kitchen and pulled out the largest knife he could find then came back, trying cut the person free, only for the vines grow back almost immediately. Not knowing what else to do he ran to the front door, flinging it open, and finding the source of the crying. A few feet away from the front step was a stroller containing baby swathed in pink, failings her limbs in protest of the chaos around her. A few inches away her mother lay covered in the tencles. 

Mateusz practically leapt from the step to the stroller and unstrapped the infant, picking her up. “Hey, Stella,” He greeted softly, as he knew from passing conversation with the mother that this was the little girl’s name, “Hey, hi. It’s all going to be alright. “He grabbed the dipper bag from under the stroller, put it over his shoulder and put the knife in the mesh bottle holder. “You and me and going to find help, okay?”

Meanwhile, Reet had just woken up to see a young woman with mousy brown hair and large brown eyes sitting on the seat by her window.

“Hey, babe.” Reet greeted her smiling, thinking it was dream. She knew she’d be sad when she woke up, but it was worth it.

“Well, you’re taking this rather well.” The woman replied, almost impressed.

“This isn’t the first time I’ve dreamed about you, Fawn.” Reet, “In fact, I’ve dreamed about you lot since—well, we don’t need to talk about that now.”

Fawn smiled. “Sweetie, this isn’t a dream.” Reet paused. “Then what is this, then?”

“The Lankin.” Quin’th was telling Quill, sitting at the table.

“Aliens?” Quill inquired, deciding to refrain from attacking for the moment.

“So, you’re not her?” Charlie asked, sitting next to Terra, who was having the same conversation with him.

“I am.” Terra contradicted.

“You just said you’re—” Charlie responded.

“The universe is so big!” Terra cut him off, “You know that. But it’s so big even you wouldn’t believe it.”

Charlie took that in to consideration. Maybe she was telling the truth. “So, who are the Lankin?”

“They gather souls, Charlie.” Terra explained, “They gather all our souls. Or they can, if we let them.”

“Quill don’t have souls.” Quill was protesting in the kitchen, though she knew that wasn’t exactly true. She had explained it all to Toni Jo once and she told her that kind of defeated the point of having a soul.

“We do.” Quin’th reminded her, “We just believe they die with us. We’re wrong about that. The Lankin look after them. They shepherd them.”

“Ah.” Quill responded, clearly still skeptical, “Where to, Heaven?”

“If Heaven is being with the souls of everyone you’ve ever known, then yes.” Quin’th answered.

“Sounds like Hell.” Quill commented.

“That, too.” Quin’th admitted.

“What do you get out of it?” Quill asked, doubting these creatures were doing this out of the goodness of their hearts.

“Souls give off energy.” Fawn was explaining to Reet, “A perpetually renewing power source. It’s mutually beneficial. The more souls that gather together, the more energy the Lankin have.”

“So, why are you here?” Reet asked, trying to play in cool.
Fawn offered a hand to her. “If you take my hand, I can ease your pain. Our souls will connect, so
that, when it comes your time, many years from now hopefully, you’ll be able to find me.”
Reet stared at the hand, seriously considering the offer. She missed her girl so much and here was a
chance to see her again and if she didn’t take it who knew if she could find her?
Meanwhile, Ram had been trying to get Tanya on his Mac for about ten minutes and was starting
to get annoyed and concerned. That was when he heard yelling from outside. “Hey! Can anybody
hear me?!”
He went to his window and looking out immediately saw two things: One a girl in the middle of
the street in obvious distress due to what was around her, and, more pressingly, cords, or tentacles
maybe, coming from every house on the street.
Elsewhere, Tanya had just thrown the doors open to her mother’s room, calling out, “Mum?!”
Vivian was in bed, with her back to her daughter.
“Mum, wake up, there’s—” Tanya began frantically, actually pulling the covers off her, then took
a gasp of horror at what she found. Her mother was covered with green viney tentacles.
Stella had calmed down somewhat, currently whimpering in Mateusz’ arms, as the youth tried to
step over the almost endless stream of vines. There were cars left running, abandoned, bikes fallen
over, and more people, hopefully still people and not bodies, Mateusz was silently praying, lying
on the ground or propped up against wall. He was also praying that he and Stella weren’t the last
two people on Earth still alive.
Suddenly there was a honking that caused him to turn around.
In the street trying to maneuver in spite of the tentacles, was a land rover, its headlights one. The
door opened and female, Welsh-accented voice called out, “Get in!”
Figuring any port in the storm, he ran over to the car and got in, finding a dark hair woman on her
phone.
“I’ve already tried that.” Mateusz informed her, “Couldn’t get through to anyone.”
“I was trying to get through to some friends of mine.” The woman explained, before putting
the phone down and looking at the teen and the tot. “Right, what’s your name?”
“Mateusz.” He answered, glancing down before adding, “And this is Stella, one of those—things
got her Mother.”
“Well, Mateusz.” Gwen responded, “I’m Gwen, and I’m gonna get you and Stella somewhere
safe.” Looking back at the wheel she whispered, “Somehow.”
“We’ve never gathered the souls of this race.” Quin’th, or rather the Lankin version of him, was
telling Quill back at the house, “Not until cracks in the universe started appearing here. We found a
few souls we could help, but we’d like to help more.”
“Right, so, this is a sales pitch?” Quill responded, “And you’ve chose a human picture of my
boyfriend to be your mouth piece. Tell me again why shouldn’t kick your arse right now.” If this
thing wasn’t going to tell her the truth she might as well.
“The battle went wrong so fast, Andra’ath.” Quin’th replied, “I had no clue it would be my last
day. There were things I wanted to say, but I never got to. Things I never got to say to you. “
“We didn’t exactly have that type of relationship.” Quill pointed out. Their first interactions
involved him questioning leadership, which she didn’t appreciate, and them arguing. The first time
they said ‘I love you’ was screaming it in the middle of a fight. “You tried to kill me on multiple
occasions.”
“That’s how nine out of ten Quill relationships begin.” Quin’th reminded her, “Then if they can
hold their own against you they’re a worthy mate. Which you did. And you were. “Then he got
back to the matter at hand, “We allow you to properly say goodbye, and thereby ensure you’ll find
one another in there hereafter.”
“Oh, this is sounding suspiciously sentimental.” Quill scoffed, “Exactly the sort of nonsense that
would lead one of these ridiculous humans into a trap.”
“It’s symbolic.” Terra was assuring Charlie, holding her hand out to him, “You give to me as I give
to you. Why does it have to be a bad thing?”
“We’ve had bad luck with aliens recently.” Charlie told her.
“Well, we’re not all evil.” Terra reasoned, “I was an alien, was I evil? You’re an alien, are you evil?”

Charlie shook his head. At least he hoped he wasn’t evil and he was certain Terra hadn’t been. If anything, she had been too good for the universe.

“And there’s so much good in the universe.” Terra continued, “So much good. You’re hesitating. You’re wondering. What if?”

Meanwhile, April and Ram, who had gotten on the same page were running through the streets in the direction they thought Tanya’s home was. They ran past a car with its engine still running and tentacles all over it. They had tried cutting one earlier, only for it to heel astonishingly fast. A man and an old woman with a cord in her back were standing by the road.

“There’s so much I wanted to tell you.” The man was saying, “So much I wanted to say.”

“I know, son.” The old woman, the man’s mother apparently, replied, “Take your mother’s hand and tell her, hmm?”

“Mama?” The man asked.

“Son.” The mother responded.

They took hands, and the pair were whisked away as the woman’s cord suddenly retracted.

At Reet’s flat, Fawn, or rather the creature she was now, suddenly jerked.

“What was that?” Reet demanded, startling.

“A soul saying goodbye.” Fawn answered, smacking her lips, “Not as clean as we’d have liked. A lot of anger there. We’re kind of a messier species than the Lankin are used to. So sad when we can’t let go properly.”

Reet reared back. “Then maybe me holding your hand or whatever you need me to do isn’t the best idea.”

“Why?” Fawn asked.

Reet was silent for a moment, gather her thoughts, then said, “After you died—I wasn’t just grieving, I was angry. Angry at whatever killed you, angry at the government for giving me a cock and bull story that didn’t give me any answers—even angry at you for getting your fool self killed.”

“And now?” Fawn responded.

Back at the house, Quin’th stood up as Quill stepped back.

“How about that fight?” Quin’th asked, “Matron’s rules, no mercy.”

“That might get in the way.” Quill commented, pointing to the cord as she tried to suddenly reposition herself.

“It’s our limitation.” Quin’th explained, “We have to stay attached to the great trunk. It’s how the souls connect. I can only come this far to you. You have to come the rest of the way.”

“Why?” Quill asked.

“Because souls can never be forced.” Terra explained, having a similar conversation with Charlie, “They can only be persuaded. What can I say to make you believe me?” Her voice got downright weepy, “Oh, Charlie. Won’t you take your friend’s hand?”

“Won’t you take your lover’s hand?” Quin’th was asked Quill in the kitchen.

“Won’t you take your best girl’s hand?” Fawn offered in Reet’s bedroom.

Yes. Reet thought, beginning to bridge the distance when she heard screaming from outside.

“Hey!” She called out, climbing out the window.

“Reet, leave it!” Fawn called out.

Reet ignored her, walking up to the children, saying, “Don’t worry, I’m a friendly. You kids okay?”

“No,” Ram answered, “The world’s ending.”
At Tanya’s house, unable to find anyone else, Tanya ran to the kitchen and grabbed a knife. It wasn’t enough that this—this thing messed with her head by looking like her father, but it attacked her mother, the one parent she had left? She not letting that stand. The creature in her room was letting her mother go, or she was going to make it.

“How do I know you’re not just some chameleon?” Quill asked in the kitchen.

“Chameleon?” Quin’th repeated, completely in the dark as to what that was.

“An animal they have here.” Quill explained, “It changes its skin to match its background.” The first time she saw one, she had to admit, she was impressed.

“Useful to camouflage.” Quin’th noted, “Have you made contact with their leaders?”

Ignoring the question, Quill continued, “Chameleons hide themselves. So, what I am wondering is what is it you are hiding?”

“Maybe you should ask yourself, what am I offering?” Quin’th responded.

Meanwhile Reet, April and Ram were running past their school which was on the way to Tanya’s flat. It was a little hard to miss the gaping hole with the tentacles coming out of it.

“What is that?” Ram asked, as they both came to a stand-still, though he knew his companion was as clueless as he was.

“I don’t know, but that’s the way to Tanya’s flat.” April replied, pointing to one of the cords. Then they took off in that direction.

“Stay behind me.” Reet instructed, leading the way.

Gwen pulled up in the parking lot of a seemingly abandoned church.

“Ah, Gwen”, Mateusz spoke up as Gwen stepped out, “I’m prayerful as the next person, but I don’t really thing it’s gonna help in this situation.”

“But the basement might.” Gwen explained, “Come on.”

The church did in fact have a basement, which Gwen lead Mateusz, who was protectively holding Stella, who was getting upset again.

“It’s alright,” Mateusz whispered, “It’s all gonna be alright.” He really hoped he wasn’t lying. When they got to the bottom Gwen pulled out a pistol.

“What is that?!” Mateusz exclaimed, his eyes widened. Who had he gone into an isolated basement with?

Gwen answered by handing it to him. “Take it.” She ordered. Mateusz just stared at her like she had lost her mind.

“Mateusz, if we’re going to get through this I’m going to need you to help to me.” Gwen said. “I’ll help you any other way.” Mateusz offered firmly.

“This is the only way you can help me.” Gwen responded, “Help us. Help Stella.”

Mateusz slowly lowered the infant to the floor and took it.

“Now, let me show you how to use it.” Gwen said.

“What are you offering?” Quill countered back in the kitchen.

“If you don’t want to hand hold, I guess we could fight it you want.” Quin’th offered.

Quill smiled slyly. “I thought we already determined I would best you.”

“Well, I’d like to see you try.” Quin’th teased, and suddenly there was a gun in his hands.

“That’s interesting.” Quill responded, ready now. She kicked, knocking the creature down.

In Charlie’s room, he was seriously considering taking Terra’s offer, but one thing kept bothering him. “You don’t like to be touch.”

“For you, I’ll make an exception.” Terra replied.

Suddenly there was clattering from downstairs.

He ran downstairs and saw his mother standing over a man, a Lankin presumably, her foot on his wrist, beside his hand was a small plie of gunk.

“There you are.” Quill commented, “Long story short, this guy showed up, claimed to—”

“Be the spirit of a dead loved one brought back by a creature called the Lankin to say goodbye?” Charlie finished for her.

“How did you— “Quill began.

“I had my own visitor upstairs.” Charlie answered.
“Who- “Quill began, the decided it could wait. Looking back down at her captive she instructed her son, “Get a very big knife.” She glanced, up, breaking into a smile as she decided, “No, wait, get two.”

Outside Tanya’s house, Reet Ram and Tanya had just arrived, and sure enough there was vine coming through one of the windows.

“Why her?” Ram lamented, “She never hurt anybody.” He certain at that point that if Tanya wasn’t already dead, something bad was definitely happening in that house.

“Nightvisiting.” April suddenly guessed.

“What?” Ram responded.

“Nightvisiting.” April repeated, “It’s a genre of folk song.”

“How do you know that?” Ram asked.

“It’s a hobby.” April answered, “There’s been songs for centuries about people coming to your window at night. Usually ghost of people you’ve lost.”

“Like my girlfriend.” Reet spoke up.

As it made just about as much sense as anyway, Ram asked, “What do they want?”

“Sometimes it’s a warning.” April answered.

“Sometimes?” Ram repeated.

“Sometimes they want to drag you down with them.” April replied.

“You have no idea what you’re giving up.” Quin’th warned Quill, back in the kitchen.

“Oh, do shut up, Quin’th.” Quill snarked, done with this.

“Quin’th?” Charlie repeated, bringing the knives. He had never heard her mention anyone by that name. Then again, she rarely talked about her past, and when she did she rarely used names.

Quill took the knives silently. “These are really the biggest we had?” One was large enough but the second one was somewhat disappointing. “Never mind, they’ll do.” Then she crouched on the floor and rammed the knife through Quin’th hand. There was a squelching sound from Quin’th body and a crack from the tile. “Now, let’s have a little chat.” Quill said, satisfied that she made her point.

Meanwhile, Tanya had made it back into her room with a butch knife. “What did you do to my mother?!”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about, Puddle.” Jasper responded, playing dumb.

“I saw her!” Tanya exclaimed, “She was covered with vines, she couldn’t even hear me!” She lunged at him with the knife. There was a squelching sound as she cut and an oozing of semi-clear liquid.

As he slowly healed the creature started to laugh.

That was when the girl heard a voice call out, “Tanya?! Tanya are you here?!”

“Well?” Quill demanded, waiting for a response.

“We came to offer you release.” Quin’th responded.

“Yeah.” Quill responded, “Got that.” She twisted the knife, before saying, “You made one mistake. That’s not how the Lankin works. You aren’t a people. You’re a person. You are a chameleon, I’ll give you that. Taking these shapes. You see, the other thing about chameleons, really long tongues which shoot out to catch their prey. You’re just the tip of the lounge.”

At that point Qiun’th dropped the act. “Such a succulent species. Your grief’s so large, it will not matter what you do to this limb. I’ve found a grief that will make me stronger than you little worms can imagine.” Suddenly the figure of Quin’th was absorbed back into the tentle and disappeared out of the window.

“Huh.” Quill responded, “What a drama Queen.”

“What does that mean?” Charlie asked, “A grief that will make it stronger than we can imagine?”

“Nothing good.” Quill answered, raising up, “Let’s kill it before we have to find out.” Marching to the door she continued, “No one disgraces the memory of my boyfriend by making him nice.” They both ran out the door wordlessly, knowing already where they needed to go.

Trying to figure out a way to stop this thing once they actually got to the school, Charlie took one of the knives and slashed one of the vines at random. It instantly rejoined. “They reform as you as
you cut them!” He screamed in frustration. That was when they saw the struggling man being dragged from his car. Apparently the Lankin was getting more violent.

“What’s it doing?” Charlie gasped.

“My guess is gathering strength.” Quill answered.

“To do what?” Charlie asked, afraid of the answer.

“Like the veins of a heart.” Quill mused, “It all leads to one branch.”

Meanwhile, Reet had finally got the door to Tanya’s flat open, rushing inside followed by April and Ram. There were tentacles everywhere.

“Where’s the rest of her family?” April asked.

“He got them.” Tanya’s voice called out as she ran from her room, still holding the knife.

Tanya explained everything that was going on and began to lead them all back into the room, when Reet stopped. “No,” She said firmly, “I’ll go, you three get out of this house. Tanya, give me the knife.”

Tanya handed it to her saying, “Please get my family back.”

“I promise, I’ll do everything I can.” Reet said, before walking into the room.

Jasper looked at Reet in surprise. “Where’s my daughter?”

“She’s not your daughter,” Reet seethed, waving the knife at him, “And you are going to let her, and her family go right now or I start seeing if you bleed.”

Jasper laughed. “I’m almost sorry for you.” He said, “It’s not going to be that simple. I’ve never met a species so obsessed with closure. The sweetness of the taste.”

Suddenly something hit her head, the last thing she remembered before losing consciousness was something wrapping around her.

As the teens fled the house, trendils hit April and Ram, before rapping them in the trendils. Tanya, how had been spared, reared every which way.

“Oh, Puddle,” Jasper called out, mockingly, “Could you come in here, please?”

In the basement on the church, Mateusz has just fired into the Sunday school poster Gwen had tapped to one of the shelves. Gwen was to the side, holding Stella, who had makeshift earplugs crafted from packing peanuts in her ears. The long noise still scared the infant, who started crying again.

“Ssh, ssh, it’s alright,” Gwen soothed softly, “It’s only Mateusz practicing.” Addressing the boy himself, she said, “If you put that in the dipper bag, you can take her.”

Mateusz did as he was told, putting the gun next to the knife, and taking Stella, gently bouncing her.

“Alright.” Gwen began, “I’m gonna got get help, you stay down here with her, don’t leave until I come back for you, and only shoot that thing if someone or something attacks you. “

“You don’t have to worry about that.” Mateusz assured her.

Gwen just looked at him, worried.

“I’ll do what it takes to protect her.” Mateusz added, gesturing to Stella with a nod. There was a sense of determination about him that eased Gwen’s concern somewhat. No one was touching that baby while he was still breathing. Satisfied, she ran up the stairs.

Tanya ran back into the room, her heart racing as she faced the creature. She had no weapon, no one could help her, and there was nothing stopping it from doing to her what he had done to the others.

“We can still help each other.” The Lankin began, “I can still take away your pain forever, but if you don’t corporate, I will kill your family.”

Tanya knew she was trapped, but she could stall, maybe something would happen. Plus, she wanted some assurances. “Will you let my friends and Nurse Drouet go?”

Coming to, Reet heard the conversation. “Tanya, don’t.” She pleaded, “Can’t you see? Then your mum will have lost you without saying goodbye. And it feed again, on her. It’s a cycle.”

“I will let them go.” The Lankin answered, ignoring the nurse, “There’s only so much grief even I can consume.” He glanced over at Reet, adding, “The child will survive.”
“Forgive me if I don’t believe you.” Reet seethed, reaching for the knife but unable to get to it. Desperate, she called out, “I have a counter offer. Take me instead. I had my own Lankin tonight, someone I didn’t get to say goodbye to. Grief is grief, isn’t it? You should still be able to feed on it.”

The Lankin smiled. “But the girl is my heart in this world. Or at least she was. There is one who’s grief is stronger than hers, but it’s not you. “Putting attention back on Tanya, “But I’m aiming to get both of them.”

Quill and Charlie had just arrived at the school. There were two tentacles that were clearly larger than the others, one going towards the school auditorium, the other down the street.

“Which one do we need to go to?” Charlie wondered aloud.

Quill was about to reluctantly say they were splitting up, but suddenly the vine leading away from the school began to wither and shrink, retracting almost.

“We go to the one that’s still intact.” Quill declared.

Suddenly a land rover pulled up to them, and Gwen jumped. “Any idea what this is?” She asked.

“Plant creature that feeds on grief.” Quill answered, “Now, come on.”

Back at Tanya’s flat, she had reached out to the creature who had begun to absorb her grief, but something had gone wrong and he had released her.

“What have you done to me?” Jasper demanded, in shock.

“You know, us humans are a messy species.” Tanya mocked him, “I hated my father for leaving! My grief may be strong but my anger it stronger. And that’s what I gave you.”

“Good girl, Tanya!” Reet commented, impressed in spite of the situation.

If anything, it made it even more warranted.

“You poisoned me!” The Lankin exclaimed.

“You don’t get to have my closure.” Tanya seethed, “You don’t get to have any of our closure. So how does that taste?”

“Bitter.” The Lankin admitted, “You have weakened me.” He laughed, “But not enough. I’ll be back for you.” Then suddenly he was pulled out of the widow, as if on some sort of bungey cord.

The trio of Quill, Charlie, and Gwen were at the auditorium, where Quill caught something out of the corner of her eye. “I have an idea,” She declared, “Cover me.” Before she got their agreement, she had already taken off.

“Where are you going?!” Gwen called after her.

“Where are you going?!”” Quill called back running down the street.

Deciding just to go with, Gwen and Charlie ran into the auditorium where they were greeted by a brown-haired man in a long coat with his back to them, surrounded by at least eight Lankin-nized people, five men and three women. Just as they entered the man appeared to run a knife across him throat, falling to the ground.

Charlie immediately ran to the man on the ground, checking for a pulse, but Gwen froze at shock when she realized she recognized some of the forms they had taken. Ianto, Owen, Toshiko, were all hovering. And wait…wasn’t that Jack’s brother? She couldn’t be sure, she never really got a good look at him. And there was also a child among the figures, a boy with blond hair. His grandson.

“He’s dead.” Charlie declared soberly.

“Charlie, get back over here.” Gwen ordered calmly, urgently. The Lankin seemed to be getting agitated at someone being around their pray, and she wasn’t sure how they would react. As there was nothing he could do for the man on the ground, Charlie ran back over to her. “You know us, too.” Ianto spoke up, “You knew several of us actually. Right, Gwen?”

“You—you know these people?” Charlie responded, turning to look at her. He turned to the body and added, “Did you know—”

“I’ll explain later.” Gwen responded, grabbing him by the wrist and running for the door, which had trendils slowly creeping towards them. They barely got out before the door was covered. That was when a double decker bus reading LK03 CFN route 55 to Oxford circus came around the corner.
“She didn’t!” Charlie gasped, when he realized her recognized the driver.
“She did.” Gwen answered, “Where did she get that?”
“She’s resourceful.” Charlie answered.

Inside, the building, the Lankin could hear something going on outside, and started to panic.
“No, no!” Owen started screaming, “No!”

It was about that time the body on the ground gasped back to life.
The bus hit the tentacles and pulled them all out of the building. Quill drove over then one by one
causing each to turn to dust. The tendrils retreated into the main cord, which in turn, went back into
the rift.

“Charles,” Gwen began slowly, “You know your mother’s insane and more than a bit
magnificent?”
“I’m aware.” Charlie replied.

At Tanya’s flat, the tendrils had dissolved, freeing their prisoners. April and Ram stood up, the
later picking leftover bits of tendrils. The looked at each other, then ran for Tanya’s room.
“That was brilliant, sweetheart.” Reet was saying pulling Tanya into an embrace. Then she pulled
back saying, “Okay, probably not appropriate contact with a student.”
“I think we can make an exception.” Tanya assured her, “I’m so glad that worked.” Then she
remembered, “My mum!”

Just then, as if on cue, Vivian threw open the door. “What on Earth is this mess?!”
Tanya just ran to her mother and gave her a big hug.
Confused by both her daughter’s intense reactions and the sudden presence of at least three
strangers in her home, Vivian understandably demanded, “What’s going on?”

Meanwhile, in the streets around Coal Hill, dazed people had begun milling around.

“I’ve spoken to a few,” Quill told her compatriots as they regrouped, “None of them seem to
remember anything, which seems convenient.”

“The Lankin probably does it so it can come back and feed again.” Charlie speculated.
“Yeah.” Quill responded, “I’ll think twice before coming back here.”

“Nice job on that by the way.” Gwen complemented, “Where did you get a bus from?”
“A couple of blocks over.” Quill answered, “Thanks to the Lankin, no one was driving it.”

Suddenly Gwen remembered she needed to do something. “Oh crap,” She said, backing away, “I
 gotta go, I left this kid I found wondering around in a church basement. Meet back at the house?”
She knew they didn’t need to worry about the dead body.

“Sure!” Quill called out, seeing that Gwen was already heading to her purloined land rover.
Meanwhile, Reet was walking April and Ram home.

“How can she not remember what happened?” Ram lamented.

“Those –things probable did something to erase her memory.” April suggested, “So they would
feed again later or something.”

“So, what do we do now?” Ram asked.

“You two are not doing anything.” Reet declared firmly, “This is not a game, this stuff is
dangerous. Now, I’m gonna make some calls, see what I can get done, but I need your word from
both of you that you will not do anything stupid like investigate this on your own, is that clear?”
“Yes, ma’am,” The teens said almost simultaneously.

“Good.” Reet said, as they came to a stop, “Now, April, if you told me correctly this is you.”
“IT IS MA’AM.” April replied, “You really didn’t have to walk me all the way here.”

“Hey, as long as you’re with me you’re both my responsibility.” Reet insisted.

As April broke from the group, Ram called out to her. “April, any time you want to come night
visiting—” Ram began, but when both women gave him looks he cut himself off. “That’s not how
I meant it.”

“I will see you at school, Ram.” April responded, walking away but smiling back at him.

“Because of the folk music.” Ram insisted, “That’s all I meant.”

“Come on, Romeo,” Reet laughed, “Let’s go.”

“I have a girlfriend!” Ram protested as they walked off.
Gwen drove the land rover up the street. “This is where you live?” She asked.
“Yeah.” Mateusz confirmed.
That was when they both saw her. A blonde woman in her early twenties running through the
crowds like a mad woman. “Has anyone seen my daughter?!” She cried out, “Please, has anyone
seen her?!”
“That’s Stella’s mother.” Mateusz told Gwen urgently.
Gwen parked by the sidewalk. “Wait here.” He ordered, getting out of the car.
Mateusz watched as Gwen walked over and calmed the young woman down talking to her for a
few minutes before leading her over to the land rover. Gwen opened the door and Mateusz stepped
out, holding out Stella to her mother. “She’s okay.” He assured her.
“I know,” The mother answered as she took her child, “Detective Carter says you took care of her.”
Suddenly she actually threw her arms around him sobbing, “Thank you. Thank you, thank you,
thank you…”
“Ah, you’re welcome, ma’am.” Mateusz responded as she pulled back.
“I should probably get her inside.” She said, taking Stella close to her chest. “Thank you,” She said
a final time before running back to her flat.
“She has no clue what happened?” Mateusz asked, looking to Gwen. She had explained to him that
anyone who had been attacked by—whatever it was, didn’t remember what happened.
Gwen shook her head. “Come on,” She offered, “I’ll smooth things over with your parents.”
“So, who did you see?” Quill asked, as they walked back to the flat.
“Terra,” Charlie answered, looking away, “You know, the girl from the brothel in Frankfurt.”
“Oh, Charles…” Quill said softly. The girl’s death had nearly destroyed him the first time around.
“It’s fine.” Charlie lied, not looking her in the eye. He glanced back and added, “You said that the man
who came to you was your boyfriend? Is it alright if I ask?”
Quill was silent for a moment. “That human form was just smoke and mirrors.” She said finally,
“He died in battle, before you came along. But that was a long time ago and literally a world
away.” Suddenly Quill was aware of a set of arms around her. Arms that were attached to a body
somewhat taller than her. Normally she would had pushed him back but tonight she wrapped her
arms around him and they both accepted the mutual comfort. “Now,” Quill said as they broke the
embrace, “Enough of that, let’s go.”
The flat was just a few feet away, and they could both see the door was open.
“Charles,” Quill began, “Did you shut the door when we left?” With the hurry they may have
simply forgot.
“I thought I did.” Charlie answered, alarmed, and slightly embarrassed.
Quill pulled out her gun. “Stay here.” She ordered and ran inside. She leaned up against the side of
the wall, creeping, “Anyone here?” She called out. After a moment she added, “You should know,
I’m armed.”
“I know Andrea.” An all too familiar voice called out.
Quill whirled into the kitchen and found Captain Jack Harkness sitting at the table, his throat still
covered in blood.
“Hey, Andrea.” Jack greeted her, “You think I could get a towel or something?”
After everyone had left the school that afternoon, Jack pried a window open, climbing in. He knew that the others were working on this, that they could handle themselves and that they wanted nothing to with him, but still felt the need to see this through, even if he had come across the case quite by accident.

He heard noise coming from outside. He turned and saw the tear opening up. Suddenly a mess of green tentacles came through, attached some sort of stalk.

Jack began to scramble back to the window for a closer look when he heard the knock. Pulling out his gun, Jack crept down the hall to the auditorium, where the knocking was coming from. “Anyone in here?!” He called out, “Look, just, come out and nobody has to get hurt.” He took a few more steps than whirled around, and his mouth fell open in shock.

“Hi, Jack.” Ianto greeted him, smiling, “It’s good to see you again.”

“Well, do you come to people have somehow gotten over their lost loved ones?” Jack countered.

“What do you know of a creature called the Lankin?” Jack asked.

“Now, I don’t mean to sound conceited.” Ianto finished, “But I know you haven’t gotten over me yet.”

“Fair point.” Ianto admitted, reaching out as far as he could to Jack, “The point is, just one touch and I can take away that pain. And when it comes your time, we can find each other again.”

“Ianto,” Jack began, “You knew—”

“I’ll rephrase, if your time somehow comes.” Ianto cut him off, “So?”

Jack stared down at the hand. He was tempted, boy was he tempted. But he knew that this was probably too good to be true.

“Take your boyfriend’s hand?” Ianto offered.

Jack just kept staring at the hand. “Am I the only one you’ve made this offer to?”

“I’m not the only soul the Lankin has.” Into replied, “We’ve only recently been able to harvest from this race, but we’ve harvested serval. Other souls are making the same offer all over the city. Many have taken it.”

“Yeah, here’s the thing,” Jack countered, “You died over seven years ago, so if the Lankin only got here when the rifts hear started appearing, how did they get yours?”

“Where did we work, Jack?” Ianto countered, “I went through the rift, too.”

“And he’s not the only one.” A woman’s voice said from behind them. Both turned around to see Toshiko standing there.

“You didn’t have anyone else to go to?” Ianto complained, seeming annoyed by her presence. He wanted Jack for himself.

“I did,” Tosh confused, “But it looked like you could use some help with this one.”

“Let me guess.” Jack responded, “Your soul got caught in the rift too, or whatever.”

Toshiko nodded. “You can take my hand or you can take his hand.” She said, “We’ll take the pain either way. But all things being equal, I’d take his.” She pointed at Ianto in case it wasn’t evident.
who she was talking about.
For the next hour every fifteen minutes, a new ghost appeared before him, asking, urging, even
threatening, to get him to take their hand, any of their hands. But by that point Jack knew this was
scam, in one way or the other.
By time they pulled out Steven it was all too much.
“Come on, Uncle Jack.” Steven said, “Take your Grandson’s hand.”
Jack slowly reached for a knife inside his coat, pulling it out. By his reasoning this would at least
stall for time.
As he put the knife to his throat, he heard the doors opening. He still pressed down, a sharp pain in
his neck before he fell to the ground in a bloody mess.
The next thing he was aware of that he Owen screaming as he gasped back to life.
There was sound of crunching outside, and suddenly the Lankin ghost were flung from the
building.
Jack smiled a little, as he didn’t know what exactly had happened, but he guess who had done it.
Andrea. She was always a clever one.
That was when Jack realized he couldn’t keep doing this alone. He had to crawl back to the team,
beg for forgiveness, compare notes, and nip this thing in the bud. It was the only way they were
going to get anything done. He pulled himself off the ground and snuck out the side entrance.
He started to hide his neck with his coat as he hurried to the flat, but the people were still in a daze
from their encounter with the creature, or creatures, whatever they had been. He arrived to the flat
and found the door shut. He tried it anyway and found that apparently in their haze they hadn’t
thought to lock it. He stepped in, looking around. He had only been in a few of Torchwood 4’s safe
houses, and never this one. Still, he managed to find his way to the kitchen and sat down. All there
was to do now was wait.
Ten minutes later, he heard them. “Charles,” Quill was saying, “Did you shut the door when we
left?”
“I thought I did.” A male’s voice, he guessed Charlie’s, Jack hadn’t actually heard the boy’s voice
in years and apparently in that time it had broken.
“Stay here.” Quill said back. A few seconds later she called out, “Anyone here? You should know,
I’m armed.”
Jack had excepted no less of her. “I know Andrea.”
Suddenly she was in the entryway of the kitchen.
“Hey, Andrea,” He greeted her, then realizing he was still a mess asked, “You think I could get a
towel or something?”
Quill responded by raising her gun and shooting him.

Chapter End Notes

I'll be honest, I don't really think this is the best thing I've written. But I've tried and I
can't really fix it, but I can't get read of it either, so...
Chapter Summary

Jack tries to get back on the team, much to Quill’s chagrin.

Quill ran back outside. “Get upstairs,” She ordered Charlie, “Now.”
“Was anyone-?” Charlie began as she stepped through the house.
“Just go.” Quill insisted, pointing up the stairs.
Charlie obeyed this time and Quill went back to the kitchen where Jack was still slumped over in
the chair. “Anything you feel like waking up…”
Suddenly Jack jutted up, gasping. “What was that for!?” He exclaimed, setting upright in his seat.
“Take your pick,” Quill answered, “Now, get out.”
“Look, Andrea, I get your mad at me,” Jack began, “And I get we didn’t exactly part on the best of
terms even…”
“That’s the biggest understatement in the history of the universe.” Quill cut him off.
“The point is,” Jack tried to get hold of the conversation again, “We need to talk about the situation
at Coal Hill. Actually, we all need to work together on this one.”
“How did you even know about this?” Quill asked, “Last I heard you on some space freighter to
wherever the Hell you got off to.”
“I was passing through when I landed in Bristol.” Jack explained, “I heard about Gwen’s search for
Toni Jo, and I remember something that happened back in the late 70s. This redhead claiming to be
from 2010s Torchwood Four and detective that knew nothing, they were…”
“Kidnapped by statues?” Quill cut him off.
“Yeah,” Jack responded, “And knowing what I know now, I wanted to make sure she got back
okay, and when I had, I saw what you were working on, and one thing lead to another, and next
thing you know I’m slitting my own throat in an assembly hall.”
Quill cocked her head. “That was you?”
“Are you really that surprised?” Jack countered.
“No.” Quill admitted, “So, what have you found out?”
“Well, I know that there’s a series of riffs in time and space at the school.” Jack answered.
“Well, we could have already told you that.” Quill responded, dismissively.
“But I can tell you the riff’s not naturally accruing.” Jack replied, “Not at first at least. And there’s
a lot of energy around them. Too much.”
“What do you mean?” Quill asked, somewhat alarmed.
“I mean, there are these weird—fluctuations.” Jack explained, “One moment they’re have more
energy than I’ve even seen, then it will just be—gone. Almost like something is feeding on it.”
“And for those of us who aren’t former time agents, what does that mean?” Quill asked.
“I don’t know, but nothing good.” Jack replied, “That’s my what I got, so—cards on the table.”
“In your investigation have you come across a group called the Governors?” Quill asked.
Jack shook his head, “Who are they?”
“We don’t know.” Quill answered, “We only learned of them this morning. What we do know is
that they’re likely the reason this school hasn’t been shut down. Fox on his way to Topeka as we
speak to see if anyone knows anything.”
“The Carcass is still standing?” Jack asked, surprised, “I figured that place would’ve burned down
by now.”
“Nope, it’s still standing.” Quill confirmed, “How is a riddle for the ages, but it is.”
Suddenly Jack smiled as he recalled the one time he had actually been there. “Hey, remember that time I thought you had sent me an S. O. S and I rushed to the Carcass as fast as I could fly and you were—”

“No, no, no, no,” Quill cut him off, “We are not doing the memory lane thing. You’ve said your piece, thank you for the help, now get the Hell out.” She pointed towards the front door, “You can leave the same way you came in.”

“Andrea,” Jack began, standing up, “You’re pissed, I get it, I shouldn’t have left like that, or at least have given you guys fair warning before I did, but I’m in this now, so we need to put our crap aside and—”

“You gave up that right when you left us holding the bag.” Quill cut him off again, “How can we trust you again after that? How do we know we’re going to need you and just turn around to find you gone?”

Suddenly Jack snapped. “Hey, I would like to point out that I’m not the only one who has a habit of running!”

Quill was practically struck for a moment. “What the Hell is that supposed to mean?!” She finally demanded.

Before Jack could answer there was a knock on the door. “Quill?” Gwen’s voice called out, “It’s me!”

Quilled turned around and headed to the door. She opened it and Gwen was standing there. “Kids dropped off, explanation given, crisis averted.” Gwen began as she walked in, but then he went silent when she saw who was in the kitchen.

“Hey, Gwen,” Jack greeted her, standing up and walking to the entryway of the kitchen, “It’s been a while.

Gwen rushed Jack, throwing her arms around him in an embrace. Then she reeled back, slapping him. Then she hugged him again.

After that, Jack had made his case to Gwen. “Alright,” Gwen agreed, “You can stay on this, but me and Fox take the lead, is that clear?” “Crystal.” Jack replied.

“You can’t be serious.” Quill protested.

“Quill, you know what it was like,” Gwen reasoned, “And we need him. It’s only for one case. Then if we want to kick him out, we kick him out.”

“You make it sound so simple.” Quill told her.

“That’s cause it is.” Gwen responded, not understanding why Quill was being so stubborn.

Not as simple as you think Quill thought, exchanging looks with Jack.

Now there was just to alert the others they had a new member. Quill was trying to get Toni Jo but was only getting her answering machine.

As she hung up for a fifth time, Jack approached her. “Everything okay?” “Oh, yeah, I’m just—trying to get in touch with Toni.” Quill answered, “She’s not picking up.” “What’s going on with her anyway?” Jack asked.

“Chris is stick.” Quill answered, “They’re all—trying to deal with it.”

That set alarm bells with Jack. “How bad is he?” “It’s Cardiomyopathy.” Quill explained, “Some hardening of the heart muscle. You can live with it, apparently, in some cases. They’re ah, working out a treatment plan. What are you asking for, anyway? What do you care?”

“Just because I left didn’t mean I didn’t stop caring.” Jack told her, “After I left I missed—Gwen, all of you. This isn’t even the first time I checked in. Nice job on the warlords by the way.”

“Thanks,” Quill replied, then she processes the implications of what he had said, “Wait, if you were on some freighter a thousand lightyears from here, how did you—”

Jack held up his old vortex manipulator as an explanation. “Got the teleport partially working. Only short-range thought, otherwise I would’ve offered you a ride home, sorry. Whenever my travels took me close enough I’ve tracked everyone down, see how everyone was doing, drop little breadcrumbs to help when I could.”
Quill thought back, trying to recall any incidents that might be explained by his claims. “The rustling bushes in San Antonio?”

Jack nodded. “And for the record, that thing ripped my throat out, so Fox owes me.”

“The bomb threat in Cambodia?” Quill asked.

“Well, at the rate you were going you’d never get that building cleared in time.” Jack reasoned. That was when Quill thought of an incident that just had to be him. “The luminescent paint trail in the Forest of Dean?”

Jack just burst out laughing. “What?!”

“We were chasing this—flying snake thing through the forest of Dean, we lost it and suddenly this glow of luminist paint leads us right to it.” Quill explained.

“I’m sorry,” Jack said in between boughs of laughter, “I don’t know what that was but it wasn’t me. I’ve only actually done things like that a few times.” As he settled down, he asked, “So, how have you been?”

“Jack, you know how I feel about small talk.” Quill reminded him.

“Fair enough.” Jack conceded, “But mind if I ask how the kid is?”

“Yes.” Quill responded curtly, “But, he’s fine. He’s—taller than when you last saw him.”

“I last saw him when he was five. I figured that.” Jack replied, “Teenagers. That must be fun.”

“Yeah,” Quill scoffed, “The last week he was all over the place. He’s been impulsive, moody. Still, he’s a great medic. And at least there haven’t been any girls sniffing around yet. Or boys, no place to judge.”

“So, you’ve told me.” Jack noted. They had been completely opened each other, even with their past loves. “Sometimes I could’ve swore you were trying to make me jealous.”

“You wanna talk about me?” Quill challenged, “What about you? You literally once kiss an alien in front of me!”

“I had to make a distraction somehow!” Jack exclaimed, “One, which I may remind you, you took advantage of!” Suddenly they were both laughing for a few moments, then as the laughter calmed down, Jack became somber. “What happened to us, Andrea?”

Quill’s eyes darted over to him with a look that said it all: You tell me.
Unheard Screams

Chapter Summary

The search costs someone their life.

It was a crowded night at the Carcass when Fox entered. He spotted some UNIT uniforms, a few other groups as well. And of course, there were the free agents. Smith and Jones, a husband and wife duo that shows up on the scene in the early tens were playfully bickering about something at a table in the middle of the room. Eddie Snicket, a more than slightly psychotic mercenary had glass of whisky at his table, but he was more interested in playing his with knife. That guy even managed to unnerve Quill. Lyra, only waitress the place had, was going from table to table, a pink creature that resembled a Sphynx cat with gills on its large ears, by her side. From Fox’s understanding it was part of her soul, and distance between them caused physical pain for them both of them. That was why she was here, everyone was in the know, so there was no reason for her to try to hide it, not with Sonja protecting her. The woman herself was scrubbing down the bar, carefully eying the scene.

And sitting at a corner table, a blindingly beautiful woman with long strait hair the color of raven’s wings was nursing a brandy Alexander.

This was the woman Fox was looking for. He walked over to the table and sat down. “Hello, Azazel.”

“Fox,” Azazel responded, almost coolly, taking a sip of her drink, “I was unaware we had business together.”

“New business has come up,” Fox explained, “I was hoping maybe you could help me with it.”

“And this business would be?” Azazel asked, staring at him with impossibly large, bright olive colored eyes.

“What can you tell me about a group called the Governors?” Fox asked, getting right to the point.

“The Governors?” Azazel responded, “I’m afraid I’m going to need a little more than that. Does this have anything to do with your venture at that school? What was the name again?”

“Coal Hill Academy.” Fox answered.

Azazel was silent for a moment. “Give me, uh…three days.” She began, “On the night of the third day we’ll meet back here, and if I have anything, we’ll talk price.”

“Those terms are acceptable.” Fox agreed.

Azazel smiled at him, taking a sip of her drink.

Fox just looked at her, not sure of what they were doing.

“Well, I’m at least finishing this drink before I get to you work.” Azazel told him, “Feel free to go about your business.”

“Right,” Fox began awkwardly, getting up, “I’ll be off, then.”

Three days later, Fox came back to the bar, but found Azazel’s usual table empty. Maybe she’s just late. He thought, sitting down. It would be out of character for her, but things do happen.

Just then Lyra came up to him. “Scotch, baby bourbon, or New York corn?”

“You know me so well.” Fox told her. “Stoch.” He figured he didn’t know how long he would be there at this point, so, what was the use in loitering?

By the time Lyra got back with the Scotch, Azazel still hadn’t arrived. He drank it ridiculously slowly, but still by the time he had finished, she still hadn’t arrived.

“She hasn’t been here all day.” Sonja informed, going to get a bottle of vodka from the supply.
Fox turned his head to her. “What?”
“Azazel.” Sonja elaborated, “She’s usually in here for a business meeting or something else, but she’s been AWOL since yesterday. It’s actually kinda weird.”
Suddenly a tremor of alarm went through Fox. “Sonja,” He began urgently, “Do you know where Azazel lives?”
At one of the nicer apartments across town Azazel was heading out of her building as if she was sneaking out of some place she wasn’t supposed to be, with a roller suitcase and a matching bag. “Going somewhere, Azazel?” A voice from behind her asked. She whirled around and found a familiar Torchwood Four operative standing there.
“Fox,” Azazel began, somewhat tense, “What are you doing here?”
“You tell me.” Fox countered, “You missed our appointment.”
“And you should thank God for that.” Azazel told him, walking away.
Fox reached out and grabbed her by the arm, tightly. “Tell me what you found, Azazel.”
“Something bigger than either of us,” Azazel warned, pulling back, “Now, I’ll tell you this: If you care anything about the rest of your team, you will pull them all out of there, now. Goodbye and good luck.”
“Azazel!” Fox called, out but she just kept walking, “Azazel!”
“Don’t make a scene, Fox!” Azazel called back, “You know I feel no guilt about working double standards to my advantage!”
It was true. They had heard about her doing it before. Fox had no choice but to watch her walk away.
The street was almost barren as Azazel tried to hail a cab, but she still felt as if she was being watched. Her eyes glanced around and she saw nothing. She felt momentarily safe until she turned around again.
Standing less than two feet of her was stature of a fanged angel, it’s arms out stretched towards her. The intel broker screamed, running down the street without taking her eyes off that statue. That was how it worked, wasn’t it? If you weren’t looking at them, they couldn’t move? That was why she never saw the other statue, only felt it as it grabbed her.
She kept screaming until it broke her neck.
Chapter Summary

Fox and Jack's investigation uncover a new layer to the case. Meanwhile, things of a more personal nature are starting to brew in London.

Chapter Notes

Sorry I missed last week. I was dealing with some unexpected things that kept me from it. I just have to thank God for getting me through it and for letting me able to update this week and hopefully it won't happen again.

“She’s dead!!” Quill exclaimed.
She, Gwen, and Jack were gathered around the table with the phone on speaker.
“I’m looking at the body right now.” Fox confirmed, staring just outside of the crime scene tape, looking at Azazel’s body, lank on the ground, her eyes wide with fear. He shook his head in distress. “I don’t have to tell you what this looks like.”
Everyone exchanged looks, as, yes, they knew. It didn’t exactly take a genius to put two and two together.
“Whoever killed her did it because of the information she found.” Gwen answered, a knot forming in her stomach. They just got a woman killed.
“Fox, you need to figure out what she knew.” Quill ordered, leaning into the table, “We’re clearly on to something big and dangerous here.”
“Believe me, I know,” Fox replied, “And I’m on it.”
“Look out for yourself.” Quill cautioned. While Quill and Azazel weren’t really friends, though she had liked her, but she knew whatever had been enough to make her flee what had been her home for as long as anyone currently around, save for possibly Sonja, could remember had to be ugly, especially if they had tracked her down and killed her for it. She didn’t want the same thing happening to Fox.
“You too.” Fox replied, “Everybody stay close.”
“Can do.” Gwen agreed before the call turned off. She ran her fingers through her hair, letting out a sigh. “That poor woman.”
“Azazel waited at least four invasions, three administrations and too many crack downs to count in that place.” Quill summarized, “What could have run her off?”
No one answered the question, because they had already answered it.
Jack brought them to the unanswered question. “So, what do we do now?” Apart from conceding power to Fox and Gwen he was truly at a loss as well, while the action appeared to be going on the other side of the world.
Suddenly Gwen got an idea. “You say the thing works as short-term teleport?”
“Yeah,” Jack confirmed, then realized what Gwen was thinking, “You want me to go help Fox.”
“Exactly.” Gwen replied.
“Be right there.” Jack agreed, before disappearing.
“Here’s hoping he comes back.” Quill commented.
Gwen wanted to argue, to state that Quill was being harsh, childish even, but only nodded her head.
She glanced around a moment then asked, “Hey, where’s Charlie?”
“He had to make a run for—for something I forget what he said it was, something we needed.” Quill answered. Looking at the clock she added, her eyes narrowing, “Come to think of it, whatever it was probably shouldn’t have taken this long.”
The reason the “run” was taking so long was because it wasn’t a run, but a cover for meeting with Mateusz in the park before the young man’s shift.
“Mateusz,” Charlie began, “I’ve been meaning to ask you something.”
“What?” Mateusz asked.
“You’ve—been teaching me.” Charlie began nervously, “And I was wondering if I could—teach you.”
“Teach me what?” Mateusz asked, looking over to him.
“How to fight.” Charlie answered, “I don’t—I don’t want anything like that happened to you again.” While he didn’t understand what exactly had happened, Mateusz had told him about his misadventures during the Lankin invasion and he had never been more grateful to Gwen.
“I don’t think being able to throw a punch would have helped the night.” Mateusz reasoned, “Besides, who says I can’t?”
“Okay then,” Charlie responded, “Hit me.”
“What?” Mateusz responded, thinking he had to be joking.
“Hit me.” Charlie repeated, “Show me what you got.”
“Charlie, I’m not going to—” Mateusz began, and his voice trailed off as Charlie took a swing at him, and he ducked out of the way, “What the Hell?!”
“Well, it was the only way you were going to do it!” Charlie exclaimed.
“Charlie—” Mateusz began trying to get his bearings back, “I know you have trouble with things like this sometimes for some reason, so I’ll just let you know that is not normal.”
Charlie realized he may have crossed a line. “Sorry.”
“What’s with this sudden interest in teaching me to fight anyway?” Mateusz asked.
“Like, I said I don’t want anything to happen to you.” Charlie began, “I—” his voice trailed off. He didn’t want to say what he was about to say. He couldn’t.
“Go on,” Mateusz urged, “You what?”
“I can’t—” Charlie began, “I don’t—it’s too soon to say it, we’ve only known each other a couple of weeks and we’ve only been doing—whatever this is for less than that.” After a beat, he added, “At the very least I care for you deeply.”
“You—” Mateusz began then broke into a grin. He leaned and kissed Charlie on the forehead. Suddenly Charlie’s heart was fluttering and he felt almost heady.
“Was that—alright?” Mateusz asked.
“Yes.” Charlie answered, “Yes, that was more than alright.”
Mateusz took his hands. “At the very least I care for you deeply, too.” He told him, “If it means so much to you, we can do it.”
“Thank you.” Charlie beamed when suddenly his phone went off. He ignored it, saying. “Okay, first we’ll need to—” However, the phone still kept ringing.
“Maybe you should get that.” Mateusz suggested.
“No, it’s fine.” Charlie insisted, “As I was saying—” However the ringing began more insisted. “Maybe you’re right.” He conceded and checked the caller ID and a knot formed in his stomach as he as it was his mother. He wasn’t sure how she would react if she found out about all this. “Yes?” He asked when he picked up.
“Where are you?” Quill asked, “How long does it take to get a—what did you go out for again?”
“Groceries.” Charlie answered, “We were this close to half-rations.” This was actually true. He should probably actually buy some provisions before he went home, if only to sell the story.
“Well, get back here.” Quill ordered, “There’s been a development.”
“Alright,” Charlie agreed, “See you in a few minutes.” He hung up and looked at Mateusz ruefully. “I’m sorry, I have to go. I haven’t exactly told her about us…”
“I haven’t told my parents either.” Mateusz informed him.
Then it hit him what Mateusz thought was going on. “No, it’s not like that, it’s—I just have to go. See you later.”
“You too.” Mateusz called back to her.
After a quick stop by the nearest petrol station to actually pick up some cans, he arrived back at the flat.
“‘Bout time.” Quill commented, taking the bag from him, “Come on, we need to talk.”
“What’s happened?” Charlie asked urgently.
Quill sat the groceries down on the counter. “Azazel had found something that spooked her, she refused to tell Fox, and then he heard on the police scanner when a body matching her description.”
“She’s dead?” Charlie responded.
Quill nodded. “Fox is trying find what was so big and bad someone was willing to kill to cover it up, Jack went to help.”
“What about us?” Charlie asked, “What do we do?”
“Right now,” Quill began, “Wait it out, try to not die and hope Susan’s source actually gets here. Assuming they don’t get him too.”
Meanwhile, back in Topeka, Fox and Jack had conned their way into Azazel’s apparent.
“Do you think she would have anything solid?” Jack asked, “Like files or a flash drive?”
“Sometimes,” Fox replied, “Depending on what the information was. I have no idea where she would have put it, though. I didn’t know her that well.”
Whatever happen she had left the apparent in a hurry. The furniture was still there, giving the implication that one would be coming back. Fox looked over in the kitchen trash can saw a small pile of ash. “Damn it.”
“What?” Jack said, turning his head in Fox’s direction.
“She was burning something over here.” Fox began, digging through what left trying to find something he could make sense of. All he was found was half of a picture of what looked like an older house that managed to escape the blaze in her haste.
Joining Fox and picking up an empty purple portfolio had been left on an end table in the living room. “I’ve been thinking—” He began.
“Oh, now we are in trouble.” Fox teased.
“Anyway.” Jack began, slightly annoyed, “Given what she did for a living she must have taken some information with her. For levage or setting up shop later. If this doesn’t pan out we should try to get into the personal effects found on the body.”
After ransacking the place and finding nothing, that’s exactly what they did.
“Here’s everything.” The young officer at the evidence desk, declared, sitting the box down in front of them.
“Thank you.” Fox replied, waiting until he left before they both started pulling things out of the box like mad.
Jack saw three plastic figures, identical Russian nesting dolls, each that could fit in the palm of his hand. Taking a chance, he emptied the bag, and, picking up the nesting doll, grabbed the top and pulled out a metal strip attached to it. He did the same with the others and found the same thing.
“Jack pot.”
They quickly pocketed the flash drives, gave the box, sans the drives, back to the officer, went back to the hotel and started sniffing through the intel.
And there was a lot of it.
“I’m taking this and diving it up with Chris.” Fox declared shifting through it, “I think Azazel would want it that way.”
“I think we both know that’s not true.” Jack replied, peering over him, “So, anything good?”
“What’s that?” Jack asked.
“A Statue.” Fox answered, “Like the one that took Toni and that cop. Maybe we can at least solve
that mystery.”
He clicked on everything that seemed related to the picture, but very little of it made sense.
“Well, it looks like Toni Jo and her inspector weren’t the only ones this thing has snatched, “Fox began, “I’ve got reports around the globe of this thing. A lot of them around this house in London called Western Drumlins.” His eyes darked up to Jack. “You thinking what I’m thinking?”
“Road trip?” Jack responded.
Meanwhile, back in London, Quill was pacing the living room floor. Usually she was fairly good at moving on quickly to whatever the next crisis was, at least for a little bit, but here, stuck at a stand still everything just kept running through her head. The man who had betrayed her had crashed back in her life, barely acknowledging anything had happened, and she was being forced to work with him. Someone was dead because of something they asked her to find. Her superior was currently in the hospital and the fate of the very organization was up in the air. Oh, and her son was probably lying to her and she had no idea why. And there was nothing she could do about any of it. Suddenly she felt trapped. In this flat, in this city in this country… Suddenly she was across the room, grabbing her coat. “I’m going out!” She called out.
“What?!” The flat’s too other occupants called out at about the same time, before running into view. “Where?” Gwen asked.
“I’ll explain later.” Quill replied, heading out the door with no further explanation.
A teleport ride later, Fox forced opened the rusty gates of the old house.
“Is now really the time?” Fox questioned as they walked up the path.
There was one thing both men noticed immediately upon entering the house: It was creepy. Even in the light of day there something-unsettling. As far as old houses went it was well-preserved but for some reason that only seemed to add to the eeriness. However, other than that, it was completely unremarkable.
“All clear down here!” Fox declared as they finished scooping out the downstairs and heading upstairs.
They split up again, but when Fox got to the second room, he called out, “Jack come here!” Jack ran to the room and immediately knew what Fox had wanted him to seen.
Someone had torn the paper from the wall, revealing a message painted in black all caps: BEWARE THE WEEPING ANGEL. OH, AND DUCK! REALLY, DUCK! SALLY SPAROW, DUCK NOW! —LOVE, THE DOCTOR (1969)
“The Doctor?” Fox repeated, “Isn’t that the bloke Torchwood was started to fight against?”
“Well, it wasn’t actually that simple.” Jack spoke up, then realize that was hardly the biggest issue right now, “1969…."
“Maybe that was when it all started?” Fox suggested.
“Could be.” Fox responded. At that point anything was still possible.
“What are the odds this Sparrow woman is still alive?” Fox asked.
Three hours and a lot of internet searches later, Sally Sparrow-Nightingale had just settled a disagreement between her kids when there was a knock on the door.
“Wait here.” She told them, then looked out the peephole and saw two strange men stage men standing there. The more nicely dressed one held up an MI-5 badge.
Anxious, Sally opened the door. “Can I help you?”
“I’m Agent Wolf Murdock, this is Agent Jason Carter.” The man in the suit introduced themselves, “We’d like to talk to you about some police report you filed a few years ago.” Sally’s stomach twisted. She knew exactly what report they were talking about. Still, not knowing what else to do, she let them. “Kathy, take your brother outside and play for a bit while I talk to these men.” She ordered.
The little girl, who looked to be about eight, stood up and her younger brother followed her out the back.
Agent Murdock got this almost mournful look on his face as he watched them go.
“Do you have children, Agent Murdock?” Sally wondered aloud.
“No.” Agent Murdock answered quickly, shaking whatever it was off, “But on the subject, you have a really lovely pair yourself.”

“Thank you.” Sally replied, “Please, sit down.”

Both men did. “So, according to our files, your friend Katherine Nightingale went missing in 2007. Also, according to our files, you both went to an abandoned house known as Western Drumlings.”

“Yes, back then I loved to look at old things.” Sally explained.

“Well, who doesn’t?” Agent Murdock replied, “Sally—if I may call you that,” When Sally nodded he continued, “Sally, I know you’ve already been over this with the police, but would mind telling us exactly what happened?”

Sally was silent, shifting awkwardly.

“I’m sorry, I know this must be hard, I understand your friend was never found, but there are things happening now, people have been hurt, people have died, maybe.” Agent Murdock urged, “So we need to know what the weeping angel is.”

Sally froze again. “How do you know about that?”

“I guess you could say the writing was on the wall.” Agent Murdock replied, “Quite literally.”

And so, Agent Murdock explained how their investigation had led them to Western Drumlins, which lead them to the message on the wall, which lead them to her.

When they were finished, Sally looked them in the eye, “I guess that means you might be the only people who’ll believe what actually happened.”

And so, Sally told them everything she knew. About a mysterious message from someone called the Doctor, about the DVDs, about the abduction of her friend at the same time her grandson showed up to deliver a letter from her, about the abduction of the cop who tried to help her, about the group of Weeping Angels now stuck in evidence storage, “As long as they’re looking at each other, they can’t move.” Sally finished, “Me or Larry go back every one and a while, just to check, but it’s been a couple of years.” After a pause she added, “Life got in the way.”

“We completely understand.” Agent Murdock replied, “Don’t worry about it, we’ll take care of it,”

After a bit, he added, “So you might want to be on the lookout just in case.” He was rightly concerned that they might have brought this all back to this poor woman’s doorstep. He pulled a card out of the inside of his packet looked at it, as if to make sure it had the right name on it, then handed it to her. “My number,” He explained, “Just in case—in case you need it.”

“Thank you.” Sally said, taking his card.

With that the pair stood up. “Thank you for your time.” Agent said sat they headed for the door. “Agent Murdock!” Sally called out.

He turned around.

“You’re not really MI-5, are you?” She asked.

“That’s…complicated.” Agent Murdock answered, “What’s important is that we’re gonna do everything we can to make sure what happened to your friend and the cop doesn’t happen to anyone else.

That was something Sally could get behind. “And I wish you the best of luck.” Without further ado, the men stepped outside, “Make sure what happened to your friend doesn’t happen to anyone else?” Jack paraphrased, “Really?”

“I said we would do everything we could. “Fox corrected, “I made no promise we couldn’t keep.”

As they walked off, he added, “So, I’m thinking Toni and her cop were simply at the wrong place at the wrong time.”

“Yeah, but—why do it the way it did?” Jack wondered aloud, “Stopping out in the middle of the road for everyone to see? Not exactly discreet.”

“Jacke they’re sentient time-energy feeding-statues.” Fox pointed out, “Who knows if they have concept of discreetness, understand our laws or moral standards, or, if they do, care that they’re breaking them left and right.” As they walked off he added, “Now, let’s check out this evidence garage and set up some kind of surveillance on it, deal with what Torchwood One somehow missed.”
“To be fair this happened a year after Torchwood one was defunct.” Jack reminded him.
“This was going on for decades before that on their watch.” Fox countered, “They robbed and killed aliens indiscreetly, sent in transfers to spy on us, or openly sent in people to investigate us, one who almost outed Quill and Charlie had she not gotten herself killed, poor girl, and yet they somehow missed the small-scale occupation going on in their own back yard door at least a generation, likely longer.”
“You’re starting sound like Andrea and Chris.” Jack told him.
“Oh, don’t act like you were their biggest fans.” Fox countered “You literally rebuilt your whole branch as a separate entity.”
“And we could almost never straight-up win the day.” Jack argued “And you’ve had your fair share of bad days as well. By no means am I defending them, I’m just saying maybe we shouldn’t be Monday night quarterbacking from our glass house and deal with the matter at hand.”
“Now who’s sounding like Chris?” Fox questioned as they walked off, “Also, were trying to see how many clichés you could fit in that sentence?”
As they left Sally stood up, sighing. The visit had brought up a lot of things that, while she would never really forget, she had tried to put in the past. They had moved as far as away as their need to commute to the shop would allow, barely talked about it except for events like Kathy’s birthday, or when they checked of the garage. And just like that, there it was. Sally glanced outside at her children and her heart stopped. Outside, in the yard with her children, was a Weeping Angel.
The Weeping Angels return to torment the Sparrow-Nightingales.

Sally kept her eyes on the Angel as she poled the door and called out, “Katherine, Dominic, come inside please!”
“Be we just- “Dominic began to protest.
“Please don’t argue with me, just get in here now!” Sally snapped.
The children, bewildered as their mother was no prone to snapping, obeyed.
“Get upstairs.” Sally instructed, “Don’t come out until I tell you to, okay?”
The children nodded, running up the stairs.
Sally’s eyes never left the creature outside as she went for her cellphone and hit her husband’s speedile. “Larry, you need to come home. Now. “
Flying as fast to home as he could, Larry threw the front door open and ran to his wife. “How many of them?” He asked urgently.
“So far just the one.” Sally answered, not looking at him.
“Okay, I’ll take it from here, get the kids, pack only what you need and get out of here.” Larry instructed.
Sally realized he hadn’t included himself in that plan. “What about you?”
“Someone has to keep an eye on that.” Larry replied, “I’ll come when I can.”
“I’m not leaving you.” Sally protested.
“This isn’t just you and me anymore.” Larry insisted, “It’s them, it’s Kathy and Dominic.”
Sally knew she was right. She ran up the stairs.
Five minutes later Sally was on the road with the kids. When she was far enough away she felt it was safe, she pulled over and pulled out the card the likely estraz MI-5 agent had given her.
Meanwhile, Jack and Fox had coned their way into the evidence lock up, only to make a devastating discovery.
The Weeping Angel Ring was nowhere to be found.
“Not good.” Jack declared, walking around the locker, “How did they get out?”
Just then a cell phone went off. “It’s Murdock’s phone.” Fox declared, “I need to take it.” He answered anouching, “Agent Murdock?”
“It’s Sally Sparrow.” The voice on the other end told him, “Something’s happened…”
“Thirty minutes later Larry heard someone entered the house, but didn’t look away, his eyes never leaving the Angel. If he stopped looking at that Angel, they were all dead. “Whatever you want, take it and go” He figured being robbed was the least of his worries right now.
“You Larry Nightingale?” An American-accented man’s voice behind him asked.
“How do you—” Larry began.
“Your wife sent me.” He answered. “I’m gonna get you out of here. I just need a few seconds to get this camera on the angel. Once I do that we have to get out of here fast, okay?”
“This isn’t my first time dealing with this, mate.” Larry told him
“I know, Sally explained everything.” The American replied, “Okay, now!”
And that that the men fled the house.
After a rather bumpy ride through the city, the pair wound up in the doors on the doorsteps of a flat in Soreditch. “Guys, it’s us!” The American, Jack, his name was apparently, called out, knocking on the door. The door was opened by a blonde woman dressed in dark clothing with one hand
behind her back. Her hand dropped, revealing a black and blue gun the likes of which Larry had never seen. “Get in.” She told them, before turning around and walking back in the flat.

“That’s—that’s a ray gun.” Larry said, half question, half statement.

Something like that.” Jack replied, leading him inside, “Come on.”

“Who are you people?” Larry asked.

“Good question.” Jack murmured.

However, Larry was more focused on the calling of, “Dad!” As a little girl and boy came running towards him.

“Hey there,” He beamed kneeling down with his arms opened wide, relieved just to see them again. After holding them for a good minute he asked, worried. “Where’s your mum?”

“In the kitchen!” The blonde called back to them, “Just off your right!”

Larry walked in to find Sally nursing a mug of some sort of murky tea looking the worst for wear.

“Hey there.” He greeted her, causing her to turn around.

Sally sprang from her seat and ran to him, throwing her arms around him and kissing him. “Are you hurt?”

“No and we weren’t followed.” Larry answered, “What about you?”

“Fine, just a little shaken up.” Sally answered, “They’re trying to figure out what to do now. I was fixing to go join them after I calmed down."

“Good idea.” Larry argued, as they headed out of the kitchen.

In the upstairs hall, a conversation was already happening when they got there.

“She’s let men we’ve sent to her stay before when they really needed hiding.” The blonde who had let them in was saying, “She just made sure none of the Daughters knew they were there.”

“That was when they were staying for one, two days stops.” The man Sally knew as Agent Murdock pointed out, “This is going to be a lot longer, most likely forever which means they will be separated if we send them there.”

“Send us where?” Sally spoke up, deucing that they were the topic of discussion.

“Okay, so, we’ve decided that the best thing to do is to get you out of the city and into hiding.” The blonde began, “We’re just trying to figure out the best route. Right now, your options are an all-female alternate society and/or cult in the Northern countryside, a church in Helsinki, Military bases in Germany, or Japan, an apartment above a Vietnamese restraint in Vancouver, or a private residence with a tri-racial quadriplegic on the gulf coast.” After a beat she added, “At least those are the most viable options.”

“Via…what?” Sally got out a lot of that going over her head.

“Mr. and Mrs., Nightingale, you can’t get back to your home.” Agent Murdock spoke up, “They’ve tracked you down, they’ll do it again, because for whatever reason they want you. Now, I know it won’t be easy, you both have lives here, a business, loved ones, your children no doubt have friends. But this is the only way to keep you, your children, safe.”

“And if they find us again?” Larry asked, as if was an obvious question.

“We’ll leave a way for you to contact us when all is said and done, just in case.” Murdock explained.

Sally and Larry exchanged looks and quickly came to terms with their situation; that life as they had come to know it was almost certainly over, and they must trust the fate of their family to the hands of strangers. “Can you go over our options again?” Sally requested, “With a little more detail, please?”

Two hours cater they had a plan. As soon as transport could be arranged, the family would head out to Canada. They would stay at that Vietnamese place until it was determined if it would ever be safe for them to come bac, If the answered was no, they would be rendered to the middle of nowhere in the states. Until then, they were staring at the already crammed house. Of course, if everything didn’t go according to plan, they might have to change course.

“I’ll start making calls.” Murdered anorchid when they had finished, “Does someone mind getting in touch with Toni? We’re going to need some of Chris’ supply as well.”

The blonde, who the couple had heard called Quill at some point, pulled out her and hit the speed
the dial.
Meanwhile, in the faculty parking lot of Coal Hill, a truck pulled up and two men and one woman approach Doretha Ames.
“Did you find them?” One of her companions, a dark-skinned man in a plain, but nice, suit asked.
“Yes, sir, right where she’d said they’d be, A man getting down from the cab of the truck. He went to the back and opened it, revealing five Weeping Angels.
“I thought there were more.” Doretha said.
“They weren’t all facing watch other, ma’am.” The driver explained.
“Good.” The dark-skinned man responded, “Now, do the same for each of the others. I’m, sure they’re all ready to be free doom their imprisonment.”
“Yes, it.” The driver agreed, pulling out a dally along with his partner.
As they watched the men work, the dark-skinned man said, “It appears you were right, Doretha. These people might be useful after all.”
Chapter Summary

Toni Jo must deflect John Henry's Investigation

Toni Jo was woken up by her phone going off, which she quickly picked up, “What happened?” “Well, a lot, actually, except no one’s been able to tell you about it.” Quill said on other end of the line. “Did you talk to Innocenta?” “We got her calmed down.” Toni Jo replied, “But she’s not talking to either of us unless it’s about Dad’s surgery. Quill explained everything that had happened and what was needed from her. “Well, one mystery solved.” Toni Jo said, when her surrogate sister had finished, “Those poor kids.” “Yeah, I know, hopefully they didn’t drop them somewhere they’d wind up in mental asylum.” Quill replied “Or burned at the stake.” After a beat she realized, “That’s not helping, it?” “Not realty.” Toni Jo confirmed, “I’ll start making calls.” “Thanks.” Quill responded, “You handling learning you barely escaped a terrible fate okay?” “As well as can be expected.” Toni Jo replied, “But for the Grace of God and nearby status chambers go I.” Honestly, she was a bit numb to the life changing and/or Earth-shattering revelations at that point. “I’ll call in when it’s done. Love you.” “You too.” Quill responded before hanging up.

Leaving the room, Toni Jo went into the bathroom to start making calls. “Yes, I know it’s last minute Sticks, you’re okay with me calling you Sticks, right?” Toni Jo was saying on her third call. “I see no reason why not.” Sticks replied, “Look, can’t you just—put them on a commercial flight?” “It’s not that simple.” Toni Jo answered. In truth, they had considered that option, but when there’s no way to tell if one’s being followed, evasive maneuvers are necessary. “Look, we just need you to get them to the Canadian border and—” Her voice trailed off as she heard someone enter the bathroom. Lowering her voice, she said, “Hold on a minute.” Putting the phone up she exited the stall, made a show of washing her hands, then exited. Finding a secluded, cameraless spot, she took the phone out again, showering, “When have a Mounty who can take it from there.” “Of course, you do.” Sticks responded mostly to himself. “Look, what if we compensated you for the business you lost?” Toni Jo suggested. “Okay, depending on the exact nature of job, charter or—other—that would run anywhere from five hundred to five hundred thousand.” Sticks informed her. “Five hundred thou—” Toni Jo began, but stopped when an orderly came down the hall pushing a cart, “—hold that thought.” And she began running through the hospital, trying to find a safe place to have this conversation. “Do you need to call me back?” Sticks asked, “You seem a little—preoccupied.” “No, it’s fine.” Toni insisted, at last finding another safe spot, “Look, we’re not made of money, the most I can do is a cool grand.” “Two grand.” Sticks countered. “One thousand one fifty and I’ll recommend you to some contacts that make use of some of your—extra curriculars.” Toni Jo debated, “As paying customers. Enough to make up for anything else
you lost."

“And after that you lose my number.” Sticks added, “I’ve paid my debt to your father five times over at this point.”

“Done.” Toni Jo agreed without a second thought, “Now do we have a deal?”

They worked out the particulars then Toni Jo hung up, staring at the phone had she really just done that? Surrendered a valuable resource that they might need again?

Maybe I’m not cut out for this. Toni Jo though, but shook it off. If we need Sticks again, we’ll deal with it then.

She began to walk back to her father’s room, when she caught something out of the Ortner of her eye that made her stop and turn around. Standing at the front desk talking to the nurse, was a familiar brunette man in a familiar dark leather jacket.

“No.” Toni Jo whispered. It couldn’t be. Could it?

The man looked up again and Toni Jo found herself staring into the eyes of John Henry Davenport. “Seeing her as well, the deceive began to approach her, but Toni Jo turned tail and ran. John Henry took after her, only to be stopped by a nurse. “You can’t just go back there.” She told him firmly.

“Ma’am, you don’t understand—” John Henry began.

Toni ho turned a corner, running into the nearest bathroom and locking herself in the earnest stall.

Okay, she though, probably not the best was to handle that. But what was she doing here? In this hospital?

Realizing there was only way to find out, Toni Jo forced herself off of the toilet.

Walking out of the bathroom she found herself flooded with different emotions. The pain and fear of patents. The worry of loved ones. The grief of those who had lost someone. The concern and desperation, and worst, in some cases cold distance and superiority, or doctors. She had unblocked much too soon. Overcome she fell to the fell to ground. This was most decidedly not her day. Or even her week. Or month. As tears brimmed in her eyes, a hand came into her line or vision.

Looking up she found John Henry standing over her.

“Need a little help?” He asked her.

That was how they wound up be sitting across from each other at a coffee house a few blocks from the hospital. Apparently, all their encounters involved unessacary drinks. Toni Jo had refused to look up from her tea, embarrassed by her handing the situation, or lack there of.

“Are you sure you’re okay?” John Henry asked gingelly concerned.

She was focusing in on him now and found him frustratingly pure of heart.

“Yes,” Toni Jo lied, “How did you fine me, anyway?”

“It wasn’t easy.” Jong Henry admitted, “I still don’t remember everything that happened, but distinctly remember somehow being in London with you at some point, so that’s where I went first. I couldn’t find you, but I found your sister, who appears to be running some sort of boarding house out of her flat by the way.”

Toni Jo’ stomach dropped but at the same time she was confused. “Quill wouldn’t do that.” She said firmly, “She wouldn’t tell you where I was, and if for some reason she did, she would give me warning.”

“Well, she didn’t know she was telling me.” John Henry explained, “When I found you weren’t there, I figured I wouldn’t get anywhere with Quill or any of the others for that matter, so I began shaking the house out. I got closer than I probably should’ve and just happened to catch a mention of Cardiff. I took a chance. After a little detective work, I managed to track you down to the hospital. After that it was just a matter of getting past the nurse. Which it’s a good thing I did, all things considered.”

“All things considered.” Toni Jo repeated, finally looking up, “So, I’m assuming you didn’t come all this way just to save me from making a speckle of myself and buying me a crappy cuppa tea.”

“No.” John Henry admitted, “The reason why I was looking for you—why I needed to go looking door you—are that I’ve been remembering things—and I was hoping maybe you could clear things up.”

Crap Toni Jo thought, her heat plummeting again. “What exactly do you remember?”
“Freaky statues that may or may not have kidnapped us, openly talking about crimes, and eighties fashion.” John Henry answered.

“Are you sure you didn’t just have some really trippy dreams?” Toni asked, hiking she could convince him that was at it was that all this had been a wild goose chase.

Instead, the response she got was a raised eyebrow.

Toni Jo sighed. “Look, this isn’t really the best time. The reason I was in that hospital is because my dad’s there. He’s got a heart condition, they just discovered it.” She hoped that maybe he would feel sorry for her and leave her alone.

His contended did soften a bit “I’m sorry.” He said softly, “Your, ah, dad, he’s the one that got you in the family business, right?”

Toni Jo opened her month to answer, but then realized that, while yes, party of him still sincerely cared about hers and her family’s welfare, he was also taking the opportunity to pump her for information in a sneaky way. “I don’t believe you.”

“How dare you?!” John Henry responded, not realizing he had been caught.

“You’re just trying to pump me for information.” Toni Jo called him out, “How dare you?!”


While he struggled for words, Toni Jo got go her to feet indignantly. “I don’t ever want to see you around here again or I will have your badge, do you understand me?!”

John Henry was still struggling for words as she walked away. She reached out to see if he had got the message. She found at the very least she’d have the time it took for him to regroup to think of a plan. With that she got up and walked away.
Their investigation starts effecting Ram's other relationships, Jack and Quill are not on the same page on how their relation ended and Charlie and Mateusz start getting sloppy. Not necessarily in that order.

“Alright,” Charlie began, standing the supply closet of the diner, across from Mateusz, “A lot of people think the secret to winning a fight is beating up your opponent. Really, it’s never getting hit. Then beating up your opponent. Like the day we met, remember?”

Mateusz nodded. Even if it hadn’t led to this, that day was rather a red-letter day. And now that he thought about it the other boy hadn’t hit Charlie that day.

“But,” Charlie continued, “Just because you get hit, doesn’t mean you can’t still win. Let’s keep using that day for reference. Can you get up against the wall for me?”

Wordlessly, Mateusz did as she was told getting up again the wall. Charlie fallowed him pressing one of his arms up against the wall. “One of this had you like this.” He recapped, before going to the other side, “And the other one had you like this. And the leader,” Charlie ran in front of him, “Was like this. Close enough to hit you, but also close enough for you to hit him if your arms weren’t pinned. But, no one thought to restrain your legs, probably because they were literally school yard bullies, but I digress. Now, kick me as hard as you can.”

Mateusz was not a little bit hesitant, staring at Charlie like he had lost his mind.

“Come on, you do it.” Charlee ordered, “Look, if it helps, close your eyes and pretend its someone you hate. Someone you absolutely despise with every fiber of your being.”

Mateusz closed his eyes. Charlie took a swing at him and suddenly felt a sharp pain in his abdomen, causing him to double over.

Hearing the groaning, Mateusz opened his eyes and saw Charlie in that position. “Oh Crap.” He exclaimed, grabbing him and leading him over to the wall. “I am so sorry.”

“Yeah.” Charlee answered, “Nice kick by the way.”

“You did exactly what I wanted you to do. You wouldn’t pull any punches in a real fight, you shouldn’t here.”

Not commenting on that sentiment Mateusz asked, “Will you be alright?”

“Thanks.” Mateusz replied, “I told you I can handle myself.”

“To be fair, I can’t exactly blame you.” Mateusz confessed. “And, somehow, kicking never occurred to me.”

“Well, it’s kind of fighting dirty.” Charlie conceded, “Going for the soft bits like that. You have a stronger sense of fair play than I do.”

The boys were silent for a moment t than Mateusz smiled at Charlie. “Maybe that’s why we fit so well together.”

Charlie smiled back at him “Yeah, maybe it its.”

It was quiet again, then Mateusz came out with a question he could contain no longer. “Charlie, how did you learn to fight like this?”

“Excuse me?” Charlie responded, thought he knew full well what Mateusz had said and what he meant.

“Who thought you fight dirty?” Mateusz asked, “Who taught you to fight at all?”
Charlie’s heart stopped. “I think I’m ready to go again.” He said suddenly, thought he was still hurting, trying to get up.

Mateusz however, grabbed his wrist. “You’re avoiding the question.” He accused, pulling him back down to the ground.


“It matters because,” Mateusz began, “I’ve told you everything but you—you just give me bits and pieces. I know you’re adopted, raised by a single mother, only you don’t have the same last name for some reason. Both of you just showed up here this semester. Your only other family appears to be a nameless doctor aunt who was significant enough in your life for you want to be a doctor, too, you live—somewhere—in this area and—that’s it. It’s like…trying to put a puzzle together when you have less than half the pieces.” If Mateusz was being honest it was that mysteriousness that attracted him to Charlie at first, but now it was starting to get frustrating.

Charlie leaned back against the wall, silent. He knew that Mateus was right, that it was unfair. “I’m sorry,” he said at last, “It’s just—there are things I can’t tell you. Things I’m afraid to tell you.” “Whatever it was, it can’t be that bad.” Mateusz assured him.

Charlie looked over and stared in Mateusz’s pale eyes. He wished it was true. He wished it was that simple. He turned away before saying, “Toni.”

“What?” Mateusz responded.

“My aunt, her name is Toni.” Charlie elaborated. He knew he shouldn’t be doing it, but it was only part of her name. It wasn’t even her actual name, it was a shortened form. What was the worst that could happen? “She specializes in emergency medical and herbal remedies. And’s a very devout Catholic.”

“Well that must have made it fun telling her about— “Mateusz began, gesturing between the two of them, “Assuming she knows.”

“I haven’t told anyone about us.” Charlie reminded him, “Including her.”

“I wasn’t talking about us.” Mateusz told him, “Specifically.”

“Oh,” Charlie responded, catching on, “No, actually, she was surprisingly okay with it. Her logic is it just means we can be stoned to death in a lot of the same places.” After a beat, he realized, “That’s not appropriate, is it?”

“Possibly.” Mateusz answered, “At the very least it’s very, very macabre.” Not he wasn’t happy for Charlie, “And your mother?”

“I’m pretty sure she doesn’t realize I have a sexuality at all.” Charlee answered, “And she’s an atheist. Well, not exactly, I mean, she believes in souls…”

“Why the difference?” Mateusz asked, “Were they both reused Catholics, or raised without religion, or…”

“It’s complicated.” Charlie answered, “Trust me, we would be here all day and we don’t have the time.” After a beat he added, “And that’s all you’re getting right now!”

“Okay,” Mateusz responded calmly, “Alright. You don’t have to say anymore if you don’t want to.” He had feeling this was going to be a marathon, no sprint.

“Thanks.” Charlie replied, “I’m sorry.” After a beat, he asked, “Why do you put up with me?” In Charlie’s mind, it was a good question.

“Because,” Mateusz began, scooting closer to him, “You’re smart, brave…admittedly not that bad looking. I think the bad out ways the good.” That was when the pair started to lean in. Really leaned in. Soon their lips were touching. Next thing either of them knew they were kiss deeper, more intense….

However, before things could go any further, they were interrupting by footsteps coming their direction.

The boys pulled back. “I thought you said no one else was here.” Charlie hissed.

“No’s one supposes to be.” Mateusz whispered back, getting to his feet.

“Is there any other way out?” Charlie asked, as if they left the way they came they’d run right into
the person coming at them.
“No. “Mateusz answered, “It’s a supply closet.”
“Okay, then we just…” Charlie began, his mind racing for a plan, “Barricade the door, make as little noise as possible and wait them out.”

The boys went to the door and put their bodies against the door, trying to keep their breathing in check and the steps walked their way, their hearts racing faster as the steps got to the door. However, the steps walked past the door, fading into the distance.
“Okay, we wait a couple of minutes to make sure no one’s coming back, then we get out of here.” Charlie instructed, still whispering.

After two minutes of complete silence Charlie grabbed Mateusz by the wrist-something that was starting to become a pattern-and dragged him down the hall. They got to the back door only to find it was locked.
“That must have been Jerry locking up.” Mateusz ruefully speculated, rubbing a hand across his face. This was not good.
“Where do they kept the knives?” Charlie asked.
“This way.” Mateusz told him, deciding not to question it, and walking off.

Charlie went through the knives, at least pulling out a butter knife. “This ought to do it.” He declared.

That was when Mateusz thought the time for question had come. “Ought to do what?”

However, Charlie’s mind was going 90 miles an hour, not even registering that Mateusz had spoken. “Cameras.” He said suddenly, urgently, “Does this place have cameras?”
“No, it’s an older building.” Mateusz answered, “Why?”

“Pulling two handkerchiefs out of his pocket, Charlie said, “I’m about to ask you do something you aren’t going to like. I need to ransack the place the little.”
“What?” Mateusz balked, knowing what he had said but no believing he had said it, nor understanding why.
“I’m going to pick the lock.” Charlie explained, “And if you won’t any chance of keeping your job, we need to make this look like an attempted robbery.” Then handed him the handkerchiefs.
“To cover your hands with.” He explained, “So you don’t leave prints.”

Mateusz took the handkerchiefs and went to work.

Charlie ran back to the door and stuck the knife in the lock. He carefully lifted it back and forth until he activated the mechanism, unlocking the door. “Mateusz!” He called out, “It’s done, come here!”

Mateusz ran to him, and together than ran out the door, down the block, then down another block, before finally stopping. “I think it’s safe.” Charlie said, turning around.

“Really?” Charlie responded, trying to stay calm.
“You’re with the mob, aren’t you?” Mateusz asked.
Charlie laughed. “What?”
“It explains everything.” Mateusz reasoned, “The fighting skills, the vagueness about your family, you knowing how to make our escape look like a break in. And a lot of mafia families are Catholic.”
“That sounds somewhat prejudice.” Charlie pointed out.
“I heard it as I was saying it.” Mateusz admitted, “So?”

“Mateusz, if I actually was with the mob, do you think I’d tell you?” Charlie countered.
“No.” Mateusz admitted, as they continued to walk.

Their plans derailed, the couple got one step closer to figuring out the ‘relationship thing’. Namely Mateusz allowed Charlie to walk him home.
“You’re not worried about—them seeing us?” Charlie asked, as if discussing a great danger. With for all he knew, they be.
“Well, maybe we should part at the corner.” Mateusz suggested. He wasn’t ready for the crap that
would hit the fan when the enviable happened and they found out.

“All right,” Charlie agreed, stopping at the corner. This time, emboldened, was the one to go in for the kiss.

Meanwhile, elsewhere in the city, a three-way video chat was happening.

“Do you think we could have been…investigating something?” Tanya asked, “Something in the locker rooms?”

“Maybe?” April answered uncertainly, “I don’t know. That would explain why I had your phone number.”

“This isn’t a good idea.” Ram spoke up, “This really isn’t a good idea.”

“Yes, Ram, we heard you the first fifteen times.” Tanya responded, rolling her eyes.

“Then why aren’t you listening to me?” Ram demanded.

“If you’re so against this than why are you even here?” Tanya countered.

“Because I don’t want you two going off on your own and getting into trouble!” Ram exclaimed.

“Alright, everyone!” April interrupted, “Everyone just needs to calm down. Now, Ram, you said you’d been having flashbacks, too?”

“I don’t know if you’d call them flashbacks.” Ram responded, “They don’t make any sense.”

“That’s okay.” April assured him, “Neither does anything else. Just—tell us what you’re seeing and I’ll write it down.”

Five minutes later they had a list of everything they were seeing. Such as it was.

“So, we have gray scales, blood, someone talking about sleep deprivation, something about Satanists, and…The X-Files?” April recapped.

“So, what?” Ram asked, “A really tired cult tried to sacrifice us to a dragon and fictional characters saved us?”

“Why do you think it was dragon?” April asked.

That was when Ram realized, “I don’t know.”

“Maybe we should that to the list.” April suggested.

“Sure, whatever.” Ram said.

“Now that I think on it more, I don’t think we encountered actual Satanists.” Tanya spoke up, “I think we were just talking about them for some reason.”

“So, what?” Ram asked, “A really tired cult tried to sacrifice us to a dragon and fictional characters saved us?”

“Why do you think it was dragon?” April asked.

That was when Ram realized, “I don’t know.”

“Maybe we should that to the list.” April suggested.

“Sure, whatever.” Ram said.

“Now that I think on it more, I don’t think we encountered actual Satanists.” Tanya spoke up, “I think we were just talking about them for some reason.”

“Do you remember with who?” April asked.

Quill didn’t care that Charlie was late or that his excuse was deplorably flimsily. She was too frazzled from trying to avoid Jack. When she went to check on their current guests, he had already done it and being frustratingly sweet with the children. She worked on the wall, Jack asked if she needed help. It seemed as if whenever she turned around, he was there.

Quill was simply getting a glass of water from the kitchen, when she heard someone knocking on the side of the wall she looked up and saw Jack. “We’re needed in the living room.” He told her, then ducked out, realizing he wasn’t wanted.

When Quill got into the living room, everyone else was gathered as promise. “I got the last transport lined up.” Fox announced, “We just need to get them to the docks tomorrow night. Now, I have to go make some payments that are necessary to pull this up, so any volunteers?”

Before either of them realized the other had done it, Jack and Quill raised their hands, then turned to look at each other in dismay.

“Thanks guy.” Fox said, “Gwen, Charlie, can you take the school?”

“Yes.” They said at about the same time.

They both opened their mouths to protest, to take it back, but everyone else was already going to another task. They turned to each other in distress and realized it was hopeless.

This was happening.

The next day, as Charlie was getting something from his locker, he noticed Ram and April talking. Since when do they know each other?

That was when Ram stared at them, and the pair locked eyes. Charlie started to get uncomfortable and looked away. He really didn’t like where this was going.

“Ram, don’t look at him.” April hissed, “At least not like that. That look shoots up red flags even
with a normal person.”
“Sorry.” Ram said, taking her suggestion.
“Besides, Tanya only thought it might be him.” April continued, “She also listed a couple other people it could be.”
“Remember what I told you April.” Ram remind her, “Be careful around him.”
Just then Rachel approached him. “Hey, Ram, who’s your friend?”
“Ah, Rachel, this is April.” Ram introduced her, caught off guard, “April, this is my girlfriend, Rachel.”
“Nice to meet you.” Rachel beamed, extending a hand.
“You too.” April replied, taking the hand and shaking it.
“How come we’ve never met before?” Rachel asked.
“Well, we, ah, just met, sort of.” April replied awkwardly.
“Well, we have class together.” Ram admitted.
“Okay,” Rachel replied, trying to be casual, “So, ah, what are we talking about?”
“Oh, just plans for a class project we’re working on together.” Ram lied quickly, “We just got the assignment yesterday which is why you haven’t heard about it.”
“Okay.” Rachel said, thinking it odd, but not wanting to accuse Ram of anything especially since he hadn’t really done anything to warrant suspicion.
“Why did you lie to her?” April asked later, “About what we’re doing?”
“I don’t want her involved in this.” Ram explained, “It’s too dangerous. The further away she is from this, whatever this is, the better.”
“Yeah, but what if we can’t?” April asked, “Keep her away from it, I mean. I’m starting to think we didn’t think this through.”
“Now you think of that?” Ram responded, “So, what exactly is our plan here?”
“I was hoping you knew.” April replied.
“What am I our leader, or something?” Ram challenged.
“Yes.” April answered.
Deciding not to fight it, he said, “Well, then, I’ll let you know when I think one of one.”
Meanwhile Charlie was doing what had become the daily check, when he realized there was someone behind him. He whirled around causing, Mateusz to jump back.
“Gah, don’t scare me like that.” Charlie exclaimed.
“Sorry.” Mateusz responded, then he noticed something in his hand, “What is that?”
“Nothing.” Charlie replied, quickly hiding the device behind his back.
“That didn’t look like nothing.” Mateusz told him.
“It is.” Charlie insisted, “Really.” Even he knew it was weak.
“Charlie, I understand that you have some things you want to keep secret, but please don’t insult my intelligence.” Mateusz responded.
Charlie sighed and pulled the scanner out from behind his back, handing it to Mateusz. The taller youth weighted it in his hand. “What is it?”
“I’m as clueless as you are.” Charlie lied, “I just found it.” Taking a chance, he added, “Does the school have a lost and a found?”
“Come on,” Mateusz told him, “I’ll show you where it is.”
True to his word, Mateus took Charlie straight to the lost in found. All the while his mind was racing for a way to get it back without anyone knowing.
Which is probably why neither of them noticed they were being watched.
That night, the Nightgales were loaded into the back of the van where they, Quill and Jack endured a tense and silently ride. “We’re here.” Was the only thing said, by Quill as she put the car in park. She and Jack opened the back doors, ushering the family they were they were faced with a woman with her hair covered with a brown hat.
“Everyone, this is Claire.” Jack introduced them, “Quill, this is the family you’ll be transporting.”
“Pleased to meet you.” Claire greeted in a Northern lit, “Now, if you’d just follow me—” With that she led them onto the boat.
After seeing the Nightingales safety off, the pair had to endure a tense car ride back. At last Jack asked, “Are you ever going to talk to me?”

“What do you think?” Quill responded.

“Can you at least tell me what I did?” Jack asked.

“You know what you did!” Quill shot back, “And then you waltz in here either trying to act like nothing having or that somehow I’m the bad guy!”

“Well you are the one who stopped returning my calls.” Jack pointed out.

“That’s what happens when you stand someone up at a train station instead of breaking up with them in person like a man!” Quill shouted. Yeah, she went there.

That caught Jack by surprise, “What?!”

“Watch that light!” Quill suddenly warned him.

Jack barely slamming on the breaks in time to stop them from hitting the car in front of them brought a blunt end to the conversation.

“I don’t get it.” Ram said as that were discussing the situation that night, “Do you think this guy knows something?”

“I don’t know what he knows or if he knows.” Tanya admitted, “I’m not even sure who he is. I’m just saying, he could be a way in.”

“It’s the best we got. “Ram admitted, “But we have to be careful in how we go about this…” But being careful was harder than it sounded. Making any move on the tall new player was harder than it sounded, as he was never alone. A certain blonde was almost constantly with him.

And that was not their only problem.

In an increasingly rare time when they not without the girls, Rachel asked Ram, “What exactly are you doing with those two?”

“Those two?” Ram repeated, not getting the connection.

“April and Tanya.” Rachel reminded him.

“Like I told you, we’re working a project together.” Ram repeated the lie.

“Right, a project that no one knows anything about and I haven’t gotten?” Rachel countered. While they didn’t have the same period, they both had Miss Quill for physics.

“Are you trying to accuse me of something?” Ram asked, trying not to sound defensive.

“No.” Rachel asked, “No, I know you would never do anything like that. Though, with some of the looks April gives you, I would be paranoid if you weren’t.”

“What does that mean?” Ram asked.

“You don’t see it do you?” Rachel responded.

However, there was someone else who was noticing something: Quill. She had been suspicious of Mateusz from the start, and as he spent more time around her son, she took notice. She also notices Charlie’s increasing absences, even when he was there, he wasn’t there sometimes. Like he was preoccupied. And his excuses for leaving or being late were getting more and more and flimsier. And for the couple’s part, they were getting less and less careful. They honestly had started not caring.

They should have cared.

They should have been careful.

It wasn’t even one of their secret rendezvous. They were just about to part ways for their second class, and, as had become custom Mateusz leaned in and the pair kissed deeply.

It just so happened, that Quill was helping Susan, as a consequence was coming down the hall.

“Wait, what is that?”

“Just a couple kids making out.” Susan responded, both her hearts stopping. Would it kill them to be discreet?

“Except I think I know the kids making out.” Quill told her.

That was when Charlie and Mateusz came up for air and saw Quill staring at them.

“Ohhhh.” She said slowly.
Welcome To Fallout

Chapter Summary

Quill has mini nervous-breakdown, but that's about to become the least of their problems.

The pairs just stared at each other for a moment. Charlie and Mateusz stared at Quill and Susan and Quill and Susan stared at Charlie and Mateusz. The tension was so thick one could cut it with a knife and Susan grabbed Quill’s arm, afraid of what she might do. That was when Quill did the one thing no one expected: She started laughing. That did little to ease the tension, as aside from being unexpected, the laughing was almost manic, and no one could tell exactly what it meant. “Is that—” Mateusz began. “I have no idea.” Charlie confessed.

“Quill?” Susan asked, tugging at her wrist, “Quill are you alright?” She was sincerely concerned the woman was having a nervous breakdown. “I don’t know!” Quill managed to get out between bursts, “I truly don’t. I mean, him, and—” She didn’t get any more out after that. “Okay, I’m gonna get her out of here.” Susan announced, “You two, just—get to class, we’ll figure this out.” “Yes,” Quill spoke up, “Yes, we will be talking about this later.”

Susan shot them both a sympathetic look as she walked away with Quill. Not knowing what else to do, Susan told the sectary they were both leaving for the day, family emergency, and took Quill back to the flat (Susan’s flat), which she hadn’t really been to since the day they kidnapped her. Depositing Quill on her red futon with a black frame, Susan got her kettle out of the cabinet and put some water on. By the time it went off, she had stopped laughing and was just sitting there, staring off into space.

Susan pour the water into two cups, let the bags seep for a few minutes, before going over to Quill. “Here,” She said, forcing the cup into her hand, “I found this blend cures most ills.” “I think I might need something a little stronger.” Quill responded, still staring off.

“That’s just what we need here, you drunk and angry.” Susan murmured, then for a moment they were in complete silence again. “Quill, talk to me. Please. What are you thinking?” “I don’t know what to think.” Quill admitted, “I mean—what?” “Well, at least you know he’s not a spy.” Susan quipped. “That still remains to be seen.” Quill responded, “He may very well be a honey trap.” Susan rubbed her forehead, “Or he’s a hormonal teenage boy, who met another hormonal teenage boy he likes, and over a decade in Torchwood has made you paranoid. And yes, I know, UNIT, MI-5, FBI, March of Dimes…” Her voice trailed off and she tried a different route, “Think of it this way, at least you don’t have to worry about anyone getting pregnant.” After a beat something occurred to her, “We don’t do, we? I’m not that familiar with either of your biologies.” “Can we please not talk about my son having sex?” Quill response, “Please.” After a beat she murmured, “But I swear, if he so much as touched him…” “Okay, talk like that isn’t going to help the situation.” Susan cut her, “Look, putting aside the possibly that Mateusz might be a spy for an alien organization, what are you thinking?” Quill finally looked up at her. “I’m thinking there’s no way this can come to a good end. One way or another he’s getting his heart broken.”
“When you have to leave again?” Susan responded.
“Well, that too.” Quill answered, “I actually was thinking about when this boy got what he wanted
left him in the dust.”
“Okay, I don’t know that much about him myself, but if you’re going to keep assuming the worst
of him, we’re not gonna get anywhere.” Susan snapped, “And it’s not like Charlie is a complete
innocent in this, he was kissing him back.”
“That hadn’t escaped my attention.” Quill responded, “Look, with all due respect to your late
husband, humans are a mess when it comes to relationships. Look around, adultery, abuse, murder
stemming from the adultery and abuse, abandoned spouses and children, lovers just up and leaving
with no explanation leaving their significant others in a train station!”
They were both silent for a moment after that. “Well, that last bit was oddly specific.” Susan said
finally, “There’s something you’re not telling me isn’t there?”
There’s a lot I’m not telling you. Quill thought, then deciding to come clean, sort of explained, “I
was in a relationship with a human man, for five years. It didn’t—end well. I don’t want Charles
making the mistake.”
Now things were started to make a lot more sense. “Look, just because you had a bad experience
doesn’t mean the same thing will happen to your son.” Susan assured her, “Was it a good idea,
getting into a relationship under these circumstances? No, but I’m sure you’re well aware that
teenagers are not known for their good ideas. Let’s just—get the whole story and have a calm,
rational discussion about this.”
“You keep talking like you’re going to be there.” Quill said.
“Maybe because you just came out of a state of near catatonia?” Susan pointed out, adding after the
beat, “Look, I get it, this is between you and your son, can I just—wait upstairs in case things get
out of hand?”
Quill and Susan just stared at each other, and Quill realized the other alien wasn’t backing down.
“Fine.”
When Quill felt well enough, the pair went back to her flat. Standing at the table, she called
Charlie. “Charles it’s me,” She began, “I’m at the flat. Come straight home after school. We
apparently have a lot to talk about. Try not to get yourself killed.” When she hung up, she could’ve
sworn Susan was hiding a smirk, “What?”
“Nothing.” Susan replied. You just have an odd way of saying I love you.
After they waited in mostly silence. It got time for school to let out, but Charlie never showed up.
After roughly half an hour, Quill called him again. “Charles, it’s me. When I told you to come
straight home I wasn’t kidding. Now, call me back to tell me you’re on your way.”
A half hour more and no answer, and no Charlie. Quill called again. “Charles, this isn’t funny.”
She said, pacing the floor, “Call me back.”
That was also when she started making calls to other people. Fox, Gwen, even Toni Jo. No one had
heard anyone. In a fit of desperation, she looked up April’s number. She had no clue.
“Charles.” Quill began, her voice desperate as she put on her coat, “I am officially freaking out
now. I don’t care about the boy, just—call me to let you know you’re alright.” And with that she
and Susan headed out the door.
“Fox, I need you to get ahold of Celeste, now.” Quill said into her phone as she ran down the street, “I need Charles’ phone and chip traced, five minutes ago.”

“Why?” Fox asked, alarms bells going off, reaching for one of his alias’ phone so he could dial Celeste at the same time.

“Something happened.” Quill answered, “I-I think he’s run away.”

“What?” Fox balked.

“Just---please get me a trace, Fox.” Quill pleaded, “Please.”

“I’m on it.” Fox told her, “I’ll let you know the minute it’s in.”

“Thank you.” Quill replied, before handing up.

“Where are we going?” Susan asked, running at Quill’s side.

“The school.” Quill answered, “It’s the last place we know for certain where he was.”

When they got there, the school was completely deserted. Still, they looked.

“Charles!” Quill called out, marching through the courtyard.

“Charlie!” Susan called out from nearby.

“Charles!” Quill repeated.

“Charlie!” Susan repeated as well.

“Charles, answer me!” Quill pleaded.

Susan turned to face her. “I don’t think he’s here.”

“I was thinking the same thing.” A third voice said from behind them.

Both women turned around to see one Jack Harkness approaching them.

“What are you doing here?” Quill practically sneered.

“Fox called me, thought you might need help.” Jack explained, “He said something about your son being missing?”

“It’s none of your concern.” Quill responded coolly.

“Quill!” Susan responded.

“It’s not.” Quill insisted, “I don’t need his help. I won’t except it!”

“Look, Andrea.” Jack began, “As long as I’ve known you that kid has always been your world. Now, he’s in the wind. Are you really going to reject any help finding him?”

Quill realized, he was right. “Fine.”

They proceeded to tell him the whole story. Having realized he was officially not at the school, there was one place to look.

That was how Quill and Jack wound up on a strange front stoop, Quill pounding on the door and shouting, “Open up!”

The door was opened, revealing Mateusz. “Miss Quill?” He asked, “What are you---”

“Have you seen Charles?” Quill cut him off, not really processing that he spoke at all, “Since this morning? Have you seen him?”

“Not really,” Mateusz answered, “He’s been avoiding me since…. the incident.” After a beat she added, “Why? Has something happened?”

“I don’t see how that’s any business of yours.” Quill snapped.

“I do.” Jack replied, “Look, Charlie didn’t come home after school and he’s not answering his phone. That’s why we were hoping you had heard for him.”
Mateusz’s eyes widened as his heart dropped into his stomach. Has Charlie done something stupid? Or worst, had something been done to him?

That was when a voice from inside called out, “Mateusz, kto jest u drzwi?!” (Mateusz, who’s at the door?!”)

“Jehovah’s Witnesses!” Jack called out.

“You know what they’re saying?” Quill whispered, as it surprised her.

“No, but, it’s not that hard to guess.” Jack whispered back, “What would you say If your kid was at the door for several minutes and not told who was there?”

That was Mateusz called back, “Faktycznie, Mama, myślę, że muszę iść.” (Actually, Mom, I think I need to go out.)

“Nibly dlaczego?!” The other voice shouted back. (What for?)

“Coś się pojawia się.” Mateusz called back. (I just need to!)

“Potrzebuję więcej, że zanim pozwolę ci iść o tej godzinie!” The voice shouted back. (You’re not going anywhere until you tell me why!)

Mateusz lowered his head in defeat, then turned his head back in. “Mój chłopak jest brak. Szukam dla niego.” (My boyfriend’s missing. I’m going to look for him.)

“Co?!” The voice inside balked as Mateusz bounded away. (What?!)“Whoa, whoa, whoa.” Quill protested, running up in front of Mateusz and realizing for the first time just how pounced the height difference is, “Where do you think you’re going?”

“Going look for Charlie before they can process what I just said.” Mateusz answered.

“No, no, no.” Quill responded, “No. You’re not going out there.”

“Miss Quill, I know you don’t like me.” Mateusz told her, “But I love your son, and I’m not going to stand around while anything could be happening to him.”

Quill realized this was no time to get in a long debate. “What the Hell, I already got my ex-boyfriend on this. Come on.” And with that they were all off.

Just then Quill phone’s went off. “Do you have a trace?” She asked as she picked it up. “I got a trace on Charlie.” Fox told her, “And you’re not gonna like where he’s at.”

Charlie stood at the side of the building, his heart pounding, not believing what he was thinking about doing.

He stared down at his phone, which was currently in his hand, flipped opened. His mother was probably having it traced, right that minute. The chip they all got in Ecuador too. If he was going to do this, it would have to be now.

And then what? Even if Mateusz agreed to run off with them, where would they go? They had no resources, Charlie only had about forty quid in his pocket and even with Mateusz’s who knew how much he get his hands on, on quite literally a moment’s notice, they had no way out of town and no place to go if they got out. Charlie couldn’t exactly use any of Torchwood’s contacts for this. In fact, he had very little of a plan at all but for some reason the thought of facing his mother after what happened that morning terrified him and he wasn’t even sure why. But this? Was this really the answer?

Before he could talk himself in or out of it, a figure came up the street. Dipping behind a different alleyway, he peered out to get a better look at her. As she got closer, he found to his shock it was Doretha Ames, a hooded clock over her clothes. When she got to the trap alley, she turned, raising the hood and went inside.

After a moment, Charlie ran after her.
The Riot

Chapter Summary

The team finds themselves in forbidden territory, find each other for a few minutes, only to be separated again when all Hell breaks lose.

Charlie followed Doretha into the alley, way until it was no longer an alleyway. It opened up, revealing a dimly listed street lined with buildings and people. Some of who didn’t appear all that human. His heart sank as he realized where they were.

Since the 1930s Torchwood Four and the London Trap Street had, had a standing agreement. They didn’t mess with the Trap Street and the Trap Street didn’t mess with them. This agreement had ensured the safety of the dizens of the street, and kept Torchwood Four from having to deal with the crazy woman who ran the place.

It was an agreement Charlie had just broke.
He was about to leave before he could do anymore damage, when he caught sight of Doretha. He took off after her, deeper into the street.

The trap was more crowded than Charlie had imagined. Of the people out in the street, he figured there were at least twenty. Every shape and size, some of them appearing human, or at least in human guises. And with the narrowest of the street and the streets surrounding it, he kept bumping up against people, barely keeping Doretha in his sight.

“Sorry.” He said as he bumped into another person, staring straight ahead, only to bump once again into yet another person. “Sorry.” A few more steps and suddenly he found himself unable to take the next step, as something had snagged his jacket. He turned around to find his sleeve in the claws of a creature a head taller then him, dinosaur-like in shape, a lean body covered in obsidian-colored scales, a mouth with sharp needle-like teeth protruding, staring at him with small, reptilian, predatory eyes.

“Lost are you, dearie?” The creature asked in a sickeningly sweet voice, grinning at Charlie with a mouth full of teeth.

“No, I just—” Charlie stammered, struggling to get free.

“Come with us.” The creature offered, gesturing to some sketchy looking people coming from an alley, “We’ll help you find your way.”

Charlie finally managed to wriggle out of his jacket and grab his knife. “Stay away.” He demanded, back away as fast as he could.

Meanwhile, the growing group of people looking for the wayward boy came to the entrance of the trap street. Quill turned around and began, “Alright, you two stay here. We’re going to go in and get Charles.”

“What would he be doing in there?” Mateusz spoke up.

“It’s a long story.” Quill replied, “I’ll explain it to you later, after I kick your boyfriend’s arse.” Mateusz wanted to argue, but considering the worry his boyfriend had caused his poor mother, just watched Miss Quill and the man who was apparently her ex walk off without a word.

“Should we really let him watch this?” Jack whispered as they headed down into the street’s secret interence.

“Oh, after all this that kid’s getting an amnesia pill.” Quill hissed, “In fact we all might need one after this, just forget this all ever happened. After I- “

“Andrea,” Jack cut her off grabbing her hand, “It’s gonna be okay. We’re going to find him.”

Quill pulled away and continued to walk.
Fine. Be that way. Jack thought as they walked, however, as they came into the secret society, his as rendered incapable of thought for a few moments. “H-How did we never know about this place?”

“Ah, you didn’t, we did.” Quill answered, “A deal was brokered between the street and Torchwood 4 ages ago, before my time, before Chris’ time, actually. We leave them alone and don’t tell anyone else about them, they leave us alone.”

“Then why—” Jack began.

“By ‘leave each other alone’ that also means we don’t help each other.” Quill cut him off, “Basically we act like we don’t know the other exists.”

Before Jack could commented, Jack saw someone in the crowd. “Andrea,” He began, “I got eyes on your boy.”

Quill looked at the direction he was gazing and saw, sure enough, there was Charlie, running through the streets with his knife out, but seemingly unharmed. A wave of relief washed over her. However, as he continued to walk, seemingly unaware of their presence, she went into panic, pushing through the crowd, but he just seemed to be getting further and further away. Desperate and angry, she shouted at the top of her lungs, “Charles!”

Hearing his name and recognizing the voice who had said it, he turned around, but still kept going. “Charles Algernon Quill!” She shouted, “You get over here right now!”

This time he did freeze and he was not the only one. Doretha turned whirled around so fast the hood fell away from her head.

They all stared at each other a for a moment then Doretha took off, then Charlie took off after her, causing Quill to take off after him causing Jack to take off out after.

“I take it you know her.” Jack noted when he caught up with Quill.

“She’s one of the governors.” Quill explained, “Or at least she’d working with them.” Meanwhile, her mind was racing with the possibilities of how they both had got there. Had Charlie been nabbed but got away? No, if that was what happened, he wouldn’t had been following her, he’d be trying to get to safety as fast as possible. Or maybe her little idiot had caught her getting up to something and decided to try to redeem himself by taking her down all on his own.

Eventually they all wound up in an alley way, where Doretha pulled a gun from her cloak. “That’s quite far enough.”

Quill responded by pulling her own gun. “Drop it.” She ordered.

“I can’t.” Doretha replied, “I’m so sorry, Quill. In another world, I think you and I could have been great friends.”

“That’s a little harsh, don’t you think?” Jack spoke up, stalling, “I mean, for all we know she’s playing both sides. Which still isn’t good, but….”

“Oh, but I’m only on one side.” Doretha spoke up, “I came here tonight to do a very bad thing, for a very good reason.” She looked at them all ruefully. “Sorry.” She said, before firing.

The gun didn’t hit anyone but the sound reverberated throughout the street, causing everyone to still for a moment.

Then, all Hell broke loose.

Everyone started screaming, people running and pushing each other to get away. Some tried to hide under carts and stands. Someone knocked over an orange stand, sending the round fruit into the street.

Taking the opportunity Doretha ran into the riot to get away.

“No!” Charlie shouted running out of her.

Quill reached out to grab him but he was so fast her finger tips barely grazed him. “Not again.” She murmured, taking after him.

Meanwhile, Gwen had just arrived outside. “Do we know anything?” She asked walking to them, “Have they found him?”

“I don’t know.” Susan answered, “They haven’t come out yet.”

“How did this even—” Gwen began than she noticed Susan’s companion, “You!”
“You!” Mateusz echoed.
“You two know each other?” Susan asked.
“I found him wondering the streets when the Lankin attacked.” Gwen answered, “What are you doing here?”
“What are you doing here?” Mateusz countered.
“Gwen, um, works with them.” Susan explained, “And Mateusz is Charlie’s…boyfriend apparently.”
Gwen stared at him for a moment. “Oh.” Then after a beat she added, “Guess it really is a small world.”
That was when the screaming coming from the street.
They all turned to look in the direction the noise was coming from, then Gwen took off running.
Susan took after her, and Mateusz in turn tried to take after Susan. “No,” Susan told him bluntly, turning around, “You stay here.” Then she took off again. The minute she was gone, Mateusz took after her.

As Quill and Jack ran through the street’s things got a little odd.
“I remember how eager you were to please me as a young bride long ago, hoe you loved me and followed me even though the barren wilderness.” A short, oval-shaped creature wit brown leathery skin, dressed in armor shouted, standing on top of an over turned crate, “In those days Israel was holy to the Lord, the first of His children. All who harmed His people were declared guilty, I, Lord, have spoken!”
“What’s a Sontaran doing quoting Jeremiah?!” Quill commented in spite of herself.
“Ade due Damballa, give mt the power, I beg of you!” Humanoid dog creature cried out.
“What’s a Nubin doing quoting Child’s Play ?!” Jack pointed out.
Charlie and Doretha were getting further and further away from them. As he got closer to her, they rounded the corner.
As Susan and Gwen entered the fray, the raptor-like creature that has attacked Charlie leapt and her, sending her to the ground.
“Get off of her, you lunatic!” Gwen shouted trying to elbow the creature of Susan only to be attacked herself, claws digging into her side. It was then that blur of green jumped on the creature’s back, causing it to let go and flee. Gwen helped Susan up, catching sight of Jack and Quill. “I think I see them.” She told her, and they ran for it.
Meanwhile Mateusz tried to catch up with the women but kept getting cut off by bizarre creatures or items falling in the street.
“I lost them!” Quill shouted, started to panic on the inside.
“They went around that corner.” Jack told her, “We just have to—”
His voice trailed off as a cart came out of nowhere, hitting Quill and ramming her into the side of a building.
“Andrea!” Jack screamed, running to her aid.
Meanwhile, Charlie had somehow lost Doretha. “Show yourself!” He demanded, his whole body on a swivel.
That was when something hit him from behind. Hard. He fell to the ground, and while he couldn’t see he guess by the pounding ache in his head the feel of something liquid trickling down his face, the skin had broken. He could also hear someone coming towards. Doretha Ames’ shoes were the last thing he saw before he blacked out.
The 'Games' Begin

Chapter Summary

Quill gets an ultimatum.

The first thing Charlie was aware of when he started to came to was an acting head. The next thing he was aware of was a deep voice he didn’t recognize saying, “Boy! Boy, are you alive?” Charlie slowly opened his eyes and found himself surrounded by bright white, everything around him. Looking out he could see a large glass window with a long white hard and other cell. Other cells with creatures in them. Aliens.

“There you go.” The voice said, and Charlie turned to see a large dark-skin man with heterochronic eyes, one brown and one an abnormally bright blue, crouching over him, “Can you speak?” “Yes.” Charlie asked managing to sit up. He put a hand to his head and realized he could feel metal sewed into his head.

“They gave me those sutures, told me to mend the wound.” The man said, “You must be important to them.” “Important to whom?” Charlie asked, though he feared he had a fairly good idea. “They call themselves the Governors.” The man answered.

Charlie’s hear sunk. He suspected as much.

Meanwhile, Quill was also waking up with a pounding head of her own. Her eyes fluttered opened and she found herself staring up at the ceiling of a car. She sat up and saw Mateusz sitting across from looking worried.

“Where are we?” She demanded, “Where are the others? Where’s Charles?” “They’re still looking from him.” Mateusz answered, “Someone had to stay with you just in case…” His voice trailed off, then he asked, “How are you feeling?” “Fine.” Quill said, opening the door and starting to walk out, only to realize that they were not in front of the trap street anymore. She turned to Mateusz looking at the boy accusingly.

“They told me get you away.” Mateusz told her, “They didn’t want you doing anything stupid.” That warned him a harsh glare from Quill.

“Their words.” Mateusz responded quickly, “Not mine.” Changing the subject, and trying to figure out exactly how to get back, Quill asked, “How far did they take us out.” “I think I drove about—five blocks.” Mateusz answered.

“Well, then,” Quill began, walking to the driver side door, “You can tell me how to get back.” “What do you know about the Governors?” Charlie asked, back at the prison. “Not all that much.” His cellmate admitted.

“Do you know why they’re keeping you here?” Charlie questioned, hopping that might lead to something. “Do you know why they’re keeping you here?” The man countered.

“No good reason.” Charlie cringed, “Either as a hostage or to torture for information.” After a beat he added “I’m hopping the fact that they bothered patching me up means they want me in one piece.”

“For your sake I hope so too.” The man replied. “You must know something.” Charlie insisted.

“I’m sorry, boy.” The man replied, “I’m as clueless as you are.” Meanwhile Quill and Mateusz had hit traffic, Quill getting frustrated. “Move it!” She shouted,
hitting the horn.”
“I don’t think that’s helping.” Mateusz told her.
“Well, what do you suggest we do?!” Quill shouted, honking the horn again.
Mateusz opened the car door. “How fast can you run?”
The pair got out of the car and started running for it. They ran about two blocks when suddenly someone stepped out in front of him. “There you are.” Doretha said.
“What did you do?” Quill growled dangerously.
Doretha pulled something out of her jacket, holding it out to reveal a Saint Christopher metal. Quill’s hear froze as she realized she recognized it. Toni Jo had turned it into a perception filter for Charlie and he had kept it even after he had been altered. For a second, she felt like she couldn’t breathe. When she got her breath back, she said. “I swear to God if you…”
“I assure you, we haven’t harmed him.” Doretha cut her off, “If he stays unharmed depends on you.”
Gathering the Troops

Chapter Summary

An important conversation is interrupted and the team gets an unexpected ally.

Meanwhile, Toni Jo was pacing in the hallway, waiting to hear something, anything from the room.

It was the day of the surgery to put the pace maker in, and Chris had asked to talk to Innocenta alone. That was about ten minutes ago. What could they possibly be talking about? What could possibly be taking them so long...

Suddenly Innocenta appeared in the hall. “He wants to talk to you now.” She told her older sister. Toni Jo walked into the room where her father was still in the bed, looking frailler than she had ever seen him. She could barely believe it was him.

“Hey there,” Chris began, unsure how else to begin this conversation.

“Hey,” Toni Jo repeated, “Everything okay with you and Innocenta?”

“Yes,” Chris assured her, “Just getting a few things off our respective chests.” After a beat he added, “You may want to sit down. This could be a minute.”

Toni Jo sat down without protest, realizing what he was doing. He wanted to say everything he never got to say just in case things went wrong and he didn’t get another chance to say it. She wanted to fight him on it, wanted to say she wasn’t doing this, that he was going to be fine and they could talk all about it later. But she wasn’t the one about to go into surgery. So, she swallowed her words and listened to what he had to say.

“Do you remember when you about fifteen, and you took it upon yourself over the summer to read, among other things, the letter Joan’s of Arc mother wrote to Pope, requesting her daughter’s Canonization?” Chris asked.

“Yeah.” Toni Jo answered with a slow nod, not sure where this was going.

“You were so moved, you started to cry, wouldn’t tell any of us why.” Chris continued, “All we could get out of you was— ‘that poor woman’.”

Toni Jo was quiet trying figure out why he was bringing this up, now of all times.

“Do you—do you think Joan’s mother was proud of her?”

“I don’t know.” Chris admitted, “But I think she should have rather have a martyr than a daughter.”

Toni Jo thought she was where this was going now. “Dad,” She began then her phone rang.

Ignoring she kept on, “I’m gonna do anything stupid,” The phone kept ringing, “I know that sometimes,” The kept ringing. Having enough Toni Jo requested, “Excuse me, I really think I need to take this, do you mind?”

“I don’t think we’re going to get through this until you do.” Chris replied.

Toni Jo picked it up. “What, Fox?” She demanded, irritably.

“Charlieranoff,” Fox told her, talking so fast it all ran together, “I don’t know why, but…”

“Whoa, whoa, Fox, slow down, I can’t understand what you’re saying.” Toni Jo cut him off. Fox repeated everything else he had said, but slower, and her heart jumped into her throat.

“What is it, what’s wrong?” Chris asked, sitting upright, as all the color had drained from Toni Jo’s face and there was look on her face of other horror.

“I’ll be right there.” Toni Jo told Fox before hanging up, “Charlie ran off, they think he might have been taken and now no one can find Quill. I’m sorry, but I can’t just---”

“Go.” Chris told her, starting to get up.
Toni Jo was halfway out the door. “Dad, what are you doing?”
“I’m not lying here while two of our people are missing.” Chris answered.
“No, Dad, you have surgery in less than an hour.” Toni Jo reminded him, “You have a heart condition, in your shape you’ll only be a liability.” She paused a minute then said, “You wanted to maybe lead this team, so let me lead it.”
Chris sat back down. “Yes, ma’am.”
With that, Toni Jo flew down the hall, running past Innocenta, nearly toppling her younger sister over. “Toni?” Innocenta asked, then she when got no response called out, “Toni!” That caused her to freeze. “What’s wrong? Is it Dad?”
“No,” Toni Jo assured her quickly, “No, he’s fine, but…something else’s happen. Something bad. Dad can tell you everything. I’m sorry, I have to. I to go.” And with that, she took off again.
By chance John Henry had come up with another plan of action and was entering the hospital just as Toni Jo was speeding out of it.
“Dr. Callahan!” John Henry called out, reaching out to her.
“Not now, John!” Toni Jo shouted, running right past him.
“Where are you going?!” John Henry demanded, hurrying to catch up to her. When she ignored her, John Henry insisted, “Ton-Dr. Callahan, I need to talk to you and I really must insist.”
“No time!” Toni Jo replied.
“I know something happened!” John Henry protested, “I don’t know what, but I know something did and I know there’s a lot more going on then you’re telling me, so I’m leaving until—”
“Enough!” Toni Jo snapped, “My family is in danger and the people I love need me right now, and I will sit down with you later but right now, I need to get to London yesterday!”
“Well, then,” John Henry began, “I think I have a way to get you there. No charge.”
Almost the moment Doretha had finished a black car pulled up and she opened the door. “If you would kindly step inside.”

Seeing no other option, Quill walked over and slid inside.

“You too, Mr. Andrjjewski.” Doretha ordered.

“No.” Quill spoke up firmly, getting halfway out of the car, “No, no, no, no, no. I am not giving you another hostage.”

“Well, I’m not going to leave him to run off and tell the others.” Doretha reasoned.

“Oh, please,” Quill responded, “We all know about the Governors, we all know you’re involved, there’s nothing the boy can relay that we don’t already know.”

While they were fighting, Mateusz saw the opportunity to take off. Maybe he could get to the other in time to catch up with the women.

Seeing this Quill smiled. “Actually. I think this might be moot point.”

Doretha turned around and found to her horror, Mateusz nowhere to be seen.

“Now, you can waste your time chasing after a civilian who is going to be of no help to you, or you can just come on and we can get this over.” Quill reasoned.

Defeated, Doretha walked over to the car.

Meanwhile, the riot in the trap street had quieted down and the remaining members, Jack, Gwen, Susan and now Fox who had joined them, were checking if anyone saw anything.

“The boy would have been about this tall,” Gwen was telling the voodoo Nubin, “Blonde hair. Possibly with a woman in a dark dress-suit, dark brown hair.”

“Sorry,” The Nubin replied, “I didn’t see anyone like that. Though I was a, uh, a bit distracted.” He looked down abashedly.

However, not all the creatures were that cooperative.

“Who died and gave you any authority over the street?!” A woman with appeared to be a cyborg of some kind, demanded.

“Well, it’s not like anyone’s seen Me in who knows how long.” Jack pointed out.

“And we’ve been doing just find on our own, thank you very much!” The woman responded, “Riot notwithstanding. And if you think you can just come in here and take over—”

“Look, lady, this isn’t a cu or whatever you think is.” Jack snapped, “I’m just trying to find my friend’s missing, possibly kidnapped son, so could you please just work with me here?!”

That was Mateusz finally got back. “They got Quill!” He called out to get their attention.

It did.

“What do you mean they got Quill?” Jack demanded, running up to him with the others.

And so, Mateusz explained everything that happened.

“I got here as soon as I could.” He finished, “I don’t think we can stop them, but maybe we can—I don’t know, pick up a trail or something.”

Jack covered his mouth before running his hands through his hair. “It’s the best we got.” He said finally, “Come on.” When Mateusz tried to follow, he turned around, stopping him, “Not you. Go back to the flat, wait for us.” They couldn’t exactly bring him with them, but they couldn’t send him home either, not with anything he had seen, could they?
“No,” Mateusz protested.
“Look, I get it you want to help.” Jack said synthetically, “But the best way to help is to get out of the way so we have less thing to worry about.”
“Alright.” Mateusz feigned acceptance.
“Can you find your way back?” Jack asked.
“Yeah.” Mateusz lied, having no intention of actually going to the flat even if he did know they way.
Meanwhile, the car carrying Quill and Doretha pulled up at what was now a rather familiar spot: Coal Hill Academy.
“Of course.” Quill groaned, as the car put in park.
Doretha opened the door and nodded for Quill to join her and stepping out of the car. Quill reluctantly did, and the pair began to walk in. “So,” Quill began, “Are you finally going to tell me what all this is?”
“All in due time, Andrea.” Doretha said cryptically, “All in good time.”
“No, no, no, no.” Quill said, stopping, “That is not how this works, if you want me to keep playing this game, you need to tell me the rules. Until then I’m not leaving this spot.”
“I’m sure your son will be very sad to hear that.” Doretha threatened, holding up the metal to remind her what was at stake.
Quill’s heart jumped into her throat and momentarily she had to fight the urge to beg, to comply, just please don’t hurt him. She regained enough control to challenge, “And how do I know you didn’t take that off his corpse?”
“Come inside and I can deliver proof of life.” Doretha answered.
Quill stared Doretha down, but realized this was the best she was going to get. She related, beginning to walk again.
However, unbeknownst to either of them, Charlie had no intention of staying put very long, and was looking for any weak spots in the cell and the security system.
“Everything you’re looking at, I’ve looked at a thousand times before, boy.” His cellmate told him, “It’s impregnable, from outside, and in.”
“Nothing is completely impregnable.” Charlie argued, “And I have a name. It’s Charlie.” He looked at him, silently asking for an introduction.
“Ballon.” His cellmate answered.
“Nice to meet you.” Charlie replied, then suddenly he got an idea, “Would you mind attacking me?”
Ballon stared at the boy like he had lost his mind, which he wasn’t sure he hadn’t. “What?”
“Look, you said if yourself, they need me alive, at least for a little bit.” Charlie began, “Also, presumably they need you alive. So, if they think you’re trying to kill me, and I’m fighting you as well, they might intervene. Intervening would mean having to open this cell, or at least come into it, which mean we can make a break for it.”
“Or they could have some sort of electric shock installed or other ways to break up fights without actually coming in.” Ballon countered. It wasn’t that he didn’t want to escape, that he wasn’t willing to try, he would just rather have better allies than an injured, possibly insane teenager.
“Well, do you have a better plan?” Charlie challenged.
Ballon realized reluctantly, the boy was right. This might be their only chance. He stood up, back up and ran at him.
Meanwhile, Mateusz thought it was safe to circle back, and had found his way back to alleyway where things stopped making sense. He was about to go back in, figuring if he was one his own that was as a good a place to start as any, when an older man dressed in a dark, tieless suit came up to him. “Excuse me young man,” He began in a Scottish lilt, “Sorry, to bother you, I was just looking for my granddaughter, she wasn’t at her flat, so this was my next guess, assuming she knows this place exist, which, fifty-fifty chance. We’re not as close as we once were. About, yea high, long dark hair, goes by Susan Foreman.”
That got Mateusz’s attention. It couldn’t be their Miss Foreman. Could it?
“Apparently something’s amiss at the school where she works.” The can was saying, “Coal Hill. You wouldn’t—”
“I know where she is.” Mateusz urgently cut him, “I can take you to her.”
Less than five minutes, later, the team was at the lost spot Quill had been seen. “What are the odds she took her back to the school?” Gwen asked.
“It wouldn’t bet against it.” Jack answered.
“Okay, we’ll go there.” Gwen declared,” Fox, Susan, you keep—” Her voice trailed off as she a now familiar figure come into view with an older man, “I thought we told you to go back to the flat! And who’s this?”
“My grandfather.” Susan spoke up.
“Your grandfather?” Mick repeated, “As in your child abandoning, teacher kidnapping Grandfather? Shouldn’t he be dead by now? Or at least, not in that good of shape?”
“We age differently than you.” Susan responded, “He’s the one I called to help.” Then looking straight at her grandfather, she demanded, “What took you so long?!”
“Sorry, I got here as fast I could.” Her grandfather replied,” Now, are you gonna introduce to your friends? I’m sure they have something to do with this. Thought, I always know those two back there.” He pointed to Jack and Gwen.
“Oh, excuse me?” Gwen spoke up. She had never seen this man before in her life.
“I don’t think we’ve ever met before.” Jack added.
That was it dawned on him. “Oh, right, I’ve been through a few faces since the last time you saw me.” The man said, “It’s me, the Doctor.”
The Initiation

Chapter Summary

Quill gets an unusual offer.

“The Doctor?” Gwen repeated, “No, that’s impossible. You’re—”
“He changes his face.” Jack cut her off, “He does that sometimes. I never told you that?”
“No.” Gwen responded, “No, no you didn’t. You also didn’t mention he reproduced.”
“Well, I didn’t know he reproduced either.” Jack informed her.
“To be fair, at the time I was thought she and my entire family were dead.” The Doctor reasoned.
“Wait a second.” Fox spoke up, “The Doctor? As in the man our entire organization was started to fight against? And you’re friends with him?”
“I told you it more complicated than that.” Jack responded,
“We’re getting off topic here.” Gwen cut in, “And we don’t have time for that.”
And so, they explained to the Doctor everything that had happened before and after Susan had called him.
“Alright,” the Doctor began once they had finished, “I think I know what’s going on, at least part of it, but first we need to do is save your friends. Now, to the school!”
“I’ll get a car.” Fox declared, running off, murmuring as he went, “This is gonna be a tight fit.”
Gwen glanced around and realized Mateusz was looking rather dazed. Considering the series of bombs that have been inadeptly dropped, without a lot of context. She walked over to him. “Hey,”
She began, “How are you doing?”
“Well, I just found out my boyfriend is somehow involved in a secret organization, the school is—some sort of magnet for aliens, and our English teacher is an alien.” Mateusz recapped. After a beat he asked, “I did get that part correct, yes?”
“Yeah, yeah, you got that right.” Gwen confirmed ruefully.
Fortunately, before they could dwell on this much longer a tan van pulled up and the door opened.
“Get in.” Fox ordered.
They all poured in.
Meanwhile Charlie was getting the crap beat out of him, and it didn’t seem to be working. Maybe they heard what we said, He thought, maybe they know it’s fake.
Deciding to up the ante, he put his mouth around Balloon’s hand and bit down, hard, his mouth filling with the metallic taste of blood, which thankfully didn’t seem to had any toxic or acidic elements.
Ballon fought back a shout of pain, then threw Charlie against the wall. When his head hit the stitches opened up and blood started slowly trickling down. Was it just him or the blood a lighter shade of red than it was before?
They were both thinking maybe it was time to stop when a doorway appeared and team of four men came through armed with what looked like cattle prods. As one of went to shock him Ballon was able to push him to the ground, get up and grab Charlie’s arm, and made a break for it. The other three tried to block their way. That was when Charlie, despite once again being semi-conscious, stuck out his leg tripping one of the guards, causing him to knock over the guard beside him, and causing the third guard to turn to them both. It was just enough of a distraction for them to burst past and out the hole.
Meanwhile, Doretha led Quill to a door under stairway marked MO17. Doretha turned around.
“I’m sorry, but this where I leave you for now.”
“Have you heard anything I said?!” Quill snapped at her, “No more games!”
“I’m not playing games with you, Andrea.” Doretha assured her, “But understand this. I will die before I let you through this door.”

Quill lunged at Doretha, wrapping her hands around the other woman’s throat. “That can be arranged.” She seethed, at the end of her rope.

“Put Miss Ames down, please.” A voice called out. Quill turned to see a dark-skinned man in suit approaching.

“You can stay where you are.” Quill warned him, “If you want her neck in one piece. Also, tell me where my son is and I’ll be happy to put her down.”

“That’s actually why I came out here.” The man in the suit said, “There’s a been a… development.”

Meanwhile Ballon was dragging a semi-conscious Charlie through an endless stream of twisty halls. He had only ever been in the prison before and had no clue where he was going, but there had to been some way out. Preferably before his newfound companion bled out. He thought he might have not only reopened the original wound but made it worse.

As he ran down yet another hallway when suddenly a doorway opened. Ballon froze. This was either their way out, or it was a trap. Deciding he had to take a chance Ballon grabbed Charlie tighter and ran for it.

They pair came out the other side, falling to the ground surrounded by three humans, two he had seen around, if only briefly, and blonde woman he didn’t.

Seeing her son bleeding on the ground Quill jumped into action, dropping Doreatha to the ground and picking Charlie up. “Charles wake up. She ordered, putting his hand on his face with more force than a pat but less force than a slap, “Wake up. I need you to wake up.” She starting to get desperate and her hands became more forceful. At last he finally came around. “There you go.” Quill eased, putting three fingers in front of his face, “Now, how many fingers am I holding up?”

“Three.” Charlie rasped.

“Three.” Quill repeated, “Good, good.” The she turned her head to the man that fell through with him and yelled, “What the Hell did you do to him?!”

“From what we could gather, these two started fighting and then when it got too intense, guards were sent in.” The man in the suit explained, “When that happened, they got in a fight with the guards and escaped.”

That was when twice as many guards as had come into the cell came into view. The quickly descended on Ballon shocking him and putting him in thick cuffs before dragging him away.

“Leave him alone, he’s done nothing wrong!” Charlie protested, nearly falling over.

“I don’t know what he told you, but he didn’t get into our cells for just minding his own business.” Doretha told him, edging closer to the pair.

“Get away from him.” Quill ordered flatly trying to staunch the bleeding with her coat. Apart from not wanting the people who did this to him anywhere near him, he had apparently been skipping injections too and his blood wasn’t changing like it was suppose when it hit the air. It wasn’t pink yet, but it was still noticeable. If the Governors didn’t already know they weren’t human, that would be a dead giveaway.

“Let us help you, Andrea.” Doretha requested, “We can get him medical attention…”

“Doretha ….” The man in the suit said in a warning tone.

“Sir, we can still pull off this conversion!” Doretha insisted, “This woman has resources, she’s of use to us.”

“Useful to what?” Quill demanded, “converted to what for what?”

“The arrival.” Doretha answered.

As a medic worked on Charlie’s head wound, Quill was showed of a series of pictures of cravings. Cravings of angels, like the ones that took Toni Jo and John Henry and the hikers and Cathy Nightingale, and who knew who else. The final was of a giant angel standing over London. “Are these supposed to mean anything to me?” She asked, finally.

“These imagines are part of a prophecy.” Doretha explained, “Predicted hundreds of years ago.”

“Uh-huh.” Quill responded, “And that prophecy says…”
“In a place where time is weak, the angels will descend.” Doretha answered.
“Well, that doesn’t help very much.” Quill deadpanned.
“What do you know about the Weeping Angels?” Doretha asked.
“A race of creatures that feed on time—” Quill’s voices trailed off, “Ooh.” Suddenly an idea of what was happening here began forming in her mind. Suddenly a lot of dots were connecting. Jack’s fulxuations, Azazel looking into the Weeping Angels, it didn’t make perfect sense, but it was starting to make some sense.
“Yes, oh.” Doretha responded, “Over time feeding off energy and the in-fighting of several different groups has ravaged their home planet forcing most of them to leave and find—other methods of feeding. I believe you’re familiar with the most common of those methods.”
“I’m am.” Quill confirmed, “Go on.”
“Well, for centuries Earth has been popular feeding ground.” Doretha continued, “So much that a faction wants to make it the Weeping Angels new home planet.”
“They just need to conquer the resident species.” Quill concluded, “And that’s where the Governors come in. Selling out your own species…”
“No, you misunderstand, Andrea,” Doretha cut her off, falling on her knees before the other woman and taking her hands, “Yes, the Angels do want to rule over us, but not as conquerors, but as saviors. They want to make a perfect world.

As for us…we’re academics. We research. We gather information in preparation. And if you join us…you could help.”
“So, this an offer to become an acolyte or a Governor or whatever?” Quill concluded.
“Just think of it Quill,” Doretha entreated, “A world with no more war, no more sickness, no more alien attacks.”
Quill thought, but not on what Doretha wanted her to. She didn’t think she was making it out of here if she didn’t say yes, plus, she could be the team’s way in. “What do I need to do?”
Doretha’s face lit up. “Is that a yes?”
A smile slipped on Quill’s face. “Yes.”
“Well, then, we would start with the initiation.” Doretha told her.
Apparently even thought she was going to be a low-ranking acolyte, at least for the time being, every Governor that could come had to be present for Quill’s initiation. As they waited, she was taken into one of the bathrooms, along with Doretha and two other female Governors, where she changed into a simple short sleeve white smock.
After sticking her head out, the door for a few moments and talking with someone, one of the female Governors came back in, holding clear bag with a small white tablet. “It’s time.” She announced.
“Quill, put tablet on your tongue, let it dissolve.” Doretha instructed her, “It will help with the next part.”
Against her better judgement, Quill put opened the bag and placed the pill on her tough. As it dissolved, she was led down the hall. As they walked, the world around her suddenly got foggy, and her body felt limp and soft, like an over-boiled noodle. Suddenly she could barely walk, stumbling over her own feet.
“What—what did you give me?” Quill slurred.
“It’s alright, Andrea.” Doretha assured her, taking her by the arm and helping her walk.
“Don’t call me that.” Quill ordered, her words still slurred so it didn’t seem as intimidating as she meant it.
“It’s all going to be okay.” Doretha assured her.
By the time they were outside room M017 Quill was practically being dragged by Doretha and another woman and everything was a soup of blurry colors with a chuck of a solid object here or there. One of her attendants pulled out a key that was one of the chucks. Quill could clearly see the key born the numerals MXVII. The numerals form a cross she inserted into a keyhole. She turned the lock and opened the door, and they all walked into the blinding light.
The light blinded Quill for she wasn’t sure how long as she was dragged through the mysterious place, when she could finally see again, her vision was still soup but she could see they were in a
concrete room with a square pool cut out filled with viscus black liquid.

“We’re going to take you up to the pool now, Andrea.” Doretha explained as they lead her in that direction. They then turned her around to face the growing crowd.

That was Quill realized that the crowd of the Governors around her hand started to chant in a combined hissed whispered, “See the glory…. see the glory….” That was when the man who had come to them earlier stepped forward. He walked up to Quill as her attendants let go of her. Taking her by the hands, he looked her dead in the eyes and asked solemnly, “Do you, Andrea Quill, of your volition, solemnly vow to spend the rest of your days working for the glorious event of The Arrival, thought you may not see in your life time?”

“I do.” Quill answered, she was surprised to find this kind of intense warmth filling her. The man took a hold of her and dunked her into the water.

Quill failed for a moment in the thick liquid the world around her going black and silent, save from the drone one gets when emerged in water. Suddenly the world went red and she was in the middle of London, a giant weeping angel assaulting the sky line, people running and screaming. Several of them disappearing. Then the vision changed to dark hall, lined with Weeping Angels, their faces covered. Then once again the scene changed to something completely different and utterly unexpected.

She was standing the middle of lush green field, the sky above her a brilliant bright blue like something out of a painting. Then she heard laughing. Turning to it she saw found group of small children, about maybe six or seven, boys and girls, every skin tone imaginable, chocolate, rose, tea, butter, cream, honey, playing.

“Children!” A voice called out, “Children!”

All the children ran to a young woman with her long dark hair pulled back. “Now,” The woman began, “Who can tell me what we discussed yesterday?”

Before she could hear the answer, she was pulled out of that world, and out of liquid. She fell to the ground her mouth open and hot, clear liquid, poured down her throat and out of her mouth.

“Help her up.” The leader ordered.

As she was helped to her feet her vision began to clear to and she felt stronger, renewed. Suddenly she pushed her helpers back and stood up on her own.

“Do you have a positive vision?” The leader asked her.

“Yes.” Quill said, hopping that was the right answer.

Apparently, it was, as she was greeted by a series of claps. Several Governors walked up to her and kissed the bloom of her cheek.

“So, what happens now?” Quill asked as Doretha walked up and kissed her cheek.

In which, The Doctor, Quill and Charlie all have a lot of explaining to do, and the team knows what to do--just not how to do it.

They group pulled up to the school just in time to see to their surprise, both Quill and Charlie walking out the front door.

“You know what you have to do?” Doretha asked, following them out.

“Don’t worry.” Quill assured her, “I do.”

“What do we have to do?” Charlie asked, his head pounding.

“I’ll explain later.” Quill promised.

“I think we need to hold back.” Fox said from the car, “Something’s happening.”

“If something’s happening shouldn’t we help them?” Mateusz asked.

“Not that kind of something.” Fox informed them.

After talking with Doretha a few more moments the pair walked off, as if heading back to their flat. Fox put the car in drive and followed them.

“What did you do?” Charlie asked, rubbing the side of his head, “To make them let us go?”

“Joined their cult.” Quill answered, “How are you feeling?”

Charlie looked like something out of a horror film and she was seriously worried about concussion at this point.

“My head’s just sore.” Charlie answered, “What do you mean cult? What cult?”

Just then her phone rang. “Hold that thought.” Quill said, picking up her phone, “Fox, we got out. I’ll explain everything when we meet up. Where are you?”

“Right behind you.” Fox answered.

They turned around to see a van right next to them. Apparently in their state they had missed that they were being tale. The door opened, revealing the team and few extras. “Get in.” Gwen called out.

Mother and son squeezed into the van.

Mateusz struggled to get to where Charlie was. “Oh my God.” He gasped when saw the state of Charlie’s head, “What happened?”

“It’s nothing.” Charlie tried to assure him.

“Nothing?” Mateusz repeated in disbelief, “Charlie, you have stitches all over your head and face and you’re covered in blood.”

“It’s not nearly as bad as it looks.” Charlie insisted.

“Quill, what happened?” Gwen asked.

“Are we compromised?” Fox added.

“Yes and no.” Quill answered. That was when Quill noticed they had picked up some extra people.

“Who’s the old guy?”

They arrived to find Toni Jo and John Henry, who had got word that Quill had been found as they arrived at their destination. “Quill, Charlie thank God!” Throwing her arms around her adopted sister before she could even get out of the car.

“Toni…I’m fine…. can’t breathe…. ” Quill got out.

Toni Jo let her go and turned to Charlie. “Oh, sweet Mother.” Toni Jo began, “Who did they do to you?” Then she noticed there were extra people present. “Did the team grow while I was away?”

Getting inside, they explained everything that happened, starting with Charlie and Mateusz kissing in the hallway and ending with Quill’s initiation.
“That’s when this lot picked us up.” Quill finished as Toni Jo took a sample of her blood. “I’ll run some tests on this.” Toni Jo said, “Try to see if I tell what they gave you.” Putting it in her medical kit she grabbed a black glass bottle, white jar labeled NANO EMUSLION OINTMENT, a patch, a jar of honey, and a clear glass bottle tabled MUSHROOM ELIXER. Grabbing a small bowel in a spoon, she went over to Charlie who on the coach with Mateusz fawning over him. “Now,” Toni Jo said, holding up the clear glass bottle, “Can you tell me what this is?” “Is now really the time for a medicine lesson?” Mateusz spoke up. “It’s the perfect time, trust me.” Toni Jo replied, before turning her attention back to her nephew, her heart silent breaking again, “Now, can you tell me what this is?” “You call it the purple.” Charlie answered, “You don’t know its official name so you just named it after the color.” “Very good.” Toni Jo said, taking out the dropper and reaching out, “And can you tell me why I’m putting it around your stitches?” “Because it contains enyzmes that speed the healing process.” Charlie told her. “I’m with the other one, is now the best time?” Quill spoke up. Aside from the plans they had to make, Charlie was still pretty weak. “Quill, I know what I’m doing.” Toni Jo snapped. Then she took the jar of honey and started carefully applying it to the wound, “And why am I doing this?” “I’m wondering about that one too.” Mateusz spoke up again. “Honey can combat infection.” Charlie told them both. “Right again.” Toni Jo praised, going for the ointment, “And this?” “Nano emulsion ointment.” Charlie answered, “Fights bacteria and generates cell growth.” “So, you do pay attention.” Toni Jo teased, before grabbing the elixir and a spoon, “This?” “Do I really have to take that?” Charlie moaned. “Charlie, you had your coconut opened twice and then stitched up by nefarious characters.” Toni Jo recapped, “I’m not taking any chances.” “It boosts immunity.” Charlie answered, before taking the spoon and putting it in his mouth. “Good.” Toni Jo replied, before placing a series of gauze over the stitches. “Now,” She began again, holding up a clear and green patch with the word, SLEEP written on it. “Toni, I really don’t need that.” Charlie protested. “It’s the lowest douse.” Toni Jo countered, “And you’ve been through a lot today.” “So, has Mum.” Charlie argued. “Charles, don’t argue with her and just put it on.” Quill ordered wearily. Charlie took the patch and put it on his neck. Within second he was out like a light. Toni Jo looked to the other boy. “It’s Mateusz, right?” “Yes.” Mateusz answered, nodding. “Take Charlie up to his room and stay there while the adults talk.” Toni Jo ordered. “No.” Quill spoke up, “Just—no.” “Quill, he’s unconscious.” Toni Jo reasoned, “There’s not gonna be any funny business and we—” She lowered her voice, “We have a lot of things to talk about.” “Fine.” Quill relented, “Just go. “After a beat she added, “But if you try anything funny, I swear I will make you watch as I rip out your spleen.” “Understood.” Mateusz responded, awkwardly picking Charlie up and heading upstairs. They waited until they stopped hearing footsteps then Toni Jo asked, “Okay, so what do they want you to do?” “Feed them information about the investigation.” Quill answered, “Try to convert you guys when I feel conformable with it.” “I take it that means the Angels haven’t set a date for the invasion.” Toni Jo guessed. “No.” Quill confirmed, “Who knows if it’s even coming, but—” “Oh, trust me, it’s coming.” The Doctor interjected. Everyone turned to look at him. “Have you known about this?” Susan spoke up.
“If you mean did I know a Weeping Angel cult set up shop at your Alma Matter, no.” The Doctor replied, “But I know something about the Weeping Angels, and they’re not going to turn down a ready food source, and they’ve vicious. Even if this wasn’t a thing, they’ll latch onto it and make it one.”

“And how did they get this food source, exactly?” Fox asked, “You said you knew.”

“Yes,” The Doctor replied, suddenly getting rather nervous, “I actually think it might be my fault.”

“What?” Jack balked.

“How?” Fox added.

“I’ve been traveling to and from Coal Hill for centuries.” The Doctor explained, “First when Susan was student there, though back then we weren’t on the grounds and we weren’t traveling, so we probably didn’t cause that much damage, if any, but more recently there was a friend of mine, Clara, who worked at the school I was popping in and out of the school grounds, all the time, in the TARDIS. Plus, I’m sure their other instances I’m not thinking of. I think that all that atton energy added up and time itself has worn thin. And all that time energy was just chum to the Weeping Angels.” The Doctor ran his hands through his hair, rubbing his face. How could he miss this?

“There has to be some way to reverse it.” Quill declared, “Some way to fix the tears.” Susan had tried to warn her about this. That there might not be way to fix the tears. But there had to be. There had to be some way…

“Well, I can patch it up, but it can only be patched up so well.” The Doctor informed them, “Even by me.”

“Then we just get the place shut down.” Toni Jo reasoned, “Sorry Susan.”

“I can find another job.” Susan replied.

“Ah, I know I’m new at this—and I don’t understand everything that’s going on, still, actually,” John Henry spoke up, “But, are the likely heavily connected cult who had inserted themselves into the school going to let you shut them down?”

Toni Jo was silent for a moment, then at last she said, “I hate to say it, but he’s right. If we’re going to get Coal Hill shut down, we’re going to have to remove them first. Quill, I have to say it, but you may be need to be one of the faithful for a little longer.”

“More undercover work.” Quill snarked, “Yip-hee.” She swore, she has done more undercover work in the past month alone then she had in sixteen years.

Meanwhile, Mateusz was upstairs, sitting at Charlie’s bedside. The other boy was still dead to the world, looking rather sickly.

“When you get better, you have a lot of explaining to do.” Mateusz whispered to him. His head was still spinning and he was still having trouble processing what he had seen in heard. It did explain some things, but for as many questions as it answered, it also raised many more.

Mateusz began to look around the room. It was rather generic, like something out of a catalogue, something staged. There were absolutely no clues to who was actually lying on the bed. But maybe there was something that would.

“Okay,” Toni Jo began, “Let’s just—make a list of what we know.”

“Well, we know that faction of a species known as the Weeping Angels plan to take over the Earth.” Quill recapped, “And they’ve tricked a group of school governors into thinking they’re coming to help the human race, so they’ve offered up Coal Hill as their personal feeding ground.”

“And we know that there have been a series of angel attacks.” Gwen added, “The hikers were probably a coincidence - “

“And they probably didn’t know Toni Jo was with you lot.” John Henry interjected, “Of course, they might have taken us for investigating the hikers.”

“And then we stuck them on poor Azazel.” Mick listed.

“That was most definitely about this.” Gwen agreed.

“Which means they could have angels on the ground assisting them.” Toni Jo summarized, “Killing for them.”

Meanwhile, Mateusz was listening to the conversation from the stairway, completely unnoticed.

“And then we lead them back to poor Sally Sparrow.” Fox lamented.
“Sally Sparrow?” The Doctor repeated, “I haven’t thought about her in years. How is doing?” After a beat the context hit him and he asked, “What did you do?”

“The only thing that survived Azazel the Intel Broker’s purge before she tried run lead us to Western Drumblings which lead us to Sally Sparrow and Lawrence Nightingale, which lead the Weeping Angels to them.” Fox explained.

“We’ve relocated them to somewhere the Weeping Angels will never find them.” Toni Jo assured him.

“But…” Jack began, his voice trailing off as it hit him, “Someone moved the angels that were in the police station.”


“So, you gave them more angels?” The Doctor questioned, “I thought you said these people were good.”

“Says the man who just admitted to accidently creating a riff in time and space.” Quill pointed out, “I think we can say there’s a lot of blame to go around here.”

As the fight broke out, that was when Mateusz made his move. He ran down the stairs and out the door.

Going to the van, he managed to get the door opened and searched until he found Charlie’s back pack. It had been left behind at the scene and gathered as evidence. Then he went back to the door and peeked inside again.

“Putting that aside,” Toni Jo was saying, “Now that we have a basic timeline and an idea of what forces they have, now we need to figure about that room they took Quill to. As in, what is it, what’s inside, and is it going to complicate things even more than things already are.”

Everyone was silent, turning to Quill who was the only one who had actually been in the room.

“Don’t look at me, I was drugged.” Quill responded.

Fox rubbed his hands over his face.

“One step forward and two steps back.” Gwen murmured.

“Now, hold on,” Toni Jo began, “We’re closer than we’ve been since this thing began. We know what we’re up against, we just need to figure out how to stop it.”

As Toni Jo continued to speak, Mateusz snuck back up the stairs.

“This isn’t the first seemingly impossible case anyone at this table has faced.” Toni Jo continued, “Not the first that seemed to just go along with no end in sight. We have been fought tyrants, monsters, invasions, sharks, killers, pirates, armies and one memorable occasion realtors. We’ve been arrested, mugged, mocked, nearly mauled, poisoned, taken hostage, pelted with trash, almost constantly perused by evil villains and falsely accused of numerous crimes!. By God, if we can somehow get through all that, we can evict a couple of pencil pushers.”

Roused by the speech, the Doctor started clapping.

“Thanks, but that’s not really necessary.” Toni Jo responded, sitting back down, “Now, back to business.”

Getting upstairs safely with Charlie still asleep, Mateusz started rummaging through the backpack for any clues. He felt terrible about it, but if no one else was going to be straight with him, he was going to get solid answers himself.

He found the usual stuff, school books, notebook, then he found an unmarked bottle of pills and a knife. Again, nothing he hadn’t already figured out. Then he found Charlie’s sketchbook.

Mateusz began to flip through the book. There were pictures of the people downstairs, his mother and aunt and the others, as well as a man he hadn’t seen, but of other things as well. Lizard people, giant monsters with rows of fangs, children with black soulless eyes.

“Like what you see?” A voice behind him asked.

“Charlie?” Mateusz began, genuinely surprised that he was awake. “I’m sorry. I—”

“It’s alright.” Charlie assured him, “After what I put you through today, I don’t have a right to complain.”

“I think you put everyone through a lot today.” Mateusz commented.

“Yeah,” Charlie agreed, sitting up, “I admit, this wasn’t one of my best ideas.”
“It helps, I think they have a bigger problem right now.” Mateusz assured him.
“What’s are talking about down there?” Charlie asked, “Do you know?”
Mateusz spent the next fifteen minutes relaying everything he heard.
“Well, that’s not good.” Charlie said, when was finished, sliding off the bed, “I need to get down there.”
“I don’t think son.” Mateusz began, pushing him down on the bed, “Remember what your aunt said? Besides...you have some explaining to do.” At the very least it kept him distracted enough to keep from exerting himself too soon.”
“Right,” Charlie responded, “I’m sure you have a lot of questions.”
“Yes.” Mateusz confirmed, “First off, exactly who are these people?”
“We’re called Torchwood.” Charlie, “It was founded back in the 1900s to investigate the strange, the unknown, the...alien.”
“You—catch aliens?” Mateusz asked.
“Yes.” Charlie admitted reluctantly.
“You’re an alien catcher?” Mateusz rephrased.
“Yes.” Charlie repeated back at him, rubbing his forehead.
“Charlie, you’re not even out of high school.” Mateusz reasoned, “Your mother I understand but—how does a seventeen-year-old get involved in this?”
“Technically they recruited my mother, I just got—brought along for the ride I guess.” Charlie responded, as he didn’t know how else to explain, and he didn’t think that did a good job.
“And you’re here now about tears in time and space at the school?” Mateusz asked.
“We didn’t know that was going on at first” Charlie said, “But yes, basically.” Charlie was silent on for a good minute, staring at the boy he was sure was about to become his ex-boyfriend. Should he go ahead just tell him everything? That they weren’t even the same species? He should tell him. He deserved to know.
“Charlie?” Mateusz asked, sensing something else wrong, other than the obvious, “There’s something else, isn’t it?”
Charlie swallowed and whipped the tears he realized was forming in his eyes. He had no right to pity himself. This was his fault. “Yes. Yes, there is…”
And so, Charlie told him everything else.
“So, everything you told me was a lie?” Mateusz asked, when he was finished, “About being adopted, everything?”
“I didn’t lie about that.” Charlie insisted, “Back on the planet we’re from, the division she was with at the time found me caught in a bush and just---took pity.” After he realized, “This isn’t helping, is it?”
“Not really.” Mateusz confirmed.
“Would it help if I told you that we—” He gestured in-between the two of them, “Wasn’t a lie.”
“But why?” Mateusz asked, “Why would get involved with me when you had---this.” For some reason this, while saying nothing about the situation, said it all.
“I didn’t mean to.” Charlie admitted, “But then, I met you and then I kept running into you and there was---something going on, and I kept telling myself it was for intel, and then Dawson and his Dragon killed Armitage and almost killed Ram---”
“Wait, wait, back up,” Mateusz asked, “Mr. Armitage is dead? And a dragon killed him?”
“Or an alien creature that looked like one.” Charlie rephrased, “That was the day I was so—shaken up, the day you found me outside the dinner?”
Mateusz nodded, “I remember.”
“And then you took my hand, I realized what was going on, and I-I know I should let go that I should try to just let you down, but—but I couldn’t.” Charlie confessed, “I’m sorry. It was unfair to you, and if you just want to run out of here and never seen me again, I won’t try to stop you.”
Mateusz just sat there for a minute, letting it all sink in. “Well, I honestly don’t think leaving’s an option right now.” He said finally.
“You’re right.” Charlie admitted, “I’m so sorry, you got sucked into this.”
“Well, to be fair that one’s on me.” Mateusz replied.
“No, it’s not.” Charlie protested, “You didn’t know what you were getting into. I should’ve avoided you or—”
“No, that’s not what I mean.” Mateusz cut him off, “Your mother came to my house tonight, looking for you. When I heard you were in trouble, I went—I went with her to come and find you.”
“Oh,” Charlie responded, “I guess that explains what you were doing here, tonight.”
“That only now occurs to you?” Mateusz questioned.
“Sorry, it’s been a long night.” Charlie responded, “Thought at this point it’s probably technically day.” After a beat, he realized what Mateusz had said, “You went out looking for me?”
“Of course.” Mateusz answered, “That’s what you do when you care about someone and they disappear.” After a moment of silence, he asked, “What was the plan anyway?”
Charlie was quiet for a long time. “Get you and run for it.”
Mateusz looked surprised.
“I never lied about how I feel about you.” Charlie informed, “Not for one second. Whatever else happened, you need to know—” He was suddenly cut off as Mateusz lunged forward, suddenly their lips were on top of each other.
When they finally came up for air, Mateusz declared. “I forgive you. This situation is complicated and messy and I don’t think I could’ve handled it any better and I forgive you.”
Charlie felt as if chains that had been wrapped tightly had suddenly been removed from his very soul. Suddenly there was so much he wanted to say. You don’t know what that means to me. How good that is to hear. I know I don’t deserve it. I love you and will spend every day for the rest of my life making it up to you. But all that came out was, “Thank you.” And that somehow said it all.
Suddenly they were kissing again, that deep intense kissing like they got up to in the dinner closet. By chance that when Quill decided she should check on them, and saw it. “No,” She declared hurrying into the room. That got the boys’ attention and they broke apart. “No, no, no, no.” She continued, getting in-between them and pushing them even further apart. “I don’t care if neither of you can get pregnant, you’re not doing—that. That under this roof, not until you put a bloody ring on it!”
“Ew, Mum!” Charlie exclaimed mortified, “We weren’t going to do—that.”
“Yes, yeah, and I’m your swan’s maiden aunt.” Quill retorted, before turning back to said swan, “Come on, you can sleep on the couch tonight.” And with that quick-marched the boy downstairs.
April, Tanya, and Ram's investigation continues, and a new strategy is tried.

Meanwhile, Jack has a nightmare.

All this happened on a school night.

The next day in physics April was aware of three things: First Miss Quill was preoccupied, more so than usual, and despite her best effort looked like she had been hit by a truck, second, Mateusz was walking around more or less in a daze, also looked like he had been hit by a truck, and she wasn’t sure, but fairly certain he was wearing the same clothes he wore yesterday, thirdly, Charlie was nowhere to be found.

Tanya had also made note of two things that day: First that Miss Ames and Miss Quill were suddenly getting rather chummy, she saw them together at least three times that day. Two, that Miss Foreman was avoiding Miss Ames like the plague, going so far as to duck behind a trash can to avoid her.

Ram had noticed one thing: That Miss Quill, Miss Foreman Miss Ames, and Mateusz all suddenly seemed to know each other.

“Okay, I’m just gonna say it.” Tanya said, as they gathered in secret, “We need to follow them.”

“What?” Ram blacked, “No, it’s too dangerous! Am I the only who remembers what Drouet said? Besides, I can’t really keep up with them on this leg!” He gestured to the leg still currently in a cast.

“Well, then, go tell her what we’re doing.” April suggested.

Ram scoffed, but said, “Okay.” He really didn’t think he could stop them, even if he tried harder.

When April and Tanya finally found Miss Quill, she was standing by the doorway joined by Miss Foreman and Mateusz. “Come on,” She said, grabbing the boy by the arm.

“You know, that’s not really necessary, I’m sure he’s not an escape risk.” Susan commented.

“You’re probably right, but just in case.” Quill replied.

“Just to clarify, am I a prisoner?” Mateusz spoke up, as no one had been really clear on the subject but he had the feeling he wasn’t allowed to leave. It also came out surprisingly casual.

“Of course not.” Susan said at the same time Quill said, “I don’t know.” The woman glanced at each other.

“What do you mean you don’t know?” Susan demanded, “How can you not know?”

“You were there.” Quill pointed out, “It’s not like what to do about the kid was high on the list of our priority.” Though to be honest, there was a simple solution, but for some reason no one had done it yet. In fact, now that she thought about it, she wasn’t even sure where her stash of amnesia pills was.

It was at point the subject of the conversation noticed something from the corner of his eye. “Is someone following us?”

Both women turned to look just as April and Tanya dunked behind a nearby corner.

“I don’t see anything.” Susan declared.

“Wait a second.” Quill order, letting go of Mateusz’s arm.

The girls held their breath and dug deeper into the crevasse, as Quill peaked in.

“They WHAT?!” Reet exclaimed after Ram explained the situation to her.

“They followed Miss Quill and the people she was with.” Ram repeated, “We think they’re involved in—in—in whatever’s going on around here!”
“Did you a hear a word I said?!” Reet balked, “You gave me your word, it’s too—” Beginning to walk out, she ordered, “Come on.”

“Where are we going?” Ram asked.

“To stop the girls before they do something they can’t take back. “Reet answered.

Meanwhile Quill had somehow missed the girls. “No one’s there.” She said walking back to the group. As she rejoined the group, the argument started up again. “We can’t hold him against his will.” Susan protested.

“Well, he’s not exactly trying to get away.” Quill reasoned, “Are you trying to get away?”

“No, ma’am.” Mateusz confirmed.

“He also wants you to like him.” Susan pointed out.

“Why would he want that?” Quill responded, not quite making the connection.

“Why do you think?” Susan challenged.

This was how the conversation went for most of the walk back to the flat. When the trio were inside, the girls came out of hiding.

“So, what now?” Tanya asked.

Inside, everyone was at work. “Anything happen today?” Toni Jo asked, not turning around.

“Well, Doretha met up with me every chance she could, but never over anything important, just over how I was recovering or some other meaningless drivel.” Quill answered, “Apparently we’re still in the love bombing stage.”

“Well, I actually have some good news for a change.” Toni Jo responded turning around with a folder in her hand, “Based on the description you gave us, we were able to identify two of the governors. “She opened the files revealing a picture of one of the women who had attended to Quill the night before, “Marin Servile, thirty-six, and get this, no connection with Coal Hill, she’s actually an up and coming executive at a defense firm.”

“What would they want with her?” Mateusz asked.

“Forces, just in case the rest of mankind isn’t so keen on salvation via giant stone angel.” Quill speculated.

“That’s what we were thinking.” Toni Jo confirmed.

“And the other one?” Quill asked, “You said there were two.”

Toni Jo opened another files. “Ezekiel Cummings. “She began, “You may recognize him as the man who initiated you.”

“Which is almost fitting,” Fox said, sauntering over to the table, “As he uses to be the ‘preacher’ for a fringe religion group, ‘The Church for the Higher Mind.’ Not much is actually known about them, as all the information seems to be had been lost. Any article about them is no longer on the internet, even the hard copies of local police reports were lost in a mysterious fire.”

“Of course, they were.” Quill responded flatly.

“What we can establish is that he can be very charismatic.” Charlie spoke up. It was the first time Quill noticed his presence. “What is he doing here? He shouldn’t even be up!”

“Mum, I’m fine.” Charlie insisted.

“Your head’s been cracked open twice, you’re covered in stiches, you still look like death warmed over, but yeah, sure, your fine.” Quill snarled, “Upstairs, now.”

“Actually, Quill, I think the work might be helping him recover.” Toni Jo interjected.

“Okay, I know I’m going to regret this, but why?” Quill countered, “Because it’s gets him moving, I can keep an eye on him, and really, keeping him home was more about not drawing attention than anything else.” Toni Jo reasoned.

Quill thought a minute then said, “No good enough for me.” Then turned back to her adopted son, “Upstairs, now.”

Charlie reluctantly got up, heading upstairs.

“Okay, now that, that’s out of the way, what do we have?” Quill asked.

“Nothing particular, per se,” Toni Jo replied, “But, ah, we have come up with a new strategy.”

Meanwhile, an older woman was coming down the stairs at the knock of the door. She looked
through the peephole seeing two people, a man and a woman, who she had never seemed before, but opened it anyway. “Can I help you?” She asked.

“My name is Jack Harkness, this is my college Gwen Cooper.” Jack introduced them both, “We’re here about your husband.”

“My ex-husband.” The former Mrs. Cummings corrected them.

“May we come in?” Jack asked.

Miss Cummings looked at him. “Alright.” She reluctantly agreed.

As they walked in, she told them, “Sit down.” As they did, she asked, “So, what do you want to know about the worst mistake of my life.”

“Well, for starters you could elaborate on that opener.” Jack suggested.

Miss Cummings paused a moment then began. “When I met Ezekiel, he was just a normal bloke, did peoples’ taxes for a living. Then he met Edward Belvins.”

“Edward Belvins?” Gwen repeated, “Who’s he? He didn’t show up in any of the reports.”

“Well, I don’t know why.” Miss Cummings replied, “Edward Blevins was the founder of the Church of the Higher Mind.” Her voice was ladened with contempt at the very name.

“I thought Ezekiel found the church.” Jack responded.

“No, he just took it over after Edward died.” Miss Cummings explained, “Or ‘ascended,’ that’s what Ezekiel told everyone. “After a beat he added, “In reality it was a blooming heart attack.

“Ma’am, this may seem like an odd question, but a lot of documentation was lost in a fire, so could you please tell us what this cult is about?” Gwen requested.

Miss Cummings took a deep breath before beginning. “The ‘church’ a term I use very loosely, was basically cherry-picked bits and pieces of religions cut and hobbled together, topped with the assertion that the serpent was Christ. That God wanted humanity to fail, and we could save ourselves if we were simply willing to try. I know it sounds ridiculous now, but at the time—somehow what he said made sense. And the blood atonements started.”

“Blood atonements?” Gwen repeated.

“It’s a concept dreamed up by some fringe Mormon groups that some people sin so much that even the blood of Jesus can’t cover it all and the only they can get to Heaven is pay with their own lives.” Jacks summarized, “Though most of the groups that practiced this have either imploded and/or all been arrested at this point.”

“Higher Minds included.” Miss Cummings said, “But the way we went about it, they couldn’t convict Ezekiel. So, I filed for divorce and got as far away from the insanity as possible.”

“I guess that means he wouldn’t listen to you if you tried to reason with him.” Gwen responded.

“You would be right.” Miss Cummings confirmed, “Why?”

“We’re not at liberty to discuss that.” Jack replied.

“He’s done something again, hasn’t he?” Miss Cummings asked.

“Like I said, we’re not at liberty to discuss it.” Jack said, “But yes.”

Meanwhile Quill and Toni Jo had a much short journey, just to Brixion.

The pair waited as the doorbell reverberated. “How do we know she even likes her sister, let alone will listen to her?”

“We don’t know.” Toni Jo admitted, “But it’s our best bet right now.”

The pair stood there in silence for a moment. “So, have you heard anything about the surgery?”

“Not yet.” Toni Jo answered, “I’m actually starting to get worried.”

“I’m sure it’s fine.” Quill told her, “They probably just don’t want to bother you or some nonsense like that.”

Just then the door was opened by a woman with brown hair and small brown eyes, “May I help you?”

“I’m MI-Agent Brown, this is Agent Carter.” Toni Jo introduced them, holding the fake badges, “Are you Minuette Servile?”

“Yes.” Minuette confirmed, “May I ask what this is about?”

“Is your sister Marion Servile?” Quill spoke up.

Minuette’s face lit up in recognition. “You know where she is?”
And with that woman ushered them in, sitting them down at the table.

“You’re telling me you haven’t heard from sister in half a decade?” Quill asked, skeptically “She’s raising star in the private defense world? Couldn’t you just look her up?”

“I know where she is.” Minuette replied, “I just can’t get to her. She won’t answer my calls, anytime I show up in her house, or her work, someone, security or the landlord, or someone throws me out, I just… I just don’t know what to do.”

“Well, we think we can help with that.” Toni Jo said, “Maybe. You see, your sisters involved with some… shady characters and we were hoping maybe you could talk with her. See if you could get through to her.”

“What do you mean, shady?” Minette asked, “What’s she gotten herself into?”

“That’s classified.” Quill told her.

“How can I help if I don’t even know what’s going on?” Minuette demanded.

“I’m with her.” Tanya whispered from the outside, “The girls had managed to follow the women without being spotted, and were currently trying to listen through the door.

“Sssh!” April hushed her, “I can’t hear.”

“We can give you information as you need to know.” Toni Jo was saying, “You can just—” Her voice trailed off as a phone went off. Quill’s phone.

“I’m sorry, do you mind if I go take this?” Quill asked, “There’s been some— things going on lately that I’m alert for.”

“Oh, please, feel free.” Minuette responded.

Quill stepped out of the room and checked the caller ID to find a number she couldn’t recognize. This could be it. “Hello?” She answered.

“Andrea, it’s Doretha.” The voice on the other line said.

“Please stop calling me that.” Quill responded, “It’s not Andrea, it’s Quill.”

“Alright then.” Doretha reluctantly agreed, “Anyway, there’s meeting tomorrow after school. Can you be there?”

“What time?” Quill asked.

As they door opened, April and Tanya ran down the block. “So, did she say what the meeting was about?” Toni Jo asked.

“No.” Quill answered, “But I doubt it’s too talk about funding.”

“I have some ideas if you want to hear them?” Toni Jo informed her.

“No, if you want to be leader, you don’t give someone the option.” Quill told her, “You just tell them.”

“Okay, here are my ideas….”

Meanwhile, Reet was trying to track down where the girls had gone, with no luck.

“Did they call you to say where they thought they going?” Reet asked.

“No.” Ram admitted, “I’m going to try calling them.”

“No,” Reet responded, “Who knows what the girls have gotten themselves into, a phone going off might just get them caught.”

“Well, what are we support to do then?” Ram demanded.

“Give me a moment to think.” Then she got an idea and pulled out her phone.

“I thought you just said—” Ram began.

“I’m not calling them.” Reet cut him off, “I’m getting reinforcements.”

Meanwhile, after the unsuccessful search for people who could get through to Ezekiel, Jack found himself fallen asleep on the couch. And his dreams weren’t particularly pleasant: The chains are cutting into his wrists, hot steam coming up all around him. The Master knew how to make an uncomfortable prison.

He hears the sound of footsteps. He looks up to see two guards carrying a woman in dark dress and leggings, with a blonde bob that looks like it could use some shaping up.

“No…” He whispered.

The guards either didn’t hear or were ignoring him, instead chaining the silent prisoner up by her
wrist, across from him. Where he had a good view of her. This couldn’t mean anything good. Only when they were gone did she life her head, revealing a familiar face with one blue eye, and one brownish green on. “Hey Jack,” Andrea Quill rasps, “Long time, no see.”

“How did you get here?” Jack asks, still not completely comprehending, not WANTING to comprehend what was happening, “…What…How…”

“Ahh, eloquent as ever.” Quill snarks, weakly.

“How did you get here?” Jack demands, getting it somewhat together, “What about the others?” Even as he says it, he had a feeling he doesn’t want the answer.

He’s right. Quill spends the next hour detailing what happened to others, his team and hers, having to stop several times to compose herself or to let Jack try to get a hold of himself. The teams met up in the Himalayas where the Master had sent Torchwood Three on that wild goose chase after hearing they were in the area, wanting to know what was going on. That was when the avalanche hit. Somehow, they all managed to survive that, thought there were serious injuries, Toshiko had a broken leg, and Fox went snow blind, plus several small cases of frostbite, and crawled their way back to Torchwood Three’s base camp. By then the Master had taken over and the Toclafane were waiting for them. They picked up Tosh first, then Into, who threw himself in front of a beam meant for Charlie, a kid he had just met, Chris, and Fox, who couldn’t even see it coming. Gwen, Owen, Toni Jo, Andrea, and Charlie were the only one who got away. Not knowing what else to do they started back to Cardiff, only to get picked off along the way. Gwen sacrificed herself to save the others and the resistance members they had hooked up with in China, drawing the fire of collaborators, Charlie got hypothermia in Siberia, two doctors and neither could do anything that made a difference, wild dogs got Owen in Germany, all they do to help him was shoot him as he was being mauled. Quill and Toni Jo were the only to make it to Cardiff, they weren’t sure how, but before they could even get to the hub, they were besieged by troops. They fought as hard and as long as they could, only to be cornered in an abandoned building. That was when Quill shot Toni Jo to keep them from taking her, only for their barricades to fail before she could shoot herself. When they’re both nicely devastated and their lungs are sore from screaming, they hear the footsteps, and the sound of something being rolls down the catwalk. Quill’s back is to him, but Jack can see the man rolling a cart towards them, a light-haired man in suit.

“No….” Jack breathes.

“Hey there, freak.” The Master chimes, grabbing a knife and pushing past Quill, a knife in hand, to get in front of her. “Have you been enjoying your time with your little friend?” He continues, grabbing a hold of Quills’ face, “I had her brought here just for you.”

Quill reels back quickly, shouting in anger, “Get the Hell away from me!”

“Ooh, so much fire!” The Master mocks, “They told me you were a feisty one.” Then he takes the side of the knife and slides it across Quill’s face. “Let’s just see how feisty you are.”

“Leave her alone!” Jack shouted in desperation, “If you want to hurt someone, hurt me!”

“Oh, but I am hurting you.” The Master responded, before cutting Andrea’s cheek.

For the next two hours, the Master does his best work, flogging, cutting, taking out her kneecaps with a freaking meat cleaver, rubbing salt in the cuts, he even takes one an eye. All the while he’s taunting her, about the teams, both of them, about their deaths, about her failure to save them, about killing her best friend, about being taken alive. But also, all the while Quill snarls and rages, spirited and defiant, not him giving in the satisfaction of seeing her break.

Then he hit where it really hurt. “Is this really the best Torchwood can offer?” The Master questions, stepping back “A woman who can’t even save her own child?”

Quill went stiff. “Don’t you talk about him.” She seethes, “Don’t you DARE talk about him!”

“What?” The Master responds, “You don’t want Jack to know the truth? How you let your son die because you couldn’t—”

“We did everything we could to save him!” Quill screamed, “We did everything we could!”

“Except watch him.” The Master Countered, “You left him alone and let him wonder off in the middle of frozen wasteland.”

“I only turned around a moment to talk to the others.” Quill protested, her voice trembling for the
first time, “He was wrapped up in everything we had. He shouldn’t have been able to move, let alone—”

“Get up and walk away?” The Master cut her off, putting a hand in his jacket, “Wonder aimlessly, alone, a little eight-year-old boy? Tell my, Andrea, do you think he wanted his Mummy as he froze to death?”

Andrea didn’t respond, tears rolling down from her good eye.

“Andres, listen to me.” Jack called out, urgently “What happened to Charlie wasn’t your fault. He’s just trying to get to you, don’t let him get to you.”

That was when the Master pulled out what he had in his pocket. It was Charlie’s perception filter caked with permafrost. “Guess he won’t be needing this anymore.” He quipped, before dropping it to the ground and crushing it under his foot.

Finally, Quill was overcome by tears.

Quill offer no furer words or any resistance through the remaining minutes of her life, which weren’t many after that. That Master, board now that he had broken his toy, finally stabbed her in the heart as Jack screamed.

“Jack!” Someone called out, shaking him, “Jack!”

Jack jolted awake to find an old man he didn’t recognize for a few moments standing over him. “You alright?” The Doctor asked, guinely concerned.

“Yeah,” Jack lied, “I just had a nightmare.”

“Ah,’ The Doctor sighed, “Well, I am familiar with those.”

“It was about the year that never was.” Jack admitted, “That must be so long ago for you.”

“But not you?” The Doctor asked.

“Physically yeah.” Jack answered, “And mentally most of the time too, but then there are times—”

“When you have nightmares?” The Doctor finished for him.

Jack nodded. “They all died, you know.” He informed his old friend, “Everyone in this house. Well, except for maybe Susan and the kid, the other kid. I don’t know what happened to them.”

“Susan wouldn’t have been on the planet at the time.” The Doctor responded, “That was back when I still thought I had killed everyone else, remember? As for the other kid, whichever one he is, well, your guess is as good as mine.”

“Yeah, about the Susan thing.” Jack began, “How is she here? I thought you were the last Time Lord in existence? Or last Galifayan in general for that matter.”

“Well, you might want to get comfortable.” The Doctor advised, “Because that is a long and complicated story.”

By the time the Doctor finished telling Jack what was, indeed, a long and complicated story, Toni Jo and Quill had returned to the flat.

“How did it go?” Jack asked.

“The sister’s on board.” Toni Jo announced, “And Quill has an appointment tomorrow.”

“Appointment.” Jack repeated, “Appointment with who?”

“Who do you think?” Quill asked, “The other faithful.”

“Do you know where Gwen is?” Toni Jo asked, “We’re going to need the contacts.”
Running Out of Time

Chapter Summary

The meeting brings an Earth-shattering announcement.

Meanwhile, back at school, Reet had gathered the majority of the Veritas Movement.
“The other is Tanya Adeola, fourteen, five feet, dark skin, black hair done in braids, brown eyes.”
She was saying, “We have some idea where they went, but not it’s exact, so we’re cordoning off grids.” She began handing out instructions, “Now, if you find them, don’t approach them, call me.”
That was when a lanky brunette in the crowd raised his hand. “Excuse me, Reet, ah forgive me for saying so, but why don’t we just call the authorities?”
“Because since we don’t actually have any relation to them, it’ll only make ourselves look guilty of something.” Reet reasoned, “And I got them into this. I owe it to them to get them out.”
Meanwhile, April and Tanya were listening at the door, when Tanya addressed the obvious. “You know, at some point, our parents are going to start wondering where we are.”
“I thought you told your Mum you were working on some project at the library.” April whispered back.
“Yeah, but that only buys us so much time.” Tanya whispered, “This is why the kid detective thing does not work in real life.”
“But we’ve learned basically nothing.” April protested.
“I can look up stuff about that woman tonight.” Tanya countered, grabbing April by the wrist, “Now, come on!”
“Alright, but I should probably call, Ram, let him know what we found.” April said.
When she finally called Ram, April wound up, getting an earful, but not from Ram. Before he could say anything, Reet took the phone and demanded, “Where, are you?”
“I just got back to my house.” April stammered.
“Tanya?” Reet asked urgently, “What about her?”
“I dropped her off before I went home.” April answered sheepishly.
“Oh, thank God,” Reet breathed, before getting stern again, “I want you three, in my office tomorrow morning.”
“What the bloody—” Reet cut herself off, trying her best not to swear in front of children, “What were you thinking? These people could be armed, you could’ve been killed!”
“We’re sorry.” April responded, “It was just a bunch weird stuff happened and—”
“Then you should have come to me.” Reet cut her off, “This isn’t a game. Playing armature detective is a good way to get yourself hurt, or worse. And then what? Did you think about what that would do to your families?!”
“You’re not exactly a professional either.” Tanya pointed out.
“But I know more about what I’m doing than you do.” Reet retorted, “I also have nothing to lose. You have something. In fact, you have a lot.”
Everyone looked abashed at that. “Do you want to know what we found anyway?” April spoke up finally.
The afternoon, Quill was trying to put contacts on top of contacts.
“Can you see?” Toni Jo asked.
“Yeah.” Quill said, blinking serval times.
Toni Jo stuck her head out of the bathroom and called, “Gwen! They’re in!”
“Okay, let’s see if these puppies still work.” Gwen said, logging in.
There had been some concern about whether the contacts would actually be useable, because they would have to be on top of her other contacts. Throwing her cover to the wind and going without the color contacts had been questioned, but it was unknown how the Governors would react to an alien in their midst, if they didn’t already know, plus, however they reacted they would likely ask why she dropped the pretense. Adding to color to contacts had also been brought, but it was determined any dye they could use would impede the camera, and there was not enough time to find a way to remedy that problem.

Gwen was looking at camera feed, which seemed to be working. She typed out, All good with the picture. Can you read this?

Quill nodded.

“Alright, people,” Gwen announced, “We are a go.”

Thirty minutes later, Quill was walking up to Coal Hill, where Doretha was apparently waiting for her.

“Were you followed?” Doretha asked.

“No.” Quill answered, “I checked.”

“What did you tell the others?” Doretha asked.

“They think I have late night staff meeting I couldn’t get out of.” Quill lied, “Which is true, in a since. So, what’s this meeting about anyways?”

“I don’t know.” Doretha admitted, “Ezekiel called it at the last minute, won’t tell anyone what’s it about.”

“Ezekiel?” Quill repeated, playing dumb.

“Our leader.” Doretha explained, “The man who conducted your initiation. He was one of the first to see the cravings.”

Of course. Quill thought, resisting the urge to roll her eyes.

They came to the room and Doretha pulled out the key. She put it in and everything happened as it did before expect this time Quill could much more clearly see it. “Come now.” Doretha said, opening the door, “Best get on.”

They walked in and immediately came to grand room with several different balconies. “I don’t remember this being here the last time.” Quill berthed, “Then again, I was kind of out of it.”

“That’s because there was no need to take you to it.” Doretha explained, thought really it explained nothing.

“What does that mean?” Quill demanded.

“One of the bits of technology we’ve gathered.” Doretha elaborated, “The construction of this place, while each room is permanent, can be moved to fit our needs.” With that she walked off, expecting Quill to follow.

They settled on one of the lower balconies. Quills eyes darted all around in her and her heart plummeted. The balconies were filled, the governors numbered in the hundreds. Low hundreds, but still hundreds.

“Who are all these people?” Quill wondered, so shocked she accidently said it aloud.

“Defense contractors, real estate developers, even some low-level government employees.” Doretha answered, “Anyone who can be useful to the arrival.”

“This isn’t good.” Gwen declared, as she and the others looked at the number of Governors on the screen.

“Is someone getting a still of this?” Fox asked, hopping they could somehow identify them all.

Just then, Ezekiel Cummings, all by himself, stepped out on the center balcony. “My people.” He began, “I will skip the usually formalities of this meeting for the news I have to tell you is too wonderful to delay.”

“That can’t be good.” Toni Jo declared.

“Oh, when the pompous skip the pomp and circuities it is never good.” The Doctor agreed.

“For decades now, we have strived towards the goal of the Arrival, that glorious days when our saviors will come to make the world anew, but never, ever have dreamed that it we would ever live to see it.”
I thought he was skipping the formalities. Quill thought silently.
“It is my pleasure to tell you that we will live to see it.” Ezekiel declared, beaming, “The time of Arrival is now!”
The team takes the fight to the Governors.

The room burst into thunderous applause.
“What?” Charlie asked, “What does that mean?”
“It means we can’t wait anymore.” Toni Jo answered, staring on in horror.
Ezekiel waved his hands and the cheering died down. “We must spend the next week and a half, making the final preparations.” He explained, “We need a space for them to come and other matters which I will be discussing with you in groups when I assign your tasks, but in a week and a half we all meet in the chamber and perform the final ritual to open the door from them. Now, if I would please talk to…”
“Really?” Fox asked, “That’s all the information we get?”
“At least until he talks to Quill’s group.” Jack responded.
Meanwhile, unbeknownst to any of them, Reet was standing in front of the door, trying to figure out a way in.
Instead of going home, Reet hid herself until people started showing up. She lagged behind, trying to avoid detection, which lead to her being locked out when she was ready to go in.
She was so focused she didn’t notice someone coming for her until they covered her mouth.
Meanwhile, in the room itself, Quill was shifting uncomfortably in an increasingly empty balcony.
How could they stop this? Apparently, Ezekiel wasn’t the ‘tell the whole plan’ sort of guy, and with this many people, who knew how elaborate the plan was. Maybe she could botch whatever her part was…
“Quill!” Doretha called out, making her realize the woman had been talking to her.
“Yeah?” Quill asked, shaking out of her stupor, “What you were saying?” After receiving a look from the woman, she said, “Sorry, it’s just all this sort of threw me, it’s a bit distracting.”
“Oh, of course.” Doretha said understandingly, “That’s what I was just saying I can’t believe this day is finally here.”
“Yeah,” Quill responded before murmuring, “In about a week and a half.”
Just then another women popped her head in. “Doretha? He’s ready for you.”
“I have to go.” Doretha berthed, elated, “I’ll see you later.”
“You too.” Quill replied, left on her own.
Back at the flat, Charlie dropped several weapons on an already cluttered kitchen table.
“Okay, so we got eight hand guns, six long guns, some dynamite, three hand-held lasers, a plasma cannon, the stuff for about twenty Molotov cocktails, two grenades, sixteen knives, two scimitars, one katana, and a—” She picked an ivory-colored, curved employment, “A crochet hook? Who the Hell put a crochet hook in?” After a beat she asked, “What about C-4? Didn’t that general give us some C-4 a while back?”
“We had to stash it in Glasgow, remember?” Fox reminded her.
“Well, somebody go get it!” Toni Jo snapped, “Jack?”
“On it.” Jack said, before disappearing.
“What are you going to do, blow through the door?” The Doctor asked.
“Basically.” Toni Jo confirmed, grabbing a hand gun.
“And then what?” The Doctor challenged, “There’s hundreds of them and only—” He stopped to do a head count, “six of you.”
“Ah, you forgot to count Jack.” Gwen spoke up.
“And me.” Susan said, raising her hand.
“And Quill.” Toni Jo finished.
“Alright.” The Doctor conceded, “Sorry I presumed what your stance would be, Susan. But nine people does not an army make.”
Toni Jo responded by pulling out her phone and began dialing.
“Who are you calling?” The Doctor asked.
“Our contact at UNIT.” Toni Jo answered, “He’s the one who got us on this case, because he couldn’t get anyone else’s attention.”
Meanwhile Quill just got a message on her lenses: ON OUR WAY.
What? What did that mean? Should she start fighting? Should she try to sneak to the door? Should she throw herself the balcony to try to create a distraction?
However, before she could do anything, the young woman who came for Doretha, came for her.
“Miss Quill? He’s ready for you now.”
Quill was led down a series of halls, they a door was open opened, revealing a room with no one else but Ezekiel, sitting at desk.
“Andrea, please, sit down.” Ezekiel told her.
Quill sit down, deciding now was not the best time to correct him about her name. She looked around, waiting for someone else to be brought into the room.
“Oh, I had to meet with you alone.” Ezekiel told her, realizing what she was doing.
“Well, don’t I feel special.” Quill snarked.
“Well, you do seem to be our good luck charm.” Ezekiel quipped back.
Yep. Still love bombing. Quill thought, but saying aloud, “Me? No, that was just—good timing.”
“Better than you think.” Ezekiel replied, “I have a task that you are just the person for. You see, before the angels, there a—purification ritual that much be done, that includes the shedding of blood. In fact, it’s the most important part.”
“You mean human sacrifice.” Quill summed up.
“More like, blood atonement.” Ezekiel corrected, “I’m told you are somewhat familiar with killing.”
“As a solider.” Quill argued, “Killing people who were trying to kill me back. Not innocent civilians.”
“Oh, trust me, you’ll find this woman far from innocent.” Ezekiel countered.
Before she could question that statement, the explosion happened.
“Come on.” Quill ordered, pulling out her gun, not quite ready to break cover but preparing to.
When they got there it was bedlam, everyone running or fighting, guns firing, smoking filling the air.
“No…” Ezekiel gasped in utter shock. How did this happen?
Quill responded by leaping in the fray, just in time to see one of the governors sneaking up on Susan, with a knife. Quill shot him before he could.
Startled, Susan turned around to see the man lying on the ground holding a knife. She turned back to Quill, “Thanks.”
“No problem.” Quill replied, dodging another blow. They had got to getting into outnumbered fights like this!
In all the chaos nobody noticed Vampire roaming the halls of the school. The little puppy came to smoldering crater which serval people were running out of. When it was reasonably clear she hurried inside.
Inside, Marin Servile had fell to the ground in the chaos, was being trampled by her fellow Governors. Suddenly a pair of arms lifted her out of the fray.
“It’s alright.” Charlie told her as he threw her arm over his shoulder, “I got you.” He trudged through the swarm of people, but couldn’t get very far.
“I’ll take her.” Jack declared, realizing what Charlie was trying to do taking her from him. He then passed her to the nearest person on their side, and eventually they got her out of the room, where
she fell to the ground.
Meanwhile, Gwen was taking them out on the left on and the right, when suddenly someone wrapped around her neck. She struggled, falling to the ground. Suddenly Fox came over and took one of the swords to her attacker, cutting his hands off. He then helped Gwen, covered in blood, up. “That yours or his?” “His.” Gwen answered, running.
Meanwhile, Doretha was trying to get through the coward, trying to get out, or get someone’s attention. She turned to just in time to see Quill shooting a male governor who was attacking one of the intruders.
Doretha stared a moment in shock then felt her blood start to boil. She had trusted her. Vogued for her.
So, she would make her pay for this betrayal.
Meanwhile, somehow making it through the chaos all around her, Vampire the puppy, suddenly transformed into a bird, taking off into a hall.
The bird turned corner after turner, deeper into bowels of the eldritch room. At last she came to a bright sterile room, lined with glass cells. She found what she was looking for. Almost.
In the meeting chamber, everyone came to pause as the ground began to shake. Suddenly they could hear what sounded like stampede coming from the hall.
Suddenly the floodgates burst opened, and dozens of aliens burst through. Hulking gray creatures with months full of fangs, green slimy things with encountered tinkles. All attacking their former captors.
This is getting out of control. Toni Jo thought. “Fall back!” She called out, silently praying that the others could hear her.
The others stopped what they were doing, running for the door. On the other side they began to regroup.
“I guess those are the prisoners they’ve been keeping.” Fox guessed.
“Poetic justice if you ask me.” Quill commented.
“Now we just have to figure out how to get this contained.” Toni Jo said, before turning to the group, “Any ideas are welcome, people.”
“Shut the door and barricade it, let ‘em have it out?” Quill suggested.
“Not helping!” Toni Jo snapped.
“Perhaps I can be of assistance.” The Doctor said, walking in.
Inside, it was beldam, countless of dead bodies on the ground when suddenly, there was bright light, coming from the exit, an alarm blared out, and everybody froze for a few moments.
“Everyone!” Doretha shouted, getting an idea, “Everyone to one side!”
The remaining Governors obeyed, leaving them on one of side of room and the aliens on the other.
“Now, everyone head for the door as fast as you can!” Doretha instructed.
“So, that’s it?” Quill asked from the nook they were hiding in, “We’re just going to let them go?”
“We’re grab as many as we can as they get out.” Toni Jo reasoned, “We can get close enough to do that right?”
“If you let me focus?” Susan replied, currently sending out the messages that were affecting Doretha’s thinking.
“Well, why can’t we just mind-control them all into surrendering?” Quill asked.
“That’s a good question, can you do that?” Toni Jo asked.
“Susan, don’t!” The Doctor spoke up, “I don’t want this lot conducting a massacre.”
“We’re not monsters, Doctor.” Toni Jo snapped, “We’ll just recon everyone into next Saturday.”
“And you can’t stop me.” Susan added.
While most of the remaining Governors had already scattered, a little under half of them separated from the group and marched to the group. “Who’s in charge here?” One asked.
“Ah, I am.” Toni Jo spoke up.
“We give you our unconditional surrender.” That same one told her.
Everyone just stared a minute, processing what was happening. That was enough time for all the alien prisoners, led by Ballon, to come out and find the team as well. “That’s them, uncle!” A young girl with long onyx hair said, “Those are the people fighting them!”

“Yes, I gathered, Oxa.” Ballon replied.

“Excuse me, do we know you, little girl?” Fox spoke up.

Before their eyes, the girl, Oxa, apparently, transformed into the dog formerly known as Vampire. “What the—” Gwen began.

“Have we had a spy with us this whole time?!” Quill demanded.

“No,” Ballon spoke up, “My niece was just able to get away, then somehow tracked down where they had taken me to here. That’s when she found you. Thank you for taking care of her.”

“I’m told you patched up my son’s gourd.” Quill replied, “Thank you for that.”

“If you’re going to defeat the governors, we want to help.” Ballon informed them, “All of us.”

“If you don’t mind, you could start by showing us around that room.” Toni Jo told him.
Stay here with the others.” Ballon told the others, who were off to the side.
Most of the aliens were reluctant to go back into the room, not they blamed them, and even if it
weren’t for that, they only saw one part of the room and wouldn’t be of much help, so they were
waiting outside with the captive Governors and a couple of guards to make sure nothing happened.
Having taken care of that, the team walked inside.
When they walked through the door, they were back in the meeting room, on the floor, greeted
with several fallen bodies.
Toni Jo felt like she was going to be sick.
“Yeah, maybe we went a bit overboard here.” Fox commented.
Getting her composure back, Toni Jo turned around. “Alright, we split into three groups…”
Toni Jo’s group took on side, finding a large steel-colored room lined tables and that were ladened
with devices and chemicals.
“Some sort of lab?” Fox speculated as they walked in.
“Looks like.” Toni Jo commented, her mouth suddenly salivating as she looked at all technology,
and the components. Oh, if only she had about month or so….
“Some of this stuff, I’ve—I’ve never even seen before.” Fox said, picking up a flat, black device.
“You probably shouldn’t touch that.” Toni Jo told him.
That was when they saw it. It was some kind of monitor, similar to the ones that track vital signs,
keeping a steady rhythm.
Meanwhile, the group Gwen was leading up had found their way to the prison.
“We’re look at, about thirty cells, here, yeah?” Gwen counted roughly.
“Twice the number of aliens they had.” Charlie replied.
“Yeah.” Gwen commented, before turning her to look at him, “You alright being here?”
“Yeah.” Charlie assured her, not seeing why the question even had to be asked, “I was only here
for a few hours and for most of that I was unconscious. I’m sure Ballon had it worse.”
“So, why exactly were they keeping you all?” Quill asked Ballon as she led their group, “Sorry for
the bluntness, it’s just that’s probably important.”
“They believed we were dangerous.” Ballon answered, “Or useful. There’s this one girl out there
who’s a seer, if you can believe that.”
“No really.” Quill quipped.
“She’s from Uptoros.” Ballon added.
“Okay, then we can believe it.” Jack declared.
“What difference does where she’s from make? A charlatan’s a charlatan.” Quill responded.
“Except, Uptoros seers are the real deal.” Jack informed, “They’re famed throughout their galaxy. I
saw it first hand during my stint with the Time Agency. It could explain where they’ve been
getting their intel from.”
“Alright, I’ll bite, we’ll have to talk to her later.” Quill conceded, opening up a door. What she saw
stopped her cold.
The room was almost completely dark, but there was enough light that they could see that on either
side of the long strait hall, were stone angels, their hands over their face.
“No one take your eyes off those things.” Quill instructed, before speaking into her com, “Guys, I
got angels here.”

Toni Jo was first to respond. “Where? How many?”

“A lot.” Quill replied, “Too far back to count. The way they’re set up we can see them all, though.”

“Okay, stay there, we’re coming to get you.” Toni Jo instructed, “I need everyone on the third floor.”

They all ran to the third floor, where no one in Quill’s parry had moved a muscle, let alone blinked.

“You okay?” Toni Jo asked.

“Yeah.” Quill answered, “As okay as we can be.” After a beat she added, “Toni, can you get a little closer?”

Toni Jo obeyed. “What is it?”

“Toni, I saw this room in my vision.” Quill told her, “When I was ignition, I was these—visions, or hallucinations, I’m not sure which, but I saw this room with all these angels.”

“Okay, we need to know what’s in that pool.” Toni Jo responded, “After we find a way to get of this room.”

“Toni, can I see you for a minute?” Jack asked.

Toni Jo glanced over at Quill.

“Go.” Quill groaned, “I don’t need you to hold my hand.”

“Never said you did.” Toni Jo quipped before going to Jack. “Please tell me you called me over here because you have an idea.”

“I do.” Jack confirmed, “It’s crazy, but…it might work.”

By chance, a few blocks away, there was construction work going on. “Okay, bring in the cement.” The foreman ordered, gesturing to the truck.

However, suddenly the truck took off in the other direction.

“Hey!” The foreman shouted, taking off after the truck, “Hey, were do you think you’re going?!”

Back at Coal Hill, Susan and the Doctor were levitating a very long funnel they had Gerry-rigged with materials from the lab. “Okay, Quill, guys, I’m gonna need you to back up. But don’t take your eyes off those angels.” The trio did as they were instructed and the funnel was inserted into the room. Suddenly deep gray wet concrete poured from a portion they had brought in, flowing down the funnel and into the room.

It was painfully long process, and the room took several hours to fill but eventually it was done. With it was accomplished, Toni Jo met Fox at the front of the school. “How much more do we have?”

“We have just enough to cover the door.” Fox answered before going back out to get more concrete.

After getting everyone out and gathering what supplies from the chamber that they could under the circumstances, which wasn’t even half of it, and making sure to get a sample of the initiation pool, they sealed off the door, covering it with concreate and spackle and installing a low-level perception filter for good measure, so no one would mess with it.

At last they got back at the flat where they proceeded to debrief and recon the Governors.

“Alright,” Toni Jo said, as she and Charlie caught a man who was falling to the floor, “We got another one over here!”

Fox came over and collected the man. “Any particular hospital?”

“No, at this point they’re either going to get suspicious or they won’t.” Toni Jo replied.

“So, this is all you’re going to do?” Ballon asked, watching everything unfold from the kitchen.

“You’re just going to erase their memories and let them go on with their lives after everything they’ve done?”

“Well, considering this was their whole lives and they’ve been involved in this for years, decades even, they won’t have much of life to get back to.” Quill reasoned, “Besides getting reconed that far back, sometimes it does things to the mind, can become a form of karma itself.” After a beat she said, “Karma, that’s a concept they have here, where you do bad things, eventually it’ll all rain back down on you.”
“I’ll have to look into it.” Ballon replied emotionlessly. After a beat, he changed the subject, “So, what happens after this?”

“Well, there’s still work to be done here.” Quill answered, “We have to round up the rest of the Governors, get the school shut down, because the tears are still happening and now, we got sealed evil in a room, plus, we need locate whoever the Governors were planning to sacrifice if it’s not too late, and of course we have something to do with you lot.” After a beat she continued, “I mean, with your shapeshifting ability you can pretty much blend into society, but we’d have to set you up with a job and everything.”

“You can do that?” Ballon asked.

“Well, we can try.” Quill replied, “Thought between your fighting and medical skills, we could use someone like you on the team. Of course, Oxa would be a problem with that. Speaking from personal experience this is no life for a child and this is coming from woman whose species had some—very severe if somewhat inconsistent ideas about child rearing.”

Meanwhile, Jack and Gwen were getting ready to debrief another Governor. “Hey, you mind holding off a moment, I need to hit the head.

“Sure.” Gwen agreed.

After Jack had done his business and stepped out of the bathroom, he found the Doctor waiting for him. “Everything okay?” Jack asked.

“Yeah, I’m just wondering around, seeing what I can do to help since I’m already here.” The Doctor explained.

“I think we’re all good up here.” Jack said, before turning to head back down. Then he froze. Because he knew a way the Doctor could help. He had wanted to ask him about it for a bit since he got here, but there hadn’t exactly been a good time for it. And you think now is? Jack thought to himself, You don’t even know if that’s what she wants anymore. She’s built something like a life here, and her kid’s not gonna want to go back so that might affect her decision…. but what will it hurt to ask?

“Actually, Doctor, I need a favor.” Jack admitted, “It’s about Andrea…”
The seer has a vision. Quill lashes out, which leads to a long overdue revelation; Dorothea makes a move. The Doctor decides to wait to reveal important information.

I am so sorry, I missed last week's update. But the truth is, I'm out of chapters now, and even though I'm getting close to wrapping this up I think, there's still more to do. I might have to start updating every other week just so that chapters aren't short and I have time to tweak. Again, sorry.

Toni Jo, Charlie, and Fox all slumped down at the kitchen table utterly exhausted. That was when Mateusz came over with three mugs. “I thought you could use these.” He explained, carefully pasting them out.

“Ah, you’re a star.” Toni Jo sighed, taking a sip of the strong tea, inhaling the sent. It seemed to revive her almost instantly, “Charlie, marry that boy.”

The two boys looked at the other. Maybe that was a good sign?

“So, what’s the plan now, boss lady?” Fox asked.

“Well, he has the names of the remaining Governors.” Toni Jo began, “We round them up, do this again, and then start making calls.”

“Do you really think you can get the school shut down?” Mateusz asked.

“Can’t say for certain, but I’d put money on it.” Fox spoke up.


“Let me put it this way.” Toni Jo said, “I once saw my father silence a small meeting of UN delicate by just pulling out a cell phone. “After a beat she explained, “He’s gathered a lot of dirt on a lot of people over the years one call to office with safety despot box, a lot of stuff could get. To say nothing of the favors he’s owed.”

“Plus, I have several of those as well.” Fox bragged.

Feeling somewhat embolden Mateusz asked, “Mr. Mulder, what exactly is your part in all this? I mean, Toni Jo’s the doctor, and Quill’s the muscle, I figured that much out, but I can’t ah—”

“Frist off it’s not Mr. Mulder okay?” Fox cut him off, “Let’s just make that clear right now. Secondly to answer your question, I’m a smuggler, or well, I use to be. After they booted me out of Interpol on completely false charges, figured I might as well actually be a bad boy. Then this lot showed up.” After a beat he added, “Minus a few people at the time.”

Meanwhile, Quill was coming out of the bathroom, where Ballon was out in the hall.

“What, you need to go?” Quill asked.

“No, I just needed to talk to you.” Ballon answered.

“Alright about what?” Quill asked.

“I was just talking to the others and they’re…restless, I guess you might say.” Ballon told him.

“We’re sorry about the accommodations but it’s the best we can do for now.” Quill responded, “And we’re not making them stay in the yard, that was their own choice.”

“It’s not that.” Ballon told her.
“I know.” Quill admitted. Considering the only humans, they had met imprisoned, it was only natural for them to be bit untrusting. She had most certainly been.

“Also, Amethyst wants to talk to you.” Ballon informed her.

“Amethyst?” Quill repeated.

“The seer I mentioned.” Ballon explained.

“She from another planet and she’s name after an earth precious stone?” Quill questioned.

“I think it’s just coincidence.” Ballon replied, “It’s actually a very common name on her planet.” Ballon took Quill and Toni outside, where the aliens, in spite of their instance they come inside, were gathered round. In the group as a wisp of a girl with a human shape, long blonder hair and saffron-yellow skin, dressed in a short blue dress, and no shoes, who’s back was being gently rubbed by the hulking gray creature.

“This is Amethyst.” Ballon introduced the girl before crouching down in front of her. “Amethyst this is the Toni Jo, the leader here, and Quill. They wanted to talk to you.”

“Here.” Quill said, taking off her coat and draping it over the girl, “You have to be cold in that.” Not that they expected their prisoners to go outside, but would it had killed them to give them proper clothing? Seriously, the girl was a hundred pounds soaking wet, what kind of treat could she be? What could she have possibly done?

“Thank you.” Amethyst said softly, wrapping the coat around her.

Toni Jo sat down next to her. “They tell us you can see the future?”

“And the past sometime.” Amethyst confirmed, “And things in the present I should not be able to know. In my bowl.” She put her hand on the rim of bronze-colored bowl containing some sort of orange liquid.

“Alright, that is a new one.” Toni Jo said, mostly to herself, “What did you see?”

The girl was silent, visibly shaking.

“It’s alright.” Toni Jo assured her, “You don’t need to be scared.” Amethyst looked up. “I saw fire and these horrible stone sutures and these horrible—dark things. And blood, so much blood.” She looked up at Quill, “And you… you were lying on the ground. I think—I think you might have been dead.”

Quill’s heart froze and everything went still for a moment. “Thank you for your information, Amethyst.” Quill said, getting up and walking away.

“Quill!” Toni Jo shouted, “Quill!”

After that, Toni Jo gathered up everyone she could find, trying to figure out what the vision meant and what they could do about it. Everyone except the woman in them, who was currently pacing in the kitchen, trying to gather her thoughts.

It wasn’t that she was afraid of dying, but knowing something about when it would happen but not enough to stop it, that was sickening. If Amethyst could have only given him a little more… That was when she felt a presence behind her. She whirled around and found Jack standing there.

“God, what are you trying to do, get yourself killed again?”

“Sorry. I just wanted to check on you.” Jack responded, “How are you doing?”

“Well, apart from trying to solve my own murder, just peachy.” Quill snapped.

“Hey,” Jack said, walking over to her and trying to put his arms around her, “We’re figure this out.”

Quill pulled away. “Don’t do that.”


“Don’t call me that!” Quill snapped, “After what you did you don’t get to call me that!” She knew that their breakup was the least of her worries at this moment, but she just—she just wanted to be mad at him about something right now.

“What, Andrea?” Jack demanded, “What is it exactly that you think I’ve done?”

“Well, for starters, never showing up and at the train station!” Quill shot back.

“I…you…huh?” Jack stammered out.

“Remember?” Quill continued, it all coming out now. What did she have to lose? She had death sentence on her head anyway. “O five, we were going to run off together, but you stood me up with
“I…” Jack began, “Andrea, I showed up and you weren’t there.”
“What—” Quill began as well, “Jack, I was there with Charles for hours. I couldn’t get you on the phone, nothing.”
“I got held up with a few last things, then this—monster came through the rift.” Jack explained, “I kept worrying about you waiting there for me, but when I finally got there…you weren’t.”
“Because I gave up and called Toni, in tears.” Quill told him, “In tears, Harkness! What, did you lose the ability to send a freakin’ text message?! All this time we—” Her voice trailed off, then she looked at him blankly, “You mean all this time we could’ve been friends?”
The two just stared at each for a moment, then Quill’s cell phone rang. Getting her bearings back she picked it up, “Hello?”
“Oh, thank God.” Doretha voice breathed raggedly on the other end.
“Doretha?” Quill asked, “You made out?”
“Barely.” Doretha responded, “I’m trying to gather, the others, we need to figure out who did this. We need form a plan.”
“Just tell me where.” Quill told her, then hung up. “That was Doretha. Apparently, this isn’t over yet. The ones that made it out are planning a counter strike.”
“Do they know it was us?” Jack asked.
“Would they call me if they did?” Quill pointed out, knowing the possible problems with that thinking even as she said it.
“Well, that could be because it’s some sort of trap.” Jack reasoned, following her as she left the room.
“Don’t worry, I’m going in armed.” Quill said, grabbing her gun.
“You’ll still be out numbered.” Jack argued, as they walked past where everyone was gathered,
“Can one of you talk some sense into her?”
“What’s going on?” Toni Jo demanded, actually managing to block Quill’s path.
“Quill got a call from Doretha.” Jack announced, “And she’s going.”
“What??” Toni Jo balked, “Quill, it—”
“Could be trap.” Quill cut her off, “Yes, I know, I know.”
“And you were going to go anyway?” Toni Jo questioned.
“I still will if you let me pass.” Quill responded.
“No.” Toni Jo said immediately, “Quill you could be walking right into Amethyst’s vision.”
“Well, what exactly do you want to do about the others?” Quill challenged.
“Then we’ll follow and take them all in.” Toni Jo reasoned, “Now stay here until I come to get and that’s an order.”
As Toni Jo began ordering everyone the Doctor watched on. Yeah. He thought, telling her’s defiantly going to have to wait.
Quill stalls for time.

Quill walked into the part alone, looking around. “Hello?” She called out, “Is anyone here?”
“Not the most conspicuous, are you?” A voice responded.
Out of the darkness, Doretha stepped, followed by several of the remaining Governors. It was rather ominous.
“Well, what else was I supposed to do?” Quill challenged, “How—how many made it out?”
“Twenty, that we’ve been able to track down.” Doretha answered.
“Do we—do we know who did this?” Quill asked, maybe laying it on a bit too thick.
“You tell us.” Another Govender spoke up.
Making a show of looking stunned and distressed at the accusation, Quill balked for a few moments before going, “You can’t—you can’t seriously think that we had anything to do with this. That I had anything to do with this.”
“Well, considering the way you just said that…” The same Govender replied.
“At the very least you have some conflicted loyalties, Quill.” Another Govender added.
“No, they’re not!” Quill exclaimed, “My loyalty is to you! I tried everything I could to defend us in that battle!”
“I saw you shoot MacLeish.” Yet another Governor spoke up.
Thinking on her feet, Quill came out with, “That was an accident. Things were absolute chaos in that room, I’m surprised more friendly fire didn’t happen.”
There was some murmuring from the group. Her story seemed plausible enough.
“I want to believe you, Quill.” Doretha spoke again, “Really, I do, but—you’re going to need to do something to prove your loyalty.”
“Name it.” Quill responded, stalling for time.
Doretha gestured from someone and out of the night two Governors half-dragged a struggling Reet Dour bet, her hands tied in front of her and a piece of cloth wrapped around her mouth.
Oh crap. Quill thought.
“We found her snooping outside of Room 366.” Doretha explained, “As you know, we were going to use for the needed blood atonement, but, well, that’s on hold and we need to stop her from talking.”
Meanwhile, three children had snuck out of their rooms and were walking through the park.
“You know, if it turns out she’s fine, he’s gonna be furious.” Ram told, “Even if she’s not fine, she’s gonna be furious.”
“Sssh.” Tanya hushed him, looking at the homemade device they were using to rack the nurse’s phone.
“She said she would call us to let us know she was okay, but that was hours ago.” April reasoned.
“Sssh!” Tanya hushed again.
“Well, can’t we just—recruit her to cause?” They could hear a voice saying.
“Sadly, I don’t think it will work with this one.” Another voice said, “Plus, she’s not exactly of use to us.”
“What, we won’t need nurses after arrival?” The first voice asked.
“No, because they’ll be no sickness to cure.” The second voice replied, “Now, I’m sorry Quill, but this is the way it has to be.”
The kids peaked and finally got a full view of what was going on. They saw, sure enough Miss Quill there, but also their new headmistress, Miss Ames, and Nurse Dourbet who, distressingly, was currently bound and gagged.

“Alright.” Quill conceded, “Give her here.”
Doretha, handed Reet over to Quill.
Alarmed, April couldn’t stop herself from screaming out. “No!”
Everyone turned to towards the voices. Within seconds several of the man grabbed them, overpowering them and pulling them out into the center of the group, in spite their struggling, while Reet tried protest this turn of events from beneath her gag.

“What I suppose you want me to kill them too?” Quill asked.
“What other choice do we have?” One of the governors spoke up again.
“Crap.” Fox whispered from where they were waiting to strike. “We can’t go in there now, they got at least four hostages.”
“But if we don’t so something, they’re going to kill them now!” Charlie spoke up.
“I have an idea.” Susan spoke up, then she sent out a message to Quill, Stall for a few more minutes, okay?
Not seeing any other options, Quill stalled. “Er, all right, these people, yes, they may disgust me, but at the end of the day, they’re just children. They probably don’t have any idea what they stumbled onto.”

“Do you honestly believe that they were just going out for a walk in the middle of the night and just stumbled upon our little gathering here?” Doretha questioned.

“Actually, Doretha, I think she might right.” A voice spoke up in the back, “I mean, it hardly seems like they’re part of some vast sabotage operation.”
“And yet, we were nearly decimated just a day ago.” Doretha reminded the dissenter sharply.

“Which is why we shouldn’t draw attention to ourselves.” Another voice spoke up, “The woman’s an adult, it’ll take a few days before anyone even notice she’s gone but the others—they’re minors, the police will be out immediately looking for them. And they might be smart enough to trace it back to one us.”

“Well, then, best not let anyone find the bodies.” Doretha responded in somewhat strained voice.
Suddenly Quill got an idea. “I can erase their memories. I’ll go, grab some amnesia pills, I’ll even still kill this one, if you need me to –”

Suddenly Ram started seeing things. Dragons, blood but also—Miss Quill. She gave him some water. “You’ve already used those on us already, haven’t you?” He spoke up.
That got everyone’s attention for a moment.
Seeing an opportunity to lead them off the subject of killing the youth, Quill responded, “What makes you say that?”
Because I can remember it now.” Ram said, “You came into my hospital room, you gave something to drink and then—and then—”
“You fell back asleep.” Quill finished for him, “That’s right. And what does that tell you?”
“You—you gave me something that—-that made me forget what happen.” Ram deuced.
“And what does that tell you?” Quill asked.
“What does that matter?” The voice who had been worried about discovery snapped.
“Well, if they’re going to die, they might as well go knowing everything.” Quill reason.
“Wait, I thought we decided we weren’t going to kill them.” Someone in the back spoke up, confused.
“Yeah!” Tanya shouted out, “You did.”
“Totally did.” April agreed, hopping that trick would work.
That was when it happened.
Suddenly the sky erupted with blots of white electric light forming a net of lightening around the cult and their captives.

“About time!” Quill called out, before starting to feel strange, suddenly she blacked out.
“Grab Nurse Dourbet!” Ram called out. There had to be some way out of this thing, whatever it
April and Tanya ran over to Reet and tried to untie her into the woman herself loss talking, then just took her and ran.
The teens somehow made it to the end of the wall, but unforcefully they couldn’t find a way out. That’s when everything went black.
The kids finally get some of the answers they were looking for; The Doctor gives Quill world-shattering news.

As the trio woke up, the first thing they were aware of was someone yelling. “What the Hell were your thinking?!” A woman’s voice, Miss Quill’s voice, they realized, was shouting. “I just—I thought I could handle it on my own without any of you ever having to know.” Charlie’s voice said, somewhat strained. “They still could have remembered without him.” Another voice spoke up. “Fox, don’t take up from him!” Quill snapped, “And I think we both know that lot’s not that clever!”

Their eyes fluttered open and they could see that they were laid out in pallets in someone’s bedroom. The yelling appeared to be coming from somewhere else in the place that they were, as they weren’t in the room. However, someone else was. “Mateusz?” April asked, sitting up right, “It is Mateusz, right?”

“Yes.” Mateusz answered, “Are you all alright? You didn’t seem hurt when they brought you, but…”

“I don’t know about the others, but I’m fine.” April told him, “You guys?” “I think I’m okay.” Tanya declared. “Yeah, me too.” Ram asked, “Now where the Hell are, we?” “Somewhere in Shoreditch.” Mateusz answered. “H-How long have you been here?” Tanya asked, “How long were we out?” “About thirty minutes I think.” Mateusz answered. “Quill is now really the best time to do this?” A new female voice said downstairs. “I’m not going to get physical, Toni!” Quill’s voice snapped. “What exactly is going on down there?” Ram asked. “Parenting, I’d guess.” Mateusz responded, seeming somewhat nervous. “That’s not what I’m worried about.” Toni Jo said, downstairs, thought if she was being honest, she was somewhat concerned about that, “I mean, we’re kind of busy here!” She gestured to the Governor they were currently retconning. “It’s alright.” The Governor said, “I can wait.” “Fine.” Quill grown, beginning to walk away, “But we are not done with this, Charles. Not by a long shot.” “I figured.” Charlie responded preparing another amnesia pill. “So, since we’re already here, can you please explain to us what’s going on?” April requested upstairs. “Preferably before we all die.” Tanya added. “No one’s going to die.” Mateusz tried to assure them, “Probably.” Everyone’s eyes widened at that “But if someone does, it won’t be any of you.” Mateusz tried to assure them. After a beat he added, “This isn’t really helping, is it?”

Mateusz then proceeded to tell them everything—well, almost everything. He left out the part about Quill and Charlie not being human. And Susan not being human. And whatever was going
on with her grandfather, he still wasn’t sure about that. And the aliens in the backyard. And the prophecy about Quill’s impending demise. He didn’t want to overwhelm them. It didn’t work out too well.

“An alien cult?” Tanya repeated again, “Our school is being run by an alien-worshiping cult?”
“And what’s this space and time tear thing?” Ram asked.
“That’s actually the only part I understood.” Tanya spoke up again.
“It’s like the Hellmouth.” April equated.
“Or that town in Once Upon A Time.” Tanya added.
“Except more murder-y.” Mateusz elaborated.
“But it’s over now, right?” April asked, “Now, that they’ve captured all the Governors?” After a beat they added, “They’re not—they’re not gonna hurt them, are they?”
“You seriously care what happens to them?” Ram asked, “After they tried to kill us?”
“To be fair they were only discussing trying to kill us.” April countered.
“That seems a bit like splitting hairs.” Tanya argued.
“Look, all they’re doing is debriefing them and erasing their memories, so it really depends on your definition of hurt.” Mateusz got out finally, starting to feel a bit overwhelmed himself with all the questions, less than half of which he had answers to.
Just then there was a knock on the door, revealing Fox standing in the doorway. “So, they’ve awakened, I see.”
“Just for minute or so.” Mateusz answered.
“And everyone’s okay in here?” Fox asked.
“Just a little rattled.” Mateusz replied.
That was when the teenagers realized, someone was missing. “Where’s nurse Dourbet?” April asked.
“Downstairs, in line to be debriefed.” Fox answered, “She woke up a little while ago.”
“So, you’re going to erase our memories?” Tanya asked.
“That’s the tricky part.” Fox admitted. “The truth is, as you all might be starting to recall, you’ve all been retconned once, and we’ve found that multiple retconning can lead to...mental problems.” Suddenly April realized where she and Tanya had been retconned. “Charlie put something in our drinks, didn’t he?”
“What?” Tanya responded.
“At the café.” April explained, “Before the Larkin attacked. He told us about you. About a group looking into what was going on at Coal Hill. “
“Yes, and I’m sorry about that.” Fox said, “He will face consequences for it.”
“No, please don’t, we—we didn’t really give him a choice.” April pleaded.
“Well, that’s between him and his—very angry mother, I’m afraid.” Fox told her.
Meanwhile, downstairs, Charlie was handing another Governor an amnesia pill, Quill glaring at him.
“I’m never going to find a good time to tell her, am I?” The Doctor lamented aloud to himself, as he watched her from the other room.
Or at least he thought he was alone.
“A good time to tell her what?” Jack asked, behind him.
The Doctor turned around, and Jack was staring at him.
“Oh, Jack,” The Doctor began, “When did you get so sneaky? Seriously, I’ve met ninjas who make more noise than you.”
“What are you talking back?” Jack asked, “What do you need to tell her?”
The Doctor looked around. “Not here.” He told him, “What I have to say is very...personal, among other things.”
“I’ll put the debriefs on hold.” Jack responded, before walking off.
As they walked off, neither of them noticed Reet walk into the kitchen.
“Fox!” Toni Jo called out holding semi-conscious Governor by the arm.
“Coming!” Fox called down, hurrying down the stairs, “The kids are up, by the way.”
“Have Mateusz keep them upstairs for now.” Toni Jo responded, handing him the Governor.
“What did you do to him?” Reet asked, standing in the doorway.
“After what they were going to do to you what do you care?” Quill spoke up. It was the first words she had spoken since she had read Charlie the riot act.
“That doesn’t answer my question.” Reet told her coolly, “And before you tell I wouldn’t be able to understand it, or some nonsense like that, need I remind you that I am a nurse. I understand medical concepts.”
Toni Jo and Charlie exchanged looks then the redhead looked back to Reet and said, “We’re using chemical compound that—while not completely whipping their memories of extraterrestrial related events—blocks them out. “
“Just like that?” Reet asked.
“Yes.” Toni Jo confirmed.
“That is just—” Reet began, “Who are you people?”
“Honestly, it might be better if you don’t know at this point.” Quill told her, earning her looks from everyone, “What? I’m just trying to contain the damage here.”
“I think it’s a little late for that.” Susan murmured.
“I have a right to know.” Reet protested, “We all do.”
Quill let out a snort.
“You’ve all been keeping this thing a secret far too long.” Reet began, “You can’t just keep covering this up. Families won’t to know what happened to their love ones!”
“Miss Duorbet, I know you’ve been through a lot, and I know you’re upset—” Toni Jo began calmly.
“No!” Reet snapped, “No you don’t know! My girlfriend was soldier in UNIT and she died and no one would tell me why! Seven years together and she was just gone and there wasn’t even a body to bury and no one would tell me anything! It was like Fawn was nothing! Then I start working at this freaking school and children are getting hurt any no one will tell anyone why! “She pointed up the stairs, “And now you’re holding a bunch of children prisoner!” She stopped finally, letting out a series of ragged breaths, “What’s so important that you have to keep lying to everyone? That you have to hurt people?”
Everything was silent for a moment, then, as if on cue, The Doctor and Jack stepped in the room.
“I’m sorry, are we interrupting something?” The Doctor asked.
“Yeah, Doc, kinda.” Quill snarked.
“Just the person I wanted to see.” The Doctor turned to look at her, “Miss Quill, we need to speak with you. In private.”
“Now’s not exactly a good time, Doc.” Quill pointed out awkwardly.
“Actually, Andrea, I really think you should.” Jack said soberly.
That was when Quill started to get worried. “What’s so bad you have to say in private?”
“Oh, so when it’s one of you— “Reet began, disgusted by the apparent hypocrisy.
“Shut up!” Jack shouted, stunning everyone in the room silence, “You have NO idea what this is!”
The outburst as so striking, and while, not exactly out of character, it was when lobbed at an innocent civilian, no one said a word for a good minute after that. The first person to speak was Quill as she stood up, trying to keep the worry out of her voice, “Come on, then. Let’s get whatever this is, over with.”
They trio walked up the stars Jack stopping by the room where the children were. “We’re gonna need to close the door for a little bit, okay?”
“What’s wrong?” Mateusz asked, sensing this was more than just the standard cloak and dagger things.
“Someone will explain later.” Jack told him before shutting the door.
They took Quill into her own bedroom, shutting the door behind them as she sat down on the bed. “Quill, what we have to tell you is going to come as shock, to put it mildly.” Jack began, “Do you need to get anyone? Toni Jo?”
“No, please, let’s just get this over with.” Quill replied.
The Doctor sat down across from Quill. “Jack explained to me that you are stranded here on Earth, and asked, if, provided, you were willing, I could take you home.”

Quill’s heart was doing summersaults in her chest. He was saying she could go home, that she could pick up the fight if there was one. She nearly shouted yes before another factor slipped into her head. What about Charlie? Even though he had never really been part of it, just part of a secret sub-culture within it, this was the only world he knew, and he hated his own people. He’d never agree to going but, then he’d might just so she could go back without any guilt, and that probably wasn’t the best thing for him, especially since unless she could pass him off as someone else, which, since he just had the permeant surgeries he could maybe, he’d have a target on his back, but she didn’t want to leave him here either. Even thought she could throttle him right now, he was still her son. And speaking of surgeries, she had been permanently altered at well. Even if some of it could be reverse, she’d still be a freak of nature...

Her hesitation gave him time to continue. “The he told where you and the boy were from. And I have something—something horrible to tell you. I a while back I actually wound up on Rhodia when they were in the middle of an invasion. A massacre.”

Suddenly the world around Quill went liquid. An invasion? A massacre? What did that mean? What did that mean?!

“There was this species, called the Shadowkin. To make a long story sort, they are a race of genocidal maniacs, and while your two species were at war, they snuck into their shadows, and then…attacked, killing a majority of the population.” The Doctor continued.

For a few seconds her brain didn’t compute, Quill couldn’t understand what he was saying, but she got enough for a great and terrible fear to well up in her.

The Doctor paused a long moment, giving her time.

“Andrea, breath, just breath.” Jack urged, taking her hands.

“I was able to save some people. “The Doctor finally continued, “Not many, ten Quill ten Rhodians, not that I planned it that way, it was just a mad dash, but the planet is basically gone.” No! A voice screamed out in Quill’s head, as she gapped wordlessly like a fish. This wasn’t happening. This wasn’t happening…

“Andrea,” Jack called out, trying to call her back. Quill jerked her hands away. “Don’t call me that.” She seethed, standing up and running out the door, down the hall, down the stairs, fighting back the tears.

In the living room there were still half a dozen Governors, either unconscious or in some way restrained, off in the corner, forgotten in the chaos.

Taking advantage of the situation, Doretha managed to slip a hand in her jacket.

Quill ran until she couldn’t run anymore. Falling into her knees under a street light, the tears finally releasing. She didn’t like to think of herself as an easy crier. She wasn’t an easy crier. But now, she gave into the catharsis of tears, hard. Her world was gone. Her people were gone. Well, there were ten of them, but still, not exactly a breeding population. They would just…die out. Or blend in with some other species that was there, wherever the Doctor had dropped them. Something inside her she didn’t even know had been there was ripped out. The grief, the anger, suddenly threatened to consume her. She cried and beat the ground, screaming and beating the ground and beating her chest and gnashing her teeth like some scene out of the Old Testament. Her knuckles ripped opened and she didn’t care. People were staring, or running off and she didn’t care. Her nose started to bleed, and she didn’t care. Her tears turned into blood droplets and she didn’t care. Suddenly she slowly started to lose consciousness.

By the time Jack and Charlie found her, a small crowd had gathered. A few had called nine nine nine, bit several had just stopped to gawk. Someone actually took a cane and was reaching out to poke her.

“Get away from her!” Charlie shouted, pushing that person out of the way, and crouching down, putting fingers to her wrist. “I got a pulse, strong too.”

“There you go, Andrea, still a fighter.” Jack said, taking off his coat and wrapping his coat around
her and picking her up, running from the scene.
Jack laid Quill on the bed and immediately she was surrounded by Toni Jo, Charlie, and Reet, who, angry as she still was, was still a nurse. She wasn’t just going to stand by while someone was in clear medical distress. After running a med scanner over her adopted sister, Toni Jo started barking out orders, “Charlie, my kit’s downstairs, I think there are still some nano statures in the back, also bring the regular thread and med spray,” “After putting a hand on Quill’s forehead she said, “Fever pills too, the nano ointment, the honey, and bandages.”
Charlie ran down the stairs wordlessly.
While Toni Jo continued to keep track of Quill’s vital—they appeared good, most of the damage was external—she asked, “Jack, what did you tell her?”

For the text twelve minutes the trio worked like lightening, anointing and bandaging, before sticking an IV in Quill and covering her up with a blanket. For there, all that was left to do was wait.
When Quill finally began slowly wait, it took her a minute to figure out where she was. With a pounding head, she slowly sat up, looking around, and found Toni Jo, Charlie and Mateusz. Toni Jo and Charlie were both out like a light, Toni Jo slumped against the well, Charlie slumped against Mateusz. Seeing she was away, Mateusz began shaking Charlie, “Charlie wake up, she’s finally coming around.”

“How long was I out?” Quill asked.
“Enough to scare the bloody Hell out of all of us.” Toni Jo groaned as she was awoken by the commotion as well, “I’m so sorry Andra’ath.”
“I take it that means Jack told you.” Quill asked, her heart sinking at the reminder.
“Just me and Charlie.” Toni Jo answered, “He’d figure you’d decide yourself about telling the others.”
“I’m so sorry, Mum.” Charlie told her, getting up carefully putting his arm around her. He knew that it was very little, but honestly, what else could he do?
“How are you taking it?” Quill asked, trying to distract herself. She had a feeling distraction was going to be her friend for a while.
“I’m more concerned about you right now.” Charlie replied, “It was your species.”
“Yours, too.” Quill pointed out solemnly.
Charlie responded with a strange look. That was when Quill realized: Of course, Charlie wasn’t thinking that way. He hadn’t been on Rhodia, since he was what, one? He had no memories. He’d been raised mostly human or Quill. He didn’t even like other Rhodians, thought she doubted he felt they deserved this. Of course, he wasn’t feeling it the way she was. Of course, he was more concerned about her. “Wow, I guess I really did give you a complex.” She finally whispered.
“Never mind.” Quill responded, getting off the bed, “So, did you get any work done while I was out?”
That earned her stunned silence.
“Well?” Quill asked when she got no answer.
“Quill, you’ve just had shock that most of us can’t even phantom.” Toni Jo began, “You need to…”
“I don’t need to do anything.” Quill cut her off.
“Quill, it’s called sublimation.” Toni Jo told her.
“Exactly what socially unacceptable impulses am I transferring?” Quill challenged.
“Considering what happened earlier—” Toni Jo began.
“Look, if I don’t do something, I’m going to wind up hanging myself.” Quill cut her off, “And then I’d be damned to fires of Hell forever, and it will be all your fault.” She knew it was cruel, blaming Toni Jo for her hypothetical suicide. To weaponize her religion against her. She also didn’t care at that point.
Suddenly Toni Jo’s blood went cold. “Alright.” She said, trying to keep the hurt from her voice, “Come on, let’s go.”
What Quill wound up doing was standing in the kitchen on auto-piolet, not procing what she was
seeing as they debriefed and retconned, debriefed and retconned, over and over again. Like a factory.

Suddenly she felt a hand on her shoulder. Slowly turning around, she saw Jack, looking concerned. “Please don’t ask me how I’m doing.” Quill requested flatly.

“Actually, I was going to ask if you should really be working right now.” Jack responded. “What, it’s not like I can do anything about it.” Quill tried to burst it off hollowly.

“Yeah, but even the Doctor took five minutes.” Jack countered, not thinking about the information he was giving away. Quill was the only thing that mattered to him right now.

“Well, he had his granddaughter.” Quill reasoned, “So unless you have any more life-shattering revelations—” She began to walk away.

“Andrea….” Jack began.

“Don’t call me that!” Quill snapped at him, “It’s Quill, please. Or Andra’ath, even.” Suddenly her human name was the enemy. Her last name, her species name, was the only she could hold on to.

“Quill,” He responded. And that was all he said.

“I-I actually think I need some air.” Quill told him, before running out, “I promise not to make a spectacle of myself this time.” then she ran out the door.

Their air was heavy for a moment, then Fox ran into the rooms. “Guys, we may have a problem.” He began urgently, “I just check on the governors we got stowed and we’re missing one.”

Quill leaned against the wall of the flat, rubbing her face wearily. She still couldn’t think, couldn’t calm herself down, not fully…

Maybe that was why she didn’t sense it, why she didn’t hear it.

Not until the gun clicked against her head.

“Don’t move, don’t scream, don’t say a word.” Doretha hissed in her ear.

End Notes

AN: First off, I'm actually Baptist, but I did research of Catholicism to make sure I was writing Toni Jo's actions correctly. Still, sorry if I got anything wrong.

Secondly, Quill's true appearance in this story is based off the Quill goddess in 1x08, and bits of dialogue I caught where details about her real appearance were described. Charlie's true appearance in this story is completely made up by me.

Finally, if you like this, or even if you hate it and want to tell me I'm an idiot, please review!

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!